

The Individual's Suffering and the Salvation of the World

by Michael Oh

The sermon explores the relationship between individual suffering and God's faithfulness, emphasizing the broader impact on the world.

Duration: 57:35

Scripture: Psalm 22, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Suffering"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on Psalm 22:22-31 and emphasizes the importance of not dividing the psalm into two parts. The main theme of the sermon is that God is faithful to his people, both corporately and individually, even in times of suffering. The speaker highlights the shift in David's perspective from cries for mercy to shouts of joy and praise. The sermon also briefly mentions the speaker's family and their ministry at Christ Bible Seminary.

Transcript

I forgot my sermon this morning, so I'm using my computer. I have an excuse though, Pastor Wanho, I'm jet-lagged. Last year I spoke to the college group, about a year ago.

Who was there when I spoke? Okay, a good portion of you. I had been in Japan that time about less than 24 hours and I was severely jet-lagged. And honestly, I don't remember what I talked about.

But I don't think I talked about this, because this is something new. Really blessed to be here. Not only did I graduate from Penn in 92 and 93 and, Lord willing, 2007.

It's part of the reason why we're here back in Japan for the six-month furlough. We've been in Japan serving for the last three years. And normally missionaries do four years on the field and then one year of furlough.

But it's really hard to leave the seminary ministry for a whole year. And also I have my PhD dissertation here at Penn to, Lord willing, finish up. So that will be our main goals and foci while we're here.

And really glad to have a chance to be here and to be a part of this ministry. Thank you especially to Pastor Young for opening up the pulpit and trusting this ministry to me. Close your eyes.

What I'd like you to do is to think about the most painful experience you've ever had in your life. I'm not talking about sitting on a thumbtack or having your fingernail ripped from your finger. I'm talking about the most difficult suffering that you've gone through in your life.

Some really bad sickness or losing a loved one, getting fired, relationship problems, problems at school, whatever. Either now or in the past. And what I want you to do is not just think about it, but to really, really feel it and remember it.

And go there to that time and to that place. And what I want to do is just give you about a minute to just really meditate upon that and to remember. So I'll give you about a minute.

Okay, go ahead and open your eyes. I know most of you are pretty young, but even now I think in this life, up to this point in your life, probably you've gone through some hard times. And it seems that no matter how hard you try, we can't seem to avoid suffering.

And also invariably I think when we suffer, what we tend to do is we all tend to ask questions. And I think we tend to ask the same questions. First of all, why? Why, God? Why did this happen to me? Why am I going through this? Is there any meaning to this suffering? God, are you really good? And does God really love me? Now today's psalm, Psalm 22, answers some of these questions, showing us that God does have a good and great purpose for suffering in our lives.

And also that the blessings of such suffering are not just for us, but for people all around the world. So before we move on, let me read Psalm 22. Go ahead and turn in your Bibles to Psalm 22, and you're probably going to want to keep your Bibles open, because we'll be going through almost each of the verses.

Psalm 22, probably familiar words to you. Psalm 22, I'll read the whole psalm. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night and am not silent.

Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One, you are the praise of Israel, and you our fathers put their trust. They trusted and you delivered them, they cried to you and were saved, and you they trusted and were not disappointed. But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people.

All who see me mock me, they hurl insults, shaking their heads. He trusts in the Lord, let the Lord rescue him, let him deliver him, since he delights in him. Yet you brought me out of the womb, you made me trust in you, even at my mother's breast.

From birth I was cast upon you, from my mother's womb you have been my God. Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help. Many bulls surround me, strong bulls of Bashan encircle me, roaring lions tearing their prey open their mouths wide against me.

I am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax, it is melted away within me. My strength is dried up like a pot shirt and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth.

You lay me in the dust of death. Dogs have surrounded me, a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones, people stare and gloat over me.

They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing. But you, O Lord, be not far off. O my strength, come quickly to help me.

Deliver my life from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs. Rescue me from the mouth of the lions. Save me from the horns of the wild oxen.

