

1. We now come to arguably, the most important psalm in the bible. This psalm is commonly used by Christians as "proof-text" that Jesus is, who He claims to be. While religious Jews disagree with that view, this psalm does make a strong argument that Jesus is the Messiah. It was written about 500 years before crucifixion was invented and it reads as if dictated from Jesus on the cross.
2. Let me start with a question that has been bothering me all week. If Psalm 22 is so important, why isn't this "Psalm 1"? If Psalm 22 lays out proof that Jesus is the Messiah, why isn't it broadcast "loud and clear" at the beginning of the book?
  - a) While I don't have a definite answer to that question, I of course, have a theory. ☺ My point is Psalm 22 teaches us about Jesus death and resurrection from His perspective. It is almost as if the psalms so far have been about "Here is what we as believers need to know about prayer in terms of our relationship with God." The psalms so far mainly focus on what God expects from us. Now, at this point (Psalm 22) we can talk a little about prayer from "God's perspective". This Psalm teaches us is what the "cross" costs God and teaches us about our payment for sins from His (God's) perspective.
3. I need to remind all of us of something I wrote a few lessons back about the psalms:
  - a) One can read the psalms them as being about the author, which is usually King David.
  - b) One can also read the psalms as being about Jesus. Many of the psalms are "officially" designated as being prophetic about Jesus because they are quoted in the New Testament. Over and above that, one can see "signs" of Jesus all over the psalms.
  - c) Finally and most important, one can and should study the psalms as to how they affect our own life. If one cannot see how the bible applies to one's life, it should not be studied.
  - d) With that said, it is hard to ignore the "Jesus aspect" of Psalm 22. Studying the psalm, one can see that it ties heavily to the events of the cross. It is almost as if the psalm is crying out, "Study me as being prophetic about Jesus." That fact will be a heavy emphasis for this psalm. At the same time, I still want to discuss in this lesson how to personally apply this psalm to our life as that is the purpose of me writing them in the first place.
  - e) With that said, I can give my title for this psalm: "Understanding why Jesus had to die for our sins and why that was necessary for my daily relationship with God". Since this psalm focuses so heavily on the specifics of Jesus dying on the cross, we should examine just what that means to us as we live our lives making a difference for God.
  - f) It is going to be important to remember in this study to know the time when King David (who wrote this psalm) lived, and that is around 1,000 BC. My point here is that the concept of crucifixion never existed when David wrote this psalm. Crucifixion was first invented by the Persians about 500 years after David. The Romans "perfected" the idea of crucifixion in terms of maximizing the pain caused to a person dying by that method. That is important as when we read of crucifixion in this psalm, to know that David had no concept of crucifixion when he wrote it.
4. Psalm 22, Introduction: For the director of music. To the tune of "The Doe of the Morning." A psalm of David.
  - a) Like most of the psalms we have studied to date, this one was written by David and it was set to music that is now long gone.
  - b) It also has this strange reference to the "Doe of the Morning". OK, what does that mean?
    - i) Most commentators speculate it was a song of David's time era. The meaning of that term is long gone and we have no idea of its' meaning.
    - ii) A doe (a dear) is an innocent animal and it may be tied to some vision David had (or the music writer had) about the beginning of a new day. Well, since an understanding of "the cross" represents the beginning of a new lifestyle for the Christian, we can tie it to something wonderful at the start of a new day.

5. Psalm 22, Verse 1, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning?
- a) The word used here for God here is different from the word "LORD" commonly used in the psalms so far. The term "God" here is an impersonal, but respectful reference to God. The point is David felt rejected when he wrote this. Whatever David was going through when he wrote it, (or maybe he was writing prophetic of Jesus, a real possibility), the point is it is describing a time where David was "so low", he felt that God rejected Him.
  - b) Most of us can recall times in our lives when we feel that everyone, including God has abandoned us. We cry out to God in effect, "Where are you? I am going through all of "this" right now, and You (God) do not seem to care as You are allowing this happen!"
    - i) So why does God go "silent" at times? As I've stated before, it is usually God's way of testing us to see if we do trust Him. It is God's way of saying in effect, "Walk by faith and trust that I (God) am working. I am allowing you to go through "this" and you may not understand why, but He does."
    - ii) By the way, God is under no obligation to ever say why we are going through whatever we are dealing with. Sometimes He does reveal the reason if we ask Him and sometimes He does not. The point is about trusting that God has His reasons for allowing things to happen and we have to accept it.
  - c) So, what good does it do to pray when God is silent? That in effect, is what David is asking in this opening verse. We will get answers to this question through the psalm.
  - d) Meanwhile, it is time to talk about this verse as it relates to Jesus:
    - i) When Jesus was on the cross, he quoted the first sentence of Verse 1 of Psalm 22. (Reference: Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34). Despite the fact Jesus was in terrible pain and suffering, he took the time and trouble to quote the opening line of Psalm 22.
