

Psalm 22 - Personal Lament

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[0 : 0 0] So we're now going to continue in our psalm series, and today we're going to be in Psalm 22. So if you've got your Bible, get to Psalm 22. Psalms is right in the middle of your Bible. And if you don't have a Bible, don't worry, the verses will also be up on the screen.

And just by way of reminder, the reason we're doing the psalms and going through the psalms is that the psalms are given to us as a gift. The psalms help give language to all the things we can feel in our soul.

At any given time, right? One pastor, an old, old pastor said, man, it's like the encyclopedia of our soul. And so we get to experience like the emotions of people in the highest of heights, where it's like, man, they're full of joy.

Things are going well. Things are happy, and they're praising God in that space. But then there's also the places of sorrow and pain and suffering, and they're crying out to God from those places.

And every emotion in between, emotion in between. And so that is what the psalms are about. They help us bring our authentic selves to God.

[1 : 0 8] And that's what God wants from us, man. He's not inviting us like Haley was talking about today. He's not inviting us to come all perfect and polished every single time. He wants us to bring our whole self. And that includes our emotions.

And I think oftentimes we think we have to come to God with everything but those things. Like we are very untrusting of emotions. I think what is often celebrated in our culture is kind of the stoic man, the man of stern face that is unmoved by anything.

Nothing hurts him. Nothing gets to him. And we tend to like applaud those people. And we think like, man, I want to be like that because it seems like nothing can really get to that guy or that girl.

So, and man, that's actually the Bible says that's the worst way to live. Heartless. Having a heart of stone like that, that is actually just very unhealthy.

But I think also, especially for many of us, we've grown up with this understanding of emotions are a bad thing to express. We shouldn't trust them. Or we should suppress them. And so we have a hard time expressing joy.

[2 : 1 0] And then the other side of that is that we also have a hard time expressing ourselves when we're in pain or when we're in suffering. And that's the other set of emotions that God calls us to bring to him, right?

Our sorrow, our anguish, our fears, and our doubts. And I think probably for a lot of Christians, we really struggle with these particularly because we think like those things are sinful.

Somehow we're just not believing God enough for whatever situation we're in. Like, man, why am I feeling sad? I'm not supposed to feel sad. That somehow has something to do with my faith and I'm not believing God enough.

And I should be like living in the joy of the Lord all the time, you know, every moment of the day. And so when we feel sorrow, when we feel anguish, when we feel doubt, when we feel fear, we think, oh my goodness, I'm sinning.

I'm sorry, God. And so along with those feelings is heaped on a bunch of shame and guilt for that as well. And it creates more fear and more doubt and more, you know, it's this ugly cycle that we can get caught up in.

[3 : 11] And I think that's one of the big lies of Christianity because God wants us to express our sorrows to him. He wants us to bring them to him. He cares as much about our tears as he does our triumphs.

And today we're going to read a song by King David. And God loved this man very deeply. It says about David that he was a man after God's own heart.

God found David as a little shepherd boy, young man in the pasture tending his father's sheep, lowly, young man of no importance and significance at all.

And he raised him up to be the king of his people, the nation of Israel. He exalted him and set him on the throne of the nation of Israel.

But for all of God's blessing in David's life, guess what? David had bad days. And Psalm 22 shows us a pretty bad day of what's going on.

[4 : 08] Verse 1, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me from the words of my groaning?

Oh, my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer. And by night, but I find no rest. Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. In you, our fathers trusted.

They trusted and you delivered them. To you, they cried and were rescued. In you, they trusted and were not put to shame. But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people.

All who see me mock me. They make mouths at me. They wag their heads. He trusts in the Lord. Let him deliver him. Let him rescue him, for he delights in him.

Yet, yet, you are he who took me from the womb. You made me trust you at my mother's breasts. On you was I cast from my birth.

[5 : 12] And from my mother's womb, you have been my God. Be not far from me, for trouble is near. And there is none to help. Many bulls encompass me.

Strong bulls of bashing surround me. They open wide their mouths at me like a ravening and roaring lion. I am poured out like water. And all my bones are out of joint.

My heart is like wax. It is melted within my breast. My strength is dried up like a pot shirt. And my tongue sticks to my jaws.

