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“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish?” Psalm 22:1

**Main Idea:** David gives out, perhaps, his most passionate plea: Oh most Holy God, why have you abandoned me? Why is it that when I cry out with all my strength and passion you do not seem to care or hear me. I am in deep anguish, and I do know you are The True Eternal God, for there is no doubt, I know what you can do and what you have done. As my ancestors trusted you so do I, and you delivered them; why not me? I do not deserve your rescue, yet I desperately desire it. I am scorned by everyone and all that wants me dead have encircled me like lions and vultures. They say you can't help me, you do not exist or care. They tease and make fun of me, scorning me for trusting you. But, I have no testimony, only my fervent trust in you. You are and always have been my God, no matter what. I have seen you not disappoint others, but I am saddened and downtrodden. I am in extreme distress, poured out like garbage. I do not know what to do or go. You are my strength and my own strength is gone. They have taken all that I have and want more. Please Lord, do not leave me, do not let me fail and rot. Do not allow my enemies to win. My body and mind are about to fail. They torture me and gloat.

Please deliver me and I will tell all to fear the Lord and praise you! My testimony will be seen and heard. Please, my Lord, you are my only hope, and all will know you do not neglect the poor and downtrodden. Lord, deliver me to safety, rescue me from evil. The evil people will know you have not forsaken your servant. And those who do forsake you then too will kneel one day to you. And as I have proclaimed your name in my weakness, I will continue to do so in my strength even louder. People will know if they seek you, you will hear them. And it will not stop here, future generations will know Who is Lord, and evil and wicked people will not have their way. Every part of this earth will know who you are. Even people who are not born yet will know of your ways and deeds.

### Contexts and Background:

David's Psalms show us that our relationship with God is to be intimate and personal lived out in community. Yet, it is not without its fears and distresses, as with any relationship. Here, David is the suffering servant. We are in a world that is filled with distress and pain and there is no way to walk through it without stumbling onto suffering and distress. David is hurt, and he is angry. Being angry is OK as long as we do not sin or curse God in it.

The setting of this Psalm is, perhaps, betrayal as David betrayed Uriah and David's own son will do the same to him. David faces numerous, contemptuous foes and threats from former loyalists, a misguided kingdom, and his own son. David's own people gave their pledges and loyalty to his son, Absalom, whose heart was prideful and his intentions skewed. A betrayal of the king--one called and placed by God--and the betrayal was directed to God Himself. Thus, David laments to God, his suffering at the hands of evil men. David felt is what Christ will fulfill (Psalm 22:7-8; 71:10-11).

Psalm 22 is a testament to Messianic prophecies that are fulfilled by Jesus Christ on the cross. David also writes as a prophet with a play-by-play of Jesus crucifixion. Such as most of Matthew 27: 27- 44 is a direct fulfillment, including “*hands and feet pierced*” (22:16 and “*no bones broken*” (22:17). Christ will be from the lineage of David and become a Name of Jesus, the Son of David. *Son of David*. This is a title for Jesus, referring to His being the Messiah (2 Sam. 7:12-13; Isa. 11:1-3; Jer. 23:1-6; Psalm 69; Matt. 1:1, 20; 9:27; 15:22; 21:9; Luke 19:38-39; John 19:23-28; Heb. 2:12).

### Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

**Verses 1-11:** David laments that the righteous suffer unfairly, while those who are innocent—and in David's case--and did not even provoke enemies are chastised. David's claim in his distress, he is "humble," who trusts in the Lord and cries out to God. This Psalm is his way to give credence to the anguishes of God's faithful living in a hostile world.

- *My God.* We have a personal relationship with a personal God! God is Holy and also approachable, what is real and important in life is found in Him, not in what others say or think or do. This is a great comfort to anyone, especially those in need! The tragedy is that today, this phrase is more of a swearword or an exclamation to something surprising, when it is meant to be an open door to God's heart (Psalm 3:7)!

