

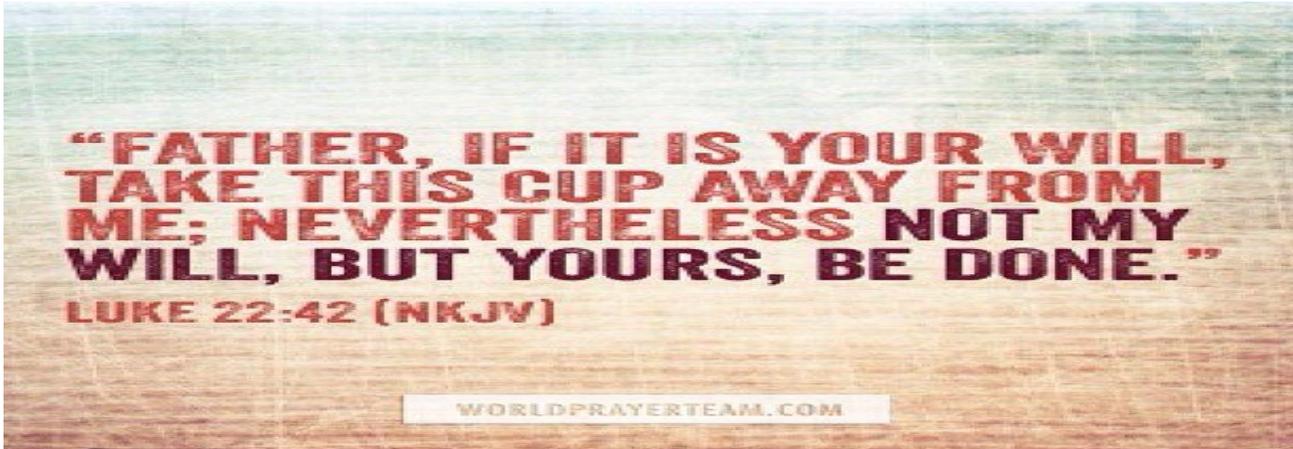
**Pray the Bible: When God does not give us what we pray for Psalm 22:1-2 FBC**

Canton Sunday am February 22, 2026

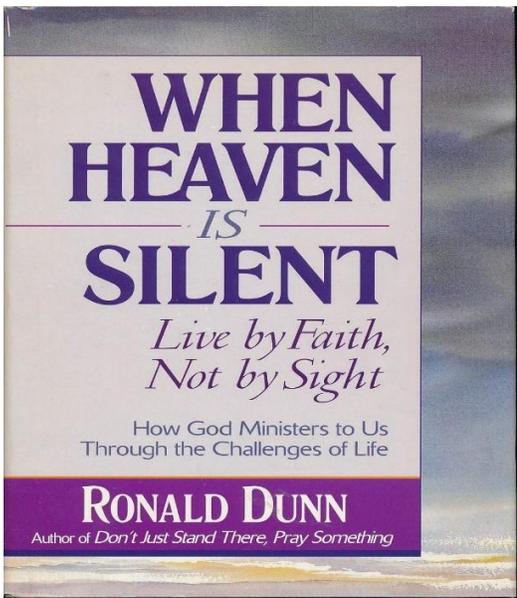
**Introduction: Why is asked 430x in the Bible.**

*Your toddler will triple that total in 1 day.*

**We ask why when we don't get what we requested. Luke 22:42**



Jesus did not get his why answered because he was unrighteous. Not because he was being punished, not because he had done something wrong or needed a character test.



**Why do we need to ask why? Because:**

- 1. The orderliness of our lives is disturbed.**
- 2. We think we can control the outcomes.**
- 3. We want to prevent repetition of tragedy.**
  - a. For ourselves.
  - b. For others.

## WHEN HEAVEN IS SILENT

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Could it be that our own urgency to know why arises from the fear that the same thing could happen to us? I have a feeling that often when we pray for another's healing, we are really praying for our own. It's like sending a scout ahead of the main party to see if the natives are friendly. We're testing the waters. If God heals this one, it's possible He will do the same for us. It sustains a desperate hope that we can postpone the inevitable. Our own life is riding on that prayer.

Perhaps this was what those friends of Job thought. Warren Wiersbe tells us that Job's plight was a threat to his friends. "His experience challenged the validity of their cut-and-dried theology. . . . This meant that what happened to Job *could happen to them!* They were not really interested in Job as a hurting person. Their major concern was in Job as a problem to be removed, not as a person to be encouraged."<sup>7</sup>

People like Job are an embarrassment. Their unrelieved suffering throws a wrench into our theological machine and forces us to invent excuses for failure and exceptions to the rule. And we are an inventive bunch.

Then, we may ask why because *we seek absolution* from guilt. Guilt is the inevitable consequence of grief. And nothing is as irrational as guilt born of grief. Somehow in the sorrow-soaked thought process we see ourselves as partly or wholly to blame for whatever happened. We

**4. We want absolution from guilt.**

**5. We seek moral equalization.**

a. We assume a moral injustice has been done.

i. Why me? In bad situations, but not 'why me' in good?

**6. We want God to explain what he has allowed or directed in our lives.**

**7. We cannot live with mystery.**

a. We don't want to think our way through=laziness.

b. We don't want any inconvenience=consumer driven culture.

## I. We are asking the wrong question. 22:1-2

Jesus already knew the answer to why God had forsaken him on the cross.

He knew he had come to die for our sins.

He knew the pain would be excruciating.

He knew God would have to turn his back on him in those 3 hours in order for believers to never have God turn his back to them ever again!

*This shows that knowing why will not take the pain away!*

### a. Not why but, what now?

#### i. Implies that we know God sees us and has a good plan for us.

**Job 42:10**

And the LORD restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.

**Job 42:10**

DailyVerses.net

#### ii. What did God answer Jesus for his suffering? V. 21b

##### 1. Redemption for others: great assembly of the brothers. V. 22-27

a. Declare His name in the great assembly of the brothers.

##### 2. Kingdom inheritance. V. 28-29

a. The kingdom is the Lord's. Daniel 2: 36-44

i. Over all nations.

<sup>36</sup> "This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. <sup>37</sup> You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; <sup>38</sup> and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given *them* into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all—you are this head of gold. <sup>39</sup> But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. <sup>40</sup> And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, *that kingdom* will break in pieces and crush all the others. <sup>41</sup> Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic

clay. <sup>42</sup> And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly [m]fragile. <sup>43</sup> As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay. <sup>44</sup> And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall [n]break in pieces and [o]consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. <sup>45</sup> Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold—the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.”



### 3. Next generation ministry. V. 30-31

b. Not: why do the righteous suffer? But, why do the righteous serve God? Job 2

Satan and God agree: serving God for the benefits is worthless.

**Conclusion: Why do you serve God? Because of the benefits? Or because He is worthy?**

As John Newton once wrote, “The hour is coming when we shall be astonished to think what mere trifles were once capable of discouraging us.” Those heartaches that once loomed so large will shrink to shadows in the blaze of His glory. So, lift your eyes, weary pilgrim. The story isn’t over. The Author hasn’t faltered. He’s weaving beauty from ashes, joy from sorrow, life from death. Trust Him. Worship Him. Wait for Him. And when at last we stand before the throne — when we see the masterpiece complete, every wound redeemed, every loss outweighed by glory — we will fall on our faces and cry with one voice: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” (Revelation 5:12).

John Newton (/ˈnjuːtən/; 4 August [O.S. 24 July] 1725 – 21 December 1807) was an English evangelical Anglican cleric and slavery abolitionist. He had previously been a captain of slave ships and an investor in the slave trade. He served as a sailor in the Royal Navy (after forced recruitment) and was himself enslaved for a time in West Africa. He is noted for being author of the hymns "Amazing Grace" and "Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken".

Newton went to sea at a young age and worked on slave ships in the Atlantic slave trade for several years. In 1745, he himself became a slave of Princess Peye, a woman of the Sherbro people in what is now Sierra Leone.<sup>[2]</sup> He was rescued, returned to sea and the trade, and captained several slave ships. After retiring from active sea-faring, he continued to invest in the slave trade. Some years after experiencing a conversion to Christianity during his rescue, Newton renounced his trade and became a prominent supporter of abolitionism. Now an evangelical, he was ordained as a Church of England cleric and served as parish priest at Olney, Buckinghamshire, for two decades and wrote hymns.

Newton lived to see the British Empire's abolition of the African slave trade in 1807, just months before his death.

## David Guzik

# Study Guide for Psalm 22

### THE SERVANT OF GOD FORSAKEN, RESCUED, AND TRIUMPHANT

*This is another psalm with a title: **To the Chief Musician. Set to "The Deer of the Dawn." A Psalm of David.** We can say that this is a Psalm sung to the Greatest Musician, to an unknown tune, by the Sweet Psalmist of Israel (2 Samuel 23:1). Here, David sings as more than an artist, but also as one of the greatest prophets ever to speak, pointing more to his Greater Son, Jesus the Messiah, than even to himself.*

*"This is a kind of gem among the Psalms, and is peculiarly excellent and remarkable. It contains those deep, sublime, and heavy sufferings of Christ, when agonizing in the midst of the terrors and pangs of divine wrath and death which surpass all human thought and comprehension." (Martin Luther, cited in Charles Spurgeon)*

#### A. The agony of the Forsaken One.

##### 1. (**Psalm 22:1-2**) The cry of the forsaken.

**My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?**

**Why are You so far from helping Me,**

**And from the words of My groaning?**

**O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear;**

**And in the night season, and am not silent.**

- My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me:** This psalm begins abruptly, with a disturbing scene: someone who knows and trusts God is **forsaken**, and cries out to God in agony.

- i. This is a [Psalm of David](#), and there were many instances in the life of David where he might write such an agonized poem. Before and after taking the throne of Israel, David lived in seasons of great danger and deprivation.
- ii. While this psalm was certainly true of King David in his life experience, it — like many psalms — is even truer of Jesus the Messiah than of David. Jesus deliberately chose these words to describe His agony on the cross ([Matthew 27:46](#)).
- iii. “We can be fairly certain that Jesus was meditating on the Old Testament during the hours of his suffering and that he saw his crucifixion as a fulfillment of [Psalm 22](#) particularly.” (Boice)
- iv. “I doubt not that David, though he had an eye to his own condition in diverse passages here used, yet was carried forth by the Spirit of prophecy beyond himself, and unto Christ, to whom alone it truly and fully agrees.” (Poole)

b. **My God, My God**: This opening is powerful on at least two levels. The cry “**My God**” shows that the Forsaken One truly did have a relationship with God. He was a victim of the cruelty of men, but the cry and the complaint is to **God** — even **My God** — and not to or against man. Second, the repetition of the plea shows the intensity of the agony.

- i. “Then it was that he felt in soul and body the horror of God’s displeasure against sin, for which he had undertaken.” (Trapp)

c. **Why have You forsaken Me?** There is a note of [surprise](#) in this cry and in the following lines. The Forsaken One seems bewildered; “Why would My God forsake Me? Others may deserve such, but I cannot figure out why He would forsake Me.”

