

Transcription of 18TM804

Psalm 22            "Our Suffering Savior"            February 4, 2018

All right. Let's open our Bibles this morning to Psalm 22 for our scripture study. We've been going through the Psalms. This is one of my favorite Psalms, and it is my favorite because it is the only place that you get any kind of insight into what Jesus personally was going through while He died for your sins and mine. Psalm 22 is the most detailed description of an execution by crucifixion that you will find in the Bible. It is far more graphic and far more detailed than you will find from any of the New Testament writers who were there, and it is written by David 1,000 years before it was effectively used as a punishment for -- I should say a capital punishment crime. So it is a Psalm devoted to Jesus' suffering.

If I said to you how valuable is your relationship with God, I would add to that, Jesus had to give His up so that you could have one at all. He had to pay so that you could be in fellowship with God.

In Revelation chapter 13, verse 8, it said of Jesus that He was the lamb that was slain before the foundations of the earth. If you go to Revelation 5 and you see the church gathered together around the throne, in seven or eight verses you read twice, "there stood a Lamb that had been slain." Or "worthy is the Lamb who was slain." And we are told by the Lord in Revelation 13 that God's plan all along had been to save you through the death of His Son. In other words, that wasn't an afterthought, that wasn't a reaction to some problems that had occurred, or a reaction to the difficulty that maybe He didn't think or see coming. God's plan from the beginning, slain before the foundation of the world, was that in creating you, He would have to save you. Now, I don't know if you and I would have gone through with it, knowing what price that held, but His fellowship with you is important enough that He went forward with the plan from the very beginning.

The Bible really only has two subjects, if you want to outline all these hundreds of pages. The Bible is concerned with the coming of Jesus to die and the return of Jesus to rule. That's it. Everything else is missing the mark when it comes to the

big picture.

I read years ago someone saying that if you cut the Bible anywhere, it would bleed. It would bleed the blood of Christ. If you go to Genesis chapter 22, you'll find Abraham there taking his son Isaac to Mount Moriah, a three-day trip. He had to see his son really as dead those three days. It would be the very same mountain upon which Jesus would eventually come to give His life. And in Genesis 22, the Bible bleeds.

If you turn to Exodus 12 and you cut it there, the Bible will bleed again. It is the institution of the Passover. The children of Israel being brought out of bondage in Egypt. They are told as the Lord is about to bring the judgment of the firstborn of every house death, the judgment of God, that if they want to escape God's judgment, they were to take a lamb without spot or blemish and put the blood on the doorpost, on the lintels of the door, and that those inside the house would be saved. The judgment of God would pass over them. It was such an important occurrence that the Lord instructed the Jews as far as their religious calendar that the month of the Passover would become the first month of the new year. It showed us the way that the Lord would come. He would be the one to save us, the Lamb of God.

If you turn to Numbers chapter 21 and cut it there, again it will bleed. The children of Israel are in the middle of nowhere. They are complaining against God and against Moses and the Lord in judgment sends serpents into their camp. And people began to be bitten and die, and all of a sudden the complaining stopped, and the praying began. Moses, pray for us. And the Lord instructed Moses, I want you to make a brass serpent -- brass, the metal of judgment in the Old Testament -- put it on a big stick, hold it up for everyone to see, and those who will look upon this brass serpent, they'll live. If they look away or decide that they won't look, they'll die. And God defines salvation that it is one that comes by faith. There's nothing inherently healing about staring at a carved image, if you will, but yet it was the Lord's word to the people, you believe in what I tell you, you'll live. Years later in John 3 Jesus in talking to Nicodemus said to him, hey, Nicodemus, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever would believe in Him won't perish. He'll be given everlasting life, for God so loved the world. And Jesus took that picture out of Numbers 21 and He applied to Himself. Salvation comes by faith, and believing in God's promises, and Jesus would apply that to His death, that He came

to die.

