

Psalm 22 - St Swithin's Walcot, 1st August 2021

It must be the most anguished cry in the whole of human history “my God my God why have you abandoned me”. These are of course the very words that Jesus cried out at the depths of his own suffering on the cross. But Jesus was not inventing unique words to interpret his suffering. Rather he was deliberately quoting Ps 22:1. Words that we first find uttered by David. Now it is difficult to see what part of David's life this might refer to. As one person says this psalm is not a description of illness but of execution, and whilst David was once threatened with stoning, it is a very different scene. Understandable people say this Psalm is simply a prophetic Psalm. – time and again we see so many refs link us directly to cross of Jesus – taunting and mocking (v7), dividing up garments and casting lots (18), hands and feet pierced (v16) One translation bible, calls this Psalm of the cross. No problem with that – most certainly is. But this psalm was song God people sang. Over years it has resonated deeply with experiences of people through ages. Indeed, part of power cross, not just objectively Jesus did something unique on cross, but that in cross, pattern for us. Suffering and then glory. NT pattern way of Jesus, way of Christian life.

Ps 22 was Jesus psalm. Ps 22 also David's psalm. Psalm 22 most certainly our psalm! Psalm two parts: psalm of **sobbing**, psalm of **praising** -2 things not mutually exclusive in life of Christian.

Psalm of sobbing

David expresses so vividly own experience of feeling utterly abandoned by God. Here is the most intense suffering that Gods servant can ever know. It's not just that enemies are surrounding him (and they are v7, 12-13) – not just that his body is in the most dreadful pain (and it is v14-16) – but almost worst of all, he feels that God does not hear him and simply doesn't care about his suffering. That is not uncommon feeling amongst us is it? In face terrible trouble, we wonder how our loving heavenly father can stand idly by when we are in such pain.

Hi had a lovely friend in my last church. In her life she had faced terrible things – death her young baby, worship-leading husband left her, more recently she had bowel cancer. What really made her upset – when we had a testimony slot in church. Someone talking very earnestly about their child's hamster that was ill/hurt. Talked of how she prayed, hamster healed. After service, my friend was seething. So angry. What kind of God heals hamster – let's baby die, marriage collapse, cancer to grow? No answer that explains that! Lady started up a group in our church. 'misfits' – people talk about doubts, why struggled so much faith. Nervous – but I took decision let

happen, keep in touch. Do you know all them still in church and serving in church. Not abandoned faith. BUT Not prepared ignore painful realities, dark questions. But somehow faith was not gone.

David, even in extreme distress, never loses faith, nor does he ever fall into complete hopelessness. His anguish leads him to prayer and the first words of this psalm. 'My God, my God'. Even in his suffering and doubt and confusion, his instinct is hanging on to his God. Same next Psalm all know so well. Ps 23 doesn't start, the lord is A shepherd. The Lord is MY shepherd. Even though I walk through valley of shadow of death – I will fear no evil, for you are with me" – dark experience, yet faith God is there somewhere v personal way.

What fuels that faith? Amazingly it is testimony. When lady angry at testimony – I wondered – should I stop allowing them. Ps 22 says no! Recalling moments when clear God has been there for his people vital. Not necessarily own experience – people's experience. V4-5 – fathers, ancestors – striking – they cried out and he didn't abandon them. David here says, I've cried and God abandoned me – BUT seen, Gods faithfulness - like fog, lifts for moment – see destination. He is there. Also, deep sense God knows him, God committed to him, no matter what seems. Been often unseen part life from very beginning. V9-10 – echo Psalm 139 – read it.

Recurring theme psalms **spiritual remedy to suffering and pain**, fill mind with stories of when God has been faithful, even if it was to others in past – **Why reading bible so imp. Why sharing testimony so imp** in church even if can cause some pain, why not me. Fill mind, truths know – God been with us. "*cast all your anxieties on the Lord, because he cares for you*". Children, my kids at times struggled with me and Fran. Tell them off, wouldn't let them have things wanted – times not stepped in and solved problems for them - let them work through stuff - grumpy and feel suffering – ask them now at uni – know we love you? – say yes. We no doubt you love us and are there for us. Seen enough evidence. Don't doubt I love them.

NT – clear – normal Christian experience – Romans 5 – suffering produces perseverance, perseverance produces character, and character hope – and hope doesn't disappoint". Bottom line is this – feeling forsaken by God far from being unique to Christ and rare for the believer –is regular and frequent struggle for the ordinary Christian. – Daily taking up the cross.

Brings us to what must now say – as well as touching on common experience Christian – psalm is clearly a profound and specific prophesy of sufferings of Jesus. See in its words the unmistakable scene of Christ's crucifixion (v16-18). Psalms fullest fulfilment is in cross Jesus. On the cross

Jesus identifies with us in our real suffering – truth is our sin, our refusal allow God to have supreme place lives, creates a barrier, a wall – shuts us out from presence of God, without realising, **we are utterly forsaken and abandoned by God.**

Hebrews 2 quote psalm, goes on “since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death”

On that cross, Jesus is our substitute – he experiences the reality and agony of being **actually abandoned by God forsaken**, cut off – so that we don't have to experience that full reality for eternity. Means, have Saviour really knows feels like to be abandoned and forsaken by God. BUT not only that.. Three days later he bursts out of tomb – show defeated sin, and death and power of devil. Declares – you are no longer ever abandoned, no longer ever forsaken – no matter how much feels like it.. The dividing wall torn down, Curtain, ripped gone for ever. God is with you! God is for you! Joy of cross. Why Psalm suddenly changes mood.

Psalm of praising.

V22 “in the midst of the congregation I will praise you”. Imagine him Sunday morning – everyone knows going through most awful time, but stands up – vicar nervous – meant full of joy, lower mood service – no – not all – tells everyone else church that morning – get up v23 – I'm praising God and you lot need to praise God too.

Why praise? Simple, - striking – success of cause of God. The failure at beginning of Psalm seems now swallowed up in victory. Notice - worldwide, all people, everyone (v27-29). God triumphed and it affects everyone, It is time blessing for all – not just short-lived (v30) lasting blessing. What is the nature victory? – **saving mercy of God** v24. Amazing – on cross cry of Jesus 'it is finished' – not cry of defeat. It is accomplished – cry of yes – its done – there in v31! Victory has been won. Gods mercy has been secured for all people. God will bless his people – One day people share glory that is now Jesus' after cross..

In this Psalm – see pattern of Jesus – suffering then glory. That is pattern of Christian life. Life will be tough. Solution – hang on to God in prayer – remember and mediate on promises of God, ways fulfilled past. Praise him, for victory of cross. Maybe don't feel victorious – look –cross and resurrection and ascension — remind us – God is merciful and he has not abandoned us. One day we will experience the fullness of his blessing and his glory. Hang in there saints!