- i. We may easily imagine a situation in the life of King David where he experienced this. Many times he found himself in seemingly impossible circumstances and wondered why God did not rescue him immediately.
- ii. Yet beyond David and his life, this agonized cry and the intentional identification of Jesus with these words are some of the most intense and mysterious descriptions of what Jesus experienced on the cross. Jesus had known great pain and suffering (both physical and emotional) during His life. Yet He had never known separation or alienation from God His Father. At this moment He experienced what He had not yet ever experienced. There was a significant sense in which Jesus rightly felt **forsaken** by God the Father on the cross.
- iii. On the cross, a holy transaction took place. God the Father regarded God the Son as if He were a sinner. As the Apostle Paul would later write, [God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.](#) ([2 Corinthians 5:21](#))
- iv. Yet Jesus not only endured the [withdrawal](#) of the Father’s fellowship, but also the actual outpouring of the Father’s [wrath](#) upon Him as a substitute for sinful humanity. “This was the

blackness and darkness of his horror; then it was that he penetrated the depths of the caverns of suffering.” (Spurgeon)

v. “To be forsaken means to have the light of God’s countenance and the sense of his presence eclipsed, which is what happened to Jesus as he bore the wrath of God against sin for us.” (Boice)

vi. “It was necessary that he should feel the loss of his Father’s smile, — for the condemned in hell must have tasted of that bitterness — and therefore the Father closed the eye of his love, put the hand of justice before the smile of his face, and left his Son to cry, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’” (Spurgeon)

vii. Horrible as this was, it fulfilled God’s good and loving plan of redemption. Therefore Isaiah could say *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him* ([Isaiah 53:10](#)).

viii. At the same time, we cannot say that the separation between the Father and the Son at the cross was complete. Paul made this clear in [2 Corinthians 5:19](#): *God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself* at the cross.

d. **Why have You forsaken Me?** There is a definite *question* in these words of David, and as Jesus appropriated them to Himself on the cross. What Jesus endured on the cross was so complex, so dark, and so mysterious that it was, at the moment, beyond emotional comprehension.

i. Spurgeon considered this question with an emphasis on the word **You**. “*‘Thou.’* I can understand why traitorous Judas and timid Peter should be gone, but *‘thou,’* my God, my faithful friend, how canst thou leave me? This is worst of all, yea worse than all put together. Hell itself has for its fiercest flame the separation of the soul from God.” (Spurgeon)

ii. We can imagine the answer to Jesus’ question: **Why?** “Because, My Son, You have chosen to stand in the place of guilty sinners. You, who have never known sin, have made the infinite sacrifice to become sin and receive My just wrath upon sin and sinners. You do this because of Your great love, and because of My great love.”

iii. Then the Father might give the Son a glimpse of His reward — the righteously-robed multitude of His people on heaven’s golden streets, “all of them singing their redeemer’s praise, all of them chanting the name of Jehovah and the Lamb; and this was a part of the answer to his question.” (Spurgeon)

e. **Why are You so far from helping Me?** David knew what it was like to feel the presence and the deliverance of God and had experienced such many times before. Every prior time of help made this dramatic *absence* of God’s help more devastating. Worse yet, there seemed to be *no explanation* for the lack of God’s help; thus the question, “**Why?**”

i. No doubt David experienced this, but only as a shadow compared to how Jesus experienced this. Prior to the cross, Jesus lived every moment in conscious fellowship with God the Father, combined with a continual dependence upon the help of both the Father and the Spirit. At the cross, Jesus felt **helpless**, as it seemed that the Father was **so far from helping** Him.

f. **O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear**: A further dimension of David's agony was the fact that he made repeated, constant appeals to God and yet felt utterly unheard. His **groaning** was unanswered, his **cry** ignored.

i. David certainly experienced this; the greater Son of David experienced it in a far greater degree. On the cross Jesus felt abandoned by the Father, and felt that His groaning and cries went unanswered.

## 2. (**Psalm 22:3-5**) Remembrance of God's nature and prior help.

**But You are holy,**

**Enthroned in the praises of Israel.**

**Our fathers trusted in You;**

**They trusted, and You delivered them.**

**They cried to You, and were delivered;**

**They trusted in You, and were not ashamed.**

a. **But You are holy**: The Forsaken One remembered God and His greatness, even when immersed in suffering. He did not curse or blaspheme God, and he knew that his present agony did not change God's holiness (**You are holy**) or greatness (**Enthroned in the praises of Israel**).

i. We have the sense that the present crisis filled David (and the greater Son of David) with doubt and confusion, yet he would not allow doubts as to the holiness or greatness of God. Whatever he did **not** know in his present situation, he did know that God was **holy**.

ii. "Here is the triumph of faith — the Saviour stood like a rock in the wide ocean of temptation. High as the billows rose, so did his faith, like the coral rock, wax greater and stronger till it became an island of salvation to our shipwrecked souls. It is as if he had said, 'It matters not what I endure. Storms may howl upon me; men despise; devils tempt; circumstances overpower; and God himself forsake me, still God is holy; there is no unrighteousness in him.'" (Stevenson, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. "We may not question the holiness of God, but we may argue from it, and use it as a plea in our petitions." (Spurgeon)

b. **Our fathers trusted in You.... They cried to You, and were delivered**: David also remembered how God had answered and **delivered** many times before. Strangely, this would

add measures of both comfort and despair: **comfort**, knowing that he cried to the same God who had **delivered** before and who could deliver again; **despair**, knowing that the God who **had delivered** before now seemed so distant and silent.

i. We can almost hear the agony of the Forsaken One: **“They cried to You, and were delivered; I cry to You and am ignored.”**

ii. **Our fathers**: “The use of the plural pronoun ‘**our**’ shows how one with his people Jesus was even on the cross.” (Spurgeon)

### 3. **(Psalm 22:6-8) Mocking the forsaken.**

**But I **am** a worm, and no man;**

**A reproach of men, and despised by the people.**

**All those who see Me ridicule Me;**

**They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, **saying,****

**“He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him;**

**Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!”**

a. **But I am a worm, and no man**: The intensity of the conflict made David feel not only ignored, but insignificant. God seems to help other men, but seems to give no help to worms. The low standing he had in his own eyes and in the eyes of others simply added to his agony.

i. It was dramatically fulfilled in the greater Son of David, that on the cross He was **a reproach of men, and despised by the people**. Cruel men mocked Jesus in His greatest agony (**Matthew 27:39-44**).

ii. “This verse is a miracle in language. How could the Lord of glory be brought to such abasement as to be not only lower than the angels, but even lower than men. What a contrast between ‘I am’ and ‘**I am a worm**!’” (Spurgeon)

iii. “He felt himself to be comparable to a helpless, powerless, down-trodden worm, passive while crushed, and unnoticed and despised by those who trod upon him. He selects the weakest of creatures, which is all flesh; and becomes, when trodden upon, writhing, quivering flesh, utterly devoid of any might except strength to suffer. This was a true likeness of himself when his body and soul had become a mass of misery — the very essence of agony — in the dying pangs of crucifixion.” (Spurgeon)

b. **They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, “He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him”**: David’s misery multiplied at those who mocked and misunderstood his agony. They used it as an excuse to call into question his relationship with God, even as the friends of Job did with him in his suffering.

i. It was as if they said, “It seemed that he **trusted in the LORD**, but we all know that the LORD rescues those who trust in Him. It seemed that he delighted in God, but that must be false because he is not delivered.”

ii. **He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him**: If Jesus identified with the opening words of [Psalm 22](#) with His great cry from the cross ([Matthew 27:46](#)), then His enemies unwittingly identified with the scornful enemies of God and His Anointed in their mockery of Jesus on the cross ([Matthew 27:43](#): *He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now*).

iii. Spurgeon preached a sermon (*Faith Among Mockers*) in which he considered the implication of this word against the Forsaken One, “**He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him.**”

- In a truly grace-filled man, his trust in God is known.
- This trust demonstrated by believing men is not understood by the world.
- This true faith will almost certainly be mocked at some time or another.
- The time shall come when the man of faith who has trusted in God shall be abundantly justified.

c. **Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him**: This statement reveals the frequent ignorance and cruelty of those who oppose God and His people. It claimed to see no deliverance, when it would indeed come soon. It also questioned the delight of God in the Forsaken One, when God did and does truly delight in that one.

i. “A most virulent irony, whereby they sought to cajole him out of his confidence, and so to drive him into utter desperation and destruction.” (Trapp)

4. ([Psalm 22:9-11](#)) A plea: “You are my God since the earliest days.”

**But You are He who took Me out of the womb;  
You made Me trust while on My mother’s breasts.  
I was cast upon You from birth.  
From My mother’s womb  
You have been My God.  
Be not far from Me,  
For trouble is near;  
For there is none to help.**

a. **But You are He who took Me out of the womb**: David understood — both for himself and, prophetically speaking, for the later-to-come Messiah — that in the depth of agony and the sense of abandonment, one could still appeal to God in remembrance of better times.

i. The Forsaken One did not say, “Since I feel abandoned by God, I will abandon Him.” He remained steadfast through the dark night of the soul, and still made appeal to the God who cared for Him since birth.

ii. “That Child now fighting the great battle of his life, uses the mercy of his nativity as an argument with God. Faith finds weapons everywhere. He who wills to believe shall never lack reasons for believing.” (Spurgeon)

b. **Out of the womb...while on My mother’s breasts...from birth...You have been My God:**

The Forsaken One argued on good, logical grounds. He reminded God of the care given since His very earliest days. That prior grace might seem to be wasted if the sufferer was not rescued in His present crisis.

c. **Be not far from Me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help:** The plea for help is again eloquently and persuasively stated. God seems **far** away; but **trouble is near** — and **there is none to help**, so **You** must help me, God!

##### 5. (Psalm 22:12-18) The agony of the forsaken.

**Many bulls have surrounded Me;  
Strong **bulls** of Bashan have encircled Me.  
They gape at Me **with** their mouths,  
**Like** a raging and roaring lion.  
I am poured out like water,  
And all My bones are out of joint;  
My heart is like wax;  
It has melted within Me.  
My strength is dried up like a potsherd,  
And My tongue clings to My jaws;  
You have brought Me to the dust of death.  
For dogs have surrounded Me;  
The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me.  
They pierced My hands and My feet;  
I can count all My bones.  
They look **and** stare at Me.  
They divide My garments among them,  
And for My clothing they cast lots.**

a. **Many bulls have surrounded Me:** The Forsaken One again describes His crisis. He described the people tormenting Him as **strong bulls of Bashan**, large animals proverbial for their strength. They surround Him and threaten Him.

i. “The **bull** is the emblem of brutal strength, that gores and tramples down all before it.” (Clarke)

ii. “The priests, elders, scribes, Pharisees, rulers, and captains bellowed round the cross like wild cattle, fed in the fat and solitary pastures of Bashan, full of strength and fury; they

stamped and foamed around the innocent One, and longed to gore him to death with their cruelties.” (Spurgeon)

b. **I am poured out like water**: The Forsaken One felt completely empty. He perceived no resource in Himself able to meet the crisis at hand. Whatever strength or resistance He had was **poured out like water** upon the ground.

i. “My heart faileth, my spirits are spent and gone like water, which once spilt can never be recovered; my very flesh is melted within me, and I am become as weak as water.” (Poole)

c. **My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it has melted within Me**: This described the physical extremity of David at the time, but it also is an amazingly specific prophecy of the future suffering of the Son of David on the cross.

