

BIG IDEA

God has not forsaken us. He is always faithful when we call upon Him.

INTRODUCTION

When is a time God felt very near? What did you learn about Him in that experience?

When was a time God seemed very distant? What did you learn from that experience?

Our experience with God ebbs and flows throughout the course of our lives. Often He feels close to us and we are in sync with Him and His mission in the world. Other times, He feels distant. Yet in both circumstances, God is still closer to us than we might feel. What changes is our lived experience, not the character of God. He is still faithful, waiting for us to call on Him. This Sunday, Ross began by speaking briefly about Psalm 22. Then we spent most of our time hearing from the Eubank family who serve as missionaries in Burma in addition to other places in the Middle East. Through their testimony, we see a picture of a God who is faithful and who has not forsaken us.

UNDERSTANDING

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PSALM 22:1-11.

How did David's circumstances seem to contradict God's promises (vv. 1-5, vv. 9-11)?

How had David allowed these circumstances to affect his relationship with God (v. 1)?

To David, God felt far off while trouble was always near. And while God feels distant, men feel very close as they taunt, insult, and despise him. These men seem to know something about David's relationship with the Lord and they mock him: "He relies on the Lord; let Him rescue him; let the Lord deliver him." These are the circumstances that drove David to feel utterly "forsaken" by God.

How was David able to worship God in the midst of trying circumstances? How did his perspective change?

In David's heart, God felt far off. Trouble was always at hand. In those moments our desire to be faithful is tried. David was able to praise God because he realized that the distance and humiliation he felt were true of him but they were not true of God. God was present in the midst of his afflictions. David was never despised or abandoned by God. David had turned his attention away from his circumstances and set his

hope on the gracious and sovereign character of God. Doing so allowed him to freely praise the Lord and trust in Him for deliverance.

How did David's experience foreshadow Jesus' experience at Calvary (see Mark 15:15-41)?

When afflicted, how can we know that God has not abandoned us?

Jesus endured the pain and suffering we should have endured for our sins (2 Cor. 5:21). This tells us that God has not abandoned us and that He personally understands the afflictions we face. He endured them on our behalf. Though our suffering may not be directly tied to our own sin, it is always tied to sin in some way—the sins of others or the reality of living in a world broken by sin. We can know that God hasn't abandoned us when we suffer because Jesus endured the cross for us so that He might bring us to God (see 1 Pet. 3:18).

> USE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON OUR TIME WITH THE EUBANK FAMILY.

What challenged you the most about what you heard from the Eubank family? What encouraged you?

In fighting ISIS, David said that he maintained three prayers, the last of which was that the heart of all enemies would be changed to love. When people stand against us, why should we pray for them? What do we learn about God through praying for our enemies?

Have you ever prayed for someone who opposed you? What did you learn? How was your faith built?

On the front lines of battle, David saw Iraqi soldiers who do not know Jesus lay down their lives for friends. Read John 15:13. How can we model this type of love and faithfulness in our daily life? Where is God calling you to lay aside your goals and preferences for a friend? If unbelievers model this trait, how much more should we as followers of Jesus?

David said that whenever Jesus calls you somewhere, He is already there before you get there. Do you see ministry opportunities this way? How should the presence of Jesus affect the way we think about obedience and faithfulness?

APPLICATION

What is God asking you to do right now? Are you being obedient? What steps do you need to take this week?

With whom are you doing ministry? How can you help strengthen them in their faith and be obedient when it's difficult?

In the last video, we saw Sahale say that for people struggling to be faithful, "Pray and ask God. He will show you what to do." Spend time asking God what He would have you do as individuals and as a group.

PRAY

Thank God for His care for you and faithfulness toward you. Ask that He would help you to do what He says and love other people in His name.

MEMORIZE

Be not far from me, for trouble is near; For there is none to help. –Psalm 22:11

Table For Two Daily Devotionals are also available to guide you in your time with the Lord. Sign up for daily emails at 121cc.com/TableForTwo or view on the 121 App.

COMMENTARY

PSALM 22:1-11

22:1. This psalm opens with a question about God's rejection, similar to other lament psalms (10:1; 13:1-2). This rejection is represented by the term forsaken. The same idea appears elsewhere in the psalm with God being "far away" (v. 19) and "hiding His face" (v. 24). In his suffering, the psalmist foreshadowed the Messiah; in His suffering, Jesus identified with the psalmist (Mt 27:46). When Jesus quoted this first line, He was probably calling attention to the whole psalm, including the theme of victory at the end.

22:3-5. These verses identify the psalmist with the nation of Israel and more specifically with Yahweh's covenant faithfulness to His people as shown by His deliverance of them time and time again (78:53; 107:6). Enthroned on the praises is unusual, picturing Yahweh's dwelling above the cherubim on the ark of the covenant (80:1; 99:1). However, in this instance it is the praise of God's people that is the focus because Yahweh is the praise of Israel (Dt 10:21).

22:6-8. Worm expresses humiliation (Job 25:6; Isa 41:14), an idea that is further developed with the scorn of the enemies. Shaking their heads was a physical gesture often associated with sneering and mocking. This disgrace was in direct contrast to the fact that Yahweh had kept Israel from disgrace (22:5). The thought that Yahweh would not rescue one of His own was a common assumption by Israel's enemies (3:2; 71:11).

22:9-10. The phrase over to You is in the emphatic position in the Hebrew text, emphasizing that Yahweh is the One in whom the psalmist has trusted since birth.