

# Psalm 22

by Ron Bailey

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*Ron Bailey's sermon on Psalm 22 explores the profound suffering of Christ and its eternal significance for humanity's redemption.*

**Duration:** 1:34:33

**Topics:** "Messiah"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the style of the preaching of the word of God, specifically focusing on the phrase 'my God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?' and the triumphant declaration 'it is finished.' The preacher emphasizes that these phrases are not expanded upon in the epistles, but are captured in the Psalms by David, the sweet singer of Israel. The sermon highlights that revelation is not just for intellectual satisfaction, but to prompt action. The preacher also mentions that the record of events in the Bible is a carefully selected God's eye view for our instruction and blessing.

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## Transcript

To have the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver him. Let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in Him. For Thou art He that took me out of the womb.

For Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon Thee from the womb. Thou art my God from my mother's belly.

Be not far from me, for trouble is near, for there is none to help. Many bowls have compassed me, strong bowls of bastion have beset me round. They gait upon me with their mouths as a ravening and a roaring lion.

I am poured out like water, for my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a pot shard.

My tongue cleaveth to my jaws, and Thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me, the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me, they pierced my hands and my feet. I may count all my bones, they look and stare upon me.

They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture. But be not Thou far from me, O Lord. O my strength, haste Thee to help me.

Deliver my soul from the sword, my darling from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth. Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

I will declare Thy name unto my brethren. In the midst of the great congregation will I praise Thee. Ye that fear the Lord, praise Him.

All ye of the seed of Jacob, glorify Him. And fear Him, all ye of the seed of Israel, for He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted. Neither hath He hid His face from Him, but when He cried unto Him, He heard.

My praise shall be of Thee in the great congregation. I will pay my vows before them that fear Him. The meek shall eat and be satisfied.

They shall praise the Lord that seek Him. Your heart shall live forever. All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nation shall worship before Him, for the kingdom is the Lord's, and He is the governor among the nations.

All they that be fat upon the earth shall eat and worship. All they that go down to the dust shall bow before Him, and none can keep alive his own soul. A seed shall serve Him.

It shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come and shall declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that He has done this. It really is an extraordinary piece of scripture, Psalm 22.

I always have a secondary purpose when I preach. Whatever the primary one is, the secondary one is always that God would enable us to see just the wonder of this book that He has trusted to us. It is an extraordinary gift of God.

This record, not of all things, it doesn't pretend to be a chronicle of world events from the beginning to the end. It is a very carefully selected, God's eye view of events that God has recorded for our blessing, our admonition, our instruction. And in one or two different places in the scriptures it tells us, without going into the mechanics of it, it tells us the underlying wonder of what God has done in this.

And you've got this classic phrase in the writing of Peter when Peter says that what happened is that it was holy men of God who were being carried by the Spirit when they wrote these things. He says that they inquired and sought diligently what these things meant. They said these things, they wrote them, and then in the aftermath of it they began to consider what they had said and they'd written and were amazed at the content of what they'd written.

And the scripture says that they asked God what the significance was of these things that they had said. And that God revealed to them that it was concerning coming grace, it was for the time to come. And then you have this little phrase in Peter and he says it was the Spirit of Christ in them, testifying of things that should come, the sufferings and the glories that should follow.

And that little explanation is an explanation of so much of what we have recorded in the scripture. It was the Spirit of Christ in them testifying. It's what John is referring to in the book of the Revelation when he says that the Spirit of Jesus, the testimony of Jesus rather, is the Spirit of prophecy.

What you have here is not a man-guy view, not even in the sense of man who is receiving a clear revelation. What you have here in the very heart of Revelation, the scripture, is actually the testimony of Jesus himself. And the Spirit of Christ in a man, in this instance in David, bearing testimony, bearing witness.

I think the thing that we said last time that we were together which provoked this second session now, is the fact that this psalm, although we refer to it as the psalm of David, in absolute terms it's not the psalm of David. This is not David's testimony. This is not David's experience.

It's not David's psalm. His hands and feet were never pierced. They never cast garments.

They cut rocks apart for his garments. He never had these experiences of this extreme thirst of his tongue being stuck to the top of his mouth, or all his bones being out of joint, his soul being poured out to death. This is not David's testimony.

There's only one person of whom this is the testimony, and it's Jesus. And that's why the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. And something happened in an extraordinary way here, and I wouldn't even try to explain the mechanics of it if I could.

I wouldn't try. The wonder that happens here is a man who is open to God, who is God conscious at some point in his experience, knows he is within him, a witness. He hears within him words that are not his words, sees things that are not the perceptions of his eyes, and then recounts them.

He echoes these things. See why some of the old Puritan theologians used to question whether Psalm 22 was prophecy or history. What they were doing really is they were thinking of prophecy in terms of the predictive element of prophecy.

But that's only one part of prophecy. Prophecy is an extraordinary thing. When I talk to younger ones, I often say, well, when someone suddenly knows what God is thinking and expresses it, that is prophecy.

And there was a point of time in the experience of David when David knew what God was thinking. He heard what God was saying. He touched something deep in the Spirit.

One of the things that says in the book of Hebrews concerning the Lord Jesus Christ's death upon the cross is that it was through the eternal Spirit that he offered himself without spot to God. Although it was a physical event in time-space, as we would call it, although it happened at a point of time and an exact geographical spot, that's to say it's real in the terms of what we usually know as real, there's something much more wonderful about the cross than that. It is an eternal event.

It is an eternal event. It was something that was accomplished in the Spirit. Let me illustrate, if I can, that idea to you of just something I read quite widely at different times, and I'm interested in people's insights.

And I remember reading, this man isn't a Christian at all, but he was talking about history generally, and he made this comment, and he said that to have a sense of history, you have to have a sense of loss. Now I like history, I think it's fascinating. But I do have a sense of loss about history.

These things have gone beyond us, you can't reclaim them. You want to in some ways to reach out and touch them and find more about them, but you do have a sense of loss. But I have absolutely no sense of loss about the cross.

I don't have any sense that it's moving away from me, that it's moving beyond my reach, that it's a lingering memory which is now fading. I don't have any of that sense. There's something about the cross which is eternal, and eternal things don't grow old.

That's really what we mean when we sing in the poetry of hymns that the blood of Jesus will never lose its power. Or we sing about the blood continuing to flow. These are poetic ways of saying this is an eternal event.

This is a moment in time captured here by this man. If there was one thing I would love to be able to do, I would love to be able to write poetry. I can't do it, I can't even remember it except silly verses.