You lay me in the dust of death. For dogs encompass me. A company of evildoers encircles me. They have pierced my hands and feet.

I can count all my bones. They stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them. And for my clothing, they cast lots. But you, O Lord, do not be far off.

[6 : 14] O you, my help, come quickly to my aid. Deliver my soul from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dog. Save me from the mouth of the lion.

You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen. I will tell of your name to my brothers. In the midst of the congregation, I will praise you. You who fear the Lord, praise him.

All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him and stand in awe of him. All you offspring of Israel. For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted.

He has not hidden his face from him, but has heard when he cried to him. From you comes my praise in the great congregation.

My vows I will perform before those who fear him. Just got a few more verses left. The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied. Those who seek him shall praise the Lord.

[7 : 11] May your hearts live forever. All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord. And all the families of the nations shall worship before you. For kingship belongs to the Lord.

And he rules over the nations. All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship. Before him shall bow all who go down to the dust.

Even the one who could not keep himself alive. Posterity shall serve him. It shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation. They shall come and proclaim his righteousness.

To a people yet unborn that he has done it. Because this is God's word. You read that and you realize, you know what?

King David, he could sing the blues. Right? Like him and B.B. King would have been tight if he lived today. What I love about this psalm is that it is wonderfully human.

[8 : 12] It confesses the pain and fear and humiliation and hardship of what this man is going through. David, he doesn't say, he doesn't like create this psalm that's like, let's see, okay, I'm going through some tough times here.

And he's going through some serious tough times. He doesn't like, how do I figure out some kind of religious formula so I can like say this and then this and then this will be the result over here, you know?

I can suddenly start feeling better. He doesn't do that. He's not like, man, how can I just steer my ship to positivity here in this tough time?

Just got to ignore all the pain and the hardship. Push through. Focus on the good. And he's raw and he's real with God. But at the same time, we have to realize, man, his faith is caught in this dissonance of his suffering and God's goodness, which is a confusing place to be.

Many of us know what that's like. We just don't often know what to do with it. And David here, he digs into his soul to give voice to his confusion and out comes this lament.

[9 : 20] And that's what this psalm is. This psalm is a personal lament. Lament. And that's what lamenting is. Lament is wrestling through confusion with God. And you feel that.

You can sense that confusion throughout this psalm. And it kicks it off in just the very first few verses. He starts out with, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

My covenant God, you seem far away. You're not hearing my prayers. You're not hearing the groaning of my heart that I've been groaning with for a long time.

It seems like you don't see my pain. And don't you love me enough to make this stop? Where are you? Then in verse 3, it goes on to say, yet.

So here's my situation, Lord. This is how I'm feeling. And then he says, yet. This is what I know about you. You are holy. Enthroned on the praises of Israel. And he's saying here, God, I know who you are.

[10 : 22] I know who you are. You're holy. You're perfect. You're righteous. You're just. You're unstained from sin. There's no guile. And there's no evil in you. Like, this isn't happening. You're not doing this to me because you are this, like, vile, vindictive type of person.

And not only that, you're our God. I'm speaking to you. You're the one who made us your covenant people. You are the one who said to us, I will be your God. I will be your Savior. And we're the ones who praise and honor and boast in you.

You can sense David's wrestle here. And what he knows about God isn't lining up with his life circumstances right now. But David also knows something.

He also knows he can't just go and change who God is. Because God is who he is. And God doesn't change. David's right. God is holy. Which leads him to think the next obvious thing.

So if God's holy and he's unchanging, then what he has done before, surely he's going to do again, won't he? Which is why verse 4 adds another layer to David's confusion.

[11 : 30] He looks back through history and sees how God has come through in the past for others. Verse 4. In you our fathers trusted. They trusted and you delivered them.

To you they cried and were rescued. In you they trusted and were not put to shame. You can feel. You can hear David's confusion.

God, I'm crying out to you to rescue me. Nothing's happening. I'm getting silence. I'm not getting your help. And I'm confused because I know that you're holy. I know that you're unchanging.