I will declare your name to my brothers. In the congregation I will praise you. You who fear the Lord, praise him.

All you descendants of Jacob, honor him, revere him, all you descendants of Israel. For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one. He has not hidden his face from him, but has listened to his cry for help.

From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly. Before those who fear you will I fulfill my vows. The poor will eat and be satisfied.

They who seek the Lord will praise him. May your hearts live forever. 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. For dominion belongs to the Lord and he rules over the nations. All the rich of the earth will feast and worship.

All who go down to the dust will kneel before him. Those who cannot keep themselves alive. Posterity will serve him.

Future generations will be told about the Lord. They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn. For he has done it.

So here's our main theme for today. Can you put that slide up? 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 seems to be divided into two parts.

Can you figure out where the break is? You can probably just hear it in my voice as I was reading through this passage. And you can hear it in David's voice as well. The break seems to be between verse 21 and 22.

It's a pretty clear break. Verses 1 through 21 are David's prayer. And then verses 22 to 31 you see this sudden proclamation of God.

And this praise to God. Let's look quickly at this first section of 1 to 21 in David's prayer. One of the ways that we can study this psalm or look at this psalm is by looking, especially in this first 21 verses, at some of the really painful and really perplexing contradictions that exist in David's mind.

And through his experiences. You can see it here in these verses. We first see in verses 1 and 2 this contrast again in David's mind or eyes between my cries to God and God's silence.

David is saying, he's crying out, I am not silent but God you are. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me? So far from the words of my groaning. Oh my God, I cry out by

day but you do not answer.

By night I am not silent. So David here is complaining about this perceived silence and also this perceived distance of his God. I remember distinctly as a child one day sitting at my kitchen table and my mom was getting some soup for me or something.

And I remember that she accidentally spilled some of that hot soup on my leg. And I cried and cried and cried. And I remember physically it really wasn't that hot.

It didn't really hurt that much. But I cried and cried. And the reason why I cried is not because it hurt but because my mom spilled it on me.

I call my mom, Mommy. Mommy spilled soup on my leg, hot soup. And you can hear that same pain in David's voice here.

My God, my God. It's not just because he felt forsaken by some God or any God. But my God, why have you forsaken me, he asked.

Why are you so far from me? Why are you so far from my words of groaning? My God, my God, my God. A second contrast we can see in David's eyes is between God's faithfulness to Israel and God's forsaking of me. God's faithfulness to Israel in the past and God's forsaking of me now.

Now in verses 3 to 5, we can see here David is like proclaiming, almost reminding God of God's faithfulness to his people in the past. Look at these verses. You are the praise of Israel.

In you our fathers put their trust. They trusted you and you delivered them. They cried to you and were saved.

In you they trusted and were not disappointed. And throughout history, God has responded to the suffering and cries of his people. And we can see that throughout the history of Israel.

David knows this and he is questioning God. When Israel trusted in you, you saved them. When they cried to you, you saved them.

Implicitly, David is asking, then why don't you save me? We know that David at least was talking about trusting in God. In fact, he was talking about this enough that his enemies were mocking him. Verse 8, he trusts in the Lord.

He says that he trusts in the Lord. Let the Lord rescue him. And clearly in verses 1 and 2 and throughout this whole section, we can see David is crying out to God and asking to be saved.

So David's really painful prayer is this. 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 saved them.

When I cry to you, why do you not save me? Do you know anything of feeling like this? Why? Why? Why? So David is feeling this painful disconnect between who he knows God to be and how he knows God has acted in the past to Israel, and David's king of Israel, right? And how he sees God not acting now and not being now. And it hurts. As any of you know who have been through really hard times and painful suffering, you know, this battle during suffering is just this up and down and up and down and up and down.

You know, there are times of real just despair and hopelessness, but also there are times of, you know, you're really determined to just place your faith in God and trust him. And a lot of times, those are almost one and the same time. They're intermixed.