Turn in your Bible to Isaiah 53 and cut it and it will bleed there too. Isaiah writes 700 years before Jesus that the Messiah that was coming would be wounded for our transgressions; that He would be bruised for our iniquities; that the chastisement of our peace would be upon Him; that by His stripes we could be healed; that it pleased the Lord to bruise His Son; that by the knowledge of Him many would be made righteous. And so He put Him to grief and He stood as a Lamb before His shearers, dumb. He didn't open His mouth. He poured out His soul unto death.

And if you come to this Psalm, the Bible will bleed, because prophetically and graphically David speaks about the cross, the manner of salvation that God appointed from day one. This is what He had in mind. This is the way that it works. And it is laid out by David, like I said, centuries before it became a method of capital punishment. The accuracy is phenomenal, but more important is the insight that you get in this Psalm of what Jesus is going through on the cross Himself.

The Psalm starts with these words, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me?" I think the refrain takes your mind immediately to the cross, does it not? Most of the books of wisdom, and we've been going through Psalms for a few weeks now, and we've mentioned to you from Job through the Song of Solomon are written by folks in their present tense relationship with God. So the things that are accounted are personal, they're literal, they're spoken in the first person. Even when there are prophetic things to be told us about the future, it always finds its life first and foremost in the experience of the author, and then God takes it forward and applies it more fully or more broadly to a person or a place or a situation. We love studying these books because of that. We are given even in 10 percent of these Psalms insight into the occasion for their writing. Until we get to this one, because this Psalm, there is nothing in the life of David as far as the history that we have that even comes close to what is described here. It is pure prophecy. How David got a hold of this, how he knew to write it. I know the Lord works and God indeed makes Himself known, but trust me, this is -- this is God's spirit moving through a man that when Peter gave his first sermon on Pentecost and he quotes out of Psalm 16, he says David's a prophet. And David indeed is a prophet. So here you have the prophecy of the suffering of our Messiah.

It really breaks into two parts, if you like. The first 21 verses are all about the suffering Jesus suffered dying for the sins of world, and then at the end of verse 21 you'll read the words "You have answered me." And for the next 10 verses till the end of the chapter there will be the victory that came when Jesus got rid of sin and provided forgiveness for man. The Psalm ends with the words, "He has done this," or "it is finished." And we get this beautiful picture of Jesus' suffering. But it is the anguish of the cross that moves us the most. "My God, why have You forsaken Me and why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning? O, God, I cry to you in the daytime, you didn't hear; and in the night seasons I'm not silent."

We know that at some point in those six hours upon the cross, from 9:00 in the morning till 3:00 in the afternoon, that the Father turned away from His Son, forsook His Son. This is the fourth of seven utterances from Jesus from the cross that we are given and recorded in the gospels, this cry of abandonment. He knew it was coming. He knew this was the method by which we would be saved. He dreaded it more than anything else. It wasn't the physical pain, which was enormous; it was the separation from the Father that sin brings. It was putting Himself where you and I stand in our sin, so that He can take our sins and then reunite us in our relationship with God. It is a startling cry from our suffering Savior.

Up until this point, three other things have been said by Jesus and they were all others centered. Even though He was going through so much, His focus was upon the needs of others. First thing He said from the cross, "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing." If it was me, Father, kill them. They're trying to hurt me. But that's not how Jesus prayed, because He came willingly, not thinking about Himself. He's thinking about His crucifiers.