    - ii) There was a common practice of Jewish rabbi's of that time that applies here:
      - a) When a rabbi wanted his students to study a passage of the bible, he would quote one verse of that passage. The rabbi would then expect his students to go find that passage, and then study the section around it.
      - b) It is my argument that Jesus is doing the same thing here. Jesus is specifically quoting the opening verse of Psalm 22 from the cross.
      - c) He wants us to understand this psalm in connection to the events of the cross. Jesus wants us to understand that Psalm 22 is prophetic about the events of the cross itself.
    - iii) I will argue in this lesson that Psalm 22 is written as if Jesus himself wrote that psalm from the cross! Remember that this was written about 1,000 years before the time of Jesus and roughly 500 years before crucifixion was invented.
  - e) One of the most important aspects to understand about the cross is the idea of separation.
    - i) The true pain of the cross was not just the physical pain, but also the pain of Jesus being separated from God the Father.
    - ii) Remember that Jesus always existed. This is why John the Gospel writer tries to get across in the first few verses of the Gospel of John.
    - iii) Because Jesus always existed, the only time when Jesus was not "connected" to God the Father was the three-hour time span on the cross! Why? Because that is when God the Father had to turn his back (so to speak) on Jesus. Jesus and God the Father were "separated" for the time span when He hung on the cross!
      - a) The prophet Habakkuk has an interesting comment about God the Father and the concept of sin. "Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong. " (Habakkuk 1:13a)
    - iv) What does that have to do with you and me? Among many other things, it teaches us that "times of separation" between God and ourselves is a time when God the Father is testing us to see if we are still willing to walk by faith.

- f) This leads us back to Verse 1.
  - i) The point of Verse 1 is that it reads like Jesus is crying out to God the Father.
  - ii) You can read Verse 1 from the standpoint of Jesus feeling the separation from God the Father for the first and only time in history. Thus he cries out in that pain.
  - iii) I believe that the pain of separation hurt far worse than the physical pain of the suffering of the cross. As the old saying goes, it wasn't the nails that held Jesus to the cross, but the love for you and me!
- 6. Verse 2: O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, and am not silent.
  - a) First, let's look at this from David's perspective. David could have been going through some specific problem where he claims he was crying out to God during the day and during the night, but David never got an answer as to why he was suffering.
    - i) OK, so what? So David didn't feel like God was responding to his problems. What do I do when I feel like God is ignoring me? For starters don't give up. Just because God is silent "now", never (I've learned this) means it is permanent. It just means that God wants us to learn something from His silence at this time.
  - b) Now let us go back to Jesus. The time span Jesus hung on the cross was all in daytime. From the Gospel accounts of the day of crucifixion, you can tell that the time of the cross was all during daylight hours. Here is what Matthew wrote about Jesus on the cross:
    - i) "From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land." (Mathew 27:45 NIV) The "sixth to ninth hour" means noon to 3pm.
      - a) Therefore, the 3-hour time span is both "day" (daytime) and "night" as Matthew 27:45 says, "darkness came over the whole land".
      - b) By the way, we know this was not a solar eclipse. To have such an eclipse, one needs to have a "new moon". The Jewish holiday of Passover, which is the night before Jesus was crucified always comes right after a full moon.
  - c) Now let's read Verse 2 of Psalm 22 again: O my God, I cry out by **day**, but you do not answer, by **night**, and am not silent. (Psalm 22:2 NIV)
    - i) Isn't it an interesting coincidence that Verse 2 of Psalm 22 mentions "day and night" in the same sentence? Initially it sounds like David is saying that all day and all night he was crying out to God? Reading it in context of the Cross, it is can be referring to "day and night" in the same 3-hour time span.
  - d) The verse also mentions David (or Jesus) "crying out" to the Father in Verse 2.
    - i) Again, we can be reading of Jesus' pain of separation from God the Father.
    - ii) The verse mentions God the Father's silence as He must "turn his back" on sin, as understood based on Habakkuk 1:13.
- 7. Verse 3: Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the praise of Israel. <sup>4</sup> In you our fathers put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them. <sup>5</sup> They cried to you and were saved; in you they trusted and were not disappointed.
  - a) This verse, along with the next several verses, remind us that God keeps His promises.
  - b) So why does David, (and Jesus prophetically) cry out in these verses? To answer that one needs to contemplate why God goes silent at times:
    - i) In other words, what do we do when God is silent? The best answer is to remind ourselves of God's unconditional promises to us of salvation and of peace.
    - ii) God promises us eternal life. As long as you are putting your trust in Jesus, there is nothing you can do to change that fact. What is eternity in comparison to your time on earth? What is pain in comparison to the joy of eternity?
    - iii) I am by no way condoning suicide, nor am I saying that your pain is not "real" or significant. My point is the times of pain cause us to have doubts about our faith. God allows suffering in our life in order to test our faith. It is as if God is saying to us during those times, "Do you trust me? Do you really trust me?"