I don't often understand it, unless it's got the pictures of Rupert at the top to explain what's happening, then I can understand it. But the wonderful thing about poets is they have this ability to freeze a moment in time, to give you time to look at it. Things happen and they pass so quickly.

But some people, some artists, have this ability to capture a moment, to give you time to look at it. And what you've got here in Psalm 22 is this man who had a very great poetic ability given to him by God anyway, this sweet singer of Israel, David, who has captured this moment in the Spirit and we have it here. We can go within that darkness into that veil and see what was really happening.

We can hear again and examine again the testimony of Jesus, hear what he's saying, hear what's taking place. Maybe you know this, that the very last words that I chose at this point, just to leave as they are here in the AV, verse 31 says, they shall come and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he has done this. Maybe you know that those words could literally be translated that it is finished.

So you've got this extraordinary psalm which begins with the word, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And ends with this triumphant note, it is finished. This is no accident. This is something extraordinary and in many ways Psalm 22 is one of the greatest examples of the wonder of what we have in the Scripture.

People in other generations used to read the Bible, what they call Christocentrically. That's to say they used to read it to find out more about Christ. Now theologians these days have moved in one way which is good and another way which is dangerous, because they will now say, well you need to read a passage of Scripture in its context, you need to understand the cultural context, you need to understand the historical context, you need to understand what book came before another.

Yes, yes, yes, yes, it's all true, and yet it's not the whole truth. I don't know of a single verse in the New Testament where it quotes the Old Testament but it quotes it in context. I don't know of a single instance in the New Testament where it quotes an Old Testament verse in context.

It always seems to take them out of its context. It captures the spirit of something, because it's not just a historical context, it's something much more wonderful. That's why I sometimes say, maybe I've said it here, that I actually have three Testaments.

I have an Old Testament and I have a New Testament, and I have an Old Testament read in the light of the New Testament. All three are wonderful revelations. God has given us something here which is not just locked in time, it's part of the eternal nature of what he's doing in revealing truth to us from this Scripture.

It begins with these events, you know these are the words of Jesus, heard I think by David, not created by David, heard and captured here in Psalm 22. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Quite often modern evangelists, maybe not so much now, but they would often focus in on the physical sufferings of the Lord Jesus. I have heard some astonishingly gory sermons about all the consequences of crucifixion, of what happened at every particular stage to the body and the emotions and the pain that was felt.

To me it's interesting that the Bible never does that. It's not because it's not true, it's because it's not the Bible's focus. The physical suffering was very, very real, but the focus of the Bible is caught here in this phrase, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? The suffering of the cross was this that the old theologians used to call the cry of dereliction.

Ever been in a derelict building? Utterly abandoned, lifeless, a wreck, a ruin? That's this cry. It comes from someone who is utterly abandoned. Not just someone who is feeling as though he was abandoned, not someone who is going through some difficult time, but someone who really is absolutely abandoned.

When it speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ being given over in the Gospels, it uses a word which really means to hand over. It speaks of Judas handing him over. In the book of Romans it actually speaks of God handing him over.

God abandoned him. God handed him over. You need to kind of get a feel of that.

If you've got something that's fairly weighty, a Bible, whatever it is, you try this experiment at one point, and give it to someone, and be conscious of the moment when the weight passes from you into the hands of somebody else, and becomes at that moment somebody else's total responsibility, and you have handed it over. It's no longer in your hands. This is what happened on the cross.

The Father handed him over. And he felt it. He knew it.

And this cry comes, my God, my God, why has thou forsaken me? What is behind all this forsaking? This is not just a psychological experience. This is a spiritual reality. Most often in the New Testament, when you get the prayers of the Lord Jesus, you'll find that he speaks of God as my Father, and on one occasion, more than one occasion, as Abba Father.

Here he refers to him as my God. Still the personal pronoun, still my, but there's something missing now. There's something missing which was the hallmark of his whole experience upon the earth.

John in his gospel says this, we beheld his glory, the glory as of and only begotten with the Father. And John's whole gospel is an account of the relationship of the Father and the Son as they go together, they work together in perfect fellowship, in perfect harmony, and at this point in time, there's something missing from it. This is no longer my Father, still my God, still submitted to God's will, but the sense of fellowship, the relationship is gone.

It's gone. His determination to do the will of God has not gone. His yieldedness to the will of God has not gone.

But that intimacy which was his strength, which was the explanation of the way in which he lived his life, it's gone. It's my God, my God now. Why has man forsaken me? What happened on the cross was really quite amazing, and we do need to turn to, or in our minds at least, to the epistles of the New Testament to really discover what it was that took place.

And you have a progressive revelation in the scriptures, you have God reveal things to us bit by bit as we're able to receive them. And you get things like the fact that John the Baptist spoke of the Lord Jesus and he said, that's him, that's the Lamb of God who bears away the sins of the world. And you've got in that language the sense of someone carrying the burden, carrying the responsibility, carrying our sin.

It's absolutely true, but it's not the whole truth. The whole truth is more profound than that. When Peter writes in his epistle, he says, who his own in his own body on the tree bore our sins.

That's taken it to another degree. Not just carrying something externally, but he's taken it into himself, in his own body. He was become, and it's left to Paul to use this language, he became sin.

He became sin. He who knew no sin, he became sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him. And the kind of language that the Bible uses is breathtaking.

I don't know whether you, when I hear that story that Vicki told this morning. When you think of an image of the Lord Jesus, if you were to say, well what is your favourite image that he has used to express who he is? You might say, well the shepherd, or the lamb, or the door, or the vine, the snake. Is that your favourite picture? It was Jesus' picture when he spoke to the people in John chapter 3. As Moses lifted up the snake, in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.

Isn't that breathtaking? Isn't that kind of chance for you? The snake? Not the lamb, not the picture of the submission, the innocence. Not the door, the picture of the wide open arms of God ready to receive, but the snake. This thing which somehow in the Bible is used as the point of origin of evil for the whole human race.

This thing that was injected into our humanness, which has touched every single one of us. He became this, not just bearing the sins, but became identified so completely with that, that I will only go as far as Paul and no farther. He became sin, and I will not explain it.

He became sin. I can see some of the things that he says to illustrate it. I can see, for example, the way in which when he speaks of his own death upon the cross, he refers to it as a baptism.

And he says, I have a baptism to be baptised with. And you don't. You don't know that part of the truth of baptism is all about identification and unification.

It's all about union. The way that they used to dye clothes in ancient times was to take some white linen or something like that and to plunge it, to baptise it, this was the language they used, to baptise it into a dye. And then when they brought it out, you had this amazing thing in which two things which had been separate, that's to say the white linen and the purple dye, have now become inseparably one.