The second words out of his mouth from Calvary was spoken to a common criminal who deserved to be there. He had started off like the crowd, mocking Jesus, but only towards the end now after a few hours on the cross he realized, man, he deserved it and this Jesus didn't. He didn't really have much to say to Jesus. "Would you just remember me when you come into your kingdom?" And Jesus said, "Assuredly I say to you," or count on this, "today you'll be with Me in paradise." And again, it was this ministering to another suffering, hurting. His last words right before lunch, before noon, were to His mother and to John. He pointed her out, "John, behold your mother. Mother, behold

your son." And He took care of her care, if you will, even from the cross. Dying for our sins, yet selflessly concerned about our needs. But then something happens. At noon a mysterious darkness begins to cover the earth, overwhelming darkness at high noon, and it would last three hours before we will hear Jesus is loudly declaring His victory. From noon till 3:00 p.m., darkness grips the land, a kind of darkness that in Exodus was described as not even being able to see your hand in front of your face, and Jesus says nothing at all. Everything that He says from the fourth through the seventh utterances here, the fourth one in verse 1, happened almost at 3 o'clock in very quick kind of succession, as He is facing being separated from the Father. Three private hours between Jesus and the Father, as the Father would pour out upon His Son sin, and He would be separated from His father due to that sin and pay the ultimate price for it: Separation.

Perhaps it was this Psalm that Jesus was meditating on as He hung upon the cross. The horror would turn. It would become victorious soon enough, but only at the end do we hear about it. "My God, why have You forsaken Me?" It's a horrible word. Horrible in English, even more horrible, if that's possible, in Hebrew. It literally means to permanently set aside or to willfully abandon. Now, maybe you know what that's like. Most of us, if we live long, are going to get hurt by somebody. You know, somebody that we love stopped loving us; someone that we trusted couldn't really be trusted; someone that we confided in, they take advantage of the situation, and you feel horrible. I mean, there's nothing good about being set aside by others. But I would contend this with you: Though you have firsthand information of what that can feel like, you've never had to suffer what He did, because when you were completely abandoned by others, you could close your eyes and say, Lord, help me, and the Lord would be there to help you. Not Jesus. Jesus cried out and Heaven was closed, and the sounds bounced back. There were echoes without any hope. You see, for Him to redeem us, He was going to have to stand where we stood, and that's where we stood, separated from God. He suffered an abandonment that we can really know nothing about. He was all alone. All alone.

The gospels lay out for you, if you read through them, this kind of gradual, I guess, abandonment that Jesus went through in the days that led up to the cross. You know, a week earlier it was Judas who had gone to a meeting and sold Him out for 30 pieces of silver. When He was in the garden of Gethsemane going through His agony, His most trusted three disciples couldn't stay awake with Him for an hour. He was just left by Himself.

When the Romans showed up, the guards, they ran, and Jesus was left alone.

"My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Notice He doesn't say why has Judas forsaken Me? Why has Peter forsaken Me? Why have the disciples forsaken Me? Where are the Jews now? Where are the Romans now? That wasn't the question. Father, why have You? Why have You? Where are You? Forsaken Me. What happened to make the Father forsake His only begotten Son on the cross?

Isaiah writes in chapter 53, I think verse 6, "All we like sheep have gone astray. We've all turned to our own ways; and the Lord has laid upon Him the iniquities of us all." Paul writes to the Corinthians, second letter, chapter 5, said, "He made Him, who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that we could be made the righteousness of God in Him." That's why the father turned His back upon His Son. That's what sin does. It separates.

In that moment the sins of the world were laid upon Jesus, and Jesus, God made man, offered the perfect and sinless and righteous life as a substitute for our sinful life and His sacrifice judicially forgives your sins, and forgiveness becomes available if you look to Him. He dies on your behalf. That's the crux, by the way, of the gospels. I mean, that's the good news in a nutshell. It's what the Holy Spirit confronts people with in life. The cross is where Jesus went to exchange His perfect life for our extremely sinful life, and we can be made right with God. We can be saved in our sin and from our sin. It's hardly fair. You get Him, He gets you. Really? How fair is that? Look up and down your pew. Say, that's not fair. No, no, don't do that.