- *Why*. This is a statement of asking God passionately, “How and why did this happen?” and it is from puzzlement and grief, not out of mistrust, rejection or disillusionment of one’s faith.
- *Forsaken me*. The anguish of “why” righteous suffer and the wicked seem to get off free. The “why” of feeling totally abandoned by God while those who do evil or not honor God do so well. The presence of God seems to be absent in these times, but there is no abandonment by God. This foresees how God will turn His face from the Son as he bears the sins that the Father can’t look upon. Jesus bore the curse of our sins that we did deserve and Christ cries this out on the cross as the God the Father looked away (Jos. 1:5; Matt. 27:46; Luke 18:31-33; Gal. 3:13).
- *Cries of anguish*. When we are scorned and even worse, betrayed as in physical pain, it hurts deep.
- *Do not answer*. David diverts the pity from himself to those who caused the pain.
- *Enthroned*. David fixes his attention on the Holiness of God over his situation. God is to be honored above any created thing or person, no matter what the rank or position or wealth (Isa. 66:1-f).
- *Holy One*. A name for God that His reign is real and must be acknowledged (Deut. 6:4; Psalm 71:22; 78:41; Isa. 40:25, 43:3, 15; 48:17; Hab. 1:12).
- *Delivered them*. David is recalling how God delivered Abraham and Joseph and the early Nation (Gen. 14; 41; Ex. 1-15).
- *Womb*. Meaning a longstanding trust and relationship with God. Beyond one’s earliest memory.
- *Trusted*. Confidence in God, no matter what. David knows of God’s ability; he is questioning God’s slowness to act and seeming carelessness.
- *Scorned/ mock*. The audacity of wicked people and hypocrites, like David’s enemies mocking him because he trusted in God. Experienced by Jesus (Matt. 27:41-44).

**Verses 12-21:** In the midst of the confusion and chaos of the situation, David laments and appeals before he reasserts his trust in God. The more you find God amidst your problems, the more your problems will fade or seem irrelevant (Col. 3:2).

- *Strong bulls of Bashan*. Bashan was a very fertile land in the north part of Israel, east of the Jordan River. This land was given to the half-tribe of Manasseh, and is currently in Syria. Thus, livestock were very large and plump and were the best in the markets and breeders. There was also a specialty breed of cattle and could not be domesticated (Joshua 13:29–31; 21:27; Amos 4:1).
- *Roaring lions*. Meaning power and fierceness, and mercilessness. These were the most feared animals at that time, striking absolute fear into the people who had no real defense against them. Lions were common in David’s time. They were captured and kept in cages and used for hunting. As they were terrifying, also a symbol of power. When David was a boy, he was a shepherd and was attacked by lions. Here a symbol of fake supporters of a king who would be the antagonists and betray them behind their back (1 Sam. 17:34-35; Nah. 2:14; Psalm 7:2; 10:9-10; Zeph. 3:3).
- *Bones are out of joint*. Meaning utter defeat and hopelessness. Referring to being scattered about, like being carried off by a wild animal and torn to pieces by other pack animals. Also, referring to a burial custom of waiting for the body to decay in a cave and then excavating it up and putting the bones in an ossuary (box). Also, carrying off, or scattering the bones of an enemy to further upset and give punishment (Job 4 4:11; 41:17; Psalm 53:5; 92:9; Jer. 8:1-2).
- *Heart has turned to wax*. As bones refer to the harm to the body, the heart refers to our psyche, the emotional state of disorder and agony.
- *Dogs surround me*. Meaning evil doers and people of contempt. This is not the beloved family pet; rather, stray dogs running amok, dirty and disease ridden. Also, means those who were ceremonially impure; in the New Testament, it meant male prostitutes. (Gen. 3:24; Deut. 23:17-18; 1 Kings 14:11; Psalm. 59:6, 14; Phil. 2:3; Rev. 21:8).

- *Pierce / tear at my hands and my feet.* Meaning to be torn or shriveled or they have wounded my hands and feet. Only use of the Hebrew word in the OT.
- *Cast lots.* This was a form of gambling similar to dice and means a booty or prize is being divided up and an inheritance, being taken before a person is dead. Clothing in those days was very valuable and most people only had one tunic. The act, fulfillment of prophecy, points to an economic loss to Jesus, as clothes back then were one of the biggest investments (Num. 21:33; 32:33; Psalm 22:18; John 19:23-24).
- *Rescue me / help me... save me.* This is a statement of faith in the assurance of what God can do, and that He hears us (Psalm 3:4; 28:6; 34:4-6; 38:15; 118:5,21).