i. The deliberately awkward and strained position of the crucified man meant that on the cross Jesus could say, “**My bones are out of joint.**” David did not know the practice of crucifixion in his day, but he described the physical agony of it with the accuracy of a prophet of the LORD.

ii. There is also some reason to believe (based mainly on [John 19:34](#)) that on the cross Jesus suffered from a ruptured heart, making the words “**My heart is like wax; it has melted within Me**” also amazingly specific.

iii. **My tongue clings to My jaws**: As was normal for anyone under the agony of crucifixion, Jesus suffered great thirst on the cross ([John 19:28](#)).

d. **You have brought me to the dust of death**: David used this moving poetic phrase to describe the extent of his misery. He probably had in mind the curse God pronounced upon Adam after his sin: *For dust you are, and to dust you shall return* ([Genesis 3:19](#)). Since all humanity was contained in Adam, this curse extends to the entire human race, and David felt himself close **to the dust of death**.

i. Obviously, David did not die in the crisis described by this psalm; he lived to write it and others. He came to the edge of mortality when God **brought** him **to the dust of death**. Yet Jesus, the Son of David, did not merely come to the edge of death; He was plunged into **the dust of death** and into all of the cursedness implied by that. Jesus bore the sting of Adam’s curse for us ([Galatians 3:13](#)) so that we would not have to bear it ourselves.

e. **For dogs have surrounded Me; the assembly of the wicked has enclosed Me**: David’s crisis would be bad enough even if surrounded by sympathetic friends; his misery was multiplied because there were violent and wicked men on every side.

i. In His death, the Son of David had few sympathizers. Haters, scoffers, and mockers surrounded Jesus on the cross and sought to make His suffering **worse** ([Matthew 27:39-44](#), [Mark 15:29-32](#)).

f. **They pierced My hands and My feet**: Perhaps here David referred to wounds he received in struggling against these determined enemies; perhaps he wrote purely prophetically. In any regard, hundreds of years before the Romans adopted the Persian practice of crucifixion, the prophet David described the wounds of crucifixion that his Greater Son would bear.

i. The Masoretic Hebrew text of [Psalm 22:16](#) doesn't say *pierced*; it says "as a lion." Yet the Septuagint (Greek) translation of the Old Testament — long before the Christian era — renders the Hebrew text as saying *pierced*. While the Masoretic text shouldn't be casually disregarded, there is good reason to side with the Septuagint and almost every other translation here. "It may even suggest that the Masoretic text was deliberately pointed in the way it was by later Jewish scholars to avoid what otherwise would be a nearly inescapable prophecy of Jesus' crucifixion." (Boice)

g. **I can count all My bones**: David examined his wounds and understood that he had no broken bones. The Son of David also, despite his great suffering on the cross, suffered no broken bones. John carefully noted this ([John 19:31-37](#)). This fact fulfilled this prophecy, as well as [Psalm 34:20](#) and the pattern of the Passover lamb as described in [Exodus 12:46](#) and [Numbers 9:12](#).

h. **They look and stare at Me**: In his crisis, David was the focus of unwanted attention. His tormentors did not allow him the dignity of private suffering, but exposed all things to their **stare**. David's Great Son also found no place to hide from the unwanted stares of cruel, mocking men at the cross.

i. On the cross Jesus was the focus not only of mocking and humiliation ([Matthew 27:39-44](#), [Mark 15:29-32](#)), but also of simple astonishment, as when the centurion said, "*Truly this was the Son of God!*" ([Matthew 27:54](#)). Luke also noted, *the whole crowd who came together to that sight, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned* ([Luke 23:48](#)).

ii. "*They look and stare upon me.*" Oh, how different is that look which the awakened sinner directs to Calvary, when faith lifts up her eye to him who agonised, and bled, and died, for the guilty!" (Morrison, cited in Spurgeon)

i. **They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots**: David was so humbled before his adversaries, so powerless against them, that they took even his clothing and used it for themselves.

i. As with other aspects of [Psalm 22](#), this was fulfilled even *more* literally in the experience of Jesus than in the life of David. As was the custom of that time, Jesus was stripped naked or nearly naked for the cross, and soldiers gambled (**cast lots**) for his clothing at the very foot of the cross. [John 19:23-24](#) and [Matthew 27:35](#) quote this line of [Psalm 22](#) as being fulfilled.

ii. "Unholy eyes gazed insultingly upon the Saviour's nakedness, and shocked the sacred delicacy of his holy soul. The sight of the agonizing body ought to have ensured sympathy

from the throng, but it only increased their savage mirth, as they gloated their cruel eyes upon his miseries.” (Spurgeon)

6. ([Psalm 22:19-21a](#)) A plea for help and deliverance.

**But You, O LORD, do not be far from Me;  
O My Strength, hasten to help Me!  
Deliver Me from the sword,  
My precious [life](#) from the power of the dog.  
Save Me from the lion’s mouth  
And from the horns of the wild oxen!**

- a. **But You, O LORD, do not be far from Me**: The request of [Psalm 22:11](#) is here repeated. David seemed to believe that he could endure [anything](#) if he enjoyed the conscious presence of God. His plea is not focused on the change of his situation, but on the presence of God in the crisis.
- b. **Hasten to help Me.... Deliver Me.... Save Me**: Picturing his adversaries as vicious animals ([the dog...the lion’s mouth...the horns of the wild oxen](#)), David pled for the help and deliverance the presence of God brings.
  - i. These lines reflect not only the great danger and misery of both David and his Greater Son, but especially their trust in the LORD God as their deliverer. He and He alone is their hope.
  - ii. **Deliver Me from the sword**: “The wrath of God was the ‘sword,’ which took vengeance on all men...it was the ‘flaming sword,’ which kept men out of paradise.” (Horne)

**B. The answer to the Forsaken One.**

1. ([Psalm 22:21b-23](#)) The Forsaken One praises God among His people.

**You have answered Me.  
I will declare Your name to My brethren;  
In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.  
You who fear the LORD, praise Him!  
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,  
And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!**

- a. **You have answered Me**: After pouring out His soul in agony, now the Forsaken One has a glorious sense that God has [answered](#) Him. The crisis became bearable in the knowledge that God is not removed from His suffering nor silent in it.
  - i. The answer of God to the Forsaken One instantly meant that He no longer felt forsaken. The deliverance from the crisis itself may be yet to come, but the deliverance from the sense of being forsaken by God in the midst of the crisis was His. There is immense relief, joy, and peace in the words, “[You have answered Me](#).”

ii. “As he thus cries, the conviction that he is heard floods his soul.... It is like a parting burst of sunshine at the end of a day of tempest.” (Maclaren)

iii. It is easy to see these words fulfilled in the experience of David; but they were perfectly completed in Jesus. This was also the resolution that another forsaken one — Job — fought so hard for. Even without an immediate deliverance from difficulty, there is immense comfort in knowing that God is there and that He is not silent in the midst of our crises.

iv. Knowing that Jesus fulfilled this prophetic psalm, it is fair to wonder just when He could speak or live the fulfillment of these words, “**You have answered Me.**” Perhaps — though it is impossible to say with certainty — it was while He still hung on the cross, yet after the mysterious, glorious transaction of bearing the sin of mankind. Perhaps it was after the triumphant announcement, *It is finished!* ([John 19:30](#)), yet before (or even in) the warm words, *Father, into Your hands I commend My Spirit* ([Luke 23:46](#)). Those words point to a re-established sense of fellowship replacing the prior sense of forsakenness.

b. **I will declare Your name to My brethren:** Having been delivered — if not from the crisis itself, certainly from the sense of being forsaken in the crisis — now the promise is made to glorify and **praise** the God of deliverance. **Others** needed to know of God’s greatness in such extremity.

i. [Hebrews 2:12](#) quotes the *second half* of [Psalm 22](#) (specifically, [Psalm 22:22](#)), proving clearly that the *entire* psalm points to Jesus, not just the agony of the first half.

ii. On the night before His crucifixion, Jesus prayed a glorious prayer, and one line of that prayer reads: *I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it* ([John 17:26](#)). Those words, prayed in the shadow of the cross, can be understood as a deliberate desire to fulfill this word in [Psalm 22](#), **I will declare Your name to My brethren**. Jesus understood that His obedient work on the cross would bring great glory to His God and Father, declaring the greatness of His **name**.

iii. We may say that this section of [Psalm 22](#) reflects the *primary* reason Jesus went to the cross: to glorify and obey His God and Father.

c. **You who fear the LORD, praise Him:** The command is given to **praise**, to **glorify**, and to **fear** the LORD. The God of such great deliverance deserves all three things from all humanity.

i. We prophetically see in this section Jesus doing two great things in the aftermath of His great work on the cross:

- Jesus declares God’s name (**I will declare Your name to My brethren**).
- Jesus leads the redeemed in praise (**In the midst of the assembly I will praise You**).

ii. Of this second point, Spurgeon observed: “I like to think that when we pray on earth our prayers are not alone, but our great High Priest is there to offer our petitions with his own. When we sing on earth it is the same. Is not Jesus Christ in the midst of the congregation, gathering up all the notes which come from sincere lips, to put them into the golden censer, and to make them rise as precious incense before the throne of the infinite majesty?”  
(Spurgeon)

## 2. (Psalm 22:24-25) Praising the God who answers the forsaken.

**For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;**

**Nor has He hidden His face from Him;**

**But when He cried to Him, He heard.**

**My praise shall be of You in the great assembly;**

**I will pay My vows before those who fear Him.**

a. **For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted**: David’s triumphant words — again, perfectly fulfilled in his greater son Jesus — reflect a profound spiritual wisdom and depth. The God who answers the Forsaken One allowed **the affliction of the afflicted**; yet **He has not despised or abhorred it**. God has used and would use that **affliction** to good and great purpose.

i. Some of God’s people automatically associate all **affliction** with the disfavor of God. It is true that sometimes **affliction** may come as punishment (for the unbeliever) or as discipline (for the believer). Yet sometimes **affliction** is something God does not despise, and uses to good effect in the lives of His people.

ii. It is in this sense that the words of [Isaiah 53:10](#) were fulfilled: *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him*. The **affliction** was not **despised**.

b. **Nor has He hidden His face from Him**: Certainly David (and the greater Son of David) *felt* that the Father hid His face (*Why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me?... You do not hear*, [Psalm 22:1-2](#)). Yet now, after God’s answer has come ([Psalm 22:21b](#)), it is clear that He never did leave the **afflicted**, even in the midst of **the affliction**.

c. **But when He cried to Him, He heard**: The answer seemed an intolerably long time in coming, but it came. David and the Son of David could both say, “He heard My cry.”

d. **My praise shall be of You in the great assembly; I will pay my vows**: There are two aspects to a right response to such a wonderful deliverance. The first is *public praise*, and the second is *keeping promises*.

