

Psalms 22

by Henry Law

Henry Law's sermon on Psalm 22 explores the profound suffering of Jesus on the Cross, emphasizing faith, prophecy, and the promise of resurrection.

Scripture: Psalm 22:1-29

Topics: "The Cross", "Substitutionary Atonement"

Description

Henry Law delves into the profound anguish of Jesus on the Cross, emphasizing the detailed account of His suffering and the ultimate victory that brings forth light and adoration. The sermon takes us to Calvary, where Jesus, as our substitute and Redeemer, endures the full weight of our curse and wrath, experiencing extreme anguish and abandonment to fulfill the penalty for our sins. Despite the depths of suffering, faith in God's holiness and deliverance remains steadfast, echoing the trust of our forefathers. Jesus, in His humiliation, identifies with humanity, enduring scorn and rejection to ultimately exalt us through His sacrifice.

Transcript

The deepest anguish of our suffering Lord is here portrayed. The story of the Cross is told in minute detail. Light breaks forth at last. May we gaze and adore!

1, 2. "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? why are You so far from helping me, and from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; and in the night-season, and am not silent."

We take our stand at Calvary. The Cross is erected. Jesus, the God-man, our substitute, our Redeemer, hangs there. We look, and we receive assurance that truly He is bearing our curse, and drinking to the dregs our cup of wrath, and receiving into His inmost soul the sword of justice, and suffering the extremities of anguish as the penalty for our sins.

For three hours ebony darkness veils the world. We may not pierce the mystery. What mind could bear to realize the tremendous transaction? We learn all that we need to know from the shrill cry which burst from the sufferer's heart. He testifies that God, His God, was no more present. His countenance was wholly hidden. Utter desertion overwhelmed Him. He cried for help, but no help came. He groaned through extremest anguish, and was not silent; but no answer came. It was the hour and power of darkness. Hell could not do more to terrify and excruciate. He was abandoned to its fury. He was surrendered to its worst.

Here we have fullest proof that our Lord's sufferings were real; but they were not for Himself. They were all really substitutional. We have a real curse-bearer, and we really suffer in Him. But against all feeling, when all things were most adverse, faith still survived and retained hold of God. From desertion's lowest depth faith cried, "My God, my God."

3, 4, 5. "But You are holy, O You who inhabit the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in You; they trusted, and You delivered them. They cried to You, and were delivered; they trusted in You, and were not disappointed."

It is faith's happy province, when outward comforts utterly depart, still to justify God. Faith cannot blame, disparage, or cast doubt on Him. Against all outward sense it knows and witnesses that God is holy; it knows that God is entitled to all praise. Praise is His due desert. His people's praises are His home. In darkest times faith gathers strength from ages of experience; it looks to the elders of God's house; they all were partakers of confiding grace. It is thrice repeated that they trusted. To trust they added prayer. The end was sure. Deliverance came, and they were not ashamed. Though He slays us, yet let us trust Him. Light is sown for the righteous. We read a wonderful word as falling from the lips of Jesus--"Our fathers." He states that He is thoroughly one with us. He is born very man, a member of our family; our fathers are His fathers, and His Father is our Father.

6. "But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised by the people."

Jesus foresaw His deep humiliation. He takes the place of a scorned reptile. He is considered scarcely worthy to be ranked on a level with the human race. In after days the prophet sounded a similar note of degradation. He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him. Let us gratefully remember that His low estate is our exaltation. He thus sinks that we may be uplifted.

7, 8. "All those who see Me laugh Me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him; let Him deliver Him, since He delighted in Him."

We return to Calvary. The whole scene here appears in predictive light. As the prophet wrote, so literally it was transacted. Hear the inspired historian; "Those who passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads. Likewise also the chief priests, mocking Him, with the scribes and elders, said, He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him." The sight of extremest misery did not move their cruel hearts. They reveled in their victim's pain; their sneers and taunts wound deeper than the nails. His grief surpassed all grief, even as His love exceeded love. By these His stripes we are healed.

9, 10. "But You are He who took Me out of the womb; You made Me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon You from birth; You are my God from My mother's womb."