- c) This does lead us back to this set of verses. Notice that the despair and pain of Verses 1 and 2 cause the writer of the Psalm to focus on the promises of God in Verses 3-5.
  - i) It is as if the writer is saying, "God, in past times, those who trusted in you were saved despite the pain they have gone through. I am trusting in those same promises right now, even though I don't know what is going to happen to me."
  - ii) I take the view that Jesus thought those thoughts at this moment.
    - a) Therefore, Jesus "comforted Himself" by remembering God's promises.
- 8. Verse 6: But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people.
  - a) This may be my favorite verse in Psalm 22. It is wonderful once you study the meaning of the word "worm" here in Verse 6. The Hebrew word for worm is "to-laf".
    - i) A "tolaf" is a red worm. In fact red-dye was made from the tolaf worm.
    - ii) The key is how these worms die. They cling to the side of tree. Then they have babies and then they die. The babies live by feeding off the dead parent's body.
    - iii) That's a great word picture. What did Jesus say we are to do with His dead body that also hung from a tree? "Take and eat; this is my body." (Matthew 26:26 NIV)
      - a) Those baby worms are living off the body and blood of the dead worm that is hanging on a tree!
    - iv) When the worm dies, it becomes white like snowflakes.
      - a) Remember what Isaiah said about our sins: "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet (red in color like the living tolaf worm), they shall be as white as snow (as when this worm turns white after it dies); though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool." (Isaiah 1:18 NIV, text in parenthesis is added.)
    - v) That tiny, little tolaf worm is a wonderful picture of what Jesus did on the cross!
  - b) As to the rest of Verse 6, "scorned by men and despised by the people", it is pretty self-explanatory. It deals with the fact that Jesus was rejected by most of Israel.
    - i) I suspect that if Jesus used his power to overthrow Rome, the majority of Jews of that day would have accepted him as the Messiah. The problem is if that happened, Jesus could not have died for the sins of the world.
    - ii) Ask most people if they are going to heaven, they will say yes because they are a good person. I'm convinced that is Satan's greatest lie. They are not interested in God dying for their sins. A perfect God demands perfection for us to spend eternity with Him. A perfect "substitute" is needed to pay the price for our sins.
    - iii) The problem of course is that most people want to prove their worth to God.
- 9. Verse 7: All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: <sup>8</sup> "He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him."
  - a) It is possible these verses are describing one of David's moments as being rejected by the people. The problem with these verses being about David is that he always had some supporters even when he was rejected. Therefore, the verses may be describing his internal feelings that everyone is rejecting David, even though it was not actually true.
    - i) Which leads to "us": Most people go through periods of time when it feels like everyone is rejecting them. It may not be true, but it feels that way. Since David does not sense God at this moment, that just makes it worse. The point is God still wants us to trust Him, even when it feels like He and all people are rejecting us.
  - b) Getting back to Jesus, these verses are direct predictions of events that happened at the time the cross. These verses speak of the rejection of Jesus by the Jewish people.
    - i) When Jesus was dying at the cross, there were bystanders hurling insults at him.
    - ii) It is as if rejection "wasn't enough". There had to be people hurling insults. Remember that the expectations of the Messiah were one who was going to overthrow Rome. When Jesus "didn't accomplish that", there was anger at Him.

10. Verse 9: Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you even at my mother's breast. <sup>10</sup> From birth I was cast upon you; from my mother's womb you have been my God.
  - a) What should one do when one feels rejected by God and by people? Start by recalling how God has worked in our lives in the past. (That is one reason why the previous psalms were given prior to this one, as it teaches us to focus on when God "did" work.)
    - i) When we don't feel God working, remember that God has worked in our lives and His silence does not mean that He is gone, but just that this is a time of testing.
  - b) Meanwhile, back to the psalm speaking of Jesus: Just because the Jewish people rejected Jesus, doesn't mean he's not the Messiah. Normally a person is only a king or a leader if the people accept him. Jesus is divinely appointed, whether people accept Him or not.
    - i) God the Father gives Jesus all authority. We can't overrule that. ☺
      - a) "Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." (Matthew 28:18 NIV) Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son. (John 5:22 NIV.)
  - c) On a different note, you can read these verses as Jesus reminding himself what is important. The pain of the cross is one of separation from God the Father.
    - i) When we feel totally rejected, reminding ourselves of when God has worked in our lives can give us comfort through the worst of times. That is the idea here.
11. Verse 11: Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.
  - a) The more I read this psalm, the more I am convinced that the pain of separation is greater than all the physical pain Jesus had received.
  - b) This is a cry of helplessness. All of Jesus power was taken away during the time on the Cross. Don't get me wrong, Jesus understood His mission and was certain of his resurrection. Still, there are times when we can feel totally helpless even when we know we will be rescued or resurrected. All we can do during such times is cry out to God.
  - c) The verse mentions, "trouble is near". I believe the trouble refers to the "bulls and lions" of the next two verses, which I'll discuss next.