You're the same yesterday, today, and forever. And I'm supposed to be special to you. You made us your people. You saved us. You said you would sustain us. And then I look back and I see that you did that in the past.

You've rescued others. When they cried out to you, you delivered them. Every trial, every sorrow, every suffering, every betrayal that you and I can go through, man, it can stir up insecurity about your relationship with God, where you stand with him.

[12 : 32] Our hearts begin to think, man, does God love me less than those he rescues and helps? Why am I not worthy of his protection and blessing?

Why do I have to go through this? And those are real emotions. Those are real questions that stir up in our soul in those times. And often what we do is we don't face those questions.

We just think like, oh man, I should not be thinking these things. We just want them to go away. We just want them to disappear. We suppress them. We don't let them out. We don't give voice to them.

Or oftentimes we bring the right questions to the wrong person or the wrong place. But lament doesn't do that. Lament brings your complaint to the right person.

And yes, I did say complaint. It is okay and it is good to bring your complaint to God. Psalm 55 verse 17 says, in the evening and the morning and at noon, I utter my complaint and moan and he hears my voice.

[13 : 39] Now some of us, that's good news because we have enough complaints to fill three sessions a day, right? The point here is that God wants you to complain to him.

God wants you to voice your complaints and bring them to him. He knows this world is full of injustice. He knows you're going to be sinned against. And he knows when you're sinned against. He knows you're going to experience pain and loss and hardship.

He knows all those things and he knows when they happen. Here's the thing. Where do you go to vent? When those things happen, when you're going through it, where do you and I go to vent?

Because that matters. There's a huge difference between venting to God and venting to others or just internalizing. Great example, the nation of Israel. Wandering in the wilderness 40 years.

What were they known for? Complaining. But they weren't complaining to God, they were complaining about God. And that's a big difference. When things didn't go their way, that's what they did.

[14 : 42] And that serves and is an example for us. Hebrews, the book of Hebrews actually talks about everything that was written about beforehand was for our benefit. We are supposed to read those things and learn from them.

So Israel gives us a great example of what not to do. What happens when we don't complain to God? Well, instead of God being our rescue, he becomes the one we rebel against.

We become hard-hearted towards him. And here's the thing. God can't help and guide you through what you don't bring to him. And in his place, if you don't go to him, something or someone will be guiding you.

And that never ends well. When we go through hardship, when we go through trial, if God isn't, you're not turning to him to have him guide you through it, something and someone else will, and it's not going to end well.

Here's the thing. Usually leads to sin. Typically leads to sin. And you can sin just as much in your suffering. Just because you may be the victim of something doesn't give you the right to respond any way you see fit.

[15 : 56] God has as much to say to the oppressor about living righteously and sin as he does to those who are oppressed about living righteously and turning from their sin.

So what's important here is bringing the issue to God. He knows how to deal with it in the best way. He does. If he is who he says he is, then he is a God that knows everything.

He doesn't know most things. He knows everything. He is perfect in righteousness and justice. And it also means he's all wise.

He not only knows everything, but he knows the best way and the best thing to do in every given situation. And how to work it out. And also he knows the best time to work out that situation.

So even when the result doesn't make sense to you and me, if he is who he says he is, then he can work all things toward the good for those who he loves. Failing to bring your complaint to God is going to push you to believe in your way and your timing is just and righteous.

[17 : 13] And slowly, what will happen is you'll become a more resentful, judgmental, self-righteous, and bitter person. And what that does, it just truncates you as a person.

It truncates your relationship with God and people. I want to just kind of focus on our relationship with God because what will happen is that you'll start to see God as unsafe and untrustworthy.

If God is allowing it to happen, why should I turn to him or trust him? That's what we think. Why should I believe he ever hears and is going to help me? And Psalm 22 gives us a good reason to continue to lean into God with your lament and to trust him in the trial.

Verse 6 says, And then verse 9, we see this pivot.

And there's two things we see in that passage we just read.

[18 : 44] Lament honors your pain, but it also honors God's faithfulness at the same time. It could hold those two things in tension. And here's what it is saying to us.

Your life is more than just today. Your life is more than the present darkness you may be living in. And lament remembers that God's been with you every day of your life, even when you didn't realize he was there.

