

# The Individual's Suffering and the Salvation of the World (Video)

by Michael Oh

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*This sermon delves into Psalms 22, exploring the theme of suffering and God's faithfulness in the midst of trials. It highlights the purpose of suffering, the different types of suffering, and the need for a global mission to proclaim God's righteousness. The sermon emphasizes the importance of worship, sacrificial giving, and the role of suffering in preparing believers for proclamation and evangelism.*

**Scripture:** Psalms 22:1, Psalms 22:3, Psalms 22:19, Psalms 22:22, Psalms 22:27, Psalms 22:30, 2 Corinthians 9:7, 2 Corinthians 6:10, Matthew 11:28

**Topics:** "Suffering", "God's Faithfulness"

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## Description

This sermon delves into Psalms 22, exploring the theme of suffering and God's faithfulness in the midst of trials. It highlights the purpose of suffering, the different types of suffering, and the need for a global mission to proclaim God's righteousness. The sermon emphasizes the importance of worship, sacrificial giving, and the role of suffering in preparing believers for proclamation and evangelism.

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## Transcript

Please open in your Bibles to Psalm 22. I'll be working through most of the Psalms, so please keep your Bibles open. But let's first read verses 1 through 5. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.

Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. In you our fathers trusted. They trusted and you delivered them.

To you they cried and were rescued. In you they trusted and were not put to shame. In you they trusted and were not disappointed.

In April 2005, just 10 days after the opening of Christ's Bible Seminary, my wife Pearl and I were called to the hospital in Japan to get the result of our second daughter Michaela's head MRI. We were thankful to hear that there were no problems with the virus and the seizures that she had had, but then the doctor told us, your daughter has a brain tumor. That was the worst day of my life.

It seems that no matter how much we want to or how hard we try, we can't avoid suffering. Invariably, when we suffer, we ask questions. Why? God, are you really good? God, do you really love me? Today's psalm answers these questions, showing us that God does have a purpose for suffering in our lives, and that the blessings of that suffering are not just for us, but for people all around the world.

So here's our main theme. God has been, is, and will be faithful to his people, both corporately and individually in suffering. And through such suffering, all the nations will worship him as he is proclaimed by his suffering people.

Again, God has been, is, and will be faithful to his people, both corporately and individually in suffering. And through such suffering, all the nations will worship him as he is proclaimed by his suffering people. Now, this psalm has two very distinct parts to it, verses 1 through 21, which we could call the prayer of David, and verses 22 to 31, which we could call the proclamation of David.

One way that we can look at this first section of Psalm 22 is to see some of the painful and perplexing contradictions in David's mind in the midst of his suffering. First, we see in verses 1 and 2 a contrast, a contradiction between David's cries and God's silence. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me from the words of my groaning? Oh, my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.

David here is complaining about the perceived distance and silence of his God. One time as a child, my mother accidentally spilled some hot soup on my leg. I remember clearly crying and crying and crying.

To be honest, I also remember another thing, that it really didn't hurt that much. But I think the reason why I cried so much is because that soup was spilled by my mom, and that pain, however little it was, was caused by my mom. I can see all the mama's boys out there nodding their heads.

In verse 1, we hear pain in David's voice, not just because he felt forsaken by any God, but by my God, my God. A second contrast that we see in David's eyes is between God's faithfulness to Israel and God's forsaking of him. In verses 3 to 5, David is proclaiming, even reminding God of God's faithfulness to his people in the past.

Throughout history, God has responded to the suffering and cries of his people. David knows this and brings this up with God. So David's prayer or honest complaint to God is, when Israel trusted in you, you saved them.

When I trust in you, why do you not save me? When Israel cried to you, you rescued them. When I cry to you, why do you not rescue me? There's this painful disconnect between what David knows of who God is, what God has done in the past, and what God is not doing for David right now. We see a third contrast from verse 12 up through verse 18.

David's enemies are near, and God is far from him. Now David characterizes his enemies as animals of prey. Long before there were lions and tigers and bears, oh, there's this movie called The Wizard of Oz.

It's in black and white, but it's still worth watching. Long before there were lions and tigers and bears, better, there were bulls, oxen, lions, and dogs. I think probably because we've never been on the same side of a cage as a lion, we don't understand what it means to fear such animals.

A few years ago, a young girl named Haley Hildebrand was taking her high school graduation picture with a tiger, apparently a school tradition. She heard something as they were taking the picture and let out a squeal, and panicking, she started to run just moments before that tiger pounced on her and took her life. David's enemies are fierce.