12. Verse 12: Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me.
  - a) I have been told that if you alone in a bull ring with a bunch of bulls, they will form a circle and surround you. They will keep circling, looking for a reason to attack. Think about that word-picture and reread Verse 12. The idea is that in the time of desperation there are still one's enemies out there who are looking for an excuse to attack you.
  - b) Many commentators see this reference to demonic influences at the foot of the cross.
    - i) At the time David wrote this psalm, bulls were used as sacrifices to pagan gods by the local Canaanites. (The Canaanites are the original inhabitants of the land of Israel and some still lived in the area even to the time David was king.)
    - ii) So if that is true, why were demonic forces at the cross? What did they want?
    - iii) Remember that the fundamental purpose of Satan is to stop, prevent, and slow-down God's plan of redemption.
    - iv) Remember when Satan tempted Jesus? (See Matthew 4 or Luke 4.) An overriding theme of the temptations was to get Jesus to take a short cut. It is as if Satan was saying, "You don't have to go to the cross, just showoff your power and everyone will believe you". The problem with that idea is that it avoids God-The-Father's will for Jesus. That "plan" by Satan avoids the price to be paid for sin.
    - v) This leads us back to the events of the cross. There were people at the foot of the cross hurling insults at Him. The cry of these insults were, "Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." (Mark 15:32.) It is the same demonic concept that Satan tried earlier. It is the idea of tempting Jesus to avoid the pain of the cross and show off his power.
      - a) That is why I believe there were demonic forces working through people hurling insults at Jesus at this moment. That ties to this "bull" reference.

13. Verse 13: Roaring lions tearing their prey open their mouths wide against me.
- a) OK John, if the bulls represent demons, who do the lions represent? ☺
    - i) A clue to this word-picture is to think of the nickname for lions: "King of the beasts". Lions are associated with kings. Lion statues are common by thrones.
      - a) With that in mind, I believe this verse ties to the Roman soldiers and the Roman government authority in the rejection of Jesus.
    - ii) The Cross wasn't just a "Jewish" rejection, but also that of the Roman authorities.
      - a) The Roman authorities, from Pontius Pilate on downward, agreed to the crucifixion. One of the lessons for us to learn from Pilate is that neutrality is not allowed about Jesus. One is either be for Him or against Him.
  - b) There is a difficult concept to grasp here of personal responsibility mixed with the idea that God knows all things. God the Father knew in advance that the Jewish nation along with the Roman leadership would reject Jesus. Yet, despite that knowledge in advance, both groups (and all of us) are still accountable for their and our actions.
    - i) It is something from a human perspective that cannot be reconciled.
  - c) Getting back to the verse, the point is David is writing about the feeling of complete rejection. It would be like us thinking that everyone we know has rejected us.
14. Verse 14: I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. <sup>15</sup> My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death.
- a) The phrase "poured out like water" is a word picture of rejection. It means to be discarded like a half-empty glass of water that no one wants to finish.
  - b) Much of these two verses focus on a physical description of the pain of the cross.
    - i) Part of the physical pain is when one hangs on the cross, the body weight causes the bones to go out of joint. Remember again that David wrote this psalm hundreds of years before crucifixion was ever invented!
    - ii) Verse 15 mentions his strength drying up from the pain. The actual death of crucifixion usually comes from suffocation. The pain of hanging on a cross makes it difficult to take a breath. It also causes dehydration. Verse 15 is in effect describing that dehydration.
  - c) Verse 14 also mentions "my heart has turned to wax".
    - i) This is not a literal reference, but a word picture. The next phrase emphasizes that fact as it says, "it (my heart)" has melted away within me".
    - ii) One of the interesting events of the Cross was that Pilate ordered all the prisoners dying on crosses to have their legs broken to hasten their death. (See John 19:31). On the cross, one has to pull themselves up on the foot-nails in order to take a breadth. To break their legs would hasten the death.
  - d) Now let me pause and read from the Gospel of John, Verse 33 and 34: "But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water." (John 19:33-34, NIV).
    - i) Isn't it interesting the soldier disobeyed a direct commandment of his superior officer? The soldier could have broken Jesus' legs even though he was dead just to obey the command. John states in Verse 36 that the reasons the bones were left unbroken is to fulfill prophecy (That prophecy has to do with the Passover lamb. Ref.: Exodus 12:46, which I'll discuss later in this lesson.)
    - ii) This does lead us back to Verse 14: The verse says, "My heart turns to wax".
      - a) The soldier threw a spear into Jesus side, and blood and water flowed out. I've heard a doctor's description of crucifixion in that Jesus died of internal bleeding. In a sense, "Jesus died of a broken heart". Thus the word-picture of the Psalm, "my heart turns to wax (melted)."

15. Verse 16: Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet.
- a) OK, we're back to the animal kingdom. ☺ We've had bears and lions, and now we have dogs. If these are not literal dogs, who do the "dog's" represent?