It says, He made us in the womb. Almost remembering, man, from the time I was born, from the time that that little sperm hit that egg and started forming me, God was there.

He was over that. He was knitting it together. He was guiding that process. He was over me. He knew me. He knew the soul that I was. And then when I was born, you sustained my life.

When I was a nursing baby, why does he, why does, of all the things to bring up, why does David go there? Why does David go to the womb and nursing? And I think it's because you and I are never more vulnerable and dependent than at that time of our life.

[19 : 55] Think about it. Babies are weak. They're powerless. They're incapable of sustaining their own life. They're not going out and getting their own job, driving themselves to work, you know, putting in a good eight-hour day, bringing home the bacon.

They're not doing that. Yet God's there. David's remembering that. Oh yeah, you were there. You were there. Before I even knew you were there.

Taking care of me and providing me for me in ways, through your ways and means. And he stops and he says, man, God is, has always been there with me.

Through my whole life, he's been, my God, taking care of me. And so we see the psalmist, he honors his pain. He says, man, I feel like a worm. I feel subhuman.

The way I'm being treated, abused by strong and powerful men that are just bent on hurting and oppressing and out to destroy me. Right? The bulls of Bashan surrounding him, the lions tearing their flesh, growling at him, saying, you're next.

[21 : 00] But he doesn't let his present suffering become what defines his life. He doesn't. He steps back. He considers all that's happened before this hardship.

And what he recognizes is, man, there is a ton of evidence of God's faithfulness. There's a ton of evidence of God's kindness and benevolence and mercy toward him all along the way. And remembering God's past faithfulness is important.

Because if you don't, your problems often get bigger than God. So much so, so that you don't think God can or will do anything about your present situation.

And I think this is a big pitfall when me and you go through suffering, is that we start to question if God is really who we believed him to be.

And that can lead to adjusting our faith or deconstructing our faith to make sense of our present circumstance. That's a dangerous thing to do.

[21 : 59] And I want to say this, lament is not a deconstruction project. It holds the truth of your trial. That is very real. And at the same time, it holds the truth of who God is, which cannot be defined by your trial.

Don't do that. Man, honor your pain and God's faithfulness. That's the ballast that we have in suffering. We don't get to say like, man, God, based on my current situation, my evidence, this is what you must be like.

Our circumstances aren't God's revelation. God's revelation is who he is through his word and what he's given to us. And that never, ever, ever changes. And that's good news.

That is ballast for our souls. Because God's past faithfulness, he's a faithful God yesterday, today, and forever, because his past faithfulness gives us confidence.

We know that he's going to be faithful in a future that he holds and he knows. Lament knows that salvation deferred is not salvation denied. Verse 19, but you, oh Lord, do not be far off.

[23 : 08] Oh, you, my help, come quickly to my aid. Deliver my soul from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dog. Save me from the mouth of the lion. Rescue me from the horns of the wild oxen.

He's crying out to God, man, Lord, I need you to come through. Things are really getting bad. I need you to come through. He's requesting and believing God is going to intervene. And then he pivots again.

Verse 22, I will tell your name to my brothers. Not the name that I think you are now, that I want to describe you as. I'm going to tell your name, who you are to my brothers.

In the midst of the congregation, I will praise you. You who fear the Lord, praise him. All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him and stand in awe of him.

All you offspring of Israel, for he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted. And he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard when he cried to him.

[24 : 11] From you comes my praise in the great congregation. My vows, I will perform before those who fear him. The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied.

The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied. Those who seek him shall praise the Lord.

May your hearts live forever. We see this in most laments. It brings the real problem, real emotions to God.

It asks God for help. And then it moves into praising God, believing he is a God who saves and will be faithful to save. In lament, we don't withhold praise until God comes through.

Right? You praise God, even in your suffering, because you believe, without a shadow of a doubt, that he will deliver. And this isn't naming and claim it theology.

[25 : 13] And if I just say it with the right amount of faith, I can make this happen. That's not what's going on here. No, no, no. It's not confidence in your ability. It's not confidence in some religious formula.

It's confidence in God who is faithful. And confidence in God who is good. The psalmist here hasn't realized his deliverance yet. But he knows who God is.