They're fierce, and they are also near. Look at the language of verses 12 and 13. They encompass him.

They surround him. They threaten to tear him apart with their sharp teeth. Verse 16, they encompass him.

They encircle him and pierce him, hands and feet. David's enemies are so near, and God seems so far away. Imagine if that teenage girl were crying out to her father as she was being pounced upon, and her father just looked on from a distance.

That's how David felt. This section of the psalm ends with verses 19 to 21 with a final gasp and cry to God before being overwhelmed, Lord, be not far off. Come quickly.

Deliver me. Rescue me. Save me.

And then it's like the curtains fall to end this first act of the drama. There's such a clear break in the psalm that some scholars have, I believe, wrongly thought that these must be two different psalms. But there is a tremendous shift in the tone of the psalm from verse 21 to 22, also in David's attitude.

What happened? We actually don't know. David doesn't tell us. It's almost as if Act 2 of this drama were missing, and we skip immediately to Act 3. We don't know exactly what David experienced that resulted in this shift from verse 21 to 22.

But from our own experience in the midst of suffering, as well as from a broader biblical context, let me suggest three things that David learned and that we all can learn in the midst of suffering. And after we consider these three brief points, we'll finish up looking at the second section of the psalm. Number one, God is in control of everything.

I think this is usually the first temptation when suffering comes. Maybe God isn't in control. Now, nowhere in this psalm do we see any indication that David sees himself as a victim of random fate.

David is clearly giving God all the credit or perhaps blame for his circumstances. Biblical reality is that God is sovereignly working out all that He has sovereignly ordained from eternity past, both in this world and in your life, including your salvation and your sanctification, a very big part of which often includes suffering. And that's a very good thing, because number two, suffering is a part of the good design of God.

This is the second temptation when suffering comes. Okay, well, if God's in control and I'm suffering like this, then maybe God isn't good, or maybe His plans aren't good. So why is suffering good and also a part of His good plan? First of all, let me suggest that suffering was designed for non-Christians, a very strange and ungracious comment perhaps to make.

But before you get up and leave, hear me out. If you are not yet a Christian, what I want to suggest to you is that suffering functions to teach you of your need for Jesus Christ. Let me introduce you to a little boy named Roberto Salazar, whom you might envy.

Roberto feels no pain. As a baby, he never cried. He never cried because of being hungry or tired or hurt or from a wet diaper.

He feels no pain. He is incapable of feeling pain. Roberto is one of 17 people in the United States with congenital insensitivity to pain with anandrosis.

This may sound like a dream condition to have no pain. Some of you parents may wish your child had this condition. But as his parents will tell you, it's not a dream.

It's a nightmare. He never feels hunger pain, so he didn't eat. When he started teething, he gnawed on his own tongue, lips, and fingers to the point of mutilation.

Pain is a God-given indicator that something is wrong. So pain that you feel in your life as a whole are a part of God's message to you that something is wrong. And the most significant thing that's wrong is a broken and absent relationship with the God who made you.

Now, I serve as a missionary in Japan and founded a ministry called CBI Japan. Modernist sentiment would tell us that Japan, as the most advanced society in the world, should be one of the least pain-filled nations of the world. Biblical perspective, however, affirms and informs the reality and the rationality that Japan, as the largest unreached nation in the world, is filled effusively with humanly insolvable pain.

Why would 9% of high school girls sell their bodies to dirty old businessmen? Because they need money? No. They have money and they spend their \$300 the next day on a Gucci wallet. Why would 4% of middle school girls sell their bodies to dirty old businessmen? Because of pain.

Pain from spiritual emptiness, accentuated, aggravated by the pains of life in a fallen world, including absent fathers working 90-hour weeks, 60% of whom have paid for sex with a prostitute, possibly even his own daughter's classmate. Do you think that the wealth of the Japanese makes them more happy? Apart from God, it creates more emptiness, more empty promises, more empty hearts. The rich are not to be envied.

Those who love their riches are to be pitied. If we allow wealth to be our source of trust, our source of pride, our source of comfort, wealth can create more emptiness, more empty promises, more empty hearts. Now, of course, poverty and hunger are not blessings in and of themselves.

But poverty can be a blessing if it strengthens and heightens the understanding of the reality of our need for God. Blessed are those who know their emptiness, their need, their hunger. But whether for the physically poor of the world or in Japan, the spiritually poor, Christians must be there to help point to the lessons of pain and to point to the solution to pain in Jesus Christ.