They have united. And the dye is through every warp and weave, every thread of it. The two are now absolutely one.

Something happened on the cross that is beyond our understanding. I think it will always be beyond our understanding. Something happened in which Jesus so identified himself with the human race, not just in what we had done, not just in the sins, but he identified himself with what we had become.

He identified himself with what we have become. Shortly we'll be in the season of Christmas when we begin to think of this staged identification with the human race, the way he comes into our world to

become one of us. He is not God dressed up as a human being.

He is God become human. There's a wonderful phrase in one of Michael Card's songs when he speaks of this babe bearing undiminished deity. A wonderful phrase.

God never ceased to be God, but he did become fully human. He became 100% human. It was the first step in his identification with the human race.

Then he began to know, and there are further identifications, of suffering, of pain, and loneliness, of growing up in obscurity, under oppression, and all these things. Then of seeing the people, of living with them, of working with them, of ministering to them. We see his ministry.

We see the high point of his identification on the cross, where he not only bears the sins of the world, but in this Bible language he became sin. He is absolutely, at that point, united with the human race. You must remember that when you think about baptism in the Spirit, because it's the counterpart.

It's when God so identifies us with him, so puts us into him, that we become one with him. Not that we become God, we are never deified, but we become one with him, in something which is, in that sense, inseparable. Where the two have become one.

Jesus used that kind of language. He did things, you know, with language which really do take your breath away. I mean, he used this illustration of his own relationship with his father, and he said, I am the father of one.

I am in the father, and the father is in me. This isn't just union. This isn't just two things tied together.

This is absolute harmony of persons. You can try a dog and a cat together by the tails and you've got union, but that's not what you call unity. And it's not just proximity, it's not just that they're close together.

It's this, I am in the father, and the father is in me. I mean, geographically, in space, there's no way of expressing it, is there? You can illustrate something that's in something, but if you illustrate that something is in something else, it's kind of one of the rules of our life, that you can only have something smaller that's in something that's bigger. But that isn't the way it works, because he is in the father, and the father is in me, and neither are diminished.

And if that isn't extraordinary enough, later on he begins to speak of the coming of the Spirit, and he says, in that day you'll know that I am in my father, and you are in me, and I'm in you. And he now gathers his own people, his own born-again ones, into this expression that he has used to describe the absolute intimacy and oneness that he has with the father. And he makes us part of it.

Take my breath away, I don't know what it does for you. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? If you've got your Bible open and you look at verse 6, you've got the statement here, I am a worm, no man. There are some Christian teachers today who are uncomfortable with what they call worm theology.

Have you heard this? Well yeah, there's a book out I think called something like that. And what's behind it is that they don't think that worm theology is healthy for Christians. They really think it's much more important that they have good self-esteem, and that they have a healthy self-image.

And worm theology works counter to that. Well I want to tell you that that's the way it is. That's the way the cookie crumbles.

God spoke to Jacob and said, fear not, thou worm, Jacob. It doesn't matter what you are if God says fear not. If God says I'm with you, if God says this, it's not the end of the story.

To recognise that we are worms. What am I saying in this? I am a worm and no man, the testimony of Jesus. In Isaiah, right at the end of Isaiah 52, which really should be part of Isaiah 53, you've got this little phrase where it says, his face was more and more than the face of a man.

It's the Bible's way of saying that something happened at this point that Isaiah is saying, where his suffering, what happened to him, was so extreme, so absolute, that he was hardly recognisable as a human being. But then neither are you. Did you know that? You are hardly recognisable as a human being.

You are not what God had in his mind when he said, let us make man. Let us make woman. When he said that, he said, let us make them in our image.

And you and I were intended to be living revelations of what God is like. Which means that neither of us has ever seen a real man or a real woman. There's a fascinating phrase in one of C.S. Lewis' books, when they go to Venus, it's called Perilandra, or Voice to Venus, or something like that.

And they go through, they re-enact the events of the Earth's creation, and this is the time of Venus' creation, and they have their own first man and first woman, and they have their own tempter, and they have their own first crisis. And there's a man from Earth who is part of the unfolding of these events. I won't spoil the book for you, but it's good to read, it deals with some important issues.

And when they get to the end of it, they have this point in time in which they're all kind of gathered round at the great coronation of the man and the woman on Venus. And all the creation are gathered together there in this glorious celebration. And the man from Earth is there too, and they want him to be part of it.

But he's actually on his face on the ground, he can't stand what he's seen. And they want him to be part of it, and he uses this phrase, and he says, don't lift me up, let me stay where I am. I've never seen a real man or a real woman.

I've lived all my life among shadows and broken images. You and I have lived all our lives among shadows and broken images. You've never seen a human being.

You've never seen what God meant when he said, let's make him our image and our likeness, unless you've seen Jesus. Only in him was this will of God perfectly expressed. Only this man was God able to say, this is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.

But there comes a time here when the only man ever to have fulfilled God's expectations, the only man ever to have fulfilled God's destiny for the human race, this man enters into an experience where his testimony, and you know he always structures, his testimony is of a worm and no man. He has passed into our experience. He has become what we have become.

You know these parts, he trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him. These parts are caught in the gospel story of it, of the people who said, he trusted in God, let's wait and see what happens. You've got this kind of language that it uses here, verse 11.

Be not far from me, for trouble is near, and as not to help many bulls have compassed me, strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round, they gait upon me with their mouths, as the roaring and the ravening and the roaring lion. I am poured out like water, all my bones are out of joint, my heart is like wax, it's melted in the midst of my bowels, my strength is dried up like a pot shard, my tongue clears to my joys, joys thou hast brought me into the dust of death, for dogs have compassed me. There's a part of this psalm that we haven't read yet.

It's that little bit that you hardly ever read that comes just before the first verse, where it says this, to the chief physician upon Agileth Shaha. I'll tell you a secret about these complicated words, if you speak them with confidence no one will ever question you. Your guess as to how you'd pronounce it is as good as mine, but it actually means behind of the morning, a young deer.

It's an amazing picture. You see, what has this got to do with the hind of the morning, this young deer? Because at this point in which we have reached the psalm now, you find the young deer hunted to death with the packs of the dogs around it. You see it exhausted, you see all its strength gone.

This hind of the morning, this one who with heaven's glory, this one who, you get this picture, I get this picture in the Gospels, that the angels are always hovering this upstage, just wanting to come into the events, wanting to serve him, wanting to deliver him, wanting to minister to him. And just one word, they're forbidden. He has to take this journey alone.