Despair and hope, despair and faith. And you can see that in David as well, right? You know, you can see this in his heart. You can see this in verses, like, especially 9 and 10 and into 11.

Yet you, you know, you, God, you brought me out of the womb. You made me trust in you. This is hard words, right? From birth, I was cast upon you.

From my mother's womb, you have been my God. So this is complaining, but this is also like confidence. David is completely confident in the sovereignty of God.

Even in his very birth, God, you are in control. David knew his birth was not random. His relationship with God was not random.

Therefore, surely, God, you have a plan for my life. And David also is completely confident in the closeness of God throughout his life. You know, there's this amazing, like, closeness and tenderness that we can hear this love in these verses.

Yet you brought me out of the womb. You made me trust in you, even at my mother's breast. From birth, I was cast upon you.

From my mother's womb, you have been my God. So hearing the language of this psalm, you can almost, like, picture God, like, delivering baby David, like, with his hands, taking David's life and holding him tenderly and then placing him at his mother's breast. David remembers such a God.

And in this moment of real weak but genuine faith, he prays in verse 11, don't be far from me. Don't be far from me now, because trouble is near and there is no one else to help me. Verses 12 to 18 provide us with a fourth contrast.

Enemies are near to me, and God, you are so far from me. So David characterizes his enemies as animals. As you can see, oftentimes through the psalms, we read in verse 12, bulls surround me, strong bulls of Bashan.

These bulls were like these massive bulls who fed upon this rich vegetation of that area. And they were just a symbol of human pride and power. And roaring lions with these sharp teeth and dogs surround him.

So David's enemies are not only fierce, but they are also near. They are near. So in verse 12, you can see that David's enemies, they surround him, they encircle him, and they threaten to tear him apart with their sharp teeth.

And then we see the same thing in verse 13. They surround him, they encircle him and they pierce him, hands and feet. So he's completely surrounded by his enemies and David is just broken.

And he's almost near death. His enemies are so near, but also it seems that God is so far away. I am poured out like water, my bones are out of joint, my strength is dried up and you, you lay me in the dust of death.

Now David here is getting really close to sinning. It's like this fine line, right? It's like, God, you are sovereign and you are the one who has placed me here. And you can only just wonder what David's feeling in his heart and if this is like a statement of faith or a statement of sin.

But basically he's saying, God, you have put me here. The reason why I'm surrounded and encircled and pierced by my enemies is because you have put me here. And then this section of the psalm ends with this like final gasp and cry to God before he's just completely overwhelmed.

But you, but you, enemies are here, but you, oh Lord, be not far off. Oh, my strength, come quickly to help me. Deliver me.

Deliver me. Rescue me. Save me.

Come quickly. Don't be far off. And then it's like the curtains fall on part one of this drama, act one of this drama.

It's really interesting. The curtains fall. Act one of this drama ends.

And then there's this really clear break. It's such a clear break between 21 and 22 that some liberal scholars say, these are two different psalms. This is not psalm one.

It's psalm 22 all alone. This is psalm 22a and psalm 23 or then psalm 23 would be psalm 24. It's so different.

It has to be a different psalm. We see this tremendous shift in the tone and we also see this tremendous shift in David's attitude. Can you see that? If you look at your scriptures, totally different.

What happened? We don't know. We don't know what happened. It's almost as if, you know, you have act one and the curtains fall and you're like, wow.

And then suddenly act three starts and you're like, what happened to act two? I have no idea what happened. We have no idea because it's not written. We want to know, but we skip immediately to act three.

And then because, you know, from verse 22 onward, we can see that David's perspective on God and also his situation have just completely changed from cries for mercy and even complaining to the shouts of joy and praise and commendation and exhortation to worship and honor God. So we're here in Philadelphia, my family and I, for six months. Can you show the picture? These are my girls.

Last time I was here, I had three girls. We have some prayer cards out on the table back there. We had one.

They're a little bit old, but this is my family. Oldest is Hannah. Second is Michaela and then Eowyn and then Elliot.