## 3. (Psalm 22:26-27) Others who rejoice in the God who answers.

**The poor shall eat and be satisfied;**

**Those who seek Him will praise the LORD.**

**Let your heart live forever!**

**All the ends of the world  
Shall remember and turn to the LORD,  
And all the families of the nations  
Shall worship before You.**

a. **The poor shall eat and be satisfied**: If God shows such faithfulness to the afflicted, there is hope for **the poor**. The good God will take care of the **poor** who trust Him and **seek Him**. They will **praise the LORD** also.

i. The faithfulness of God to the Forsaken One becomes a foundation for His faithfulness to others in need, such as **the poor**. His satisfaction in the work of the Son of David means grace and blessing and **joy** (**Let your heart live forever!**) for others.

b. **Those who seek Him will praise the LORD**: There is a **promise** in this, that **those who seek Him** will in fact find the **LORD**, and thus they will **praise** Him.

i. "There are souls now weeping for sin and longing for a Savior who will soon find them, and then will become most hearty singers of the new song. They are coming, coming in their thousands even now. The music of praise shall be continued as long as the sun, and the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. From generation to generation shall the name of the Lord be praised." (Spurgeon)

c. **All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the LORD**: The faithfulness of God to the Forsaken One even becomes the base for bringing **all the ends of the world** to the **LORD**. Not only is it true that the LORD has *not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted* ([Psalm 22:24](#)), but He uses that affliction to reach **all the ends of the world** for the knowledge of God, for repentance unto Him, and for His worship (**all the families of the nations shall worship before You**).

i. We may say that this section of [Psalm 22](#) shows the **second** great reason why Jesus went to the cross: out of simple love for those who would believe on Him and His saving work, and therefore **remember and turn to the LORD**. It is not an overly-sentimental exaggeration to say that Jesus thought of His redeemed and loved them up to the cross and on the cross.

ii. [Hebrews 12:2](#) says of Jesus: *who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame*. [Psalm 22](#) powerfully displays that joy, both in His obedience to and glorifying of His God and Father, and the joy of rescuing and loving those who would trust on Him; that there would be **brethren** that He declared the name of God unto ([Psalm 22:22](#)).

iii. "In that last happy interval, before he actually gave up his soul into his Father's hands, his thoughts rushed forward and found a blessed place of rest in the prospect that, as the result of his death, all the kindreds of the nations would worship before the Lord, and that by a chosen seed the Most High should be honored." (Spurgeon)

iv. "I think it is an absolutely wonderful thought and one that should move us to the most intent love for and devotion to Jesus Christ. You and I were in Jesus' thoughts at the very moment of his death. It was for you and me explicitly and for our salvation from sin that he was dying." (Boice)

#### 4. ([Psalm 22:28-31](#)) Enduring praise for a faithful God.

**For the kingdom *is* the LORD's,  
And He rules over the nations.  
All the prosperous of the earth  
Shall eat and worship;  
All those who go down to the dust  
Shall bow before Him,  
Even he who cannot keep himself alive.  
A posterity shall serve Him.  
It will be recounted of the Lord to the *next* generation,  
They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born,  
That He has done *this*.**

a. **For the kingdom is the LORD's, and He rules over the nations**: The experience of affliction and crisis did not make the formerly Forsaken One lose any sense of confidence in God's power and authority. The LORD's reign over the nations makes sense of both His prior crisis and the call to all nations to worship before the LORD ([Psalm 22:27](#)).

- i. This reminds us that one day Jesus *will* reign over all nations. It would be unthinkable otherwise. "Is Christ, the great King, satisfied to settle down in a corner of the world as ruler over one scanty province?" (Spurgeon)
- ii. "Our new-born nature craves for the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom, and prays for it instinctively." (Spurgeon)

b. **All the prosperous of the earth shall eat and worship; all those who go down to the dust shall bow before Him**: The LORD God is *so* highly exalted that all honor Him, both **the prosperous of the earth** and **those who go down to the dust**.

- i. It is of note that though all honor the LORD, they honor Him in different ways. **The prosperous of the earth** enjoy a fellowship meal and **worship** God. In contrast, **those who go down to the dust** simply **bow before** the LORD in humble reverence.
- ii. This has much the same idea as the later passage of the Apostle Paul, when he wrote: *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father* ([Philippians 2:10-11](#)).

iii. **Those who go down to the dust** suggests those who are rightly humbled, but it can also be understood in a broader sense. Earlier in the psalm, **dust** suggested the mortality of man and his place under the curse ([Psalm 22:15](#)). David may here use **those who go down to the dust** as a simple representation of all humanity.

iv. If this is true, then the phrase **even he who cannot keep himself alive** follows the same thought. It is a suggestive phrase, especially considering the connection in this psalm with Jesus the Messiah, the greater Son of David. Of all humanity, Jesus was singular as One who *could* **keep himself alive**. Jesus Himself said of His life, *No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again* ([John 10:18](#)).

c. **A posterity shall serve Him. It will be recounted of the LORD to the next generation:**

The faithfulness of God unto the formerly Forsaken One is told throughout the generations, bringing great glory to the LORD. They will all look at what has been accomplished in and through the formerly Forsaken One and hear, **“That He has done this.”**

- This results in *service* through the generations (**a posterity shall serve Him**).
- This results in *God’s fame* through the generations (**It will be recounted of the LORD to the next generation**).
- This results in the *spread of the message of God’s righteousness* through the generations (**They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born**).

i. We can say that Jesus thought of His Jewish brothers on the cross (*My brethren*, [Psalm 22:22](#)). He thought of the Gentiles who come into the assembly of the redeemed (*in the great congregation*, [Psalm 22:25](#)). He even thought of future generations whom He would rescue and who would trust Him (**to the next generation...to a people who will be born**, [Psalm 22:30-31](#)).

ii. “Finally the vision extends to unborn generations (30f.), in terms which anticipate the preaching of the cross, recounting God’s righteousness (or *deliverance*, a secondary meaning of the word) revealed in the action He has taken.” (Kidner)

iii. This all adds to the wonderful truth — true for King David of Israel, but far more gloriously fulfilled in Jesus Christ — that *none of the Forsaken One’s sufferings were wasted*. Every drop of that cup of agony was and is used to the great glory of God.

iv. In the fullest measure, Jesus appropriated the victory of the second half of this psalm just as much as He did the agony of the first half. “Just before He died, Jesus cried out, ‘It is finished’ ([John 19:30](#)). This is a quotation from the [last verse of Psalm 22](#). In our text that verse reads, ‘he has done it,’ referring to God as subject. But there is no object for the verb in Hebrew, and it can equally well be translated, ‘It is finished.’” (Boice)

v. “The psalm which began with the cry of dereliction ends with the word *he has wrought it*, and announcement not far removed from our Lord’s great cry, ‘It is finished.’” (Kidner)

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# Matthew Henry Commentary on Psalms 22

## Psalm 22

The Spirit of Christ, which was in the prophets, testifies in this psalm, as clearly and fully as any where in all the Old Testament, "the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow" ([1 Pt. 1:11](#)); of him, no doubt, David here speaks, and not of himself, or any other man. Much of it is expressly applied to Christ in the New Testament, all of it may be applied to him, and some of it must be understood of him only. The providences of God concerning David were so very extraordinary that we may suppose there were some wise and good men who then could not but look upon him as a figure of him that was to come. But the composition of his psalms especially, in which he found himself wonderfully carried out by the spirit of prophecy far beyond his own thought and intention, was (we

may suppose) an abundant satisfaction to himself that he was not only a father of the Messiah, but a figure of him. In this psalm he speaks,

- I. Of the humiliation of Christ ([v. 1-21](#)), where David, as a type of Christ, complains of the very calamitous condition he was in upon many accounts.
  - 1. He complains, and mixes comforts with his complaints; he complains ([v. 1, 2](#)), but comforts himself ([v. 3-5](#)), complains again ([v. 6-8](#)), but comforts himself again, ([v. 9, 10](#)).
  - 2. He complains, and mixes prayers with his complaints; he complains of the power and rage of his enemies ([v. 12, 13, 16, 18](#)), of his own bodily weakness and decay ([v. 14, 15, 17](#)); but prays that God would not be far from him ([v. 11, 19](#)), that he would save and deliver him ([v. 19-21](#)).
- II. Of the exaltation of Christ, that his undertaking should be for the glory of God ([v. 22-25](#)), for the salvation and joy of his people ([v. 26-29](#)), and for the perpetuating of his own kingdom ([v. 30, 31](#)).

In singing this psalm we must keep our thoughts fixed upon Christ, and be so affected with his sufferings as to experience the fellowship of them, and so affected with his grace as to experience the power and influence of it.

### **PSALM 22:**

This prophetic psalm stands out more than the other messianic psalms. Written by David, it gives a graphic description of the death of Jesus Christ by crucifixion. At the time it was written, stoning was the form of capital punishment. One thousand years later, the Romans introduced death by crucifixion.

[v.1](#) This verse was quoted by Jesus on the cross. He was forsaken by God for a moment so that you would not be forsaken by God eternally.

[v.2](#) Darkness covered the land when Jesus was crucified. He was separated from God because a Holy God could not be in fellowship with sin. "Fellowship" means "oneness."

[v.6](#) Jesus Christ was despised and rejected by men ([Isaiah 53](#)).

[v.8](#) The high priests mocked Jesus when He was on the cross.

[v.10](#) Life begins before birth. There is a great deal of awareness by the fetus.

[v.14](#) Here is another description of the cross. When Jesus' side was pierced blood and water came out of the wound. In hanging on the cross, the muscles fatigued and the joints fell out of place.

[v.18](#) The Roman soldiers cast lots for Jesus' robe ("vestures"), because it was too good to be divided. Jesus' death was perfectly planned before the foundation of the earth.

[v.21](#) On the temple altar were horns. When a person was desperate, he held onto the horns.

[v.24](#) God heard Jesus when He cried.

[v.27](#) Salvation for the Gentiles is predicted.

[v.29](#) The resurrection is prophesied. God has given Jesus the kingdom and everyone will bow before Him ([Philippians 2:10](#)).

# The Bible Says Psalm 22:1-2 Meaning

The Biblical superscription of [Psalm 22](#) is:

*A Cry of Anguish and a Song of Praise.*

*For the choir director; upon Aijeleth Hashshahar. A Psalm of David.*

The Biblical classification of [Psalm 22](#) is twofold. It is both *A cry of Anguish* and it is a *Song of Praise*.

The Psalm begins with a grievous cry or complaint to *God* ([Psalm 22:1-21](#)), but it ends with an awesome declaration of *God's* overwhelming righteousness ([Psalm 22:22-31](#)). In some respects, it feels like two different psalms, but [Psalm 22](#) tells a unified story of how *God* turns the *anguish* of suffering, humiliation, and defeat into a celebration of *praise*, wonder, and triumph.

[Psalm 22](#) was *written for the choir director*-indicating that it was intended as worship music. Both its cries and its praises were sung and offered as a song of worship to *God* by Israel. King *David* was the writer of this *psalm*. We know this because the Biblical superscription of [Psalm 22](#) tells us that it is a *Psalm of David*.

*David* (1040-970 B.C.) was the anointed king of Israel. *David* was anointed by *God* to replace *Saul* who sinned against the LORD ([1 Samuel 15-16](#)). The Hebrew word for anointed is a form of the word *Messiah*. This means *David* is a messianic king. *David* is generally regarded as the best king over Israel. The LORD blessed him, and he was a man after *God's* heart ([1 Samuel 13:14](#)).

This did not mean *David* was perfect, or that he had an easy time becoming king, or ruling as king. He spent years in exile avoiding the jealous and deadly wrath of King *Saul* ([1 Samuel 18:10-11](#), [19:9-10](#), [20:1](#), [21:10](#), [23:14-15](#)). And his own son, *Absalom*, led a nearly-successful rebellion to overthrow *David* that forced him to flee from his capital city of Jerusalem ([2 Samuel 15](#)).