He has to run like the hind of the morning, and he's hunted to death, and the dogs around him. Let me read that passage again, and think now of the hunt. Verse 13.

They gazed upon me with their mouths as a razzling and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, all my bones will have a joint. My heart is like wax, it's melted in the midst of my bowels.

My strength is dried up like a pot shard. My tongue clings to my jaws. Thou hast brought me into the dust of death, for dogs have compassed me.

In the midst of all this, he speaks about bulls compassing him. And you get this picture, in the language that's used, of an amazing conspiracy, and an amazing gathering together. It's as though all the forces and powers of hell have become focused at this point of time in history.

It's all there. One of the things it says in Isaiah 53, when it speaks about all our iniquities were laid upon him, it actually says all our iniquities were gathered together upon him. And this is a gathering.

This is a fearful gathering. This is a gathering of evil and hostility, undisguised. It's seen now for what it really was, and what it's always been, and what it still is, in the unregenerate heart.

The thing that happened in the Gospels, and it goes on constantly, where the Lord Jesus... well, the Gospel writers keep on saying, this was going to happen, they were going to arrest him, but they couldn't because his hour was not yet come. And you've got this theme, it keeps on going, the hour has not yet come, the hour has not yet come. And then, right on the eve, right on the moment of the arrest and the crucifixion, you've got Jesus, and he says, my hour has come.

But in Luke's Gospel, he's got another little phrase, and he says this, and he says, when he's talking about those who arrested him, he says, this is your hour, and the power of darkness. There's something that took place on the cross that really is extraordinary. It is the ultimate revelation of everything.

It's the revelation of what evil is really all about. Evil is about fear-side, it's about the murder of God. Evil is really all about, you know, don't you, that essentially sin is a conflict of wills.

Whatever your definition of sin is, it has to have that in the centre of it. Sin is somebody, some created being, saying no to God. That's what it is.

But lots of it is hidden. Lots of it is hidden, I think, in God's mercy for us. Lots of it is hidden because we've learned to put a veneer of sophistication over things, and we've learned to get on with one another because it suits us, because if I'm nice to my neighbour, my neighbour's nice to me.

But when you get right down to the bottom line, when all the restraints are taken off, and the ultimate question is who is going to survive, you'll hear this cry that's part of the human race's experience, we will not have this man to reign over us. And ultimately the choice is you crown him, or you crucify him, and there are no other options. There are no other options.

And it's here, at this event at the cross, where all that God is, God's own love, he commends, he demonstrates his love towards us, as Paul to the Romans, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. What you have on the cross is a revelation of God, and a revelation of that that is opposed to God. And it's all here.

It's out of the corners now. It's no longer hiding, it's no longer pretending, it's no longer subdued, it's now what it really always has been. At one and the same time, you have the synchronisation of two hours, my hour and the hour of darkness.

And they're met here, in this person who hangs on this cross. He is the battlefield, it meets here in him. This one who has lost everything, it's all been taken away from him.

He's lost his friends, he's lost his followers, he's lost a sense of his Father's fellowship it's gone. And naked, physically and spiritually, he goes through to pay the price for us. The bowls, the basin, they beset me around.

I have a friend, he's probably a friend to quite a few of you as well, who is a professional photographer who specialises in cattle. And he got used to, when the cattle shows before Sutton Mount, that was how he used to make his living, going to these places and taking these amazing pictures, portraits of unique kinds of cattle. And I remember talking to him one day, we were just talking about cattle in particular, and he just talked about the amazing power that bowls have, what an immensely strong animal they were.

And he was telling me of a time when one of someone that he knew was actually in a kind of a ring with a bowl, and the bowl just leaned on him. He said, and we could hear the ribs cracking. The bowl was just leaning on him.

These creatures had immense power. I don't know what you think of the most powerful animal, but people living in this part of the world wouldn't have seen, they wouldn't have seen the power of elephants, they wouldn't have heard of it, they wouldn't have seen the power of other things. To them, the thing which symbolised power was a creature called the aurochs, the wild ass.

It was an enormous creature with a widespread horn and of immense power. It was the ultimate in power, as far as they were concerned. It's the beginning of the Hebrew alphabet.

That shape, that way, is actually a bull's head, that's what it is. It's kind of right deep down in the psyche of what they were. As we refer to him, we refer to bowls, and coming out when he's talking about them being able to count his bones and all the rest of it.

You come down to this part here, in verse 20, and he says, save my soul, his strength is all gone. We'll go back to verse 19 to pick that up. Be not thou far from me, O Lord, O my strength.

He has none of his own. Haste thee to help me, deliver my soul from the sword. We can go into Zechariah, if we have the time, and see there when it speaks about the sword being unsheathed and raised against the shepherd, but you can follow it through.

My darling, my only one, my soul, from the power of the dog, literally from the paw of the dog. I'm a dog person, we've always had dogs in our family, and maybe, this might save you getting your fingers bitten sometimes, what I'm going to tell you now. One of the reasons you should not pass a strange dog on the head is because another dog subdues her pups by putting her paw on their head.

She dominates them by pushing their head down. Now, if you go up to a strange dog and you put your paw on its head, and it doesn't know you, it'll fight back. It thinks you've taken the first move against it, so it'll fight back.

This image of the paw holding down, dominating, it's here. My darling, from the paw of the dog. There's immense powers here that are being unleashed at this time.

It's as though God, in his mercy, had always restrained the wickedness of the human race, had always restrained the wickedness of the enemy, but at this point he takes his hands off, and you see what it's all about. You see, it's not really a question of him putting his throne along the side of God. That could never work.

You can't have two supreme rulers of the universe. It's either or. And this is it.

This is all the powers, all the powers of evil in opposition to God, ranged against the Lord Jesus. He's under the power of the dog. And then you've probably noticed this was the one place that I changed it.

And what I really wanted to do was to change the punctuation. There's no punctuation in the Bible, literally. There's no gaps between the word and not even thou within the word in the Old Testament, so this punctuation is a special skill.

He says here in verse 21, save me from the lion's mouth, and then I would take out that colon, if you've got one there. In fact, I would start a new verse, maybe even a new paragraph, because this is the watershed of this whole psalm. This is the point at where everything changes, and it's the other part that I want to kind of give some attention to tonight.

Up until this point, the whole mood of this psalm is dark and darker and darker. It's brooding, it's ominous, it's evil. If you read this and let the Spirit of God speak to you, you'll feel the oppression of these events.