  - b) In Hebrew, the word for dog and the word for a gentile (i.e., a non-Jew) is the same root word. It is not just a gentile, but essentially a person doesn't believe in God.
  - c) Some believe it refers to the Roman soldiers who actually drove in the nails and gambled for Jesus' clothes. That would connect the first part of this verse with the second part.
  - d) Notice the last part of Verse 16 says, "They have pierced my hands and my feet". Even if you think some of the references in this psalm are a stretch of the imagination to be compared to the cross, you have to admit this phrase is impressive.
    - i) Remember that the original concept of crucifixion was invented around 600 BC by the Phoenicians. When they did it, they just impaled someone on a pole.
    - ii) The idea of nailing one's hands and feet to wood was invented by the Romans. David penned this Psalm around 1,000 BC. Even if you don't trust that date, it is common knowledge that the entire Old Testament was translated into Greek 150-200BC. When that translation was made, the concept of crucifixion was unheard of. Yet David specifically wrote, "they have pierced my hands and my feet."
  - e) So if David had no idea what the crucifixion was, other than prophecy, what was David thinking when he wrote this? Maybe the idea of being rejected was so painful to Him, that it was like the feeling of not being able to move one's hands or feet.
  - f) On another note, there is an official Jewish encyclopedia's that denies the Hebrew word that is translated "pierced" actually means pierced. (One can see why they would want to deny that meaning.) There have been very good Christian scholars of the ancient Hebrew language that have done the research to prove that "pierced" is the correct translation.
16. Verse 17: I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me.
- a) If you read through all of the New Testament, you never read of a physical description of Jesus. You don't know if He was tall or short. You don't know if He was thin or heavy.
    - i) This verse is not talking about the fact that Jesus was so skinny, one could count all of His bones. Our Lord and Savior was not anorexic. ☺
  - b) Reading this in context of the New Testament, I don't believe this is Jesus' seeing all of His bones. I believe it refers again, to the fact that none of Jesus bones were broken. That is why the text says, "I can count all of my bones". I discussed earlier how the Roman soldier did not break Jesus' legs despite the command of his superior officers.
    - i) To quote the Gospel of John again, "These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken," (John 19:36 NIV)
    - ii) John is referring to a Jewish Passover requirement that no bones be broken on the sacrificial lambs. I believe the fact that the psalm is saying "I can count all of my bones" refers to the fact that none of His bones were broken.
  - c) This verse is combined with the final phrase of, "People stare and gloat over me".
    - i) The "Cross" was a combination of physical suffering and human rejection. The pain Jesus' felt was a combination of all the physical torture of being on the cross and at the same time, being rejected and gloated over by bystanders.
    - ii) Think about this verse in light of what people were saying about Jesus at the cross:
      - a) "In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him." (Matthew 27:41-42 NIV)
      - b) The fulfilled prophecy is the New Testament word "mock" which is similar to the word "gloat" as found here in Psalm 22.

17. Verse 18: They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.
- a) For those who still have doubts that Psalm 22 is David predicting the events of the Cross, Verse 18 should be my closing argument. ☺
    - i) When you read through the Gospels, you discover that the soldiers gambled ("cast lots") for Jesus' clothing at the cross. The Roman soldiers were paid for their crucifixion assistance by receiving whatever the condemned person owned.
    - ii) That fact is mentioned in John's Gospel (19:24) and John quotes this fact of the soldiers gambling for Jesus' clothing as being a fulfillment of the prediction about the death of Jesus as stated here in Psalm 22.
    - iii) Since I'm discussing John 19:24, let me quote it: "Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it." This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled which said, "They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing." So this is what the soldiers did. (John 19:24 NIV)
      - a) Again the "scripture to be fulfilled" is Verse 18 of Psalm 22.
      - b) John claims that Verse 18 is prophetic of Jesus.
      - c) So you see, it's not just me claiming Psalm 22 is about Jesus. ☺
18. Verse 19: But you, O LORD, be not far off; O my Strength, come quickly to help me.
- a) The psalm changes tone in Verse 19. Verse 17-18 focuses on the people "around" the cross. Those verses focus on the "mockers" and those gambling for his clothes.
  - b) In Verse 19 we are back to Jesus himself. It is as if we are reading his thoughts.
    - i) Notice the focus of this verse is not "woe is me", but the focus is on "Lord help me!" That is a good lesson for us to learn during the difficult times. There is nothing wrong with crying out to the Lord to rescue you in difficult times.
  - c) What impresses me about this verse is David refers to God as His strength. We forget easily that our strength to accomplish anything comes from God.
    - i) This does not mean we can ignore sleep, eat all junk food and say, "Well, God is my strength, I can do anything through Him!" God gave each of us a body and He expects us to treat it well. It means that God can work through our human resources (i.e., our physical strength) for His glory.
    - ii) One has to remember that all we accomplish for God does not come through our human strength, but through God working in us and through us.