While we instantly sense that [Psalm 22](#) is personal to *David* (*My God, my God... v 1*), and presumably autobiographical, we do not know for certain which specific set of circumstances *David* is referring to within it. *David* experienced numerous trials and fought in many wars against many different enemies throughout his life-both before and after he became king. Various lines within [Psalm 22](#) could refer to any one or several of these perilous moments. It also may be that [Psalm 22](#) is an amalgamation of multiple dangers which *David* endured, and deliverances by *God* from those perils.

That said, there is one incident where the Bible describes where *David* was captured by or at least living among his enemies. It is when *David* lived among the Philistines. This event is described in [1 Samuel 21](#) and is reflected upon by *David* in [Psalm 56](#), which is “A Mikhtam of David, when the Philistines seized him in Gath” ([Psalm 56](#), superscription).

While he is in the Philistines’ custody, *David* pretends to be a madman and froths at the mouth ([1 Samuel 21:12-13](#)). It appears that this shrewd act saved his life because the Philistine ruler, King Achish, did not execute *David* ([1 Samuel 21:14-15](#)). One of the reasons *David* was among the Philistines was because he fled to the territory they controlled as a means to escape King Saul who was seeking his life ([1 Samuel 21:10](#)).

There are many indicators in [Psalm 22](#) that *David* may be drawing from his experience as prisoner to the Philistines. This terrifying and perilous incident in his life was a time of *anguish* and God’s rescue, comparable to this *psalm of anguish and praise*. This commentary will attempt to make note of these possible references as we come upon them.

Moreover, it is possible that *David* composed [Psalm 22](#) after the dangers and God’s deliverance from them had already taken place. However, *David* wrote it in the perspective of the present as though the events he describes are actually happening. If so, it is as a “re-lived perspective.” This poetic technique immerses readers into the psalmist’s sufferings and desperation.

The re-lived perspective helps or even induces readers to experience some of his *anguish* as though they were living it as well. As readers experience *David*’s anguish vicariously through [Psalm 22](#), they are also able to actively retrace *David*’s steps of faith in God as he hopes and celebrates the deliverance yet to come.

[Psalm 22](#) is specific enough to be personal to *David*. But it is expressed in sufficiently broad terms so that significant portions are relatable to many who are experiencing feelings of anxiety, isolation, or desperation. Ultimately [Psalm 22](#) is edifying, as its prayer progresses from describing the dire straits the psalmist experiences to the hope and assurance of deliverance and triumph through the LORD. It models the perspective we ought to choose whenever we encounter hardships or stress.

Even as [Psalm 22](#) is a testimony to one or more hardships which *David* endured in service to God, it casts an incredible foreshadowing that distinctly details numerous and extraordinarily specific hardships that Jesus, the Messiah, would later suffer on the cross ([Matthew 27:33-50](#), [Mark 15:22-38](#), [Luke 23:33-46](#), [John 19:16-30](#)). As the *psalm* indicates by identifying itself a *Song of Praise*, the LORD triumphantly delivered the messianic king *David* from the *anguish* of his troubles. So too would (and now has) the LORD deliver the Messiah from death through resurrection, to the astonishment and blessing for all the world.

The term *Ajeleth Hashshahar* within the phrase-upon *Ajeleth Hashshahar*-is left untranslated by the NASB. It means “upon the morning deer.” On its own, it is unclear what is meant by this expression. In context, it probably is a musical reference informing the original readers that the text was to be sung according to a tune called the “The Morning Deer.” Others have supposed that The Morning Deer might refer to the Messiah. [Psalm 22](#) is the only time the expression *Ajeleth Hashshahar* occurs in the Bible.

[Psalm 22](#) is a Messianic *psalm* which prophesies important predictions about Jesus the Messiah- particularly in regards to His crucifixion, death, and resurrection. Matthew’s Gospel, in particular, explicitly features no less than two prophecies from this *psalm* ([Psalm 22:18](#), [Matthew 27:35](#); and [Psalm 22:1](#) with [Matthew 27:46](#)) to demonstrate to his Jewish readers how the awful death Jesus suffered proved that He was and is the Messiah as foretold through the scriptures. This countered those who claimed Jesus was disqualified from being the Messiah.

The Bible Says commentary for [Psalm 22](#) will initially focus on the immediate meaning of *David’s psalm* and then look at its prophetic forecasts of Jesus’s suffering, crucifixion, resurrection, and triumphant victory.

## **THE IMMEDIATE MEANING OF DAVID’S PSALM 22:1-2**

[Psalm 22](#) begins with a personal and agonizing *cry* to God:

*My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?* (v 1a).

*David’s* opening line of [Psalm 22](#) is powerfully immersive. It instantly plunges the reader into the depths of *David’s* suffering. It immediately allows the reader to re-live *David’s anguish*. The writing is so persuasive that many have taken it as a literal fact-that *God* actually had *forsaken David*.

But *God* did not forsake *David* even though it may have appeared that *God* forsook him.

The Hebrew word translated as *forsaken* in [Psalm 22:1](#) is a form of אָזַב (H5800-pronounced “aw-zab”). It means “to leave behind,” “abandon,” “reject,” “fail,” or “desert.” *Forsaken* (“awzab”) is an emphatic and stark word.

The LORD promised the people of Israel through His servant Moses that He “will not fail you or forsake you” ([Deuteronomy 31:6](#)), using the same root word, “awzab,” for “forsake.” We know *God* had not literally *forsaken David* because *God* does not violate any of His promises ([Numbers 23:19](#), [Deuteronomy 7:9](#), [Joshua 21:45](#), [Isaiah 40:8](#), [Hebrews 6:18](#)):

“Once I have sworn by My holiness;

I will not lie to David.”

(Psalm 89:35)

David will later write in Psalm 22 how God did not forsake him:

“For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;

Nor has He hidden His face from him;

But when he cried to Him for help, He heard.”

(Psalm 22:24)

Even though God did not actually forsake David, that does not mean David did not feel forsaken. David questioned God because of the horrendous circumstances he was facing that were threatening to overwhelm him. As Psalm 22 will later indicate (and 1 Samuel 22, one of the events Psalm 22 probably describes), these circumstances include:

- “despised by the people” (Psalm 22:6)
- “encircled” by his enemies (Psalm 22:12)
- exiled from Israel (1 Samuel 21:10)
- physically injured (Psalm 22:14)
- physically exhausted (Psalm 22:15)
- imprisoned and humiliated by his enemies (Psalm 22:16-17, 1 Samuel 21:13)
- desperately feigning madness to survive (1 Samuel 21:13)

Experiencing such horrible circumstances would understandably cause even the most faithful followers of the LORD to feel as though God had forsaken them. We are limited, finite beings, and our own strength fails us. A faithful follower of God would take such feelings and concerns along with the ordeal of their circumstances to the LORD in prayer. And this is exactly what David does.

The psalmist’s question is a sincere and respectful petition to God to explain to him why he is suffering such terrible things. It is a personal question addressed to My God. It is repeated for emphasis-My God, my God.

As phrased, the psalmist’s question seems to presuppose that God has forsaken him. But the question does not accept this presumption as settled fact. It would seem from the later verses in the psalm that rather than being offered as a charge or fault, blaming God for this action, David is seeking clarification or wisdom from God to better understand the terrible ordeal he is enduring.

In this *psalm*, it seems that *David* is fully expressing to *God* how he feels, then working through, with *God*, the reality of *God's* benevolent care for him, even in the midst of great difficulty.

The Book of James explicitly teaches this approach.

“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. **But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.**”

(James 1:2-5)

The opening line of *Psalm 22* personally asks *God why* He is allowing the psalmist's trial and pain to occur. But in the *psalm*, he does not blame *God* or accuse Him of wrongdoing. His suffering and question are both real, but the psalmist asks *God* with due reverence, respect, and faith (*James 1:6-8*).

While the Bible condemns grumbling against *God* or speaking wrong of Him to others, as *Job's* friends do (*Job 42:7*), *God* does not expect His people to suffer in silent stoicism without His help. Rather, *God* invites us to come to Him in our pain and suffering and He will hear our complaints (see *James 1:2-9*). And though He may not remove the trial or the pain, He promises to generously give us His (true) perspective on whatever it is we are facing (*James 1:5*). This includes peace which passes all understanding (*Philippians 4:4-7*) and rest for our souls (*Matthew 11:28-30*).

This line *My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?* (v 1a) contains the first two of many personal references in this *psalm*.

Notice how *David* refers to *God* as **MyGod**. He speaks directly to *God* and uses the second person pronoun-*You*-while addressing Him. Between *Psalm 22:1-5* the psalmist will address *God* with-*You*-no less than eight times. This indicates that this portion of the *psalm* is a personal conversation between the psalmist and *God*.

The opening line touches upon the so-called: “Problem of Evil.”

To learn more about the Problem of Evil, see [The Bible Says](#) article: “The Problem of Evil.”

The Problem of Evil can be viewed from two basic perspectives. These are perspectives of pride and humility.

The "proud-posture" sees all things as relative to "me." Pride is having a perspective that "I know best and the definition of good and bad are relative to me and to my desires." Pride justifies our actions, casts blame on others, and rationalizes our behaviors.

This position judges *God* based upon the finite opinion of the one who is suffering. It presumptuously renders its verdict based on the perspective of the sufferer without considering *God's* point of view (reality). The position of pride blames others. Part of that blame is to accuse *God* of being part of the problem. While tempting-especially in the midst of intense moments or seasons of suffering-this false perspective is not connected to reality and will not lead to life.

That the prideful posture of finite humans is not connected to reality is apparent from applying a simple thought experiment. If eight billion people on earth plus *God* share the perspective that "I am always right," by definition all must be wrong save one (and in reality all are wrong). The only one who can be right all the time is the One (*God*) who can see all perspectives at once. Does that make *God* prideful? Not at all, for humility is the willingness to see reality as it is.

Boastful assertions against *God* stemming from the proud-postured explanation of the Problem of Evil are intellectual, unsound, and logically faulty. Pride merely generates an apparent dilemma for anyone who both claims that *God* is perfectly good and completely powerful while blaming *God* for not performing for them to meet their expectations.

The apparent dilemma stemming from the prideful perspective is rooted in the view that "Good is that which I desire, therefore the sovereign *God* is obligated to perform for me and give me what I want."

Thus the proud-postured Problem of Evil argument often leads to a form of what is often referred to as atheism that runs something like this:

"If *God* truly was perfectly good and completely powerful, then He would not let this terrible thing happen. And because this terrible thing happened, this demonstrates that *God* does not exist."

This is not actually a position of atheism, but rather a sort of philosophical tantrum, "If *God* won't do what I say, then I will punish Him by not believing in Him."

Superficially, the prideful posture that a good *God* would eliminate evil may seem to be a compelling argument, especially for someone who is in the midst of suffering. But the Problem of Evil is only an apparent dilemma-not a real one.

The prideful perspective solution to the Problem of Evil is based on at least five grossly presumptuous assumptions:

1. It falsely presumes that we understand what is good better than *God* does.
2. It grossly overestimates the magnitude of our personal circumstances, putting them at the center of the universe.
3. It misstates the evil nature of human sin.
4. It mischaracterizes *God's* goodness as being something that has no connection to true goodness.
5. It ignores *God's* ability to resolve all things into something that is immensely good.