Five years ago, the Lord gave our team, CBI Japan, a vision, and it was a vision to see the gospel of Jesus Christ shine in the very heart of the city, the city where much of the teenage prostitution of Japan is occurring, the city where kids are being bullied and many resort to suicide, the city where hopeless young people gather to be hopeless together. And our vision was to establish a safe space for young people in the heart of the city, a place where young people could be physically, emotionally, relationally, sexually, and spiritually safe in the gospel. But honestly, there are moments when we had to ask ourselves, why would God give us a vision for something that seemed, at least financially, like it could never become a reality? Japanese real estate is infamously expensive.

During the real estate bubble, which burst about 20 years ago, a five-by-seven-foot tiny plot of land in downtown Nagoya cost about \$130,000. But we continued to pray and wait and believe that God would open a door for ministry in the heart of Nagoya City. And then suddenly, or finally, a door was opened.

We discovered a property near a major stop in the city whose value during the real estate bubble was more than \$8 million, and the sale price was \$1.3 million. And that's a huge bargain, and missionaries love bargains. But that's still about \$1.2 million more than I had ever raised.

So we called for prayer, and we called for 90 days of prayer, and people all around the world began to pray and to give. Missionaries around the world gave a total of \$50,000. Missionaries from Latin America, China, even Afghanistan.

Most of these people I've never met before in my life. By the amazing grace of God, and the help of friends, churches, missionaries around the world, and complete strangers, by day 82, we had received \$1.3 million. It was a miracle.

But after we reached 100% of our goal, the property was gone. We were one week too late. But then literally the very next week, we heard about another property, a larger building, a larger piece of land, a much better location, just five minutes walking from Nagoya Station.

But we thought for sure it would be at least \$5 to \$7 million. During the real estate bubble, the property was probably worth close to \$20 million. By God's grace, two years ago, we received keys on that property for \$1.2 million.

And today, in addition to Christ Bible Seminary, our first floor is home to the Heart and Soul Cafe, the fulfillment of that safe space vision. If you want to learn more, I invite you to talk with our new CBI director, Brett Rail. They're right in the front row, or to visit our booth or website.

Please pray for Japan. God miraculously provided for us that we could have a presence with those who are in pain, with those who are suffering. And He also gave us the wonderful privilege of sharing with those in pain, both the lessons of pain and also the solution to pain in Jesus Christ.

Let me also say that suffering was designed for Christians. We miss the whole meaning of the Christian faith when we live our lives seeking to avoid suffering and difficulty, seeking to be comfortable physically, financially, emotionally, relationally, and spiritually. If this were Jesus' goal, to be physically, financially, emotionally, relationally, and spiritually comfortable, He would have stayed in heaven.

So many Christians seek to live the pain-free Christian life. Such a life has no impact. Discomfort and suffering are tools of God's discipleship in our lives, and are thus part of the very good plan of God.

And then thirdly, not all suffering is the same. Not all suffering is the same. I think if you look at Scripture, you can probably see at least three types of suffering.

One type of suffering is just a consequence of our own sin. When you suffer like this, you sin and you suffer for it, I think it's good to ask yourself a question that we often ask our children, which is, when does God love you? The answer, thank God, is all the time. There is grace and love and acceptance from the Father even in, especially in, such times.

But, brothers and sisters, may suffering because of our own sin not be the bulk of our suffering. Another type of suffering is what we could call common suffering. And this is suffering that affects people, you know, regardless of whether they're a Christian or not, similar to what we call common grace.

This is not suffering because of sin, it's just a part of life. It includes health problems from colds to cancer, includes hot weather, cold weather, earthquakes, typhoons, financial struggles, poverty, death itself. All people want to avoid this suffering but can't.

I'm so very thankful to the very many people who have prayed for my daughter Michaela. We were so thankful to learn that her condition is not cancerous. She has yet to need surgery, but we continue to monitor her with regular MRIs.

It has been both a thorn for us to bear, but also an opportunity for us to testify of the sustaining grace and faithfulness of our Lord. The trust that Christians put in God in the midst of common suffering can be a tremendous witness to the gospel for those who do not know Jesus Christ. And finally, there is Christ's suffering.

And this is suffering that is suffered for the single reason of living for Jesus Christ. This includes suffering at home or work or school because of obeying Jesus. This includes persecution from governments or companies or even family because of refusing to dishonor Christ.

This includes also a common suffering that is suffered or even compounded because of following Jesus Christ. For example, suffering financially to help the poor, for the lost, or for the spread of the gospel, or suffering poverty and or danger to live in the inner city or in an unreached nation. Many, many Christians have rarely or never experienced such suffering.