  - d) Notice how Jesus dealt with the physical pain and the pain of rejection:
    - i) He doesn't say, "Woe is me". He doesn't say, "mind over matter". He doesn't say, "If I just try hard enough, I can ignore the pain". He prays to God the Father to give Him the strength to handle the situation.
    - ii) That is a great model prayer for us during the difficult times: "Lord, give me the strength to handle the situation. Give me the discernment to make the right decisions through this situation. Let not the lessons of this situation be wasted."
  - e) In a sense, this prayer is answered. The prayer says, "(God) come quickly to help me".
    - i) The bible does give proof that in effect, God the Father did answer Jesus' prayer: "Pilate was surprised to hear that he (Jesus) was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died." (Mark 15:44 NIV)
    - ii) Pilate was probably an expert on crucifixion. He had sentenced enough men to be crucified that he knew how long it takes for someone to die by that method.
    - iii) Now think about the prayer of this verse that says, "Come quickly to help me". God the Father "took His life" relatively quickly as opposed to letting Jesus suffer longer. I believe that God the Father answered Jesus' prayer of "come quickly" by 1) accepting Jesus sacrifice and 2) not letting Jesus suffer "longer than necessary".
      - a) Don't get me wrong. Jesus still hung there long enough to give the Gospels validity. I'm simply arguing that God the Father did not let Jesus suffer longer than what was necessary. It was an answer to prayer.



19. Verse 20: Deliver my life from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs.<sup>21</sup> Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen.
- a) Verse 20 continues the prayer of Verse 19.
    - i) These two verses are full of "word-pictures" of those who condemned Jesus.
  - b) We're back to two previous references: The "dogs" and the "lions", as well as a new one, "the horns of the wild oxen". Let's review each one:
    - i) The "dogs" refer to "Gentiles, i.e., non Jews" at the cross. It most likely refers to the Roman soldiers. The "lions" is a reference to government authority. It refers to those who sentenced Jesus to death.
  - c) The new word picture reference is "The horns of the wild oxen". (The King James Version says "unicorn". It represents some sort of one horned animal.)
    - i) In the Old Testament, animal's horns are associated with power. Animals that have horns use their horns as their source of strength and power.
    - ii) This may refer to the same government leaders, using a different word-picture. It may refer to the Jewish leaders who condemn Jesus, or the Roman leaders. Either way, it refers to the leaders who condemned Him.
20. Verse 22: I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you.
- a) The tone changes in Verse 22 from "look at my suffering" to "praising God". It is saying in effect, "When things are at their worse, know that God will rescue us and that there will come a day where we can praise God for victory among our brethren." Let me explain:
    - i) Visualize Jesus thinking, "I will declare your name to my brothers, in the congregation I will praise you." Translation: Jesus will be resurrected.
    - ii) Yes, Jesus is condemned by "hanging on a tree". He is cursed with sin.
    - iii) Theologically speaking, remember that Jesus became sin at that moment.
    - iv) "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2nd Corinthians 5:21 NIV)
  - b) A point here (as it relates to us) is when everything is falling apart, we should give thanks to God who will see us through whatever we are dealing with so we can praise Him.
  - c) It is important to understand the Jewish concept that anybody who is hung from a tree is eternally condemned. (Reference: Deuteronomy 21:23) I believe one of the reasons the Jewish leadership wanted Jesus crucified (as opposed to say, being beheaded) as because crucifixion "counts" as being hung from a tree as wood is a tree-based product.
    - i) The religious leaders believed if Jesus hung from a tree, that would negate his claims of being the Messiah as you are biblically "cursed" if hung on a tree.
  - d) The Psalm declares that "I (Jesus) will declare your name to my brothers;"
    - i) So who are Jesus brothers? Jesus answered that question himself:
      - a) "He (Jesus) replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." (Matthew 12:48-50, NIV.) If we have committed our lives to serving Jesus, we too, are His brothers and sisters.
    - ii) The interesting part about this Psalm is that it does not say, I "did" declare your name, but I "will" declare your name. That is why I believe it ties to the resurrected Jesus in heaven declaring, "who are His brothers" on judgment day.
21. Verse 23: You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honor him! Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!
- a) Let me talk about the Holy Spirit for a moment. A role of the Holy Spirit is to get our focus upon God the Father and Jesus. In this context, it is almost as if The Holy Spirit is a "church choir director" saying, "Don't sing about me, I'm just here trying to lead the choir to sing about God". In that context, you can read Verse 23 as if it is the Holy Spirit asking for praise for what Jesus did on the cross!

- b) This verse specifically focuses on the nation of Israel.
    - i) Here is Jesus being crucified. The verse is saying to the Jewish nation in a sense, "You know, despite what you did, it is not too late to repent." Salvation is offered to the Jewish nation first and then to all non-Jewish people. (See Romans 1:16) As long as one is living in this world, it is never too later to turn one's heart to Jesus.
