

Psalm 22: 11-21; “You Have Answered Me”, A Communion Sermon, part of the series entitled – “Christ’s Passion, Death, and Resurrection noted in the Psalms and Remembered”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on September 6th, 2015, in the Afternoon Worship Service.

Although this psalm was written by David, it is very evident that it goes far beyond the personal experience of David to let us have a view of Christ Jesus in His sufferings on the cross, His resurrection from the dead, and the triumphs of His kingdom. The last time that we were together around these words we looked at the first 11 verses which describe the humiliation of our Lord; how He was despised and rejected of men, and forsaken by His Father for that time, so that He could accomplish our redemption. Why did such a wonderful and righteous man have to suffer? He had to suffer so that you might be saved from your sins and be justified; declared righteous in God’s sight. But, He also had to suffer in order to purchase for you all the spiritual blessings and benefits which must be conveyed to you if you are to grow up into Him; that is, to become righteous and holy in the way that you think, and speak and live. Christ prayed fervently to be able to go through these sufferings and triumph on your behalf, and God answered Him. Let me give you 3 reasons why Christ had to suffer for you.

1st of all – Christ had to suffer so that you would not be deceived by false religion.

Verses 12 and 13 say: “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.” It was men who were strong religionists who put Jesus to death on the cross. What Jesus was bearing for us there on the cross, was not only wrath and anger of God against our sins, but also the wrath and anger of religious men who had held to and believed in a false system of their supposedly being saved by their religious works. He was not only hated by them, but He was also despised and abused by a number of the Roman soldiers who crucified Him. Verse 16 – “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.” Now, all of this suffering at the hands of unsaved religious men and cruel men was done to Him, and borne by Him, for your sake. Why, you ask? It was so that you, one of God’s chosen people, could be crucified with Him to the world’s approval, and not fall prey to the doctrines of the false religions of the world. These are things which deceive multitudes of people. All of the false religions of the world are based upon works-righteousness; something that religious people do in order to please their god. And these men who thought that they knew God, here in this instance, were guilty of crucified the Lord of glory. These bulls of men were very self-righteous, very self-justifying persons, and in many ways they were sinners, but they do not know it. They often rejected being told by Jesus that they were sinning when they were trying to please a god of their own conception, and not the God of the Bible. Christianity is the only true religion because Jesus Christ is the only man who has ever fully pleased God. And He is the only Savior of sinners. He is the man appointed by God to be the only Mediator between God and fallen sinful men. Jesus died so that you might know this truth, and the truth might set you free, and that you might be free indeed!

When a person falls to the temptation of being self-righteousness in religious matters, then Satan can deceive them in mighty ways. Self-righteousness is the religion of the world. It is possible that a person can be Jewish, or Catholic, or even a Protestant Christian, and still deceive themselves in this regard. But if you would know God and follow Christ, your self-justifying pride and anger must go. God is opposed to the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. A person like this might have deceived themselves from their youth on up, about what God is looking for from them. If they were a compliant child, then they might begin to think that their

being outwardly good is the way that God approves of them, not realizing that there are many self-justifying sins in their heart. They might think that God approves of them just as they are; without conversion, without their heart being changed, because they have attempted to do the will of their parents. But God's will goes much farther, searching into your heart attitudes, and your thoughts and motives for why you do things. God and His glory must be brought into your heart. But in many people there is too much of their self-will, and self-justification to let that happen. So, this is why the Lord Jesus Christ had to suffer; so that you might be freed from these kinds of thoughts, and learn to serve God in truth. The Lord Jesus had to suffer so that you might be willing to learn to endure the persecution of evil and self-justifying religious people around you. For "all who would live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."

This is why trouble was near for the Lord Jesus. He must suffer so that we might understand that we cannot justify ourselves in the sight of the holy God. Before we believed in Him we were people who justified ourselves by our works, or we were people who justified ourselves living a life of sinful independence from God. God can accept neither. So it was very fitting that the Lord Jesus suffered at the hands of the religious rulers of the nation of Israel; the scribes and Pharisees and rulers of the people. Many of them believed that they were fully justified in putting Jesus to death. They were so strong in their self-justifying legal righteousness that they are described here for us as strong bulls of Bashan. They are described as raging and roaring lions. Bulls are those creatures which can attack you and push at you with their horns and stomp on you with their hoofs, and kill you in short order. These bulls are further described for us in verse 21 as "wild oxen" who have horns. With their horns of authority and power in the Jewish nation, the chief priests and elders gored the Lord Jesus. As lions they roared at Him and tore at Him and held Him down to eat Him up as their prey. Those who follow after them to agree to put the Lord Jesus to death are called dogs in verse 16. "For dogs have surrounded me; the congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me."

