

“GOD-FORSAKEN!”

Psalm 22:1-18

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INTRODUCTION

There is likely no psalm where the “sense of loneliness is so utter, none in which the peril is so imminent. In this psalm we see the believing man in his extremity—troubled, suffering, reproached and mocked, persecuted, expended, physically ruined, and on the verge of death. But the worst of it all is that he finds himself **God-forsaken**. Where is God when it hurts? Why won’t God help me? When will He come to my assistance? Surely, every child of God at times has felt this way, and this psalm has been a source of strength and comfort to many.

However, primarily this is a **Messianic Psalm**. It applies to Christ first and foremost, and then in relationship with Him to the believer as well in a secondary sense. This psalm, truly Davidic according to the title and grammatical and vocabulary usage and stylistic features, cannot be tied in with any circumstance in David’s life or any characteristic experiences of his. Nor can it describe “the whole history” of David’s “sufferings and persecutions. This psalm does not describe an illness or other difficult human experience; it describes “an *execution*.”

Peter and the NT give the best interpretation: A “holy m[a]n of God spoke as [he] was moved by the HS” (II Pet. 1:21) and as a “prophet” David “foresaw and spoke of ... the Christ” (Acts 2:30-31). Leupold notes that most liberal critics reject the prophetic interpretation of this passage and supposed the sufferings of some individual were found to be very appropriate by Jesus for use in His circumstances. However, the results coming from the deliverance of such a person (vv. 22ff) go far beyond what could be reasonably expected by any normal human sufferer (pp. 207-208).

Leupold notes **four** possible interpretations for this psalm—*personal, ideal, national, predictive*:

- 1) Personal—some individual such as David lived through such circumstances and then recounts them.
- 2) Ideal—not of any particular person, but “things that would befall the ideal righteous man; a sort of composite picture of all the sufferings that would befall a man if he were entirely righteous.”
Perowne presents this view; it was composed by an individual of the Babylonian captivity speaking as a representative. It seemed as though God had forsaken him, yet he knows that some day he and his people will praise God along with the nations (236). **I cannot accept this; it is clearly a Davidic psalm.** But, Perowne also combines this view with number 4—the predictive (237). Israel’s history was “typical of the history of Redemption, as well as that of the individual Israelite to be typical of Christ” (Ibid).
- 3) National—the nation of Israel, esp. during the exile.
- 4) Predictive—the entire psalm is “pure prophecy concerning the Christ Himself and assumes that the author was conscious of the fact that he was prophesying”. This view is the **oldest** and the **most predominant** and to some degree still is. Note NT parallels with Ps. 22 concerning Christ’s Crucifixion:
 - Verse 1 cry: Mt. 27:46—Jesus on the cross

- Scorn of passersby and shaking of their heads (v. 7; Mt. 27:39)
- Words of v. 8—Mt. 27:43
- Intense thirst of v. 15—“I thirst” in Jn. 19:28
- Parting of the garments (v. 18)—Jn. 19:23
- The piercing (v. 16) in all the gospels of nailing to the cross.
- The conversion of the nations in vv. 22ff as the fruit of His resurrection and ascension (Heb. 2:11).

Leupold seems on track when he prefers a form of the **view four**, without ruling out that some elements of the other three could be involved here; I would add *especially of number 1 as true in the life of David to some extent*. To some degree these sufferings may be seen as “a kind of composite picture of what righteous men have endured throughout the ages”; but, Leupold notes, “such an abstraction has too little flesh and blood to be located in this psalm” (195). Moreover, Israel’s experiences may only remotely be related to the details of this psalm. Psalmists did at times become prophetic witnesses as we see e.g. in Ps. 110—cf. Mt. 22:43.

The Psalm is divided into “I/me” sections (1-2; 6-8; 12-18) and “Thou” sections (3-5; 9-11; 19-21). Verse 22 transitions to triumphant proclamation to the nations and others of God’s response and deliverance of his sufferer.

Though things may seem desperate, God will never leave you nor forsake you—because He already judicially forsook His Son!

On the title of the psalm “upon the hind of the morning” we can make these comments:

1. A tune name, and a reference to first words of another song, to the tune of which this psalm would be played.
2. But, the tune in question may have dealt with such a topic as suggested by those wanting to see some significance in both “the hind” and “the morning.” There are too many similarities elsewhere in Scripture for this to be a mere coincidence.
3. But the evidence is not clear enough to make these words a reference to the theme of this psalm.

I. THE EXTREMITY OF TROUBLE (1-2; 6-8;; 11-18)

A. Forsaken by God (1-2)

1. His words of groaning (roaring) bring no response—no salvation (1).
2. His continual cry—day and night—results in no answer nor silence for his words (2)
Yet, in all of this note that He is still “My God.” (2 times in v. 1; once in v. 2)

B. Reproached by Men (6-8)

1. Degraded from a man to a worm (6a)
2. Reproached by men and despised by people (6b)
3. Sneered at by passersby—gaping mouths and wagging heads (7)
4. Using his own words to mock him (8)
 - Commit yourself to the Lord.
 - Let Him deliver you and rescue you.

- Surely, He delights in you!
- C. In Imminent Danger of Death (11-18)
1. Trouble near but no helper (11)
 2. Surrounded by bulls (12)
 3. Threatened by a Ravening and roaring lion (13)
 4. Surrounded by dogs (16)
 5. Personally and physically spent (14-15)
 - Poured out like water
 - Bones out of joint
 - Heart melted like wax
 - Strength dried up like a piece of pottery
 - Tongue cleaving to the jaws
 - Lying in the dust of death
 6. Piercing of hands and feet (16)
 7. Naked and emaciated (17)
 8. Garments divided among his adversaries (18)

II. THE ENCOURAGEMENT IN GOD (3-5; 9-10)

- A. God is Holy (3a)
- B. God is “enthroned”, “dwells upon”, the Praises of Israel—His people (3b)
- C. Believing forefathers have trusted in God and were delivered (4)
- D. Believing forefathers cried out and were not ashamed—disappointed (5)
- E. Divine care has been present for the believer from birth (9-10)
 - God brought me forth (9)
 - God gave me the security of my mother’s breasts. (9b)
 - I am cast on God from birth (10a)
 - You are “my God” from birth (10b)

CONCLUSION

Life brings much trouble—you have not had it as bad as Christ! You have never experienced what He did.

Remember, when God seems distant, he is still present and will sustain you—just as He always has! He cannot give you up—for He is Holy; His nature and promises and commitments make that impossible. He has answered other believers in the past; He will answer you. He has always been there for you; why would he stop now.

Since he inhabits the praises of His people, **praise Him** and trust Him—even when there seems to be no hope and no apparent reason!

Though things may seem desperate, God will never leave you nor forsake you—because He already judicially forsook His Son!