You'll feel the thick darkness that covered the earth at this point in time, and it gets darker and darker and darker. Until this point of time, and suddenly the day breaks, and it comes out like this. This is how I would read it, verse 21.

Here's the final cry. Save me from the lion's mouth, and this is where the new bit begins. Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorn.

Can you see him impaled on the horns of a unicorn? Can you see him impaled on the horns of a restless, untamed power that will not say yes to God? Can you see it? That's what's happening on the cross. From that point in time when he gave himself perfectly to the will of God, there comes this conviction that his cry is heard. I'm not sharing these things with you this morning just out of academic interest.

My primary purpose really is this. To make it clear that unless God has really done in you a regenerating work, unless he really has caused you to be born again and born anew, all these frightening powers that we have just touched on are actually residents within you. They are part of what it means to be human as human has become without God.

You say, I'm not like that. You live in a very civilized world. You've got lots of life's friends around you and family that support you.

If it gets down to the bottom line and it's life for life, there's something in you that will fight to the death for its own survival, even if it means killing God. Believe me, it's the only thing that explains our world. It's the only thing that explains our world.

It's the only thing that explains Auschwitz. It's the only thing that explains the 9th of September. It's the only thing.

The world, the human race has no explanation for evil. There's something different here. This is demonic.

This is diabolical evil. Jesus said he's a thief, he's a liar, he kills and he destroys and there's something of that in the human race that isn't in the rest of the animal creation. It's not there.

I know you see examples of cats with mice and kill it and in you this can be the point at which all this is broken. This day can be the new day. This can be your watershed.

Everything up to this point has been dark and darkness and gloom and depression. Here now we stand with the hind of the morning, it's a new day. The possibility of something else happening for you.

These are extraordinary things that God reveals. They're not caught in this way in the Gospels. They're not expanded in this way, in quite this way, in the epistles.

But here in David, the sweet singer of Israel, he saw something and captured it and it's here. And revelation is never for your intellectual satisfaction alone. It's always so that you'll do something about it.

What will you do about it? Believe me, my friends, believe me, you may say, no you're not describing me, I am. I am. I'm describing what you would be like if God took his restraint off, if the society in which you live took his restraint off.

I'm describing exactly what you're like and what we are like was revealed at a point in time and it was your hour, the hour of darkness. And I was part of that and you were part of that. But beyond it all, it was all part of God's will to bring these things to a head, to bring these things to an absolute confrontation.

And at the end of this psalm, you've got the cry, it is finished. Wonderful. This morning we were looking at Psalm 22 and I'd like to return there tonight.

If you weren't able to be with us this morning, if you had other responsibilities, we were saying that this psalm really is an extraordinary psalm in the way that it unfolds the amazing events of Calvary, the time when our Lord Jesus hung on the cross in those darkened times when no eye could see, certainly no imagination could guess what was taking place. But here in this psalm we have an amazing revelation of what was happening. I call it the testimony of Jesus.

This is the testimony of Jesus which is the spirit of prophecy caught in the spirit of David who writes it down here for us. And I was saying that it's also an amazing psalm for the way in which it falls so easily into two parts. The first part which takes you right up to where are we, verse 21, in fact really halfway through verse 21, is a time when it's very dark and brooding, it's heavy, the whole atmosphere is ominous and pregnant with disaster almost.

It gets darker and darker as you go through. And then at a certain point in this psalm it's really like a watershed and suddenly the whole atmosphere has changed. And this is at this point in verse 21.

And I said this morning that there's no punctuation as such in the originals of the Bible, so to a certain degree you have your own liberty as to where you put your false stops and your comments. Sometimes it's quite strange the way that the Bible has been broken up into verses and chapters. There's an old story that the man who did it the first time did it on horseback.

And every time he stumbled he started a new verse. And every time he fell off he started a new chapter. And there are parts of the Bible where you think there might be some truth in that kind of legend.

And here certainly there ought to be some kind of break. There ought to be some, if you're going to put it into verses, there ought to be something which says this is different to what has gone before it. Halfway, I'll read from verse 21.

Save me from the lion's mouth, thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorn. Saying this morning that the unicorn is really the wild aurochs, a great, massive, amazingly powerful wild ox. And you've got this amazing picture of this person impaled under the power of this fearsome thing.

And it's this amazing picture of what the Lord Jesus Christ submitted himself to for our sake. He didn't, in this sense, break the power of evil by main force, by squashing it under his thumb, but by submitting himself to the will of God. He was this lamb with no power of his own who submitted himself to the orderings of God, and in him the purpose of God was wonderfully worked out.

I've just turned, or I am in process of turning, to the book of Hebrews, because I wanted to pick up a verse. This is Hebrews chapter 5. Hebrews chapter 5, where it speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ and calls him a priest. In fact, it says he's a high priest of a particular kind.

Not the Old Testament Levitical type of priest, but another kind of priest, a king priest. And he is the high priest of that particular order. And it says several things about him.

And then in verse 6 it says this, I'll read from verse 5. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made a high priest, but he that said to him, Thou art my son, today have I begotten thee. As he says also in another place, thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. And then it says this of the Lord Jesus, who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him out of death, was heard in that he feared.

Though he were a son, yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered. This little phrase where it says he was heard. If you turn back to the Psalms, you'll see you get this impression in the earlier part of the Psalm of the intensity of the crying of the Lord Jesus.

I don't necessarily mean vocal. His tongue was stuck to the roof of his mouth. There was no great noise in that sense.

But in the depth of him there was this great crying, this great longing, this great reaching out to God that he might be full faithful in that that God had trusted to him. And you've got the little phrase in Hebrews that says simply, he was heard. And here in Psalm 22 it says this, verse 21, save me from the lion's mouth, thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorn, from the horns of the wild oryx.

This is really very significant and it's not just a minor point. We need to understand that our salvation was completely gained for us in what Jesus did upon the cross. Medieval theology had all kinds of weird ideas about Jesus being sneaked into hell under some subterfuge and then suddenly surprising them and breaking the power in that way.

And it's actually crept into some modern songs. It actually crept into the Conference hymn book last year. It has no basis at all in scripture.

Your salvation, my salvation was achieved while he was upon the horns of the wild oxen. While he was upon the cross. The resurrection displayed it.

The resurrection proclaimed it. And his continuing ministry in heaven sustained it. But the salvation was gained, it was perfected, it was done there as he hung upon the cross.

It's not a minor point. Then he goes on and says this in verse 22, I will declare thy name unto my brethren. It really is an amazing switch of mood as you come into these verses.