Elliot's a girl, too. Four girls. So it's a happy family.

I wish I had more time to share about our ministry of Christ Bible Seminary. We're not Nagoya Theological Seminary anymore. That was the original name that we had thought we would use, but we ended up changing that before the seminary opened about a year and a half ago.

But Christ Bible Seminary is a ministry seeking to raise up and train and equip this young generation of Japanese Christians to help lead and reach both the church in Japan and also the young people in Japan. It's a great ministry to be involved in. It's exciting to see how God has worked.

If you are interested, I would love to get a chance to hang out with you more and to talk and to answer questions and for you all to get a chance to hear more about our lives and our ministry and what it's like in the mission field. And Dan Cho, Dan, could you raise your hand back? My real good friend, Dan Cho, who is also a member of GCC, will be hosting just a get-together tomorrow night at 7 o'clock at his house. And on the table in the back, Dan's going to be there after service and he has some little flyers.

If you're interested just to come hang out and talk and ask questions and learn and pray, so please join us. Please join us and you'll get a chance to hear more. So Dan will be there in the back and then I'll be here also if you want to get a chance to talk more and learn more about our ministry.

David Yim and Brian Pyle came all the way to Japan to hear these things. Sorry, guys. But it was great to have them with us.

You know, if we look back on our three years, the past three years in the mission field, we can say that we've experienced some suffering. I think the hardest part for us has been facing opposition and challenge inside of the church. And I think oftentimes that's what you face in the mission field.

It's one thing to have someone who is not a follower of Jesus Christ persecuting you and criticizing you, etc. But when it's inside of the church, I think that's the hardest thing, the most discouraging thing. And we've gone through a lot of that, especially through the well-known, old, established Japanese leadership who don't want to see any change, even though they're only 0.25% Christians in Japan.

And there's desperate need for change in Japan. So our seminary is completely different from most ministries in Japan. Our unofficial motto is, the seminary for young Japanese who don't want to go to seminary.

So we've gotten these constant attacks from these older, established leaders who say we shouldn't be doing what we're doing, how we're doing it, and where we're doing it. So that's been really hard. And so that's been one type of suffering we've been going through.

There's been lots of spiritual attack that we've experienced, in particular since April of this year and also in the year 2004. You have to realize in Japan, you're in an unreached nation. I would argue one of the most dark nations spiritually in all the world.

A number of months back, we had a missionary to the Muslims speaking at a church in Tokyo, and she said that she felt much more spiritually oppressed in Japan than she did in the Middle East. And you have to realize that 130 million people, almost every single household has an altar set up to worship idols and dead ancestors, and they burn incense to these idols, and they offer prayer to these idols, and offer food to these idols, as they open their homes and their hearts to demonic oppression. There are 186,000 officially recognized cult groups by the Japanese government, and they argue, they say that, and they worship 8 million gods in Japan.

What does that translate into spiritually? Let alone what happened historically with Japanese and Koreans and the past generational sins of that people, and 80% of child pornography on the internet coming out of Japan. What does that look like then spiritually? So to be honest, I was really looking forward to furlough. I

think we were doing really well in ministry-wise and spiritually, but just to get a chance to kind of breathe.

Sometimes it's so suffocating in Japan, and that's been another kind of persecution and suffering that we've gone through over the last three years. But I think probably the most difficult suffering and the most painful one that we've gone through has been just what our family has faced. We've gone through different kind of sicknesses.

I had pneumonia and a broken rib because of the coughing and some different viruses and Pearl. My wife has had a bad back, and she's starting to develop arthritis with our four girls. Last year, our girls went through something called the rotavirus.

You don't want your kids to get the rotavirus. One month of diarrhea and vomiting. The diarrhea medicine you need to eat, but then they throw up, and then the vomiting medicine you need to go the opposite direction, but then they diarrhea it out.

