

The Redemption of Distress

How Life Feels – part 1

April 12, 2020

Distress is stress on steroids. Distress occurs when the things we are relying on to make “life” “work” are in significant jeopardy. When the Titanic hit the iceberg the captain sent out a “distress signal.” It was an urgent call for help.

In our fallen world, distress can occur at any time and for many different reasons. It may appear as if God is nowhere to be found. Why doesn’t He fix our problem? But, again and again, God uses our human distress redemptively! The eyes of faith must fixate on the promises of God and God’s past deliverances of His people during times of distress, awaiting our redemption.

This Friday is Good Friday. This Sunday is Easter. This week we’ll look at Psalm 22, written by King David about **one thousand years before** Christ! It is a remarkable prophecy of what would happen on the cross one thousand years later!

DAY 1: Abandoned by God? Psalm 22:1-8

Psalm 22:1 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? ² O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, and am not silent.

³ Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the praise of Israel. ⁴ In you our fathers put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them. ⁵ They cried to you and were saved; in you they trusted and were not disappointed.

⁶ But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people. ⁷ All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: ⁸ "He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him."

1. We don’t know the distress David is in but we do know that Jesus’ experience on the cross can’t be missed in this psalm!

2. How do things “look” or “seem” in vv. 1-2?

3. How does the psalmist try to combat the way things “look” in vv. 3-5?

4. Remembering the character of God and past deliverances of God helped for a time, but did it take away his distress?

5. Distress is coming to the psalmist in multiple ways! Part of the distress is physical, and part of his distress relates to the people around him. What is going on in vv. 6-8?

6. Has distress come knocking on your door? In what way? In multiple ways?

DAY 2: Affirmation of God's Care. (Past and present). (Psalm 22:9-11, 19-21)

Psalm 22:9 Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you even at my mother's breast. ¹⁰ From birth I was cast upon you; from my mother's womb you have been my God.

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

¹⁹ But you, O LORD, be not far off; O my Strength, come quickly to help me.

²⁰ Deliver my life from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs.

²¹ Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen.

1. The psalmist recalls past remembrances of God's faithfulness, gracious gifts and sovereign acts. What strikes you from vv. 9-10?

2. In v. 9 David makes two unusual statements: (1) "... **you made me trust** in you even at my mother's breast." (v. 9). And (2) From birth **I was cast upon you**..." What do you think he means by this? What does David realize about faith?

3. Both of these realizations propel him to pray in v. 11.

a. Does David ask for the distress to be over?

b. Does David ask for God to solve the reasons for distress?

c. What does David want more than anything else in his distress? (v. 11)

4. Notice in v. 19 that he repeats the same basic idea in this prayer!

5. It's not until this point in the psalm that David asks for rescue. What is the significance of this? (Think of all David has written up until vv. 20-21).

6. As Christians it is easy to assume that God's first job is to relieve our distress. Instead, distress often lingers longer than we want it to. How are we to think about that? What is God trying to build in His people through times of distress?

7. Is David illustrating the kind of response to distress that would be a good example for you?

DAY 3: Agony of Suffering. (Psalm 22:12-18)

Psalm 22:12 Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me. ¹³ Roaring lions tearing their prey open their mouths wide against me. ¹⁴ I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. ¹⁵ My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. ¹⁶ Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. ¹⁷ I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. ¹⁸ They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.

1. What is so stunning about this psalm is that one thousand years later it so closely mirrors the crucifixion of Jesus, from His physical suffering, spiritual suffering, emotional distress, and distress from so many people around Him!

(You can read Matthew 27:32-54; Mark 15: 21-39; Luke 23:26-49; John 19:16-37)

2. List the elements of His physical suffering. How does he describe what is happening to his body?

3. There are several references to being physically spent, drained, etc. List those below.

4. Have you experienced some type of physical suffering? What was it like? How would you describe it?

5. What effect did that have on you?

6. In the gospels, at this point in time, Jesus is at death's door.

7. Jesus' distress is actually made up of multiple distresses:

- Abandoned by His disciples.
- Unjustly accused of crimes He did not commit. An unfair trial, sentenced to death.
- Separated from God; God seems nowhere to be found. He feels abandoned.
- Physical suffering and agony. He is being tortured.
- He realizes He is at death's door. The distress of impending death.

8. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 4: Anguish of Scorn (Psalm 22:7-8, 12-13, 16-18)

1. “Sticks and stones may break my bones but words can never hurt me!” When I was a kid I remember shouting this out with great bravado.
2. I should have been handed the “Head in the Sand Trophy”, for stupidest things ever spoken!
3. There was a relational, social, and personal distress trying to afflict David and Jesus, a thousand years later.

*Psalm 22:7 All who see me **mock** me; they **hurl insults**, **shaking their heads**:⁸ "He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him."*

4. The psalmist includes people coming by and “shaking their heads” at him. What is he describing?

5. Verse 8 is said with cruel sarcasm.

6. There are words and attitudes that strike fear in human beings. In the list below, rank these from 1-5, with “1” being the cruelest.

___ Being “made fun of”

___ Publicly embarrassed

___ Publicly insulted

___ Publicly mocked

___ Sadistic sarcasm.

7. What struck you from this list and your ranking?

*Psalm 22:12 Many bulls surround me; **strong bulls of Bashan** encircle me.*

*Psalm 22:13 **Roaring lions tearing their prey** open their **mouths wide** against me.*

*Psalm 22:16 **Dogs** have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have **pierced** my hands and my feet.*

*Psalm 22:17 I can count all my bones; **people stare** and gloat over me.*

Psalm 22:18 They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.

8. The agony of scorn takes a terrible toll on the human soul. What strikes you from these verses above?

9. Have you experienced the “agony of scorn?” Jot down a few words from your experience.

10. How does this affect how you see what Jesus did for you on the cross?

DAY 5: Aftermath of Sovereignty! (Psalm 22:22-31)

Romans 8:28 And we know that in everything, God works for good with those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose.

1. This is one of the most well-known verses in scripture. It is also one of the greatest biblical promises we enjoy.
2. This promise is illustrated in bible story after bible story over the course of two thousand years of biblical history. It has also been experienced by millions and millions of Christians down through two millennia.

The point is this: God will bring about ultimate good through the worst of evils.

3. We have looked at the first twenty-one verses of Psalm 22, and considered the parallels between this psalm and the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.
4. On Good Friday, Jesus died, an unjust, unfair, death by torture, cruelty and contempt. Was that the end of the story? It is a tragic ending? Is there no hope?
5. Let's pick up the ending of Psalm 22.

Psalm 22:22 I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you.

²³ You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honor him! Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!

²⁴ 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. ²⁵ From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly; before those who fear you will I fulfill my vows.

²⁶ The poor will eat and be satisfied; they who seek the LORD will praise him-- may your hearts live forever! ²⁷ 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, ²⁸ for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations.

²⁹ 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. ³⁰ Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord. ³¹ They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn-- for he has done it.

6. How would you describe the change in the story?

7. How would you describe the response of David? His attitude? His perspective?

8. The ultimate of example of bringing the best out of the worst of evils is the resurrection of Jesus Christ after the cruelest and most unjust of deaths, ever!!!! On Easter Sunday, the resurrection of Jesus reminds us that the most important good we could ever enjoy has been purchased! The promises of forgiveness and salvation was secured through what looked like the death of a vision—the death of Christ. But NOT!!!!!!

Happy Easter! He is risen! He is risen, indeed!