You've suddenly got a whole new group of things as you're dealing with. You've now got a family, my brethren. You've got this reference to the congregation and the great congregation.

When this is quoted in Hebrews, let's go back to Hebrews. A little bit earlier in Hebrews this time. In Hebrews chapter 2, we'll pick up that same theme.

Verse 6, we'll start from there. But one in a certain place testifies, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels. Thou crownest him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands.

Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things under him.

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him. It entirely suited him.

It fitted perfectly. I used to know a man who used to say that the word Jesus, J-E-S-U-S, stands for just exactly suits us sinners. He was perfectly fitted.

He was exactly tailor-made. Sorry to use, maybe these are corny phrases, but this is what he came for. It became him.

It was entirely fitting. It was absolutely appropriate. It was exactly what he'd come to do.

He fitted this role perfectly, and here it is. It became him. For whom are all things, and by whom are all things in bringing many sons to glory to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

For both he that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one, all from the same origin, same source. For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren. In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.

Quoting directly, obviously, from Psalm 22. So let's go back to Psalm 22, and you'll see the order of things there. It speaks of the suffering, it speaks of the death, and in the phrase that we use this morning from Peter's letter, it's really going through this little cycle that you get again and again in the scriptures, the sufferings and the glories that should follow.

I was walking through a cemetery just the other day. I do that from time to time. I find them fascinating places.

You can often almost imagine a whole life just from one or two things that's said on the tombstone. And I was walking through this particular tombstone, this particular cemetery. I can't walk through tombstones.

Not yet. One day maybe, but not yet. Have any of you here ever seen the tombstones of the Booth family? They're in one of the London cemeteries, and they're worth going to see.

They've been broken by Vandal unfortunately, but you can still see them, and you've got that for General Booth, and it says, I've forgotten all the dates, but it says something like this, William Booth, General Superintendent, General of the Salvation Army, born this date, born again this date, went to heaven this date. And then of his wife, and it says Catherine Booth, born this day, born again this day, went to heaven this day. And just across the path, Eric, is the grave of Bramwell Booth and his wife.

And on theirs it says, Bramwell Booth, born this date, born again this date, promoted to glory this date. And then his wife, born this date, born again this date, promoted to glory. And I looked at these things, and I said, this is wonderful.

People don't die in the Booth family. No one ever dies. But they go to heaven, they're promoted to glory.

It's a tremendous thing. Tremendous. I was thinking when we were praying earlier about the untouchables.

In the heyday of the Salvation Army, in the early days, when people were moving with tremendous power in the Holy Spirit, and tremendous sacrifice, and lots of people relatively untrained, with great conviction, went all over the place. And some of them actually went to India. And there was quite a move amongst the untouchables.

And people didn't know quite how all this tied together, until they began to talk to people who had responded, to find out what had been the source of all this. And they discovered that what had happened was that at a certain point in their visit to the untouchables, a young Salvation Army officer, a woman, was there, and she'd met one of these untouchables, and this untouchable person had a huge thorn in her foot.

And she needed to get it out, and there was no way she could get it out, and she had no tools for it, but she had strong white teeth.

So she took hold of this thorn with her teeth, and pulled it out of the foot. And there was an amazing response, that she did not understand why it should be. And lots of the people did not know the full implications of the Gospel.

All that they knew was that God had sent a woman who had put the most holy part of her body on the most polluted part of the body of an untouchable, in order to bring them relief. They were special people, in the way that God moved in these... What was I talking about? I know what I'm talking about, gravestones, tombstones. And I was walking through this cemetery, and I saw this tombstone, and there was just the name of a woman, and the dates that she had died, and then under it, just the simple words, no cross, no crown.

Now that's the name of a book written by William Penn, the man who was the father of Pennsylvania. No cross, no crown. It's the same theme, the sufferings and the glories that should follow.

No cross, no crown. You can trace it back. Let me show you an illustration of it.

Way back in the Old Testament, you've got a wonderful story of the time when Abraham offers up his only son in direct obedience to the command of God. Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, and offer him to God. And Abraham went through the activity, the action of that sacrifice, went through the sufferings.

And then you come, that's chapter 22, then you come to chapter 23, and in chapter 24 you have the event when Abraham sends out his servant to find the bride for the son who has just passed through death. So in Genesis 22-23, you've got this whole theme again. You've got the sufferings and the glories that should follow.

And you've got it here in this psalm. The sufferings and the glories that follow. All the sufferings, this dark brooding first half of the psalm.

And then we come to this point, Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorn. I will declare thy name unto my brethren in the midst of the congregation. These are words which, some people say that in the Old Testament there isn't a word for church.

Well the English word for church isn't in the Old Testament, but the Hebrew word for church is in the Old Testament, and it's in here. This is kahel, which is the reason why our authorised version translators put the word church into Hebrews. This is the church.

Out of his death there comes this absolute conviction of a family, of something which is the kahel, something which is the church of God. People who have been gathered out of tribe and nation, made into one new entity, one new community, one new people of God, and in the centre of them is Christ, is the one who has passed through death, singing his own song of praise and victory. I hope you can hear that song.

I hope you can hear it in your heart. That's the song we need to join in with. It's the song of victory, it's the song of all that is accomplished.

He sings it here. I will declare thy name unto my brethren in the midst of the congregation. I will praise thee.

Now let me take you back to the Old Testament, farther back. If you go back to the book of Exodus, and Exodus chapter 33. This is a very wonderful passage of scripture again.

It's a time when God has really said to the people of Israel that because of their sin, he's going to keep his promise to them, he's going to give them the land that he promised them, but he's not coming with them. He's going to send an angel to do it, and they are distraught in their grief and their repentance, and they plead with God to come with them. And Moses pleads with God, and it comes through like this.

This is verse 12. Moses said to the Lord, See, thou hast said unto me, Bring up this people, and thou hast not left me, no whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight.

Now therefore I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I might find grace in thy sight, and consider that this nation is thy people. And God said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And Moses said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.

For wherein shall it be known that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? Can you see what he's saying? He's saying the thing that identifies us as your people is your presence. It's not the blessings, it's the presence. There was one time in one of the great Wesleyan Methodist conferences, where they gathered together and they were recounting the events of the previous year, and saying how God had blessed, and the way in which the work had expanded, and it was a time of great rejoicing, and in the end of it, so the story goes, that John Wesley stood up and said, and best of all, God is with us.

That's really what matters. Everything else is secondary. Everything else maybe isn't even secondary.