It's terrible, and this was one month before the seminary opened. Eowyn, who was a baby at that time, houses in Japan are really cold in the wintertime because their walls are paper thin. She had diarrhea one night, and then it was freezing cold that night.

We woke up, and she's there, and her fingers are blue, and her body's stiff. She had hypothermia, and we rushed her to the doctors, and they take blood tests trying to make sure that she didn't have hypoglycemia, which can result in long-term brain damage. And then during that same virus, our second daughter, Michaela, had seven seizures one night.

So we rushed her to the hospital. They say, oh, we don't deal with children. We rushed her to another hospital, and she's admitted for four days, and just seeing your little child in this metal crib with all these lines coming out of her.

Finally, she was okay. We came home. She had different tests done.

Everything got normal. We opened the seminary. One week later, the hospital asked us to come back for the results of the test.

Two Japanese doctors sit down with us, and they say, your daughter has a brain tumor. A lot of their explanation and stuff, we didn't understand what they're talking about. All we could definitely hear was overhearing the two doctors looking at the MRI film, and one of them saying to the other, which means, it's large, isn't it? This is one week after the opening of the seminary, and we're scrambling, thinking we have to go home.

Now, we don't know exactly what David experienced between verse 21 and 22. It's just not written. But from our own experience, through some of the suffering that the Lord has graciously put us through, and also from just a larger biblical context, what I want to do is just suggest to you three things that David learned, and that also we learned over the past years and months, and things also, hopefully, that we all can learn as well.

Number one, God is in control. God is in control of everything. This is usually the first temptation when suffering comes into your life.

The voice of the serpent, you hear the voice of the serpent saying, maybe God isn't in control like he said he is. And some people think that a world with a less than sovereign God is comforting. I don't.

I don't. First of all, it gives entirely too much credit to the evil one, to Satan. Secondly, it puts almost everything in jeopardy, that there's nothing that is certain, there's nothing that is secure, and it's a very, very scary world to live in.

What does it even mean to trust in God in a world that is not under his control? Now, nowhere in this psalm do you get any indication that David sees himself as this victim of fate. Oh, this world of chaos, and this terrible thing has happened to me. David is clearly giving all the credit, or perhaps even all the blame, to God for his circumstances.

And the biblical reality is that God is sovereignly working out all that he sovereignly ordained in your life, both in salvation and also in your sanctification and your growth. And that's a very good thing. Secondly, suffering is a part of the good design of God.

And this is the second temptation when suffering comes. Okay, well, maybe God's in control, but if I'm suffering like this, maybe God isn't good. Maybe God's plans aren't really so good.

But biblically, we can see that God is sovereign, God's plans are good. And let me give just two examples of why God's plans are good, even with the existence of suffering. Number one, for any of you, and for all of you who are not a Christian, suffering, God designs suffering for you.

Sounds terrible, right? Coming to a church, the preacher said that God designs suffering for non-Christians. I'm not sure if I want to go to that church. If you are not a Christian today, or not yet a Christian today, 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 someone who you might envy. That one, the little picture. This is Roberto Salazar.

Roberto Salazar is four years old. Roberto feels no pain. As a baby, he never cried.

He never cried because of being hungry, or tired, or his diaper was wet. He feels no pain, ever. Amazing, right? You envy him, don't you? Roberto is one of 17 people in the United States who has what's called congenital insensitivity to pain with anhidrosis, referred to as CIPA.

This may sound like a dream condition, right? I want CIPA. But, as his parents say, it's a nightmare. It's a nightmare.

He never feels hunger pain, so he doesn't eat. When he started teething, he gnawed on his own tongue, and lips, and fingers to the point of mutilation. Because he was teething, and he felt no pain.

Pain is a God-given indicator that something is wrong. Pain is a blessing. Pain is a blessing from God.

So, pain that you feel in your life, whether physical pain, or emotional pain, or just looking at pain and suffering as a whole, these are God's messages to you that something is wrong in your life. Something's wrong. And the most significant thing that is wrong for you, if you're not a Christian today, is the lack of intimate, loving relationship with God who made you.

