

# A Plea for Deliverance

Devotional Reading: Psalm 107:23-32

Background Scripture: Psalm 22; Daniel 3

Today's Scripture: Psalm 22:1-11

## I. Petition by David

### Psalm 22:1-5

To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth  
Shahar, A Psalm of David.

**1 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?**

**2 O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; And in the night season, and am not silent.**

**3 But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.**

**4 Our fathers trusted in thee: They trusted, and thou didst deliver them.**

**5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered: They trusted in thee, and were not confounded.**

1a. David was surrounded by enemies who mocked him and were eager to see him destroyed (Psalm 22:12, 16). In light of this seemingly hopeless situation, David cried out to God. His cries were notably not directed to any random pagan god. Instead, he called on the God with whom he had a relationship: *my God*.

By using this term of intimacy, David demonstrated confidence that the God who had entered into a covenant relationship with Israel would also be faithful and present to him. But David's situation was so dire that he felt compelled to ask

*why* God seemed distant. Throughout the history of Israel, God had promised His presence with His people. The promise of God's presence anchored the hope of the psalmists (examples: Psalms 9:10; 37:28; 94:14).

While suffering on the cross, Jesus quoted this half-verse in Aramaic: "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34). In the lead-up to and during His crucifixion, Jesus was mocked, attacked, and forsaken as He was handed over to death. The suffering led Jesus to feel abandoned by His heavenly Father. By quoting this psalm as a prayer, Jesus expressed anguish regarding the rejection that He experienced on the cross.

1b. Any hope of rescue seemed *far* away. The kind of *helping* that David desired was deliverance from his enemies. All other avenues of deliverance had been exhausted; only the strength of the almighty Lord could save David.

The phrase *the words of my roaring* reflects the depths of David's despair. He was left to groan and cry out for any means of rescue. The sense of being abandoned by God led David to cry out as a last resort. His cries were like the roar of a wild animal in anguish.

2. David's cries for rescue were not a

one-time occurrence; he petitioned God *in the daytime* and *the night season* for deliverance. It is understandable for God's people to cry out to God and question whether or not He hears those petitions (examples: Psalm 42:3; Lamentations 3:8, 44). However, unlike the experience of other psalmists, it seemed to David that God *hearest not* the man's cries.

3. Although David had questioned why God seemed distant (Psalm 22:1, above), he still affirmed the unique characteristics of God. Notably, he proclaimed that God is *holy*, meaning He is totally perfect and free of any blemish of sin. There would be none other who could save God's people. God's holiness is often the foundation of worship in the psalms (examples: 29:2; 99:3, 5, 9; 145:21).

For ancient Israel, God's presence was represented by the ark of testimony. He would reveal His presence "from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony" (Exodus 25:22). However, in the verse before us, God's presence is in the midst of His people as He *inhabitest the praises of Israel*. Even in distress, David could worship God—the only one who is holy, faithful, and present in the midst of suffering.

4-5. The history of God's work with His people gave David confidence in God's faithfulness. Such reflection anchored David's worship and provided encouragement regarding God's active and all-powerful presence. Other psalmists shared this view (examples: Psalms 78:53; 107:6).

Perhaps David was reflecting on the exodus from Egypt. While enslaved in Egypt, the people *trusted* God's promises to their ancestors—promises of blessing, descendants, and land (Genesis 15:14-18; 17:4-8; 26:2-6, 24; 28:13-15; 46:2-4). Trusting these promises and God's faithfulness, the people cried out that

God would bring freedom from their enslavement (Exodus 2:23-24). God saw the people in their suffering, took pity on them (2:25), and *delivered* them from their oppression (12:31-42).

The word *confounded* typically means to be confused or perplexed. However, that is not its meaning in this verse. The underlying Hebrew word is translated elsewhere as "ashamed" (Psalms 25:2; 31:1; etc.), and that is the sense here. Those who hope in the Lord and trust His promises have hope that He will someday remove shame once and for all.

The three uses in these verses of a form of the word *trust* reveal the tension between trust and suffering. Feelings of sadness, anger, and fear are often associated with grief—such are normal human emotions. However, in those moments, we can also trust that God is present and with us and will be faithful to us. Such tension reveals a "both-and" situation: we can *both* cry out in our suffering *and* trust that God will provide comfort.

