

TRUTH B-P CHURCH
Adults Sunday School

PSALM 22 – THE SUFFERING CHRIST (PART 2)

I. REVISION

From the words “Aijeleth Shahar” being an instrument used by women in mourning, we know this is a psalm of mourning. It depicts how the psalmist was going through much suffering which also describes the suffering Christ. And it is based upon the psalmist's experiences in his suffering. This psalm is also known as the messianic psalm.

We have covered how the psalmist cried due to suffering (1-2). However he continued to trust in God due to his faith in Him (3-5). He remained humble as he was enjoying close fellowship with God. He knew who he was before the Almighty God. He did not see himself worthy and it was God's delight that gave him the comfort.

We continue with what we have left off as the psalmist continues to look to God as he was going through his troubles. He is full of hope when looking to God. But when he looks at self in what he can do to help himself, there is no hope at all. Truly our hope is found only in God, if only all the sinful men on this earth realized this great and wonderful truth!

II. FULL OF HOPE WHEN LOOKING TO GOD

Verse 9, “But thou *art* he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope *when I was upon my mother's breasts.*”

The psalmist looked back to the time of his existence, when he was conceived in his mother's womb. And he confessed that it was all the Lord's doing. But how did he understand about hope when he was still sucking milk? Can a two year baby know God and understand hope, assuming that that was the maximum age of nursing the baby from the breast? From human perspective, it is unlikely. But with God all things are possible. 2 years of age is just an assumption. It could be older or even younger! It is the Holy Spirit that grants illumination, regardless of the age.

For the psalmist, he had come to know God at a very young age, even the time that he was still sucking milk from his own mother. This is an encouragement to all Christian parents as well as a challenge for them to start nurturing their own children as young as they can be in the Lord.

Verse 10, “I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou *art* my God from my mother's belly.”

“Cast upon” means to be thrown down. What the psalmist meant was that God has been protecting him since his conception. God is already his God when he was conceived. What profound and great thought this is! Does it mean he was already born again when he was in his mother's womb? In my personal opinion, this seems to be so. To call God mine describes a relationship that is restored and not broken anymore. There is a sense of belonging. This is what the psalmist is saying, “I am God's and God is mine.” We are unable to confess this intimate relationship with God if we are not born again.

Applied to Christ, this is true that God has been protecting Him even from birth. There was no proper place for Him to be born. Yet in a manger, He was delivered with the least hygiene and protection. Truly God protects Him. It did not stop there. King Herod tried to kill Him. When he got wind of His birth and planned to take Him. But his plan failed when the wise men went on their

way home without informing him. By the time he realized it, it was too late since Joseph and Mary had already escaped to Egypt with baby Jesus at the tender age of 2. Throughout His earthly ministry, many also tried to kill Him such as the chief priests, Pharisees, and scribes who were powerful and influential people in those days, yet they could do nothing to Him until the time came for Him to be crucified. God watches over Him and protects Him all the way in His life.

Verse 11, “Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for *there is none to help.*”

It was upon this basis of a restored relationship that the psalmist had with God that he cried out to Him. When troubles overwhelmed us, we can feel lonely and even at times felt abandoned by God. This is so because there is still no help after we prayed. Has God forsaken us?

The psalmist is still looking to God. He still hopes in Him. Trouble is near, but has not overtaken him yet. There is still hope. And this last hope, also the only hope is reserved solely for God. For the psalmist confessed that there is none to help. It is not that he has sought for help from everywhere first. Not at all! He approached God first and that was his hope in Him. The psalmist realized that there is no better help than God. He is not going to turn to his family, friends, or even the elite armies that were all prepared to die for him. He is looking only to God. His eyes are upon God and Him alone. All for the reason that God is his only hope.

III. NO MORE HOPE WHEN LOOKING TO SELF

Verse 12, “Many bulls have compassed me: strong *bulls* of Bashan have beset me round.”

Bulls are strong animals. Bashan is mountainous and to graze upon such mountainous terrains makes the bulls even stronger and powerful. When tamed, they were useful domestic animals. However when they were riled or provoked, they became uncontrollable and will charge headlong against any threat before them. And the psalmist described his enemies like these angry bulls. And it is not one bull, but many. And they surrounded him that there is no way of escape for him. Such was the situation of the psalmist in the midst of his troubles.

Verse 13, “They gaped upon me *with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.*”

His enemies were further described as lions. The word “gaped” means to rend or tear apart. To describe how tearing apart was done by the enemies, the psalmist used a lion by what it does naturally such as ravening (pluck to pieces) and roaring (moaning loudly). The enemies tried to tear the psalmist apart by using words to slander him. Words can kill. Many a time, it is words that started war and conflict between nations and even families. This would include spread lies and falsehood, with all kinds of false accusations against one another.

Verse 14, “I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.”

The psalmist felt so cast out like water being poured out of a container. When water is being splashed on the ground, there is no way to gather back and be the same again. It has been poured out! That’s how the psalmist felt so cast out and unwanted. Having all the bones out of joint is not only a painful experience but also described as being so helpless. Since the joints have been dislocated, there is no way to move both hands and legs. He could not lift himself up at all. He just laid there helplessly.

His heart is like wax, which means melted and no holding back. It just flowed and continue to flow and no stopping. There is no rest and peace. In other words, the psalmist felt so restless and troubled within him. What a terrible feeling he was going through inside him.

Verse 15, “My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.”

There is no more strength in him. The psalmist was referring to a potsherd being left dried completely in a furnace. There is no more moisture that contained in it. What a comparison of his strength as completely dried off and no more!

When the tongue was stuck to the jaws, no words can be heard clearly and properly. There may be noises and sounds but there is no way to be able to reason out and argue for the injustice that was experienced. Imagine the inability to defend yourself against all the false accusations that were hurled at you. This resulted in even greater frustrations and agony.

The dust of death means it was just one more step to be taken and buried in the grave. It was close to death. In fact to have come to such a pathetic state, it is as good as gone and as good as dead already.

Verse 16, “For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.”

The psalmist describes his enemies like dogs. Dogs are unclean animals. They picked at dead carcasses for food. They are wild scavengers, and attacked people when they are alone. Such was the situation of the psalmist in his desperation. His enemies have finally encircled him that there was no way out. Surely he will die in their hands.

Interestingly, the psalmist wrote of an experience that did not happen to him: they pierced my hands and my feet. The psalmist was not trapped until he died from it. This was the experience of the Messiah. Christ was pierced in His hands and feet when He was nailed to the cross. The focus was how Christ was trapped and the enemies have gotten Him and did according to their wickedness.

Verse 17, “I may tell all my bones: they look *and* stare upon me.”

The bones here were believed to be those who are close to the psalmist. He can count the number of them. But they did nothing to help him. They just look and stare upon him. In other words, they could not do anything to save him or deliver him. Such was the experience of Christ. He came unto His own, but they rejected Him. In fact they were the ones who crucified Him. They were the religious leaders of Israel who were put in charge of teaching God’s laws to the people. And yet they were the very ones who thrown out the Messiah whom they taught to the people. What irony!

In all these verses above, we can feel how the Messiah having to go through the great suffering both internal and external, led to His death on the cross on our behalf. What great love He has for us to go through all these in order that we might be saved.

Truly the Lord suffered greatly from all the mocking, flogging on his backs, piercing of the nails into his hands and legs, and crucified high up on the cross for all to see. Yet He put all His hope in God the Father for the mission He gave Him. That mission is to save us from our sins. What a sacrifice He made! That’s how we are saved! Let us be thankful and reciprocate by loving and serving Him. May God help us. Amen.

(To be continued)