Faith draws support from recollection of the earliest mercies. The goodness which watched over infancy and childhood are too often overlooked as common dealings. But the enlightened eye in all this watchful care discerns God's gracious hand. It is our wisdom to trace each providence to special love. They dwell in regions of delight who see God everywhere, and in all concerns. In all things Christ is our bright example! May He who is the giver of all faith give to us faith strong as His own! As He trusted, so may we trust!

11. "Do not be far from me, for trouble is near; for there is no one to help."

Faith quickly flies to God. Its feet frequent the well-known path of prayer. In nearness of trouble it finds nearness to the mercy-seat. Absence of human help is not a loss if it secures the help of heaven. Welcome all earthly destitution, if God supplies the void.

12, 13. "Many bulls have surrounded Me; strong bulls of Bashan have beset Me round. They gaped upon Me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion."

We return in spirit to the cross. The dying Jesus looks around; multitudes encircle Him; with open mouth ferociously they assault Him. Throughout the mass there is no sign of pity; all hearts seem dead to common feelings of humanity; they show the properties of the wildest beasts; they are savage as the untamed bull; they thirst for blood as the devouring lion. This is the saddest picture of man's malignity. What frightful fury raged against Jesus, the perfect model of holiness and love! His only offense was that He walked this earth as God. We see what man is when no grace restrains. If we love Jesus, whom the world thus hated, let us give praise to grace, which causes us to differ.

14, 15. "My life is poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax, melting within me. My strength has dried up like sunbaked clay. My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth. You have laid me in the dust and left me for dead."

The suffering Jesus thus described His miserable state. In graphic terms He tells of His extremity of agony and His extremity of weakness. The pain of the cross was bitterest pain; the weight of the body, suspended by the nailed hands and feet, violently strained the whole frame. It was almost dislocation of each bone; every joint was wrenched. But still no bone may suffer fracture. A clear type announced their soundness, and wondrously was the type fulfilled. The picture shows the whole frame dissolving; it retains no firmness, no consistency; it utterly yields and flows away in weakness, as resistless water yields to touch. Strength of spirit, also, collapses. As wax melts, softens, and offers no resistance to subduing heat, so the heart lay prostrate beneath subduing misery. What is so weak and brittle as the clay of the potter baked and dried up by fire? So the fire of God's wrath brought down to nothingness the Sufferer's strength. The parched mouth showed that the vital fluids were dried up, and death usurped undisturbed dominion.

In all this anguish Jesus realizes His heavenly Father's hand. This is Your doing. I sink into the dust of death. But Your hand thus lays Me low. Jesus thus dies, because His people were thus sentenced; and He thus mounts the cross to die their death, that He might bear to the uttermost their curse. He mercifully selects a term to show how exactly He bore their penalty. The sentence said, "Unto dust you shall return." Jesus calls God to witness, "You have brought Me into the dust of death."

16, 17, 18. "My enemies surround me like a pack of dogs; an evil gang closes in on me. They have pierced my hands and feet. I can count every bone in my body. My enemies stare at me and gloat. They divide my clothes among themselves and throw dice for my garments."

This wonderful passage establishes beyond all controversy that none but Jesus is the subject of this Psalm. To no one else can these terms apply. In Him they receive entire and exact fulfillment. Another prophet writes, "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced." The history relates the very fact. No ground is left on which unbelief can place its foot. Let us give thanks, knowing that by these wounds we are saved, by these stripes we are healed. The very garments of our suffering Lord are here foretold; the seamless texture of His upper vest; the mode in which they are distributed; the Roman soldiers utterly without knowledge of this Scripture, devoid of all intention to accomplish, worked them out to the very

letter. It is a wondrous word, "These things also the soldiers did."

19, 20, 21.

"O Lord, do not stay away! You are my strength; come quickly to my aid! Rescue me from a violent death; spare my precious life from these dogs. Snatch me from the lions' jaws, and from the horns of these wild oxen."

Here new images appear to show the bloodthirsty rage of the unrelenting murderers. We have seen their fury as bulls and lions; we now see their fierceness as dogs and wild oxen. Fierce fury could not be more fierce. Again, we see that no trials can quench the flame of faith, or check its rapid flight to God. It ever realizes, When I am weak in myself, I have God for my strength. In the lowest depths of misery, it clings to deliverance as a sure anchor. Jesus testifies on the cross, "You have heard Me." He was not saved from dying; but He was saved from death. He died, for He must endure our death. But death could not detain. He lives again; He was fully heard. Glorious victory! He dies for us, and by His death, He has abolished death.