But this abandonment by His father caused greater pain than anything physical. It was horrendous, it was overwhelming, which is why when you go to read about His struggles in the garden, that He began to sweat these great drops of blood, that's not normal. It is a medical condition if your body is under tremendous stress, and I suspect that what He was facing was more than His body could handle, and so the capillaries in His sweat glands exploded due to the extreme pressure and stress, and it leaks into the sweat glands. It was His greatest place of stress. He didn't want to lose His intimacy with the Father. Father, if there's any other way that we can do this, let's do that, then let's not do this. But there was no other way.

Now, here's what interests me in reading this Psalm: Jesus'

greatest stress was losing His faithfulness and intimacy and access to His Father. We so often give it, write it off, and count it as nothing because we'd rather sin, or pursue sin than treasure our access to God. What He didn't want to lose, we oftentimes don't want to hang on to. And it caused Him the most grief. Separation from God.

And listen as we read through this. David in verse 3 says this, "You are holy, You're enthroned in the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in You; they have trusted, You delivered them. They cried to You, they were delivered. They trusted in You, they weren't ashamed." In times past, the Lord rehearses as Jesus, the man hangs, if you will, upon the cross, the goodness of God. The goodness of God to His people, how when they cried out and trusted in Him, He didn't embarrass them or leave them ashamed. He helped them. He delivered them. He came to them. But look what we read in verse 6, "But I, I'm a worm, I'm no man; I'm a reproach of men, despised by the people. When they see Me, they ridicule Me; they shoot out their lip, they shake their heads. They say I trusted in the Lord, let Him deliver Him. Let Him deliver Him if He delights in Him, since He trusted in Him." You see, Jesus on the cross was mocked. He was praying too for deliverance, but deliverance hadn't come.

A quick review of the gospels will tell you that exactly what David writes 1,000 BC happened that day at Golgotha, in the dark, around the cross, as the opposition came and mouthed these very words. I'm sure that they didn't realize they were fulfilling prophecy. Matthew writes in chapter 27 that those who pass by, they began to blaspheme Him. They wagged their heads at Him. They said, "You who destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself. If you're the Son of God, then just come down from the cross." The chief priests got involved. The elders and the scribes chimed in. "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him come down from the cross and then we'll believe in Him. He said He trusted in God. Let Him deliver Him now if He wants Him, if He'll have Him. He said He was the Son of God." And Jesus finds Himself alone and the enemy surrounding Him.

He reminds Himself again in verse 9 of the past faithfulness of God. "But You are He. You've taken Me out of the womb. You made Me trust of You from My mother's breast. I was cast upon You from My birth. From My mother's womb You've been My God. Don't be far from Me. Trouble is near. There's none to help." Despised and rejected of men. Man of sorrows acquainted with grief. We hid our faces from Him. We despised Him and esteemed

Him not. Jesus again reminds Himself of what God has done. But what's happening to Him, verse 12, "Many bulls have surrounded Me. Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me. They're gaping at Me with their mouths, like a raging and roaring lion. I'm being poured out like water, My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax melted within Me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, My tongue clings to My jaws; You've brought Me to the dust of death. Dogs have surrounded Me; the congregation of the wicked have enclosed Me. They've pierced My hands and My feet; and I can count all of My bones. They look at Me and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots." Jesus on the cross for us. The cruelty of man pointed out, the strong bulls of Bashan.

Bashan is an area in the north, in the Golan, that runs up through Mt. Hermon. It was a fertile kind of farm area where a lot of times these bulls were allowed to run wild. They were known for just charging at you for the littlest of provocation. In a poetic sense the Lord writes of that here, that these men are surrounding them where just -- they couldn't wait to charge and destroy. The dogs in verse 16 are not -- nobody had household dogs in those days. They were wild animals. They roamed in packs. He compares them to wild men driven by wickedness.

And look at the graphic description beginning in verse 14 of the crucifixion. As David writes by the finger of God upon him, "I am poured out like water, My bones are out of joint; My heart is melting within Me. I am thirsty and dehydrated. I'm near death. They've pierced My hands. They've pierced My feet." And the One who made the waters now cries out for water. "Count My bones. They stare at Me. They look at Me. They gamble for My clothing."

