

PSALM 22 – The Sufferings of the Messiah (part 3)

Verse 14 (emblematic parallelism) – David felt as if he was poured out like water. The depth of his soul was emptied like water being poured out of a container. All his bones were out of joint. How painful it is to have one bone out of joint. But to have all the bones out of joint - the pain must be excruciating. Obviously this is poetic language which describes the pain that David experienced internally. The sorrow was both emotional as well as physical. His heart was like wax, i.e. melted wax that flows uncontrollably. It was melted in the midst of his bowels. This is a description of a man whose innermost being is void of strength and the joy of living has departed. David was consumed by his grief.

Verse 15 (emblematic parallelism) – His strength was dried up like potsherd (a piece of pottery). This means that David's strength was completely gone. He was weak like an infant. He could not go on and felt completely boxed in. His strength was gone and he was totally exhausted. David's tongue cleaved to his jaws. This means that he could not speak at all. He could not argue or reason or cry out to man for help. Every source of help had been totally exhausted and David was at a total loss. No one on earth could come to his aid. David felt as though the LORD had brought him into the dust of death. The dust of death has to refer to the ashes of a person after death and decay had taken place. This means that David felt like death had consumed him. He had even passed death and into the stage of decay after death!

David's description of his emotional and physical state ought to be the state of every believer. This should have been the state we were in before salvation. We should have felt bankruptcy of spirit. These two verses describe very well bankruptcy of spirit. There is no implication here that David was not born again. He was definitely describing his condition after he was born again. This was his experience in the face of severe trials that reduced him to absolute helplessness. The lesson for us is to reject self confidence and to have God confidence instead. Paul shared in **2 Corinthians 12:10** (KJV), "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

These two verses could also be applied to Christ in His time of crucifixion. As Christ faced the cross of Calvary, he knew that He was dying for the sins of the whole world. To be forsaken by the LORD as He hung on the cross resulted in Christ sweating as it were drops of blood (cf Luke 22:44) even as He communed with the Heavenly Father.

Verse 16 (synthetic parallelism) – David's enemies were called dogs. They do not refer to pet dogs but wild street dogs and scavengers that roamed the cities. These pick at dead carcasses for food. They also move in packs. David's enemies had surrounded him and he had no one to turn to for help or for safety. This is very much like the time King Saul pursued David and the time Absalom ousted David from the throne, albeit for a short while, before

his death in battle. The assembly of the wicked have enclosed or surrounded him, and they were closing the circle to make it smaller. In addition to calling them dogs, David also referred to them as the assembly of the wicked. Their actions and motives were characterised by wickedness. They wanted to kill David who only wanted to obey God and to do His will in his life. David did not ask to be king and he did not try to oust king Saul who forfeited the kingdom because of his own sins. God made David king by His sovereign will. David had done no wrong and that is why he could call them "the assembly of the wicked."

David said that they pierced his hands and his feet. This could not have been a literal experience, which means that David felt as though his hands and feet were nailed down, as though he could not move. There was nowhere to go for safety in Israel. He had to leave Israel and enter Philistine territory to find safety! In the case of Jesus Christ, it was a literal experience for him. Christ's hands and feet were nailed to the cross.

Verse 17 (synthetic parallelism) – David said that he could tell all his bones, i.e. he could count them. This describes a man who is thin and gaunt. David could see his own bony hands and feet and ribs. They seemed to stare back at him. Some may infer that the bones were David's enemies. However, the context argues more for the bones rather than the enemies. What a despondent picture of a man rejected by his own people and nation. He loved Israel and was prepared to die for Israel, including king Saul. The soldiers had fought side by side with David. He played the harp to minister to king Saul when he was ill. David obeyed when the king ordered him to kill the Philistines. Despite all the good he did, they wanted him dead.

This is also a picture of Christ, who came to die for us and we put Him on the cross instead. He gave us His all and we crucified Him! He died a most painful death to save us.

Verse 18 (synthetic parallelism) – This verse cannot apply to David at all without hurting the text. It has to refer only to Christ. **John 19:24** (KJV), "They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did." There is a clear NT reference stating that what they did in the time of Christ was in fulfilment of Holy Scriptures. These soldiers at the foot of the cross of Christ were so callous - all they cared about was to loot the crucified victims. They were present at the most important event in all of human history which the LORD took thousands of years to plan and finally accomplished within their lifetime. They were so near the cross and yet so far from God. Their callous attitude depicts the callousness of all mankind. If we were there like the soldiers, we too would probably have behaved in the same callous way! Anyone who rejects the gospel of Jesus Christ is re-enacting the callous acts of the soldiers at the cross. Many care only for the material and reject the eternal even when it is offered free of charge!