22. "I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the congregation I will praise You."

The horrors of the cross give place to joy. From this deepest misery we hear a jubilant note. Jesus now speaks as risen from the dust of death, as going forth arrayed in power, and crowned with majesty and honor. He states His mission to reveal to the Church all the perfections of His heavenly Father, and ever present by His Spirit in the assemblies of His people, to fill their mouths with Jehovah's praise. He will make their hearts a flood of gratitude, and cause the streams of thanksgiving to overflow. How great is His mercy and condescension in thus uniting us to Himself as brethren! He who is Jehovah's fellow, one in essence with the Father, God over all, blessed forevermore, looks with intensest love on us poor miserable worms and vilest sinners, and is not ashamed to call us brethren. In the days of His abode on earth we hear His voice, "Go to My brethren;" again, "Go, tell My brethren." We adore Him as Firstborn among many brethren. Let us with all boldness ever draw near, and tell Him our every sorrow and our every need. He has a loving brother's loving heart towards us.

23, 24. "You who fear the Lord, praise Him; all you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him; and fear Him, all you descendants of Israel. For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither has He hid His face from Him; but when He cried to Him, He heard."

From the cross the voice of Jesus stirs up His people to laud and glorify His Father's name. They are described as those who fear. Their filial love is ever tremulous of giving offense. Their love is mingled with revering awe. Mercy to Jesus on the cross is a rich topic of thanksgiving. He was, indeed, the despised and rejected of men. He drank the bitterest dregs of affliction's cup. But though for a while forsaken by the Father, He was ever His dearly beloved, and His every prayer was heard and answered. Warmed by this thought, let us obey our Lord, and sing God's praises, ardent with love, lowly in fear.

25. "My praise shall be of You in the great congregation; I will pay My vows before those who fear Him."

The heart of Jesus is ever intent to bring glory to the Father. It is His joy to awaken the notes of praise wherever His congregations meet. He remembers, also, the work which He is pledged to execute. Never will He cease, never will He remit His efforts, until the whole company, given by the Father's love, are sought and found, are melted and renewed, and brought by faith to welcome His complete salvation.

26, 27, 28. "The meek will eat and be satisfied. All who seek the Lord will praise him. Their hearts will rejoice with everlasting joy. The whole earth will acknowledge the Lord and return to him. People from every nation will bow down before him. For the Lord is king! He rules all the nations."

Another distinctive mark of Christ's little flock is meekness. They are true followers of Him who sweetly said, "I am meek and lowly in heart." Abundance of refreshing feast is provided for them. Christ is their bread of life. Christ is their daily manna. Christ is their feast of fat things. They hear His welcome, "Eat, O friends, drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved." They are fully satisfied, and they return abundant praise. Jesus, though dying, knew that He would live forever, and living would be the life of all who trusted in Him. Surely their life is far from harm who know that "their life is hidden with Christ in God." At present the world is full of all turmoil and evil. But this confusion and iniquity will soon give place to the reign of righteousness. Christ is heir of all things, His righteous throne will soon be set, and then from the rising of the sun to its decline pure worship will be given to Him.

29, 30, 31. "Let the rich of the earth feast and worship. Let all mortals--those born to die--bow down in his presence. Future generations will also serve him. Our children will hear about the wonders of the Lord. His righteous acts will be told to those yet unborn. They will hear about everything he has done."

The sorrows of the cross end in glorious triumph. What marvels of extensive blessedness spring from these seeds of agony and blood! The Word shall receive full accomplishment, "Therefore, God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." Until the bright day of His return, a constant succession called by His grace, quickened by His Spirit, adopted into His family, shall spring up to call Him Lord, and render devout service. They shall flow on in uninterrupted streams, proclaiming from age to age His glorious righteousness, as their robe to justify, as their ornament for heaven. Rejoicing in full salvation, they shall ascribe all to His finished work. Deep in self-abasement, they shall magnify His grace. One shall be their song. This glory is all His work. He has done this. May we thus sing!

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