He knows how God works. And even though things aren't looking good for him right now, even though he's losing, he believes one day God's going to work on his behalf to deliver and save him.

He has not given up on God. And lamenting isn't giving voice to doubt. It's dwelling in that confusion of suffering, between suffering and God's goodness.

But in the end, lament, in the end, faith in God prevails. It chooses to trust in the God who holds the future. And lament is what we'll do the more we are secure in our relationship to God our Father.

[26 : 20] That's what's going to happen. And think about this. God's own son lamented in his most desperate hour. From the cross, Jesus cried out the very words that opened this psalm.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? This psalm was fulfilled by Jesus on the cross.

When Jesus said that, he knew what he was doing. He knew that he was saying, this psalm, I'm stepping into all that it says. We only heard him say, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

But the fullness of this psalm is describing what he is going through. He is lamenting his real experience. Verse 16, his hands and his feet were pierced by evil men.

Psalm 22, verse 18, soldiers were dividing his garments at the foot of his cross. In verse 7, it said, all who saw him mocked and scorned him. In his hour of greatest anguish and pain and humiliation, Jesus looked to the father and the father was silent.

[27 : 33] He didn't step in to comfort or to save his son. And in that darkness, Jesus lets out his lament. And God the father from heaven didn't look down and be like, man, Jesus, I thought you knew better.

Me and you from eternity, I thought you knew how much I loved you. The father didn't look down and despise his son. How dare you lament at me like that? He didn't withdraw his love or chastise his son, but still he didn't answer Jesus' cry.

Think about that. He didn't come and rescue Jesus from the cross. God was silent when his son was most vulnerable. The cross, I think it teaches us not to measure God's love by his silence.

He's going to be silent in our lives sometimes. Don't try to, don't start measuring his love and his goodness when that happens. God the father never stopped loving Jesus.

And here's the proof. There's an empty grave. The empty grave shouts louder than the silence of the crucifixion.

[28 : 52] God's rescue was deferred. It was not denied. And that's good news. I know some of you, you're going through hell right now. You're going through tough stuff.

You may be wondering, man, God, where are you? Feel silent. That empty grave, don't forget that. It shouts louder, it shouts louder than the silence of the crucifixion.

In the cross and resurrection, we see the pattern and the hope of lament. Lament. Let's learn to lament. Let's use this gift. Let's bring our real selves to God.

Let's not hold it back. Let's bring our complaints and our pain and our sorrows and our anguish to the right person. He's good and he hears. Give it to him.

But always remember, man, God's bigger than your problem. There's an empty grave that proves that. There is hope for salvation yet to come.

[29 : 58] We need to know that because the road to eternal life isn't trouble free. Acts 14.22, Paul and some guys are going back through the churches and it says, they're strengthening the souls of the disciples and they were encouraging them to continue in the faith and saying that through many tribulations, we must enter the kingdom of God.

Jesus isn't going to make your life perfect and sweet. Life is so much better with him but it's not going to be trouble free. As the band comes up, I want to give us some options to respond and I want to speak to you in the room if you're here and not yet a Christian.

I want to say something very sobering. I'm saying this in love because I care about you. One day we will die. One day you will die. And when we die, we're going to stand before God in judgment.

And for those that never repented and believed on Jesus, there will be an eternal suffering. There will be no release from that. There is no rescue at that point.

There will be no lamenting to soothe you and comfort you. That place, that eternal death is described as darkness, unresolved weeping and gnashing of teeth, anger, bitterness.

[31 : 28] But Jesus is offering you his salvation today from that suffering. He died on the cross to release you from sin's penalty of eternal death and sin's power over you.

I want to call you, man, humble yourself. Repent of your sin to him and confess him as king and savior. For those of us in the room, we are a Christian, you call yourself a Christian, I want you to respond and ask God, how is he calling you to respond today?

What is he calling you to do? We're going to take a moment right now before we take communion just to examine our hearts. We're going to quietly do that for the next 60 seconds.

Examine your hearts. How is God calling you to respond? Let's do that right now. Amen.

Holy Spirit, all that you have begun in our hearts, I pray that you would continue to do today through this week. Amen.