  - c) Back to the Psalm itself, I want you to notice the progression:
    - i) First we had a number of verses focusing on the individual pain of the cross.
    - ii) Then we had some verses focusing on those who mocked Him at the cross.
    - iii) Then we had a "first person" prayer asking God The Father to rescue Him.
    - iv) Now we have a "group prayer". It is almost as if Jesus is saying, "Hey, I've let go of My pain. I've praised God the Father, and now I want everyone to join Me (Jesus) in praising God the Father."
    - v) A point for us is often we do our best witnessing for God once we've let go of our pain and anger. Once we've got the right perspective and our focus is back on God, then we can encourage others to join in our prayer for God.
    - vi) I'm not saying we have to wait for the perfect moment to be a witness to others. I'm saying that people watch us when we are in pain. If they can see the joy in our hearts despite the circumstances, then we become great living witnesses for God.
22. Verse 24: For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help.
- a) The perspective of Verse 24 is changing to that of God the Father.
    - i) The point of Verse 24 is that God the Father accepted Jesus sacrifice.
  - b) Notice Verse 24 uses the term "the afflicted one". One can read this verse referring to anyone who is afflicted, but reading it in context of the entire psalm, one can see how it refers to a specific person, i.e., Jesus on the cross.
  - c) A few verses back, we had Jesus praying to asking God to rescue Him in Verse 19.
    - i) This verse is an answer to that prayer. It is God the Father saying, "Yes I have heard that prayer and yes I am answering that prayer".
    - ii) There is a nice personal application as well. The bible tells us that God does hear the prayers of the afflicted. It is a reminder that during our times of suffering, God is there listening to our prayers. Take comfort in that!
      - a) "So that they caused the cry of the poor to come to Him; For He hears the cry of the afflicted." (Job 34:28 NKJV)
  - d) The next question is, "If God loves us so much, why doesn't God immediately come and rescue us out of all our pain? Tough question! ☺
    - i) First of all, if God gave us nothing but happy times and no suffering, people would become Christians not to worship God, but just to avoid pain.
    - ii) Second, there is usually a lot we learn from those tough times. Most of us have had our greatest growth during the difficult times of our life.
    - iii) All of our suffering is God-filtered for some purpose that He knows and He may or may not allow us to know. That is the idea behind Romans 8:28.
      - a) I have come to the conclusion that all suffering we go through is "God-filtered" for some divine purpose of His. That may not make the suffering any easier, but it does help me to deal with the pain of such times.
23. Verse 25: From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly; before those who fear you will I fulfill my vows.
- a) We're back to Jesus "speaking" from the cross. Let me paraphrase: "When we get to heaven, everyone will praise Jesus in gratitude for the price he paid for sins."
  - b) The last part of the verse says, "I fulfill my vows". Remember that Jesus understood that he was to be crucified. He stated so many times in the Gospels. The "vow" was Jesus agreed to pay the price for sins and God the Father accepted that payment.

- c) The first part of this verse says, "From you comes the theme of my praise".
    - i) The "you" refers to God the Father. It was "His idea" for Jesus to pay the price. The "theme" is the whole idea of the plan to have Jesus die for our sins.
  - d) The reference to "my praise in the great assembly probably ties to Revelation Chapter 5.
    - i) That chapter in Revelation is describing a ceremony where Jesus is given the title deed to the earth. As someone with a real estate background, I like to refer to Revelation, Chapter 5 as "The close of escrow". ☺
    - ii) Revelation 5 speaks of a "great assembly" as does Verse 25 of Psalm 22. I visualize multitudes of people in heaven watching this great ceremony in Revelation 5.
      - a) In this ceremony Revelation 5:4 says, "no one was found who was worthy" other than Jesus himself. It speaks of Jesus being the only one to fully obey the law and is "worthy" to receive the title deed.
      - b) In that sense, no one is "good enough" to be in heaven based on keeping the law. Revelation 5:6 then shows Jesus being compared to a "slain lamb" who was found worthy of God the Father.
  - e) With all of that in mind, reread this verse. This Verse in Psalm 22 is talking about how Jesus will fulfill his vow (to pay the price on the cross) knowing that it is all part of God's redemptive plan for mankind.
24. Verse 26: The poor will eat and be satisfied; they who seek the LORD will praise him--may your hearts live forever!
- a) The first part of this verse says, "The poor will eat and be satisfied."
    - i) Let's tie this to something Jesus taught, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. (Matthew 5:6 NIV) With that verse in mind, I don't think Verse 26 is talking about physical hunger. I believe the "satisfaction" reference is about those who are seeking God.
    - ii) Remember that the "Cross" refers to a time of separation between God the Father and God the Son. God the Father "turned His back" on Jesus as He cannot look (figuratively speaking) upon sin. Jesus became sin at this point for our sakes.