Verse 19 (synthetic parallelism) – David cried to the LORD for help and asked the LORD to not be far from him. He felt as if the LORD was far from him because no immediate help came. David had to be reduced to such a low state of emotional bankruptcy so that when the LORD intervened, David would learn the precious and invaluable lesson of never leaning on himself but always on Christ alone when he became king of Israel! David needed to learn that the arm of the flesh, which includes self confidence, experiences in life as well and a high IQ, is useless in the service of the LORD and in fighting God's battles. It must be the LORD alone that David should turn to for help even as he sought the counsel of His men; ultimately it is the LORD alone who could help. He cried to the LORD to draw nigh to him. He called the LORD His strength. David was beginning to learn. Indeed, the LORD must always be our strength. This means we are to pray without ceasing and cry to the LORD daily for help and guidance. The whole nation's spiritual well being was in David's hands when he became the king of Israel. He cried to the LORD to come to his aid in haste. David could not take it anymore. This was the perfect condition David must be in when help came from the LORD. There can be no doubt now in David's eyes and heart that it was the LORD who would strengthen and deliver him.

This must be our constant cry as well so that we do not forget that it is always the LORD who helps and strengthens. Peter needed to be reduced to the same low state of bankruptcy of confidence after he denied the LORD three times at a time when the LORD needed him most to stand with Him. Peter was shattered of all self confidence when the LORD restored him back into service in John 21. When this verse is applied to our LORD Jesus Christ, it has to be from the time of His agonizing prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46) to the crucifixion. The LORD strengthened Christ so that He was able to go all the way to the cross, for Christ was sorrowful even unto death, i.e. premature death (cf Hebrews 5:7-8).

Verse 20 (synonymous parallelism) – Using an imperative, David cried to the LORD to deliver him, i.e. to snatch him away from the sword. This was to be done by force. No enemy could stop the LORD from snatching. David was too weak to help and contribute to his own deliverance. It was entirely up to the LORD to deliver. “Deliver my darling”, i.e. my only begotten or unique one which is a reference to David's own soul, “from the power of the dog.” The same term of endearment first occurred in Genesis 22:2 when the LORD addressed Abraham and referred to Isaac as Abraham's "thine only" son. Based upon his special covenantal relationship with the LORD, David cried to the LORD to save him from his enemies who were very near.

Verse 21 (synthetic parallelism) – Using another imperative to press home the urgency of his dire state, David cried to the LORD to "save" him. It was to save him from the lion's mouth which means that his enemies were very near and about to devour him. On a few occasions, David was nearly captured by Saul's men if not for the LORD's timely intervention

(cf 1Samuel 24:24-29). Any prey near the lion's mouth has only one end, death. David's faith was strong. He acknowledged that the LORD had already heard him. David used a phrase "from the horn of the unicorn" to describe the perfect timing of the LORD's deliverance. The horn was used to describe power. The unicorn was an unknown animal. The word appears in the OT nine times and each was translated in the KJV as "unicorn." What is known is that it is a fierce and wild animal.

We need to understand that the LORD's deliverance does not mean physical safety and that there is no death or incarceration for the cause of Christ. In the case of David, it involved physical deliverance because his reign as king was God's will and it had not been fulfilled yet. God's will had yet to be fulfilled in David's life. Therefore, David's deliverance was both physical and spiritual. David held on to his faith and continued to trust in the LORD. For believers today, it can also be both physical and spiritual depending on whether our work for the LORD has been completed or not. However, in many cases the deliverance is only in terms of the spiritual whereby the believer's faith stays true to Christ till his last breath. Was Christ delivered by the LORD when He died on the cross? The answer has to be "yes". Christ finished the work that the Father sent Him to do and that was to die on the cross for our sins. Likewise, men like William Tyndale were also delivered by the LORD when they held on to their faith even as evil men strangled and burned them at the stake.

Verse 22 (synonymous parallelism as well as chiasmic structure) – David would testify the Name of the LORD to his brethren. He would speak of God's grace and mercy and His timely help in time of need. His testimonies would come from his heart, for David had experienced the nearness of the LORD in his life of being persecuted for the faith. He would praise the LORD in the midst of his brethren. The use of synonymous parallelism was for emphasis.

It is harder to praising the LORD from the heart than from the head. When we defend the Word of God, it is often a head defence whereby the heart is seldom involved. When we testify of the goodness and grace of the LORD in our lives, it is a testimony from the heart. Such transformation from head knowledge to heart knowledge is what the LORD desires from every believer. Every believer ought to have experiential knowledge and to testify of the LORD's goodness. Singing from the depths of our souls whenever we meet on the Lord's Day is one of the best ways to tell our brethren the goodness of the LORD in our lives.

[to be continued]