Everything else is expendable. Here's Moses, a man of an older covenant, who effectively says to God, if you're not going to come with us, we don't want to go. Because the thing that makes us distinctively yours, the thing that makes us unique, the thing that identifies us, is your presence, and without you, none of it makes any sense.

Wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth? And the Lord said to Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken. For thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name. And Moses said, I beseech thee, show me thy glory.

And God said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee. What would you have expected God to say? What do you think of it? If you were to say to God, show me your glory, what would you expect God to show you? His spiritual muscle? His power? The awesomeness of his presence? What is the thing that is uniquely the glory of God? Well, God knows what it is, and that's why he says to Moses, I'm going to make my goodness pass before you. That's his glory.

God's glory is his character. We beheld his glory. As of an only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Not primarily power. Not primarily miracle. Not primarily wonderful teaching.

Grace and truth. So Moses makes the tree, and God speaks to him, and he says, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee. And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

And he said, thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see me and live. And the Lord said, behold, there's a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock, and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover thee with my hand while I pass by. And I will take away my hand, and thou shalt see my back parts, but my face shall not be seen.

And you know that's where the wonderful hymn comes from. But the thing I want to focus on is this little phrase, where in answer to Moses' prayer, which was show me yet your glory, God says, I will cause my goodness to pass by, I will declare to you my name. You see this language? I will declare to you my name.

I'm sure I must have said this before, but God's, God's names are not labels. They are revelations of his character. Every time you have a title for God, they're not superfluous titles, they are unique expressions of who God is.

And here, God says to Moses, I will tell you who I am. I will declare my name to you. Who I am, it will be declared to you.

Somehow, I don't know how this worked, but in some way, as Moses stood in this safe place, God revealed to Moses who he was in his glory, in all his goodness. This is what it means to declare the name of the Lord, to reveal the fullness of his character. Okay? We're working a little bit like kind of algebra with equations here.

We need to find a value. We need to find a value for this little phrase. What does it mean to declare the name of the Lord? Because once we know what it means, we can take that value into another part of the Psalms and understand what it's saying there.

I will declare your name. Let's go to Psalm 22. Verse 21.

Save me from the lion's mouth, for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorn. I will declare thy name. Listen to it.

To Moses, God says, I will declare my name. Here now, after the victory of the cross, you hear Jesus saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren. I am going to reveal who you are in all your fullness to those who are my family, to those who are my church.

He'd said, hadn't he, I will build my church. The gates of hell will not prevail. I am going to reveal myself to you uniquely, in a way that others will not know me, will not see me.

This is Bible language. I will declare to them thy name. Come with me to John chapter 17.

And look at this prayer. This is what he prayed shortly before the cross. I'll read from, um, I'll read from verse 17.

No, I'll go back a verse. From verse 16. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

Sanctify them through thy truth. Thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one. As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.

That the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me.

That they may be perfect in one. And that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and that love them as thou hast loved me. We could pause on that verse.

That again is an astonishing statement. Jesus says here in his prayer to his Father, I want to do something, I want something to happen so that this truth will be known, that you have loved them in the way that you love me. The way that God loves us is the way in which he loves the Son.

There's another line in the Michael Codd song which says, if I can remember it, something like, he cannot love more, he will not love less. He cannot love more, and he will not love less. And Jesus here is praying that this will be known, that the Father's love to us will be known.

This is exactly what Paul says when he writes to the Romans, and he says, God demonstrates his love towards us, his own unique love for us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. This that happened on the cross is the revelation of God's attitude to men and women. It goes on, Father I will that thou also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me, for thou loved me before the foundation of the world.

Now put those two facts together. If he loves you as he loved Christ, and he loved Christ from before the foundation of the world, how long has he loved you? If he loves you with the same love with which he loved Christ, and he loved Christ from before the foundation of the world, how long has he loved you? It's a good stuff, I'll give it a go. It's wonderful how these things work together, that's absolutely right.

O righteous Father, he says in verse 25, O righteous Father of the world, hath not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me, and I have declared unto them thy name. Can you see it? He says of these unique witnesses of who he is, and of how he is, he says to them, I have declared to them thy name. God said to Moses, I will declare my name.

Who has the power to declare the name of God? Who has the power to reveal who God is? Only God has the power to reveal who God is. You know, don't you, that we would know absolutely nothing about God if God had not chosen to reveal things about himself. A man by searching can't find out anything about God.

You can't submit him to test in a laboratory. There's no way you could know anything about him. We are creatures and he is the creator.

There's no way we could span that gap except that God has chosen to reveal himself and has revealed himself in Jesus. And the greatest revelation of God revealed in Jesus is what happened on the cross. That is, this is why it is the beginning, in that sense, for all Christian theology.

However you begin to understand God's dealings with men, with the world, with individuals, you must begin here. You must begin at this point, for the God who has demonstrated that he loves us, he cannot love more and will not love less. Everything else somehow has to be fitted into that central fact.

We might not understand it, we can't always put all the pieces together, but it begins with this, we know that God loves us. I have declared unto them thy name and will declare it. This is what Jesus does in the congregation.

This is what he continues to do in the church. He continues to declare the name of God, or putting it in my language, he continues to reveal the character of God, so that in the church of Jesus Christ there ought to be a comprehensive revelation of what God is like. I work with a charity.

It's called Prospects and it works with people who have a learning disability and it's overtly a Christian organisation. The reason that we hold on to being a Christian organisation is because although we know lots of people do wonderful things with people with learning disabilities, we are absolutely convinced that only Christians can reveal the love of God. Absolutely convinced that only Christians, that's to say only the church, can declare the name of the Lord.

Only through God's own people can he reveal his true nature and we believe that God wants to reveal his true nature to people with learning disabilities. We see ourselves as an agency of God's willingness to reveal himself in his love and his commitment to all people without distinction. Every single one is valued in God's sight.

Every single one is precious and important to him. I will declare unto them thy name. I have, he says, and I will.

And this then tells you why he's going to do it. That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them. If you follow what we were saying, this little bit that we've been doing in John's Gospel here, and you think of these statements where he says, I'm praying that they will know that you have loved them in the way that you love me.

And then he says, you've loved me from the foundation of the world. So he's talking about this unique love which is the love of God, this agatha, this love which is measured, if you can measure it, by its willingness to lay down all its own rights for those who are the object of that love. It's the love that is uniquely displayed in what happened on the cross.

And it's wonderful that God should have loved us with a love like that. But there's a little greater miracle on the way, if you can look at it. It's here that the love wherewith thou hast loved me might be in them.