You see, it seemed like everyone who should have been for Him in church and state was out to kill the Lord Jesus. And now think of the many situations in Church history where the saints of God have needed the grace of Christ to endure persecution, and suffer for His name's sake. Only our Lord had the ability to purchase this precious and powerful kind of grace that will lead you to receive the truth: "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake." "Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven." Christ has suffered so that we might change and become different people from what we once were. We are no longer trying to justify ourselves. But we justify God having sent His Son to suffer and bleed and die so that we could have all the blessings of salvation.

2nd – Christ suffered for you in order to be made sin on your behalf.

Verse 14 says – "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." Now in this middle section of the psalm, Our Lord Jesus is asking in prayer that God would not be far from Him, for trouble was close at hand. He is hanging on the cross. They have pierced His hands and feet. He looks down at his own body and counts all of His bones. He cannot pull himself up to free Himself from the awful pain and anguish that plagues His mind and heart, and all of His body. He would have His precious life delivered from the power of the dog, be saved from the lion's mouth, and be pulled away from the horns of the wild oxen who have gored Him! These sufferings were all for sinners who would become saints. How is it that a person becomes a Christian? Is it not when they come to see what sin has done to their life? Is it not when they come to realize that in their heart they have thoughts that are not right, and they see that there have been many of God's commandments that they have broken, or not kept in a way that honors God? This is the way that each Christian was before their conversion.

Some person may be here this afternoon who needs to come to know Christ, and yet they do not understand the gospel; that Christ died for sinners. I would have you know, that even now you can pray to God ask Him for forgiveness and new life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Jesus knew in the fullest measure the awful weight of our sins coming upon Him, from the time of the garden of Gethsemane on to death. He went through all the anguish of being falsely tried, and scourged; all the way through that time. He was led to the cross to bear that weight and endure those sufferings. Were His sufferings for basically good people? No, He said that He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He said that it is not the healthy person who needs a physician, but the sick. And so His sufferings were for sinners like us. Indeed, our partaking of the Lord's Supper today is a reminder to ourselves that we are still sinners who need the repeated cleansing of the blood in order that our consciences might be freed from guilt at every point in our experience; we who are often falling short of what God has asked to do. This supper is our proclaiming the Lord's death until He comes.

For what His death has brought to us is His life. "I have come that they may have life," Jesus said, "and that they may have it more abundantly." (John 10: 10) What Christ purchased with these sufferings was the grace to renew and transform your life. He was poured out like water so that you would have the water of life in the grace that He gives to you. All of His bones were out of joint on the cross, so that your bones which were broken by sin can now rejoice. His hands were stretched out on the cross and His feet were fastened to it there, so that your hands and feet which once hung down, unable to do His will, now have strength to serve. The knees which were feeble to do all of what God had commanded you, are now strong to walk in the truth. Here in these verses we find graphic descriptions of Christ's sufferings on the cross. Why did He have to suffer in all these particular ways? It is because we have so many sins of different kinds. Some of those sins relate to our neglect of God Himself, and some relate to the way that we speak to, and treat, other people. Jesus suffered at the hands of wicked men, and He also suffered the righteous wrath of God being placed upon Him; God's special presence being withdrawn from Him at the time of His crucifixion and death. But even though Jesus was enduring great sufferings on our behalf, yet He was without sin Himself. 2nd Corinthians 5, verse 21 says, "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." The word "be" or "become" in that first phrase of that verse is not there in the original Greek. So I would like to read it to you in that way, without the supplied word or words. This is how it would read in the New American Standard translation: "He made Him who knew no sin, sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Jesus, on the cross, did not "become sin" in His nature. Sin did not infiltrate His holy being there. But He surely did bear our griefs and carry our sorrows. All during the time of His crucifixion the Lord Jesus was holy. But what took place, there at the cross, was that all of our sins were imputed to Him in such a way that He became seen by God as all the sinners in the world rolled up into one, and punished accordingly. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree.