In short, the Problem of Evil understood from a position of pride presumes to put our finite perspective above *God's* perfect wisdom. Or to say this in logical terms, all of these logical faults arise from erroneous presuppositions concerning such fundamental definitions of *God*, goodness, or evil.

When *God* created humans He made them in His image, which included giving humans the power to make moral choices ([Genesis 1:26-27](#)). *God* delegated to each person the authority to make three fundamental choices: who they trust, the perspective they adopt, and the actions they take. Much of scripture is dedicated to leading humans on a journey to adopt a perspective that is true, one that gives us the benefit of *God's* perspective, which is reality; *God* can see all perspectives at once.

*God's* introduction of human choice into the world also introduced the possibility of evil, for evil is simply any choice that departs from *God's* (good) design for humans to live in service to and harmony with one another, as well as with *God* and the natural world He created.

The basic choice each human makes each day is the same as that offered to Adam and Eve—the choice between good and evil. The choice of good is to choose to love and serve others; this is a choice that leads to life, connection, harmony. The choice of evil is to choose to exploit others and extract from them in order to fulfill our fleshly appetites. The choice of evil leads to exploitation and violence.

Why then would *God* introduce choice, when human choice can lead to evil? There may be many reasons for this, but one that is apparent is that choice is necessary for there to be actual love. If we create a doll, we can love it, but the doll cannot love us back, because it has no moral choice.

Real love is serving the best interest of another when it is costly or inconvenient to us ([John 15:13](#), [1 Corinthians 13:4-8](#)). It is through this sort of serving-others love that we actually gain our own greatest fulfillment ([Matthew 16:24-25](#)). *God's* reward for those who serve others in love goes far beyond anything we can conceive ([1 Corinthians 2:9](#)).

*God* actually promises to immensely reward those who set aside self to love others, as Jesus did. Jesus promises to those who overcome the temptation to fear the world's rejection (as He did) that

He will share His rewards with them ([Romans 8:17b](#), [Revelation 3:21](#)). This is a mind-boggling good that God will create out of a fallen mess, like a potter making a beautiful vessel from a mess of clay.

The second posture from which the Problem of Evil can be addressed is a perspective of humility. Humility is the willingness to see things as they actually are-to embrace reality. This includes the reality that *God* is the omniscient creator who made all things, and that we are a part of His design.

Accordingly, the position of humility seeks wisdom by pursuing *God's* perspective. When we see from *God's* perspective, we see reality. This includes perspective on any evil that is being suffered. [Psalm 22](#) can be viewed as taking its reader on a journey from seeing the evil circumstances from one's own perspective, then shifting to *God's* perspective. This indicates what we have all experienced-that our natural bent is to see things from our own limited perspective-for it is that perspective we feel and experience physically. The challenge to adopt a perspective of humility is that it requires looking beyond our own immediate experience.

The position of humility acknowledges human short-sightedness and finite limitations. In [Psalm 22](#), *David* assumes the position we all have-that of the questioner. In the position of humility, by faith the questioner presumes that "the problem" is from a lack of understanding, wisdom, or right perspective regarding the painful circumstances.

According to this humble position, far from being part of the Problem of Evil, *God* (in His wisdom and mercy) is the only solution to it. [Psalm 22](#) begins from the position of a human experiencing pain and difficulty and expressing it to *God*. We can presume this is not only healthy, but appropriate, given that Jesus uttered the words from the cross from [Psalm 22](#) that express this perspective ([Matthew 27:46](#)).

But then [Psalm 22](#) takes us to a place of humility, recognizing that *God* is in control and no amount of evil will overcome His benevolence. Jesus uttered the words from the cross, then committed His spirit into the hands of *God* ([Matthew 27:50](#)). *God* then resurrected Him from the dead.

[Psalm 22](#) begins from a place of questioning then takes us to a place of committing our spirit unto *God* in humility (reality).

The prophet, Jeremiah, beautifully exhibits the humble approach that acknowledges the reality of *God* and Who He is when he wrote:

"Why should any living mortal, or any man,  
Offer complaint in view of his sins?  
Let us examine and probe our ways,

And let us return to the LORD.”

(Lamentations 3:39-40)

This humble (reality-based) attitude regarding suffering leads to life, wisdom, and all manner of good.

When taken as a whole, we can see that *David* is operating with a humble attitude as he addresses his heartfelt suffering and concerns to *God* in [Psalm 22](#). The fact that he questions *God* does not negate that he approaches *God* in humility.

Perhaps like the father who came to Jesus with his gravely sick child, who cried out, “I do believe; help my unbelief” ([Mark 9:24](#)), *David* is seeking to add understanding to his faith amid awful circumstances. Or perhaps *David* first expresses his emotions to *God*, seeking His direction, and gains wisdom granted by *God* through the experience ([James 1:5](#)).

[Psalm 22](#) starts amidst *David*'s bewildering agony.

He is in *anguish* and does not understand *why God* would allow such dreadful circumstances to happen to him. He personally asks his *God why He has forsaken* him and *why He* seems to be beyond the reach of his prayers. The psalmist laments that it feels like *God* is distant and inaccessible:

*Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning* (v 1b).

This expression means that the desired outcome of *deliverance* is *far* from his groans for deliverance. The gap is *far* and wide between the psalmist's painful reality and his hope for salvation from his dire circumstance. *David*'s question in verse 1 is asked from the acutely felt gap between *groaning* and *deliverance*.

His question of *God* expresses how the psalmist feels as though his prayers for *deliverance* have been groaned in vain. He expresses a perspective that either *God* has not heard them; or *God* does not intend to answer them in a way the psalmist desires; or both.

*David* reiterates the futility of his desperate prayers to *God*.

*O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer;*

*And by night, but I have no rest* (v 2).

*David* is taking a posture of humility, in that he is seeking *God*. But here he expresses that his experience to this point is that *God* is not to be found. The psalmist is questioning *God* for why He is

not responding the way he desires *God* to respond. *God's* response seems to be to remain silent and/or apathetic toward him in the midst of his suffering.

The psalmist expresses his frustration; he cries out to *God* in prayer when he is awake (by day) but feels as though *God* is not answering him. The psalmist also cries out to *God by night*, but he finds *no rest* or reassurance. His exhausted plea, *by night but I have no rest*, seems to further indicate that the psalmist is unable to sleep because of pain, worry, or serious and imminent dangers encircling him.

If [Psalm 22](#) refers to the predicament when *David* was living in captive exile among the Philistines where he had to feign insanity to survive (as described in [1 Samuel 21](#)), the questions and statements of [Psalm 22:1-2](#) would have been quite natural for him to wonder, or ask *God*.

*My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?*

*Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning.*

*O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer;*

*And by night, but I have no rest.*

### **[PSALM 22:1-2 AS A MESSIANIC PROPHECY](#)**

*My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?* (v 1a).

From a Jewish perspective, the expression: *My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?* is the equivalent in western culture of saying "[Psalm 22](#)." When Jesus says these words, it is reasonable to assume He is invoking all of [Psalm 22](#).

Near the end of His six hours of suffering on the cross, the last three of which are when darkness covered the earth, "Jesus cried out with a loud voice... 'My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?' ([Matthew 27:46](#)).

Jesus the Messiah was in unimaginable agony when he shouted out these words. The intense emotional, mental, psychological, and spiritual pain this expression revealed is too mysterious and profound for us to fully comprehend. Perhaps the best we can make of it is that what Jesus endured was the worst suffering a human being is capable of experiencing. His *anguish* was beyond anything anyone before or since has endured. Not only was He dying a brutal death, He was also taking upon Himself the sins of the entire world ([Romans 6:18](#), [Colossians 2:14](#), [1 John 2:2](#)).

Taken in isolation, these words could seem to indicate a cry of defeat. But Jesus's cry was not in isolation; the totality of [Psalm 22](#) is inferred, which ends in victory. However, at the time of its

utterance, Jesus's desperate exclamation: "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" ([Matthew 27:46](#)) was four things at once.

1. An expression of *Anguish*
2. A question of Humble Faith
3. An utterance of Atonement
4. A prophetic Allusion to the many Messianic fulfillments of [Psalm 22](#)

### 1. Exclamation as an Expression of Anguish

The Messiah said, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" as He was screaming out in unbearable agony over the broken fellowship that He had forever enjoyed with His Heavenly Father. Matthew indicates that Jesus cried out *My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?* at the conclusion of the three-hour darkness ([Matthew 27:45-46](#)). This terrible darkness is generally understood to be indicative of the Father's wrath endured by His Son, when Jesus became the sin of the world on our behalf ([2 Corinthians 5:21](#)).

Nature itself quaked at this horrible estrangement. How could the sun shine forth when the eternal and fundamental relationship-the Triune Godhead- which had created the cosmos was fractured for a time, and *God* was (paradoxically) forsaken of Himself?

For the first time in eternity, *God* the Son was in some mysterious way not in harmonious fellowship with *God* the Father. The unbreakable bonds of fellowship within the godhead were severed, so that humanity might be joined together with God ([Romans 6:18](#)).

It was in dissonant rupture of the divine relationship that Jesus screamed: *My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?* When saying this, Jesus was quoting [Psalm 22](#), which prophesied the words that Jesus would utter.

Jesus's lament-"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" ([Matthew 27:46](#), [Mark 15:34](#))- reveals the symbolic meaning of the darkness that covered the earth for three hours ([Luke 23:44](#)) to be an experience of overwhelming loneliness and desperate desolation. It was a time of intense existential dread for Jesus.

Jesus's expression is a response to that existential pain. "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" ([Matthew 27:46](#), [15:34](#)) is bleak question. And there is no immediate reply. Jesus's outcry unveils a glimpse at the profound isolation and emptiness He felt on the cross when He was temporarily *forsaken* by *God*.

With *God's* back toward Him, Jesus was likely tempted to feel as though He were defeated.

The Messianic Servant Song of [Isaiah 49](#) suggests as much when the LORD's Servant (the Messiah) says to the LORD: "I have toiled in vain, I have spent My strength for nothing and vanity" ([Isaiah 49:4](#)). Indeed, the eleventh verse of [Psalm 22](#) suggests this as well:

"Be not far from me, for trouble is near;

For there is none to help."

([Psalm 22:11](#))

This sense of futility likely intensified the loneliness, isolation, desolation, and existential pain Jesus suffered.

Perhaps more succinctly, Jesus's desperate question, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" ([Matthew 27:46](#), [15:34](#)), was in response to the disturbing disorder of spiritual death.

Death is separation. When we think of death, we think of a person's spirit and soul being separated from their physical body. When this kind of death occurs, we who remain can no longer interact the person who has died; their body is merely an empty vessel.

But spiritual death is not the severance that takes place between a person's material body and their immaterial spirit. Spiritual death comes when our soul is separated from *God*-from life itself. That is why the Bible describes the consequence or wages of sin as death ([Genesis 2:16-17](#), [Romans 6:23](#), [James 1:15](#)), because sin separates us from *God*. Sin separates us from *God's* (good) design for us to live in harmony with *God*, nature, and one another on this earth.