And all the challenges that you go through, and struggles that you go through, they are indication to you that something is wrong. Pain is not something that you can escape, but it is something that you can deal with, and where you're going to find the dealing with that pain is in relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and the healing of your soul in what Jesus Christ has to offer. And I'm sure the people around you, and also the pastors, would love to talk to you about how to deal with suffering and pain in your life.

Also, not just for you, but suffering, it is a blessing from God for Christians. It is a blessing from God for Christians, because through suffering, God makes us more and more like Jesus Christ. We miss the whole point of the Christian life when we seek to live our lives to avoid suffering.

The primary goal and instinct and motivation in your life is to avoid suffering, that we want to be comfortable, that you seek to be comfortable financially, that you seek to be comfortable physically, you seek to be comfortable relationally, emotionally, even spiritually. And if you're honest, I think, you can see that most of the things and how you're deciding what you're going to do with your life and how you're going to live your life and where you're going to go and what you're going to do, I would guess, for most people, most of your motivation for how you're doing things is to avoid suffering, that you want to be comfortable in all these ways. We're seeking to live, if they had a book, like the pain-free Christian life.

Right? Sounds so good. But such a life has no impact. Such a life has no impact.

And John Bunyan said, there is more to be had of Jesus in times of suffering than any other time. There is a comfort and peace that surpasses understanding even in the midst of tremendous suffering. And this is a path that leads to our eternal home, where there will be no more tears, crying, or pain.

And we had so much of Jesus during those hard times with our daughter, Michaela. More of Jesus in our lives than at any other time ever. And then number three, not all suffering is the same.

Now, if you look at the scriptures, I'd argue that you can see at least three different types of suffering. Number one type of suffering is consequences from our own sin. Suffering that results because of our own sin.

You know, because of our sins, what we do and what we don't do, etc., relationships can be painful. We have suffering and pain because of our sin, what we've done. We have problems at home and work and school.

We even have physical and financial and spiritual problems because of our own sin. And Satan loves this. And when this is the bulk of our suffering, he will leave you alone because you're doing a good job already.

Number two, this is what I call common suffering. Common suffering. This is suffering that affects you.

It doesn't matter if you're a Christian or not. This is common suffering, almost like common grace. It's just a part of life.

It includes health, anything from the cold to cancer. It doesn't matter if you're a Christian. I'm a Christian.

I shouldn't get cancer. This is common suffering for all. It includes financial problems, separation from loved ones, hot weather, cold weather, earthquakes, typhoons, poverty, even death.

All people want to avoid this suffering. You can't. You can't.

And then thirdly, what I call Christ sufferings. This is suffering for the singular reason of following Jesus Christ. You have decided to live this way and you suffer for it.

You've decided to do this because of Christ or for Christ and you suffer for it. And you know what I'm talking about, don't you? The decision to live in a particular area of the city because you want to minister the gospel. You want to love people who have no opportunity like this.

You make a decision at school or in the workplace, I am not going to act this way because I want to honor Jesus Christ and you suffer for it. Your grades suffer for it or your work performance or your salary suffers for it or you decide, or for missionaries, deciding to leave your home and culture and friends and family and language to go to a place where Jesus Christ is not known and where the gospel is not spoken of. I would argue that many Christians have never experienced such suffering.

That the bulk of your suffering is number one, which is avoidable at some level. Number two, common suffering, which is not avoidable. And if you stay in those two areas, Satan is glad.

Once you move into three, your suffering will increase. What kind of suffering do you suffer? David learned these lessons and the result was this completely changed life and attitude. And from verses 22 to 31, we can see a heart that is completely different, a heart of praise and trust and exhortation.

And we can see in verses 22 to 31 a complete change. And we can see now the fruit of endured suffering in faith. Do me a favor, stand up for like five seconds, stretch and then sit back down and we'll finish.

So open up your Bibles, look at 22 to 31. So this is beautiful stuff. And if you look at this, you understand this is one psalm.