Our lives are so hidden, so innocuous to Satan's work that they don't bother Satan at all. How about you? What kinds of suffering do you suffer? Mainly because of your own sin? Mainly common suffering that is no different from non-Christians? Again, God is there for you in such suffering and there is so much of the gospel and grace to be known in such suffering. But I ask you, brothers and sisters, do you know anything of what it means to suffer for Jesus Christ? Now, of course, tabulating what kind of suffering you have in some sort of chart or something is not the point.

The point is about following Jesus Christ and accepting the very real, often difficult, always wonderful consequences of following Him. David learned these lessons and the result was a completely changed life and attitude. From verses 22 to 31, we see a heart of trust and praise and exhortation.

In verses 22 to 31, essentially, we see the fruit of endured suffering and faith. And that fruit is praise and proclamation. First, in verse 22, we see individual praise.

I will tell of your name to my brothers in the midst of the congregation. I will praise you. This is a doxological instinct that is basic to the Christian life.

It's why we sing. In verse 23, we see exhortation for others also to praise God, because it's not enough for just me to worship God. You who fear the Lord, praise Him.

All you, offspring of Jacob, glorify Him and stand in awe of Him. Why do God's people praise Him? Because He saves. Verse 24, for He has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted.

As God is trusted in and His faithfulness is testified about, we see next that blessings flow. Poor and rich are blessed, verses 26 and 29. The afflicted or the poor will eat and be satisfied.

Verse 29, all the prosperous or the rich of the earth will eat and worship. Can I say a quick word about money here? Some pastors think that their people value money too much. I disagree.

I think people value money too little. Money is like blood. There is great value and blessing.

But money, like blood, was meant to flow, to flow through the body, to clean and cleanse and bless and enrich and support and give life. This is God's design for the money that He has blessed you with. You have opportunity for double blessing, to receive and to give.

And what a shame it is to miss out on the fullness of God's blessing and giving, and giving sacrificially and generously for the flow of blood and blessing to the whole body of Christ, to the global body, for the global spread of the gospel. My seven-year-old daughter, I have five children, four girls and a baby boy. My seven-year-old daughter recently asked me, she said, Papa, is money important? And I think Christian parents usually answer something like this, no baby, it's not important.

But kids see that it is, and it's invested so often in temporal things, things with no eternal value. Money indeed has value, and that value is redeemed when it serves eternal global gospel purposes. When we believe God's promises in the gospel, we invest generously in gospel purposes.

When we don't believe God's promises, we spend selfishly or hoard fearfully. When we believe that we've received a glorious eternal inheritance, we release the ambition to build an earthly inheritance. Let me speak for a moment from my heart for the 99.99% of missionaries around the world who will probably never get invited onto this stage.

Let me speak on behalf of my beloved brothers and sisters around the world who are sacrificing and suffering for the gospel. I counted a high privilege to be a part of their fellowship. First of all, I'd like to say, sorry for every angry sounding missionary that you've ever heard from.

We're a passionate bunch, and many missionaries are struggling and hurting. We try to put on a good face, try to make a great PowerPoint, tell great stories. Those are our marching orders when we walk into your church.

Impress us, inspire us, or we might drop you. It almost feels like there's a competition, like a beauty competition, to get our picture up on the church wall. And how happy most missionaries are to get a 10-minute presentation slot in front of the youth group, or even the surprising blessing of three minutes before the actual congregation.

Missionaries honestly feel rejection every single time that we make an embarrassed appeal for financial support, and people say no, which is no doubt great training for the mission field. And perhaps that's part of God's intention in the rejections that we experience inside the church, and an opportunity to believe the gospel more deeply. But honestly, it's discouraging.

We post about an urgent financial need or request support on Facebook from friends to get to the mission field, and all these friends click like, like, like, like, like, and almost none of them actually help with the financial need. Please, please don't do that. What I encourage, and what we try to do also as a family, is to never say no.

When someone shows the faith and courage to ask, we always try to say yes and to be as generous as we can. By faith. Now, I've spent a lot of my heart and life in the past years, you know, trying to mobilize

missionaries.

Jesus says that the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. I think, though, I'm beginning to realize why the laborers are few. I've been going through so much effort and time to mobilize goers, but I finally come to realize that goers aren't the main issue.

There are actually many wonderful people who want to go, but the reason why the laborers are few is because the senders are too few. William Carey, the great missionary to India, said, I'll go down into the mine if you all will hold the rope. But the message of some American Christians to missionaries today is basically, buy your own damn rope.