Jesus seems to have died-in both senses of that word-on the cross. That is, Jesus suffered spiritual death (for all of humanity) on the cross and He suffered physical death on the cross. He suffered spiritual death when He was separated from His Father and took on the sins of the world ([Romans 6:18](#), [Colossians 2:14](#)). Then He suffered physical death when He dismissed His spirit.

Like the first Adam, Jesus appears to have suffered spiritual death first and physical death second.

Adam suffered spiritual death when he sinned, as evidenced by him hiding from *God* ([Genesis 3:7-8](#)). He suffered separation from *God's* (good) design for humans to never die physically when he was exiled from the Garden, and could no longer eat from the Tree of Life ([Genesis 3:22-24](#)). Adam was also apparently exiled from the intimate fellowship he had with *God* in the Garden of Eden ([Genesis 3:8](#), [23-24](#)).

There were other deaths that took place the day Adam sinned. His fellowship with God was broken in that he blamed God ([Genesis 3:12](#)). His fellowship with Eve was broken as well, as he also blamed her ([Genesis 3:12](#)). And since Adam did not take responsibility for his own actions we can infer that he suffered an internal separation from reality. Adam physically died as well, but much later ([Genesis 5:5](#)).

Jesus appears to have suffered many forms of separation (death) at once in the time between His arrest and the end of His crucifixion. It is inferred He endured spiritual death (separation from God) while on the cross during the three hours of darkness-when He took on the sins of the world. Jesus was *forsaken* by God as “He bore our sins in His body on the cross” ([1 Peter 2:24](#)). He suffered separation from men when He was rejected by His own people ([John 18:40, 19:15](#)), and ridiculed and mocked ([Matthew 27:43](#)). He suffered separation from His disciples, who forsook Him ([Matthew 26:56](#)).

Jesus also suffered physical death on the cross when He gave up His Spirit ([Matthew 27:50; Luke 23:46](#)).

But unlike the first Adam, Jesus did not suffer spiritual death because of His own sin. Rather, Jesus suffered spiritual death because even though “He knew no sin,” He was made “to be sin on our behalf” ([2 Corinthians 5:21](#)).

Jesus died many deaths on the cross including both spiritual death and physical death. God, the Father, was the One who crushed Jesus, for our sake ([Isaiah 53:10a, Philippians 2:8, Hebrews 10:9](#)). This happened when He bore the sins of the world during the darkness.

Presuming the darkness represents the time that Jesus bore the sins of the world, Jesus was spiritually dead for three hours ([Matthew 27:45, Mark 15:33, Luke 23:44-45](#)). Jesus was the One who laid down His life physically ([John 10:17-18](#)). This happened when Jesus cried “out with a loud voice [and] breathed his last” ([Luke 23:46](#)). Jesus remained physically dead for three days ([Matthew 17:23, Mark 9:31, Luke 24:7, 1 Corinthians 15:4](#)).

Having been betrayed and denied by His own disciples ([Matthew 26:46-50; 26:69-74](#)) and rejected by His own people ([Matthew 27:22, 27:25, John 1:11, 19:15](#)), God had turned His back on His Messiah on the cross. The perfect Son was separated from His Father’s perfect love. Paradoxically, God had been *forsaken* of God. This was done so that humanity could be grafted in ([Ephesians 1:22-23](#)).

The spiritual *anguish* caused by this spiritual separation (death) was overwhelming. Even though Jesus clearly understood His mission ([Matthew 20:18-19](#)) and He willingly took up His cross out of

obedience to His Father ([Matthew 16:24](#), [Luke 23:39](#), [Hebrews 12:2](#)), this did not eliminate the emotional pain and existential *anguish* of experiencing spiritual death.

## 2. Jesus's Exclamation as an Expression of Humble Faith

Like His ancestor *David*, who cried out from a position of humility seeking understanding, Jesus cried out ““My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?”” ([Matthew 27:46](#), [Mark, 15:34](#), [Psalm 22:1](#)) from a posture of humility.

Even though He was *God*, Jesus endured suffering as a human. Jesus did not rely on His divinity to overcome His suffering-He “emptied” and “humbled” Himself ([Philippians 2:6-8](#)). He humbled Himself by being willing to obey His Father’s will ([Philippians 2:8](#), [Hebrews 5:8](#), [10:9](#)).

If we take the view that all of [Psalm 22](#) is messianic, as is presumed in Jesus’s utterance of the first line of [Psalm 22](#), we can conclude that Jesus overcame His suffering as a human the same way that we are to overcome suffering-by faith. Jesus took the faith journey expressed in [Psalm 22](#) while hanging on the cross.

That is why Jesus is referred to as “the author and perfecter of faith” ([Hebrews 12:2](#)). As *David* was bewildered by his sufferings, Jesus too was bewildered by the torturous ordeal of the cross and of being *forsaken* by His Father during the three hours of darkness. Yet He endured.

Given the faith journey of [Psalm 22](#), we can conclude that the Son of *God’s* question on the cross-*My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?*-was an honest expression of what He was feeling, and that He then immediately sought to see His own circumstances through the eyes of His Father.

Jesus’s question-“Why?” was not a cry of defeat, nor an accusation that God was unjust. Rather it was the beginning of an honest inquiry that never strayed from an underlying belief in *God’s* goodness.

To learn more about the Problem of Evil, see [The Bible Says](#) article: “[The Problem of Evil.](#)”

## 3. Jesus's Exclamation as Utterance of Atonement

As previously explained in the commentary of this passage as it pertained to *David*, the Hebrew word translated as *forsaken* in [Psalm 22:1](#) is a form of אָזַב (H5800-pronounced “aw-zab”). It means to “leave behind,” “abandon,” “reject,” “fail,” or “desert”. *Forsaken* (“awzab”) is an emphatically harsh word.

Unlike His ancestor *David* or any other human living on earth, Jesus actually was *forsaken* by *God* for a time. *David* was not actually *forsaken* by *God* because *God* promised to never forsake His people (Deuteronomy 31:6).

*God* overlooked the sins of the world prior to Jesus, who took on the sins of the world (Acts 17:30). Likewise, *God* is patiently withholding the fullness of His wrath upon the living, “not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). We can infer that those who refuse to receive *God*’s grace and the forgiveness of sins will be eternally forsaken of *God* in the next life, by their choice (Revelation 20:15). But Jesus took on the sins of the entire world, that whoever would believe might have eternal life (John 3:14-15, Colossians 2:14, 1 John 2:2). When He became sin on our behalf, Jesus suffered the forsaking wrath of *God* for us.

*David*’s intense sufferings and circumstances spurred him to petition *God* about what was happening to him. Taking the entirety of Psalm 22 as messianic would indicate that Jesus also went to *God* in prayer throughout His fiery trial.

It was in reference to the anticipation of being *forsaken* by *God* while experiencing His Father’s wrath on the cross that Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane for this cup to pass from Him (Matthew 26:39a). Jesus prayed in the Garden for His Father not to leave, abandon, reject, or desert Him. He prayed for *God*, His Father, to not fail to rescue Him from the humiliation and agony of the cross. He sought another way. Yet He submitted to His Father’s way.

All others, including His disciples, would run away or turn on Jesus. The Son prayed for His Father to not “awzab” (forsake) Him. But Jesus the Son, as He prayed to not be *forsaken* by *God* His Father, also prayed, “yet not as I will but as you will” (Matthew 26:39b).

*God* the Father did not answer His Son’s prayer in the way His Son apparently desired Him to respond. Against His Son’s desperate and personal desire, the Father forsook the Son:

“You hid Your face, I was dismayed.”  
(Psalm 30:7b)

“But the LORD was pleased  
To crush Him, putting Him to grief.”  
(Isaiah 53:10a)

“He...did not spare His own Son.”  
(Romans 8:32a)

“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin.”

([2 Corinthians 5:21a](#))

When Jesus became the sin of Israel and the sin of the world on our behalf ([2 Corinthians 5:21](#)) the full weight of *God's* wrath was kindled against His Son. This passage from Deuteronomy illustrates the use of “awzab” (forsake):

“Then My anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake (awzab) them and hide My face from them, and they will be consumed, and many evils and troubles will come upon them... But I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil which they will do.”

([Deuteronomy 31:17-18](#))

The LORD makes this statement in Deuteronomy to Israel. The question might arise as to why *God* would say that He will forsake Israel when elsewhere He promised to never forsake them.

The first way to reconcile *God's* promise to never forsake Israel and His prophetic anger is to distinguish two different applications of “forsake.” One application is related to Israel’s acceptance, which is permanent, absolute, and unconditionally given by *God*; *God* will never forsake His people from being His precious possession. The other application is related to Israel’s fellowship with and approval from *God*-this is conditional, based on their faithfulness to their covenant with Him under the Law. *God* forsakes fellowship with His people when they forsake following His ways.

For a fuller explanation of this topic, see [The Bible Says commentary for Deuteronomy 31:14-23](#).

The second way to reconcile *God's* promise to never forsake Israel is as a Messianic prophecy that was fulfilled during the time Jesus took on the sins of the world. *God's* unconditional acceptance of all who believe is made possible because Jesus paid our ransom to redeem us from sin. The way *God* kept His promise to never forsake sinful Israel ([Deuteronomy 31:6](#)) was by forsaking Jesus, the Messiah, when He became sin for us ([2 Corinthians 5:21](#)). *God* made His promise to never forsake Israel ([Deuteronomy 31:6](#)) in anticipation of the cross. This promise to never forsake His people has extended to all who believe on Him ([John 3:16](#)).

It is possible that both reconciliations can apply at the same time.

Jesus was *forsaken* by *God* on Israel and the world’s behalf like no one ever has or will be *forsaken*; He endured the sins of the entire world ([Colossians 2:14](#)).

But the Father’s rejection of His Son and His petitions were part of a better plan, a plan to redeem all of humanity. A plan to not only repair the separation between people and *God*, but also to restore

humans to their original design to reign over the earth ([Hebrews 2:9-10](#)). Jesus's death on the cross was the Lamb of God that took away the sins of the world:

"If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,  
He will see His offspring,  
He will prolong His days,  
And the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand."  
([Isaiah 53:10b](#))

"but delivered Him over for us all" ([Romans 8:32](#)).

"on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."  
([2 Corinthians 5:21b](#))

Jesus, the Messiah, God's only begotten Son was *forsaken* by His Father and suffered and died horribly on the cross. And it was during these three hours of darkness that Jesus was made to be sin on our behalf. But Jesus would not be forsaken by God forever.

- His question-*My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?*-seems to come precisely at the moment (the ninth hour-[Matthew 27:45-46](#)) that the darkness lifted and His fellowship with God was restored.
- This means the Son's relationship with His Father was restored before He died on the cross. After asking God why He had forsaken Him, soon thereafter He uttered His dying words: "Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit" ([Luke 23:46](#)).
- Three days later God raised Jesus back to life ([Luke 24:46-47](#), [Acts 10:40](#), [1 Corinthians 15:4](#)).
- Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus ascended to be with God, His Father, again in heaven ([Luke 24:50-51](#), [John 20:17](#), [Acts 1:3, 9-11](#)).
- Jesus is now seated at the right hand of God ([Hebrews 2:3](#)).