And this is glorious. And if you chop this psalm into two, you completely miss the whole point of this psalm. So what we see in 22 to 31 is that these painful contradictions in David's heart have found this glorious resolution, this glorious resolution in Act 3. So the mocking people that we see in the first section have become instead now this praising people, this praising of God.

We see that this temporary abandonment that David felt instead now has become both individual deliverance and also generational deliverance. We can see throughout this whole section. Starting in verse 27, we can also see again the fruit of this endured suffering.

We can see the extent now of God's blessings and salvation. That it goes not just Israel praising God for deliverance, but worship and praise and glory to God and honor of God even to the ends of the earth. And this is a key, primary, basic lesson that every Christian should understand.

Yes, God is my God. But the Christian response to the wonderful salvation of Christ should be, may my God be their God. May my God be their God.

Oh, may all the nations, may all peoples worship Christ and be able to say of God, He is my God. This is the very heart of missions and of the Christian life that we all cannot ignore. God's salvation for us is part of a great big plan of salvation from eternity past to eternity future for every nation on earth.

And God invites us to be a part of that plan. And David here is showing us how by exhorting Christians to worship God and also proclaim the salvation of the Lord to the nations, to the world. So in verse 29, look at verse 29, we see that these blessings flow both to the poor and to the rich.

In verse 30, we see that from suffering and the faithfulness of God, we will see generational worship of God. Old, young, future generations even. In verse 31, we see there's also not just generational worship, but generational mission as well.

Old, young, future generations will testify and proclaim God's righteousness to the nations. We can see basically from this psalm that God works through the sufferings of individuals like David, like you, like you. The basic theme of the Bible, we suffer, he saves.

We suffer, he saves. It's true when you first believe in Jesus Christ. We suffer, we suffer because of sin.

Number one, right? We plead to him for mercy and he saves us through Jesus Christ. And then, what do we do? We testify of the incomparable greatness and love and grace and glory of Jesus Christ. And what a wonderful savior he is.

This is evangelism. We testify, not because we have a duty, oh, you're a Christian now, you should evangelize. We testify because it's natural, because we want to talk about our loving savior, because Jesus is so good, amen? And we want other people to have such blessings, especially your family and your friends.

And as we share about your sufferings, people will listen. People will listen. You listen to me, because there's a testimony, a powerful testimony to be had of how good Jesus Christ is, how faithful he is.

We suffer, we testify, we trust, we testify, and people will listen and people will live, both here and to the ends of the earth. If you don't say anything to people, if we don't testify, no one will come to know the Lord. And that's largely the case today.

There are three billion people in the world who have little or no opportunity to hear your testimony, this testimony of the goodness of God and the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Three billion people. Most of them, 90% of them, are in what we call the 1040 window, 10 degrees north latitude to 40 degrees north latitude, stretching from Japan all the way up to North Africa.

Three billion people who want to hear, who need to hear this testimony of your suffering and the suffering of Jesus Christ. Billions who have not or will not hear if we don't testify. Billions who have not or will not hear unless someone will go and suffer.

Even as a Christian, you know, same theme. We suffer, he saves. We suffer, we suffer common suffering, Lord willing also, we suffer Christ's sufferings.

We share in his sufferings. We plead to him. We wait in silence.

We plead, we wait, we plead, he answers. We, we're saved. We testify.

As we testify, people are disciplined to Jesus Christ. People are encouraged. People are challenged.

And God is glorified. As we share about our sufferings, people will listen. And they will be disciplined to Jesus Christ.

As we suffer and we rely upon God and testify of his faithfulness, people are one to Christ. Evangelism and missions happens. As we suffer and rely upon God and testify of his faithfulness, people are disciplined to Christ.

Discipleship and missions happens. It's not just that God is faithful in our sufferings. You know, you hear lots of sermons on suffering.

God is faithful. Trust God. God will be faithful to you in your sufferings.