**Verses 22-31:** This part of the Psalm that takes the lament of “why” and turns it into a statement of faith that yes, God can, and I will respond.

- *I will declare / tell.* This is a response of gratitude, because of Who God is and what He can do, even though He may choose not to grant our request. This points to Jesus' role as the Righteous sufferer (Luke 18:31-33; Heb. 2:12).
- *Praise him.* I will be thankful and worship Him as Lord. This points to Christ, Who will lead us in praise as a great congregation (Rev. 5:12-13; 7:12; 19:5).
- *Hidden his face.* Even when our enemies despise us, when we are right with God, He does not, nor ignore us.
- *Fulfill my vows / perform.* A promise to be faithful and be indebted to God, no matter what. Also, if answered, a promise to be grateful and tell others and not forget (Lev. 7:16; Deut. 12:6-7; Psalm 13:6: 27:6; 35:18; 54:6; 69:30-31; 51:16; 116:13-14).
- *Poor will eat.* Either a reference to participate in the sacrificial meal and offering at the Temple/Tabernacle and or being included in worship and family functions, no longer an outcast (Deut. 12:17-19).
- *Who seek the LORD will praise him.* Place Him first, *pouring out our soul to God* (Deut. 4:29; Jer. 29:12-13; Ps. 62:8).
- *Ends of the earth.* The scope of our praise to God is not limited by what we can do; rather, what God will do with it. Perhaps a prophetic reference to the Great Commission (Matt. 28).
- *Turn to the LORD.* God loves the person who turns to Him in their need.
- *Dominion belongs to the LORD.* The victory of life and salvation belong solely to God (John 19:30)!
- *Unborn.* A commitment to tell others what God has done and keep doing so, as those who are not born will hear it in their time, too.

### **Devotional Thoughts and Applications:**

David always felt he was in the care of God. He felt a special relationship and His protection as far back as he can remember. From dealing with his older abusive brothers, a non-caring father, heading sheep at night in dangerous situations and even being attacked by lions, he knew God was there and protected him. Now comes a time, perhaps late in his life, all that he has gone through and did, he is betrayed by his own son and family. David is on the run and passionately exclaims “why” to God, why can this be. Perhaps a night or many days of grief and lamenting go forth, seeing no relief, as if tossed him aside, abandoned like a stillborn sheep at night. Through his petition and cries, he gets to the place, even though all has gone wrong, things are as bad as they could ever get, he will still trust in God. This is so true and passionate; Jesus used this Psalm to cry out from the cross. Each stanza is a prelude to what Christ will do. As David experienced a small glimpse, Christ will literally be nailed by it fully for us all.

**Christian Life Principle:** We can remain in our “whys” and go nowhere when life is at its worst or we can take our brokenness, give it to our Lord for His purpose. You will be amazed at what God can and will do through you! How many lives can you impact for Christ’s glory in your brokenness and pain?

**The Essential Inductive Questions** (for more Inductive questions, see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

**Additional Questions:**

1. What does it mean to you that God does indeed hear us?
2. How does this Psalm show us that our relationship with God is to be real and personal lived out in community?
3. Have you ever felt totally abandoned by God while those who do evil or not honor God prosper?
4. Even though all has gone wrong, things are as bad as they could ever get, David states that he will trust in God. How does this motivate you?
5. What does it mean to have confidence in God, no matter what? Have you been able to muster this? Why or why not?
6. What causes us not to feel that the presence of God at times?
7. The more you find God amid your problems, the more your problems will fade or seem irrelevant. How have you experienced this?
8. How has your relationship with God and others grown from your intimate and personal relationship with God?
9. Have you ever experienced or witnessed that the righteous sufferer unfairly, while those who are innocent suffer? How does this make you feel? What can be done?
10. David turns his lament of “why” into a statement of faith that yes, God can, and I will respond. What situation can you apply this too?
11. David diverts the pity from himself to those who caused the pain. How can you divert your attention from your situations to the Holiness of God? What would this look like?
12. Faith gives us the assurance of what God can do. So, how can you make this your mindset?