Death by crucifixion was awful. In fact, if you study the etymology of the word "excruciating," you will find that that word was invented to describe death by crucifixion. That's what the word means. We use it today to describe something that's intolerable or unbearable, that is agonizing, discouraging, the mocking, the abuse, the crown of thorns, the weakened state, the carrying of cross beam of the cross that He was helped with for a while by Simon of Cyrene; pierced hands, pierced feet, beaten body, trying to pull up to get some air out of your lungs. You end up dying by asphyxiation, but it may take three to five days. There was no harder place to stand. And Jesus describes what is going on among Him by: "Father, where are You? You helped us always. I've grown up believing and trusting in You."

Nothing ever in Jesus' life prepared Him for this. He would always get up in the morning to go pray. He'd be out late and He would pray. He'd look to the Father. He lived His life like we're supposed to, trusting in God, and now He doesn't answer. And the alienation and out of the darkness of separation and out of the excruciating pain of loneliness, God's Son cries out. He did this for us.

Final prayers that are only recorded here in verse 19 and 20 and 21 are these: "You, Lord, do not be far from Me; O My strength, hasten to help Me! Deliver My soul from the cross, My precious life from the power of the dogs. Save Me from the lion's mouth and the horns of the wild oxen." Private prayers from the Son to His Father in the darkness of those three hours.

Fortunately we have the end of verse 21 where we read the words, "You have answered Me." The accomplishment of the cross fills these last few verses. Communion with the Father is restored. The separation is over. The price of pain for our sins through His death is now right before Him, and Jesus will soon cry out very loudly, "It is finished," and the whole tone of the Psalm changes. When Jesus rose from the dead and spent the afternoon of the resurrection day with two people on the road to Emmaus, He took them through the scriptures that we are told and showed them everything in the scriptures which talked about Him. By the time that He left them alone, they could only say to each other, "Didn't our hearts burn within us while He talked to us along the way?" I think that's kind of what this Psalm is meant to do, to turn you on to the love of God.

Because of the cross and this suffering, the whole world could now be saved. Every sin of every man ever committed was now paid as far as a debt. And, in fact, in the verses that follow, and I'm going to give you an opportunity just to read them yourself from verse 22 to verse 31, there is this declaration that says from now on, because of this sacrifice, man could be saved. From the Jews to the gentiles, a worldwide congregation embracing the cross. Verse 22, my brethren; verse 23, the descendants of Jacob; verse 24, the poor and the afflicted; in verse 25, the great assembly; in verse 27, to the ends of the world, the families of the nations. And he ends by saying this in verse 30: "A posterity shall serve Him. It will be accounted of the Lord to the next generation. They will come and declare His righteousness to a people yet to be born, and this is their message, He's done this." This is His accomplishments. Looking way ahead, it is now our job to take the goodness of God's love and tell our generation what He did

and why He did it. And that's the method by which God has sought to reach the world. The way of Jesus is the subject of our witness.

The fifth thing that Jesus said on the cross, "I'm thirsty." And I think that He wanted something on His lips because breathing in and out for those hours dried Him out and He wanted to have everyone hear what He was about to say.

The sixth thing, "It's finished." The seventh, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." It is finished, "tetelestai." But here we have in verse 31, "He has done this," and the word "done" is the word "assa," and it means to complete or to finish. The word is going to get out that He's finished it. His sacrifice, sufficient. His last words from the cross are the last words of this Psalm. And until Jesus comes again, the second subject of the Bible, every generation has to tell others He's finished the work.

He's finished the work. But look how He got here and look what He had to go through and look what you get to see into the heart and mind of Jesus as He hung upon Calvary for you in the darkness all alone. Motivates me to want to love Him more, because He first loved me. And if you love Him, you'll keep His commandments. How can you not? Look what He did.