    - iii) This verse can be read as Jesus thinking, "I am here on the cross and in all my suffering, I can focus on the fact that I will be resurrected. My sacrifice will be accepted. I will be satisfied despite my pain of the moment."
  - b) These verses of praising God are reminders that during times of suffering, we are to be "heavenly focused". It is the reminder that our rewards for service are in heaven.
    - i) Paul said, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory". (2nd Corinthians 4:17 NKJV.) Think of all the pain that Paul suffered. It is incredible that he uses the term "light affliction". This is a man who was beaten, stoned, and left for dead. Yet he refers to all of this as "light affliction". Because Paul focused on his eternal-rewards, his pain was bearable. That is the idea of the word "forever" as used in verse 26.
    - ii) In other words, the way we deal with pain is by putting that pain in perspective of the eternal time frame of being with God forever.
25. Verse 27: All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, <sup>28</sup> for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations. <sup>29</sup> All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before him--those who cannot keep themselves alive.
- a) There is some future point in time where everybody bows down to God. That is what these three verses are talking about. All people will either do it by force or by free choice.
  - b) It would help to know that Revelation 20:11 refers to a "great white throne judgment" where nonbelievers are judged. I believe that is this time where everyone bows to God.
    - i) Paul also referred to this: "It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'"" (Romans 14:11 NIV)

26. Verse 30: Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord. <sup>31</sup> They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn-- for he has done it.
- a) These two verses speak of the time frame of Jesus: "post-cross".
    - i) Prior to the cross, only some who lived in Israel at that time had heard of Him.
    - ii) "Post-Cross", His name spread worldwide. That is what these verses predict.
    - iii) It is interesting to consider how a handful of believers in Jesus spread and grew over three continents. In only a few centuries Christianity became the dominant religion of the Roman Empire.
  - b) I want to end with a discussion of the last phrase, "he has done it".
    - i) Do you remember what were Jesus' final words on the Cross?
      - a) They were, "it is finished". (See John 19:30 NIV)
    - ii) Remember that from the cross Jesus made a handful of recorded statements:
      - a) The first one was, "My God My God why have you forsaken me? (Which I discussed earlier in this lesson and is quoted in Verse 1 of this psalm.)
      - b) Again, the last statement made by Jesus was "It is finished".
      - c) Some of you are familiar with the Greek word "tetelistai", meaning "it is finished". It also means paid in full. It is like paying off a bank loan. The receipt from the bank says, "Paid in full".
    - iii) This leads us back to the last phrase of Psalm 22. In the (pre-Christian) Greek translation of Psalm 22, the last word used is "tetelistai". This translation is known as the Septuagint. (Old Testament only.) It was written between 100-200 BC.
      - a) In the English translations of the last phrase, it comes out differently, but understand that Jesus last words on the cross were "It is finished, which in the Greek is translated "tetelistai".
      - b) Both Psalm 22 and Jesus' last words on the cross both end with the idea that it is completed. The price for sins has been paid. (Pause) Done deal!
    - iv) With that in mind, think of the next psalm, which is Psalm 23.
      - a) Psalm 23 is the "Lord is My Shepherd" Psalm. It is the most famous Psalm in the bible. The emphasis is on the peace we have with God.
      - b) Psalm 22 ends with "Tetelistai". It is done. The price for sin has been paid.
      - c) Then and only then, can we have the peace of God as Psalm 23 describes.
27. OK, let's wrap this up:
- a) Psalm 22 focuses primarily on the events of the cross.
  - b) The last few verses focus on the results of the cross.
  - c) Because the price was paid on the Cross, the name of Jesus was spread around the world. Eventually every knee will bow to Jesus, either by force or by free will.
28. Let me end this with some thoughts about experiencing God's peace.
- a) We can't have the peaceful relationship between God and ourselves unless we are first willing to accept the price paid for that relationship. That is what Psalm 22 is all about.
  - b) I started this lesson by pondering, "Why wait until Psalm 22 to explain the cross? The answer is for us to contemplate what the peace of God is all about. For most of the lessons so far on the psalms, we have been focusing on our issues in order for us to experience God's peace. Now God wants us to understand, "What did it cost Him, in order for us to have that peace?" It cost Him, "His only son". To put it another way, God Himself had to experience separation from "God's peace" in order for us to have the peace of God.
  - c) Think of it this way: In order for us to have God's peace, we have to let go of what we have done wrong. In order for God to have peace with us, God needed to demonstrate what letting go of sin was all about. That is why Jesus needed to be separated from God the Father, so we could understand what that separation felt like.
  - d) To put it another way, what do you do when you are really scared? The answer is to focus on God's love for you and me.

29. Let's pray: Father, we thank you that the price for sin has been paid. Help us during our own struggles to keep that perspective. Help us to remember that everything this life has to offer doesn't compare with the riches that You have prepared for us for all of eternity. Help us to keep that focus as we show our gratitude by serving You. Guide us for Your glory. In Jesus name we pray, Amen!