Listen to John Gill on this verse – "Christ was made of a woman, took flesh of a sinful woman; though the flesh He took of her was not sinful, being sanctified by the Spirit of God, the former of (who formed Christ's human nature): however, He appeared "in the likeness of sinful flesh"; being attended with infirmities, the effects of sin, though sinless; and He was traduced (falsely spoken of) by men as a sinner, and treated as such. Moreover, He was made a sacrifice for sin, in order to make expiation and atonement for it; so the Hebrew word חטאת signifies both sin and a sin offering; see Psalm 40:6, and so αμαρτια, Romans 8:3. But besides all this, He was made sin itself by imputation; the sins of all his people were transferred unto Him, laid upon him, and placed to his account; He sustained their persons, and bore their sins; and having them upon Him, and being chargeable with, and answerable for them, He was treated by the justice of

God as if He had been not only a sinner, but a mass of sin; for to be made sin, is a stronger expression than to be made a sinner: but now that this may appear to be only by imputation, and that none may conclude from hence that He was really and actually a sinner, or in himself so, it is said He was “made sin”; He did not become sin, or a sinner, through any sinful act of his own, but through his Father's act of imputation, to which he agreed; for it was “He” that made him sin: it is not said that men made him sin; not but that they traduced Him as a sinner, pretended they knew He was one, and arraigned him at Pilate's bar as such; nor is He said to make himself so, though He readily engaged to be the surety of His people, and voluntarily took upon Himself their sins. The Father gave Him as an offering for their sins. But He, His Father, is said to make Him sin; that is, it was He that “laid”, or “made to meet” on Him, the iniquity of us all; it was He (that is God the Father) that made His soul an offering for sin, and delivered Him up into the hands of justice, and to death, and that “for us”, in “our” room and stead, to bear the punishment of sin, and make satisfaction and atonement for it; of which He was capable, and for which He was greatly qualified.” (End of quote) This tells us much about what happened there at the cross. Even though He became sin for us on the cross, by bearing our guilt and shame, He was all the while confessing that God was holy, and enthroned on the praises of Israel. Remembering these blessed truths, I would ask you to come down front now with me to partake of the Supper.

3rd – Christ suffered in order that you might triumph over death.

Verse 19 says, “But You, O Lord, do not be far from Me; O My Strength, hasten to help Me!” The Lord Jesus had already confessed in verse 1 that the Father's presence was leaving Him and that He was experiencing a feeling of sorrow and dread coming upon Him which was due to His having to bear our sins. He prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, the night before He died, that “this cup might pass from Him”, but He knew that it was His will do the Father's will, and not be released from these sufferings which rightfully belong to us. Our sins brought trouble near to Him there, and all the way through His experience of suffering for us at the cross. And yet, He was so very willing to bear our sins; and so He was still praying for deliverance in verses 20 and 21 – “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!” The Father did not answer that prayer immediately. Christ had to bear the sins of the world, and the Father's righteous wrath, which He did, but the beauty of all this was that at the moment of Christ's death, He knew that He had triumphed, and that all of His prayers for us had been answered. It is true that His body had to lie in the tomb for 3 days. But there is this statement in verse 21 – “You have answered Me.” I believe that it is a statement of triumph.

I am aware that there seems to be a difference between some of translations at this point. The ESV says: “Save me from the mouth of the lion!” “You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen!” The New American Standard says, “Save me from the lion's mouth; From the horns of the wild oxen You answer me.” Young's Literal Translation I think is the best of all here. It says: “Save me from the mouth of a lion: And – From the horns of the high places Thou hast answered me!” The “horns of the high places” I take to be metaphorical phrase picturing for us – the cross. God the Father answered God the Son the moment that He died on the cross. In that moment He was delivered from all of His enemies. The moment that He finished His work of redemption on our behalf, He triumphed in death. Christ knew the moment that He died that He had triumphed. His human soul did not then go to hell, but back to God who gave it. He said from the cross – “Into Thy hands I commit My Spirit”. His spirit would be re-united with His resurrection body on the first day of the week. We have great reason to rejoice that God answered Christ in just this way; for the moment that we die, we too will triumph over death. Our spirit will be made perfect, and we will behold our Savior. We will never spiritually die once we have been born again. Death, for every believer, will be the entrance into eternal life.