Jesus the Messiah endured the brunt of God's wrath when He was *forsaken* (and spiritually slain) by His Father during the three hours of darkness on the cross. But the Father's wrath against His Son who became sin for us ([2 Corinthians 5:21](#)) lasted only for a brief time, then turned into immense favor:

"For His anger is but for a moment,  
His favor is for a lifetime;  
Weeping may last for the night,  
But a shout of joy comes in the morning."  
([Psalm 30:5](#))

Three supreme goods came about through His being *forsaken* and killed:

- The Eternal Glorification of Jesus  
([Isaiah 53:12a](#), [Philippians 2:9-11](#), [Hebrews 12:2](#))
- The Redemption of the World  
([Isaiah 53:12b](#), [John 3:16](#), [Colossians 2:13-14](#))
- The Restoration of Humanity to Their Original Purpose  
([Hebrews 2:9-10](#), [Revelation 3:21](#), [Romans 8:17b](#))

Interestingly, from the Messiah's perspective, the first half of [Psalm 22 \(Psalm 22:1-21\)](#) describes *God* the Father's rejection of the Son, while the second half of the *psalm* ([Psalm 22:22-31](#)) describes the eternal blessings that came about through the divine forsaking.

One final point needs to be made regarding Jesus's death and question *why have You forsaken me* as they pertain to atonement (covering).

According to Matthew and Mark, the timing of Jesus's lament "*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*" was spoken "about/at the ninth hour" ([Matthew 27:46](#), [Mark 15:34](#)). This would have been approximately 3:00 p.m. This is significant because Jesus not only died shortly after saying this, it also corresponded with the timing of the daily afternoon "Tamid Sacrifice."

The Tamid Sacrifice took place in the temple each morning and afternoon. It consisted of several elements: an unblemished male lamb; a flour and oil mixture used to make unleavened bread; wine; and incense. This sacrifice symbolized the perpetual covenant between *God* and the people of Israel.

It was offered twice daily to display how *God's* relationship was continuous and unwavering. The Tamid Sacrifice was offered as an atoning sacrifice-particularly for sins committed unintentionally ([Luke 23:34](#)). Hebrews alludes to the Tamid Sacrifice when it says: "Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices. To "atone" means "to cover." The daily sacrifices covered sin for a time. But Jesus's sacrifice was once for all ([Hebrews 9:12](#)) and covered all sins for all time.

Jesus as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" ([John 1:29](#)) was not only "our Passover [lamb]" ([1 Corinthians 5:7](#)) who was sacrificed for us, He is also our Tamid Sacrifice. The body and blood of Jesus is the sacrifice that sanctifies us once and for all ([Hebrews 9:25-26; 10:9-11](#)).

The symbolism of Jesus's outcry and death occurring at the same time as the daily Temple sacrifice for sin demonstrates how He is our atoning sacrifice of the everlasting covenant, to wash away all the sins of all who believe ([John 3:14-16](#)).

#### 4. [Jesus's Exclamation as a Prophetic Allusion to the many Messianic fulfillments of Psalm 22](#)

While on the cross Jesus directly quoted the first line of [Psalm 22](#): *My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?* (v 1a).

Within Jewish culture, quoting the first line of a *psalm* is a way to name or call upon the entire *psalm*—including its prophetic lines of Messianic vindication, triumph, and *praise* ([Psalm 22:21-31](#)). From a Jewish perspective, the expression: *My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?* is the equivalent in western culture of saying “[Psalm 22](#).” Therefore, when Jesus cried out the first line of this *psalm*, He was highlighting how the whole *psalm* pertained to Himself as the Messiah. This included both the *psalm's* prophetic sufferings and the *psalm's* prophetic triumphs. This was Jesus's way to express how the entirety of [Psalm 22](#) was really about Himself and the Messianic work He came to accomplish.

A more complete list of the prophetic fulfillments of [Psalm 22](#) is available in [The Bible Says](#) article, “[Jesus's Seven Last Words from the Cross-Part Two: A Word of Desolation.](#)”

*Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning* (v 1b).

The second line of [Psalm 22:1](#) may refer to multiple moments within Jesus's final hours.

It could refer to the Father's denial of Jesus's desperate petition for Him to provide another way besides a painful and humiliating death on the cross to accomplish His mission to offer salvation to the world. In the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus was troubled to the point of death ([Matthew 26:38](#)), He fervently prayed: “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done” ([Luke 22:39](#)).

There was a wide gap and far *distance* between the outcome Jesus wanted His Father to have for Him and the desire of His *groaning* prayers.

The line *Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning* (v 1b) could also be in reference to the three hours of darkness and silence Jesus suffered on the cross. The Gospels do not go into elaborate detail about what happened between the sixth and ninth hours (~ 12:00pm-3:00pm) when Jesus was on the cross. They mostly say that it was dark ([Matthew 27:45](#), [Mark 15:33](#), [Luke 23:44-45](#)). But it seems as though that it was during this time that *God* turned His back on His Son as He

sacrificially became the sin of the world. It was during this time that *God* the Father forsook *God* the Son, hence Jesus's loud lament: *My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?*

Moreover, if this was the case, then the next verse of this psalm expounds on what Jesus may have been experiencing as the darkness covered the earth.

*O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer;*

*And by night, but I have no rest (v 2).*

This verse seems to indicate that Jesus was praying to His Father during those three awful hours of darkness. It also seems that *God* did not respond to Jesus according to His immediate wishes to be consoled or delivered. Jesus cried *by day* (before it was dark) and *God* did *not answer*. Jesus cried out in the darkness (*by night*) but He received no consolation up to that moment.

To learn more about the meaning of Jesus's question-*My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?*-from the perspective of the cross, see The Bible Says article, "[Jesus's Seven Last Words from the Cross-Part Two: A Word of Desolation.](#)"

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## COMMENTARY

# Trusting Providence: Why We Must Not Complain Even When God's Plan Hurts



**Sarah Holliday**  
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When I look back on life, I'm amazed at how much sense it makes. Hindsight, they say, is 20/20. Yet sometimes the clarity crashes in like a thunderclap of grace, a divine revelation that stops you in your tracks: *See? It really did turn out more than okay. It turned out beautifully. Purposeful. Glorious.*

In the heat of the moment, though, life rarely feels that way. Trials press in, confusion swirls, and pain can seem relentless. Our natural response is to cry out, "Why, God? Why this? Why *me*?" These aren't always complaints born of rebellion. Often, they're honest pleas from weary hearts longing for understanding. We ache for answers to the afflictions we endure, and when those answers don't come quickly — or at all — we can feel abandoned or overlooked.

And if those answers do come, it's commonly not until much further down the road. Only then do we see all the magnificent ways God really did use poor circumstances for our good and His glory.

Because of this, Scripture invites us to a deeper trust — one that runs deeper than sight. Trust that doesn't insist on instant explanations but anchors itself in the unchanging character of the One who numbers every hair, catches every tear, and writes every chapter. Romans 8:28 doesn't promise that *some* things work for good — it declares that *all* things do, for those who love God and are called according to *His* purpose. The shattered dreams, the agonizing delays, the seasons of sorrow... He gathers every fragment and threads them into a masterpiece of redemption whose full beauty we cannot yet discern.

Joseph's story in Genesis is a prime example of this. Sold into slavery by his brothers, falsely accused, forgotten in prison — he could have spent decades questioning God's plan. But years later, standing before those same brothers, he declared, "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good" (Genesis 50:20). What looked like senseless suffering became the means of saving many lives from famine. Hindsight revealed providence at work.

Even the cross itself — the darkest hour in history — shines brightest in hindsight. Jesus walked toward Calvary with full knowledge of the Father's will. The disciples? They stumbled in misunderstanding after misunderstanding. They rebuked Him for speaking of His impending death (Matthew 16:22), failed to grasp His predictions (Mark 9:32), and scattered in terror when the nails were driven. To them, the crucifixion looked like utter defeat: the Messiah crushed, hope extinguished, dreams buried in a borrowed tomb.

But resurrection morning changed everything.

For the disciples, full clarity only came *after* the Christ rose from the dead, when He explained the Scriptures to them on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:25–27, 44–45), and they later reflected: “Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?” (Luke 24:32). What had seemed catastrophic was unveiled as the fulfillment of Isaiah 53 — the final victory over sin, death, and hell. Defeat in real time became triumph in eternity. If the early church could only see God’s hand clearly after the fact, wouldn’t that be the same for us?

Those “magnificent ways” God uses our circumstances often remain hidden until we’ve walked through the fire and emerged on the other side. They only become sweet and dear when the flood that once surrounded us subsides, failing to overcome us since His hand kept us afloat. Only then do we begin to grasp how a closed door protected us, how a season of waiting built perseverance, or how pain deepened our dependence on Him. What felt like chaos was really divine choreography — His sovereign hand guiding every step, even when He seemed far off.

When the questions rise again — and they will — we must resist the temptation to complain against God’s providence. When the instinct to grumble rises, flex the muscle of faith instead. We may not grasp the *why* today, but we can cling to the *Who*: a Father who never squanders a single tear, who turns mourning into dancing (Psalm 30:11), whose light and momentary afflictions are forging for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison (2 Corinthians 4:17).

If this is the God who spoke galaxies into being, who upholds the stars by the breath of His mouth, who did not spare His own Son but delivered Him up for us all — can He not be trusted with the small, fragile span of our lives? The psalmist put it beautifully: “When I look at Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have set in place, what is man that You are mindful of him?” (Psalm 8:3–4). Yet He *is* mindful. He *does* care. That’s the miracle!

You see, we *can* flip our own scripts. Instead of “Why is this happening to me?” whisper, “Father, this hurts, but I trust Your good, perfect, and unstoppable will.” Instead of “Has God abandoned me?” declare, “Lord, You promised never to leave me nor forsake me. Your steadfast love endures forever. I choose to stand on Your unbreakable word.” When we feel lost and afraid, repeat the word back to yourself: “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever” (Psalm 23:4–6).

Even when providence stings, remember: He did not send His Son to Golgotha’s agony only to abandon us in ours. If the path of the perfect Son included a cross, why would we demand a crown without thorns?

So, here’s the call: look back and give thanks for yesterday’s mercies. Look forward in hope, knowing tomorrow’s story is already written by the same loving Author. And in the present tension? Rest. He is good. He is wise. He is *near*. One day soon — oh, glorious day — the full unveiling will come. Every tangled thread will glow with meaning. Every tear will be gently wiped away by nail-scarred hands. Death will be swallowed up forever. Mourning, crying, and pain will vanish like mist before the dawn (Revelation 21:4). No more questions. No more confusion. Only the endless, radiant worship of the Lamb who was slain — who reigns now and forever.

As John Newton once wrote, “The hour is coming when we shall be astonished to think what mere trifles were once capable of discouraging us.” Those heartaches that once loomed so large will shrink to shadows in the blaze of His glory. So, lift your eyes, weary pilgrim. The story isn’t over. The Author hasn’t faltered. He’s weaving beauty from ashes, joy from sorrow, life from death. Trust Him. Worship Him. Wait for Him. And

when at last we stand before the throne — when we see the masterpiece complete, every wound redeemed, every loss outweighed by glory — we will fall on our faces and cry with one voice: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” (Revelation 5:12).

He has done it all. He will finish it all. And in that day, every knee will bow, every tongue confess, and the universe itself will echo with endless, thunderous, unfathomably marvelous praise. Until then — hold fast. He is coming. And He is making all things new.

Topics: [Biblical Worldview](#)

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