That's a good message. It's incomplete though, especially in Psalm 22. Yes, God is faithful in suffering.

Yes, God has a purpose. But that suffering has missional impact. Missional impact with global implications.

And the broader your suffering testimonies can be and the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, the greater impact then the gospel will have even to the nations. The history of the church affirms this. You know, wherever you have suffering of the godly, you have in due time fruit bearing of the gospel.

That is true throughout the history of the church and that is true throughout the world today. You find a suffering church and in due time you will find fruit bearing of the gospel. I guarantee you.

Throughout the history of the church, God has worked his salvation through the suffering and testimonies of his people individual by individual by individual. And I hope you are waiting for this. This is most true in the suffering of Jesus Christ.

Right? So Jesus echoes the words of verse one on the cross and this psalm shadows the experience of Jesus Christ on the cross. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? We can see in this passage the sufferings of Jesus Christ. He is surrounded by his enemies.

They mock him. We hear his cries to God. You know, David only thought that God had forsaken him and every Christian in this room can have complete confidence God will never forsake you.

But Jesus on the cross was forsaken by the father. God turned his face away from Christ and poured out his wrath on the sins of the world that he bore. The only reason that we can be forgiven of our sins is because Jesus was forsaken.

That is the love and mercy of God. So this is the amazing truth of Christianity. Hear this well.

God not just allowed, but he ordained suffering to exist. And hear this. Why? Ultimately, the greatest reason why suffering exists is so Jesus Christ could suffer.

Suffering exists, was ordained by God ultimately so that Jesus Christ could suffer and suffer for you and for us and display the most amazing love and sacrifice conceivable. And from that sacrifice, God would be glorified and honored and worshiped and praised by people throughout time and throughout the earth. God worked his salvation through the suffering of Jesus Christ.

How, oh how, can we complain at the very, very little suffering that we know or even can possibly know here on earth if Jesus Christ suffered like that? And also, how can we not testify and proclaim Jesus Christ's love and suffering to those all around the world if he loved us so much to suffer like that? Every person that has been greatly used by God for his glory has suffered. Most importantly, Jesus Christ. Don't run away from suffering.

Not only will it be a tool in your discipleship, but also it will be God's tool to bring salvation even through you, even to the ends of the earth. You know, when the church is filled with those who seek the painless

Christian life, growth is neglected, evangelism is neglected, discipleship is neglected, and missions is neglected. I think sometimes avoidance of suffering is the number one reason why people don't even consider being a missionary.

I don't like suffering. Of course you don't. When the church is filled with those who for following Jesus Christ anyhow and anywhere that he will lead, suffer and trust and testify and worship, growth is evident, evangelism is evident, discipleship is evident, and missions is the passion of the whole church and becomes an extension of the church and their ministry of the church to the whole world through you.

Let me end with one more John Bunyan quote. He says this, and I believe this speaks to both the fruitfulness and or the fruitlessness of Christians and also of the church. Fruit which dies or fruit which blesses even to the ends of the earth.

John Bunyan said this. It is said that there is a nation where the trees bear no fruit. Because there is no winter there.

Let's pray. Oh God, my God, our God, we thank you, oh Lord. We praise you that you are our God, that we can say, my God, with great intimacy, with great joy, with great familiarity, and with great confidence.

And God, it's my prayer and our prayer that you would so work in the hearts and lives of every single person in this room, oh Lord, that we would recognize your tremendous blessing that you have given to us in all that's around us, in all of our lives, but also, oh God, even in suffering. And especially, oh God, in the suffering of Jesus Christ. A suffering and a gospel which motivates us to testify and to love those around us, and to testify and to persevere and to pray and to walk in faith and to even suffer around us and to go even to the ends of the earth, that my God and our God might become their God and your God.

Oh Lord, would you work such a work that our suffering would not be in vain, and much more so, oh God, that the suffering of Jesus Christ would not be in vain, but would bear fruit even through us, oh Lord, even to the ends of the earth. Bless, oh God.

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