I heard of a church that sent 70 middle school kids to Japan to do a short-term mission week in Tohoku. The heart behind that is wonderful. But they raised \$3,000 per person for that trip.

\$210,000. What does it say when people are willing to do short-term mission trips but not give? I hope lots of you here and watching this talk will go to the unreached as missionaries. But I also hope that 90% of you will send.

I honestly think that we could nearly double the number of missionaries in the world today if Christians learned and lived out gospel generosity. And the task of reaching the remaining 6,600 unreached peoples of the world would be reasonably within reach. Would you play your part in ushering in the kingdom of God and the return of Jesus Christ? So again, money is like blood.

It was designed to flow. And what happens when blood does not flow? We die. Our arteries get clogged as we eat and consume, and our hearts get clogged.

When we see money as ours, not God's, when we sit on our money and count it rather than invest it globally for the gospel, and our hearts get clogged, and the health of our whole lives is in jeopardy, how are we to give joyfully, as we all know from 2 Corinthians 9-7, and also sacrificially? 2 Corinthians 6-10 says, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things. How much are we to give toward our financial poverty that many might have spiritual wealth? A basic goal that I often encourage is 10% for the church and 10% for reaching the unreached globally. If your salary and such situation are such that those standards don't really hurt you, then your own standard for sacrificial giving would be increasingly higher.

Giving that is joyful, sacrificial, and that displays the glory and feast of God in the gospel. Now, David here in Psalm 22 may be describing a vow that when God answers his prayer, when he finally rescues, David will share those blessings. He will literally lay out a feast, a feast for the poor, and they will share in the rescue and blessing of God.

They will taste God's blessing and rescue. And brothers and sisters, God has already provided that rescue for you in Jesus Christ. Lay out a feast in celebration, a generous, ridiculous feast for the lost all around the world.

God has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. Is this true or not? What would it look like in our lives if we really believed that? What would it look like if we really didn't believe it? Every spiritual blessing. How would you live if that were true? How could you live if that were true? How should you live because it is true? How will you live because it is true? Every blessing without qualification, without limitation, without hesitation.

In verse 27, we can see the extent of God's blessings and salvation. All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him. And here, brothers and sisters, is a key lesson for the Christian.

Yes, God is my God, but the Christian response to the wonderful salvation of Jesus Christ should be, may my God be their God. May my God be their God. Oh, may all the nations and all the peoples of the world worship Christ and be able to say to him, my God, my God.

And this, brothers and sisters, is a missional instinct that, in addition to the doxological one, should be basic to the Christian life. That personal doxology is not enough. That no Christian should be satisfied with personal worship alone when so many around the world have little or no opportunity to even hear the gospel or worship the Lord of the universe.

Let me be clear here. Worship is primary, not missions. But if the only purpose of God was our personal worship and our personal enjoyment of the gospel, then God would immediately sweep us up to heaven after we believe in him so that we can fulfill that sole purpose.

So why not then? Because in addition to our primary purpose of worship, we have been given a primary mission while on earth for the building of the kingdom of God, for the hallowing of God's name by all of creation, for the worship of God by every tribe, language, people, and nation. And that primary mission serves that primary purpose of worship. And that primary mission flows from that primary purpose.

But that primary purpose is lost and insulted when that mission is neglected. God's salvation for us personally is part of a great big plan of salvation from eternity past to eternity future for every nation on earth. God invites us to be a part of that plan, to have global doxological mission.

And David here is showing us how by exhorting Christians to worship God and also to call the world to join in that worship. And that is also the heart and passion of the Lausanne movement. I'm just now one month into my new responsibilities as the executive director and CEO of Lausanne.

I thank you for your prayers. I ask for your prayers. I need them now more than ever before.

Lausanne is one of the influential Christian movements of the modern church era that at the same time probably you've never heard of before. But you know the fruit of God's work through Lausanne. You know of Billy Graham, Lausanne's founder.

You know of John Stott, the lead author of the Lausanne Covenant. You very possibly are a part of a church or a Christian organization or mission that uses the Covenant as its statement of faith and mission. I think every Christian should read and also get to know the Lausanne Covenant.

It is the most widely used faith and mission statement in the world. You've heard of unreached people groups which was a concept introduced at the 1974 Lausanne Congress in Lausanne, Switzerland by Ralph Winter that had a profound effect and resulted in a shift in the whole of global mission strategy. Leaders from all around the world from 150 nations met there in Lausanne, Switzerland to renew their commitment to the biblical foundation of the faith and to recommit themselves to the biblical mission of the church.