Not just declared to them, but revealed in them. He continues, it must be the work of Jesus. It is his work to constantly reveal the nature of God.

But he is ordained that he will reveal the nature of God within his church, in the body of his people, amongst his brethren, so that they too become this living revelation of what God is like. Become living channels for agatha, a love which doesn't insist upon its own rights. I won't tell you the full description of it, you just need to read Corinthians chapter 13 and you'll find exactly what that love's like.

And it's only in God's people that that love is to be seen. Go back to the psalm, I'm conscious our time is going. Psalm 22, or has gone, maybe.

Just want to get to one other part now. Verse 22, this is it, this is the joy that was set before him. This is why he endured the cross and despised the shame.

In order to come through to this place where he could declare in the midst of his brethren the continuing revelation of the character of God. Verse 23, ye that fear the Lord pray and say all ye the seed of Jacob glorify him and fear him all ye the seed of Israel. For he has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted.

Neither hath he hid his face from him. And here it comes again. But when he cried unto him he heard.

My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation. I will pay my vows before them that fear him. The meek shall eat and be satisfied.

They shall praise the Lord that seek him. Your heart shall live forever. All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord.

All this is from the cross. All this is the absolute conviction of our Lord Jesus that he has been heard. He still hangs physically held by nails on a cross but the work's done.

It's done. It's all done. It's all completed and now he looks forward to all the glories of the whole world of the seed and the expansion of the consequence of what he's done.

All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord and all the kindreds of the nation shall worship before him for the kingdom is the Lord's. Isn't this wonderful faith? To the human eye he still hangs naked, blood-scarred, a wreck of humanity. But in his heart he knows he's heard and he knows that of the fruits of his labours all this shall come forth.

The kingdom is the Lord's and he is the governor among the nation. And all they that defy upon the earth shall eat and worship. All they that go down to the dust shall bear before him and none shall keep alive his own soul.

That's all to do with dependency upon God. And then this little phrase, a seed shall serve him. If you've got something like prosperity it's a shame because it would be better to leave it simply to the seed.

It's this same picture, isn't it? The seed falls into the ground and dies. And the consequence of it falling into the ground and dying is it brings forth a harvest of other seeds that can fall into the ground and die. And so the cycle goes on and on and on.

A seed shall serve him. It shall be counted to the Lord for a generation. I'm just trying to weigh up in my mind whether I should be provocative.

I'll tell you what's in my heart. There's only one generation of God's people. There's no such thing as the next generation.

Biblically the next generation means people who haven't been born yet. God has no grandchildren. Don't ever look at your young people and say, this is the next generation.

It's not. It's this generation. It's not tomorrow's church.

It's today's church. It's one family. It's one spirit.

It's one seed. It's one people. It's one church that spreads horizontally throughout the whole earth and vertically down through the centuries.

It's one. There's only one generation. Those who are his family.

Those who according to Hebrews are from the same source. From the same womb. From the same pain.

From the same travail comes one glorious family. Not many travails. Just one travail.

Which brought forth this amazing thing that we call the church of God. They shall come and they shall declare his righteousness to people that shall be born. Here they have a role.

They have a role to speak to the next generation. But that is evangelism. That's the people who will come and when they come they become part of this generation.

There's no ageism in the church of Jesus Christ. There's no male, no female, no teenager, no pensioner. I was thinking this morning when they were being told that some had the right to kind of sit down.

That would get my wife on her feet and it killed her I think. That kind of thing. But there's, there's, it's one.

It's one. Without becoming militant we really do need to be diligent that we maintain the unity of the spirit and that we see that it's the same spirit if they're truly God's children in the junior and the senior and the pensioner and we're one. And God has made it one.

Now the world can't cope with this. The world constantly breaks things up into sections, into its nations, into its groups, into its colors, into its age brackets. But the church doesn't.

The church doesn't do that. It's one. It's one.

He died to make it one. Let me just remind you of his prayer. That they all may be one.

That thou, Father, art in me and I in thee. That they also may be one in us. For the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them. That they may be one, even as we are one. And all this through this amazing identification of our Lord Jesus Christ with the human race in all its fallenness and all its sin and all its rebellion and all its obstinacy, he did not just take our place.

He stepped into us. He became what we have become. And he broke the power of it.

I think I may have told you before, and you'll know it probably anyway, there's a fascinating book that was written called Talk of the Otter. If you've read it, it's an amazing piece of writing. He wrote it about 20 times, I think, longhand, and kept on revising it and revising it.

It's a story of an otter. And it starts off with the birth of this otter, whose name is Tarker, and it goes through the different events of this otter's life. And at certain points in the events of this otter's life, this otter is chased, harassed, threatened by a pack of otter hounds.

And the chief leading hound, I think it's called Dreadnought, Dreadlocks, Dreadlocks. Yes? Dreadlock, I think. You can check it out, you can read it.

And Tarker has one or two very narrow escapes, and he kind of raises his family and it goes, but it's not a sentimental story, it's a very hard-hitting, kind of realistic, natural type of a story. But then right at the end of the book, Dreadlock, we'll call him that for convenience sake now, Dreadlock manages to chase Tarker, the otter, and he catches him in the waters of the coast, I think it's supposed to be in Devon, Exmoor, that kind of area. And there's this amazing story that the man writes, and he tells of the story when Dreadlock, this great otter hound, kind of takes this bite of the otter and kind of throws it up in the air, and it kind of goes into the water.

And then, with its last dying strength, Tarker fastens himself on the throat of this otter hound, and drags it under the water with him. And there's a very graphic picture of this agitation, and then a great big black bloody bubble that surfaces, and then absolute peace. And Tarker has taken his mortal enemy, and Tarker has taken his mortal enemy down into death with him.

And it's exactly what Jesus did upon the cross. He took the human race's mortal enemy down into death, and it cost him everything. It cost him his life, but he broke the power of it.

And from the cross, the victory song already began. And you hear it, you hear the last words echoing out to the doctors. It is done.

It's finished. Now, this morning I said that what Jesus did on the cross was not just an event in time and history, but it is an event of the Spirit. It is an eternal moment, it's an eternal now.

It's for that very reason that you now, at this moment, can step into all the victory of what Jesus accomplished at that moment in time. Right now. In fact, now is the only time you can do it.

You can't do it tomorrow, unless tomorrow becomes a now, as God speaks to you these things and kindles faith in your heart. But now, now this can become your victory song. This can become your triumphal proclamation.

It's finished. It's done. The power is broken.

If you will step into that, that he has accomplished right now, it's open for you. Let's pray. Amen.

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