## II. Insult from Enemies

### Psalm 22:6-8

**6 But I am a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised of the people.**

**7 All they that see me laugh me to scorn: They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,**

**8 He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: Let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.**

6. Worms are associated with destruction, death, and decay (examples: Deuteronomy 28:39; Job 21:26; Isaiah 51:8). David's self-identification as *a worm* and not a *man* reveals the extent of his negative self-assessment. His enemies had treated him as though he was worthless and on the verge of death. He began to

believe that their threats and vile hopes would come true.

7. Although God seemed silent, David's enemies were not. They took advantage of David's situation to make a spectacle of his suffering. They ridiculed David and heaped *scorn* and insult on him because he trusted God. Mockery and insult led them to *shake* their heads out of disdain and disgust.

8. This verse reveals that David's enemies quoted his prayers back to him. However, they did so with a harsh and sarcastic tone. The confidence of David's enemies is displayed as they sarcastically invited God to *deliver* David. They refused to believe that God would miraculously intervene for the good of David. To the suffering psalmist, their mocking words seemed to have a kernel of truth; their sarcastic invitation likely reinforced the psalmist's doubts and lament.

God's people often face scorn and ridicule from the unrighteous. Even Jesus faced ridicule (Matthew 27:39) and sarcastic incitements (27:43) while suffering, adopting Psalm 22:1 as His own in the process (Matthew 27:46). In those moments of testing, we can trust that God will be faithful to us, even amid ridicule and mockery. This trust is our hope as believers.

### III. Presence of God Psalm 22:9-11

**9 But thou art he that took me out of the womb: Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.**

**10 I was cast upon thee from the womb: Thou art my God from my mother's belly.**

**11 Be not far from me; for trouble is near; For there is none to help.**

9-10. David's delight in the Lord came from the ways that God had provided for

him—a provision that began while David was still in his mother's *womb*. While "covered" in his mother's womb, he was "fearfully and wonderfully made" by a caring God (Psalm 139:13-14). God's care continued after David was born and received his mother's love, care, and provision. God's care for His servant was on display from that man's conception to his birth and childhood.

By reflecting on God's provision during his conception, birth, and upbringing, David demonstrated the reason for his *hope*. A form of the underlying Hebrew word translated *hope* is also translated as "trusted" elsewhere in this passage (Psalm 22:4-5), and that is the sense in the verse before us. David's trust in God was not based simply on any good feelings that David felt. Instead, David's confidence came from the certainty he had because of God's previous demonstrations of provision (see Isaiah 46:3-4). Although David experienced suffering and felt doubt, he demonstrated trust that God would provide, leading the psalmist to proclaim in worship: *thou art my God*.

11. David's petition *be not far from me* is repeated later in the psalm (Psalm 22:19). The petition to God reflects David's deep need for urgent deliverance from his enemies and his situation. The psalmists frequently petitioned for the nearness of God's presence when they faced trials and suffering (examples: 35:22; 38:21; 71:12). They knew that God is always-present (omnipresent; example: 139:7-12). Surrounded by trouble, the psalmists desired to experience God's presence through their deliverance from suffering.

The sort of presence that David desired was an act of deliverance from the *trouble* brought on by his enemies. David sought the *help* that *none* other could provide, a deliverance that only God could give.

# Involvement Learning

## A Plea for Deliverance

### Into the Lesson

Who do you call on when you experience a crisis?

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How do you want that person to respond when you call on him or her?

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### Into the Word

Read Psalm 22:1-11. What possible situation might have prompted David to pen this psalm?

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What feelings of David does this psalm communicate?

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What true things did his feelings reveal?

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What thoughts of David does this psalm communicate?

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What true things did his knowledge reveal?

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What possible tensions could arise between how David felt and what he knew?

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How could those tensions exist simultaneously?

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### Key Verse

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me, and from the words of my roaring?  
—Psalm 22:1

### Into Life

What is a struggle in your life or a personal trial that feels hopeless?

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What evidence can you recall of God's faithfulness to you?

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Write a prayer for God's help or rescue.

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### Thought to Remember

Cry out to God!