You've heard of the 1040 window which was introduced by Louis Bush after the second Lausanne Congress in 1989 in Manila, Philippines. You've been blessed by and sat under the teachings of leaders

who attended the Lausanne Younger Leaders Gathering in 1987 in Singapore. Young leaders like Ajit Fernando, Peter Kuzmich or that young leader who preached this morning, John Piper.

The third Lausanne Younger Leaders Gathering will be in 2015. You're aware of some of the great challenges to God's global mission today including Islam and the so-called prosperity gospel, secularism and the critical need for partnership with the global south. You might even have heard about the third Lausanne Congress in Cape Town where global leaders gathered to tackle these great challenges facing the church and which has been described as the most diverse gathering of global Christian leaders ever with 4,200 leaders from 200 nations.

We're inviting Christians and churches around the world to join us for 31 days of prayer during the month of May. Prayer for Lausanne and prayer for the world. We have some uniquely strategic opportunities to impact the world for Jesus Christ in the days to come and I hope that you will join us for those days of prayer.

We live in a world with more than 2 billion people with little or no gospel witness or opportunity, billions who have not or will not hear the gospel if we do not testify, billions who have not or will not hear unless someone will go and suffer. If Jesus Christ being proclaimed and worshipped among all the nations and peoples that he has made, if it matters and if it matters to you, won't you get involved? Brothers and sisters, our suffering is not merely for our own sanctification, it is to prepare us for proclamation, proclamation of the difficulty of life in a fallen world, but also the blessedness of God's grace that speaks into suffering, that sustains us through suffering and that will ultimately rescue us from suffering. And we see in verses 30 and 31 that this generation and future generations will be blessed from suffering and the faithfulness of God.

We will see generational doxology of God, old, young, and future generations. In verse 31, we see generational mission as well. Old, young, future generations will testify and proclaim God's righteousness to all nations.

They shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn that he has done it. Worship now will become worship forever. As we suffer and rely upon God and testify of his faithfulness and worship him, people are one to Christ.

Evangelism and missions happen. It's not just that God is faithful in our suffering or that he has purpose in it for us, but that suffering has missional purpose with global implication, where you have the suffering of the godly, you have in due time fruit bearing of the gospel. Now throughout the history of the church, we can see that God works his salvation through the suffering and testimonies of his people individual by individual, and this is most true in the suffering of Jesus Christ.

Jesus echoes the words of verse 1 on the cross. This psalm shadows the experience of Jesus Christ on the cross. We see his suffering.

He is surrounded by his enemies. They mock him. We hear his cries to God.

David only thought that God had forsaken him. Every Christian can have complete confidence that God will never leave us nor forsake us. That is his promise.

But God turned his face from Christ on the cross and poured out his wrath upon him who became a curse for us. We question God, how could you allow me to suffer? How could you allow suffering to even exist if

you are good? And here is one of the most amazing truths of Christianity. God not just allowed, but ordained suffering to exist.

Why? Ultimately, the greatest reason why suffering exists is so Jesus Christ could suffer and suffer for us and display the most amazing love and sacrifice conceivable. Suffering exists because God ordained that Christ would suffer for sinners, but it was a meaningful purpose-filled suffering. And from that sacrifice, God will be glorified and worshiped by people throughout time and to the very ends of the earth.

God worked his salvation through the suffering of Jesus Christ. How can we complain of our little, little suffering when we know how much Jesus suffered for us? Don't run away from suffering. Not only will it be a tool for your own discipleship in Christ, it will be God's tool to bring salvation even to the very ends of the earth.

Do you run towards suffering for the sake of suffering? Of course not, but we run towards Christ. And as a consequence of following him, as Christ taught us, we will have tribulation. There is a suffering that will be known because all is not right in this world, but God has a plan and that plan includes you.

And so following him to the cross, we take up our own crosses and experience the pain and joy of denying ourselves. Following him to the loss, we set aside social comfort and political correctness and some of the freedoms of our own private space and time and future and relational preferences. Following him in sacrifice, we deny ourselves financial comfort and pleasure that others might have their daily bread and still others might come to know the bread of life.

And for some now or perhaps among you in the future, following him even to the ends of the earth, suffering the loss of family, friends, language, culture, and comfort, that the worthy name of Jesus might be worshipped, that our God might become their God. Amen.

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Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/nqkGwBg1vpo.mp4>

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