

An Exposition of Psalm 22 Radio Message

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Bible Text: Psalm 22

20th Century Reformation Hour

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Now this is Carl McIntire and on the Good Fridays in years past I have always given you the great exposition of Psalm 22, the greatest picture of the death of Christ that we have in the Bible. And so now as you listen to me expound this 22nd Psalm you will see the fulness of this cross in all of its glory.

Now I take you directly to the 22nd Psalm.

The Lord Jesus Christ was offered up as a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and then to reconcile us to God which he did. And that great event on Calvary's cross was a transaction. The great transaction is done. Almighty God who created the universe and made the earth and placed man here in his likeness and his image, came in as we would say to court and satisfied the demands of the judge and he was the judge. And he himself paid the penalty for the iniquity and the sin of his own disobedient creatures that they might have freedom, might be delivered from death, that they might have the gift and the treasure of everlasting life.

Now at this time each year I have devoted the Good Friday broadcast to the 22nd Psalm and I have said, and you have heard me say it, that the greatest picture or the greatest portrayal of the death, the greatest...well, it exceeds anything that there is anywhere in all the Bible or anywhere presenting the death of Christ. It is Psalm 22. And so far as my own ministry is concerned through these years, this Psalm, this portion of the Bible is the one that I have spoken on more than any other passage in the Word of God.

Now the reason I like it and the reason I present it as I do is simply that we have here the only instance, the only place in the Bible where the death of Christ is presented from the viewpoint or from the position of the one who hung on the cross. Jesus is here describing his own death.

The psalm opens, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"¹ And these are the words that were uttered a thousand years later after David wrote them, a thousand years later while he hung on the cross. So Psalm 22 begins with Christ on his cross.

Now there are other representations in the Bible, of course, of the death of Christ. The seed of the woman is going to bruise the head of the serpent. That is in the third chapter

¹ Psalm 22:1

of Genesis. And then you come all through the period of the flood where you have these representations of the coming of the Messiah and you get Abraham. And you say...and he is the father of the faithful.² And Abraham was justified by faith and it was faith in Christ.³ Then you come up to Moses and Moses said, “A prophet shall the Lord thy God raise up unto thee like unto me and unto him shalt thou hearken.”⁴ And the whole representation of the sacrifice and of the Passover Lamb as Moses presented it when they left Egypt was Jesus Christ, the blood of the lamb that takes away. “Behold the lamb of God,”⁵ John the Baptist said.

In other words, you have many, many representations of Christ all through the Old Testament and into the New Testament and they all are the same. Paul says, “He loved me and gave himself for me.”⁶ In the narratives of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John you have a description of the events and you have the soldiers and you have the thieves and you have the women. You have all the witnesses gathered about that event when he was lifted up on that cursed tree and died.

But that is looking at the cross from the foot of the cross. The Old Testament looks at it from the perspective of prophecy and the New Testament looks at it from the perspective of news. It has already happened and we call it the gospel. And then you come to the book of Revelation and there is the Lamb. He is worthy because he has slain and redeemed us to God.⁷ All this panorama, the whole span of the Bible from beginning to end presents the cross.

Paul said, “I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified.”⁸ And that is the message. And the Holy Spirit was sent that he might take the things of Christ and reveal them to us: his ministry, his life, his death, his resurrection, his promised return in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.⁹

And on Good Friday, ladies and gentlemen, this is the message, this is the delight of God’s people. It transcends anything and everything else that we might even think about. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, according to the Scriptures. He was buried and he rose again the third day from the dead according to the Scriptures. Isn’t that beautiful?

Now, the place to begin in the exposition and the setting forth of many of the psalms or the passages of the Bible is at the conclusion. You know, many of you people start reading novels and you get so wrapped up in it that you can’t wait so you turn over to the concluding section and find out how it is all going to end. Well, Psalm 22 has in its conclusion, the summary and the emphasis. It has in it the message and the result.

² See Romans 4:11

³ See Romans 3:28

⁴ See Deuteronomy 18:15

⁵ John 1:29, 36

⁶ See Galatians 2:20

⁷ See Revelation 5:9

⁸ See 1 Corinthians 2:2

⁹ See Matthew 24:30

Now let me read you the last two verses. “A seed shall serve him.”¹⁰ We have just seen the crucifixion. We have just seen the resurrection. “It shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.”¹¹ That is, for a people, for the elect, for the Church, for the bride. “They shall come.”¹² That is, those who have believed him and those who are going to serve him shall come, “and shall declare his righteousness.”¹³ Our task is to declare, to declare the righteousness of our God, what he did when he offered his Son. He is righteous and he also justifies the ungodly and he did it by the sacrifice of his own Son. “[To] declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born.”¹⁴ That shall be born. The great unborn of generations, of course, that are to follow. And we are a part of it. But it also goes even further than that, to a people who shall be born in the new life, the people who shall receive the new birth, the people who, indeed, shall be the great evidence of the power of God unto salvation. And then, finally, “that he hath done this.”¹⁵

Ladies and gentlemen, when you preach the gospel you simply tell people what God has done. He has done it. It is his work. It is for us. And, furthermore, he did everything that was necessary to do in order to give us everlasting life. And so “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”¹⁶

Will you follow me as we look, now, to the cross itself. Run down through this psalm and see the different sties which Jesus himself saw as he looked down from the cross. We find him at the opening of the Psalm talking to God. And the first thing that he is going to do is to make it very plain that he himself understands who God is, that he is holy. And he understands what sin has done. It has made Christ a worm. And that he understands what he himself was to do. That is to be the Savior of the world.

“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”¹⁷ A thousand years later Jesus uttered those very words exactly. He asked, “Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?”¹⁸ Here he is on the cross and he is crying to God.

O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.¹⁹

Jesus is there to deal with sin. He recognizes that a holy God is in the heavens and the holy God whom he calls “my God, my God.” And then he turns and he says, “Our fathers

¹⁰ Psalm 22:30

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Psalm 22:31

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Romans 6:23

¹⁷ Psalm 22:1

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Psalm 22:2-3

trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.”²⁰ Beloved, God has never to this day ever forsaken anybody who trusted him. They that trust in the Lord shall be like Mount Zion.²¹

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.²²

Just think of it. Jesus said, “No one that has ever trusted in thee, oh God, has been forsaken. You have always delivered him.”²³ Now that’s true. That is absolutely true. But in the case of Jesus Christ he was forsaken

Why was he forsaken? Why should he be the one and only exception in all of God’s dealings with men? Why should Jesus Christ be the only one? And he cries out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”²⁴

Well, the Lord saved us, folks, so we wouldn’t be forsaken. But here Jesus Christ is on the cross and he says, “I am being forsaken.” And he recognizes that his situation, the condition in which he is in right now, is related to the fact that God is holy. God is holy. In verse six he says, “I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.”²⁵

What made him a worm? The Son of God, the sinless one, the perfect Messiah, who could say I am a worm? He could. And he had to say it because sin made out of him a worm. And when the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all,²⁶ we read here and “I am no man. I am no man.”²⁷

Oh, beloved, his visage was so torn that he didn’t even look like a man. He says, “I am a reproach to men.”²⁸ He says, “I am despised.”²⁹ Well, he was despised and rejected of men³⁰ Isaiah tells us in Isaiah 53.

And then he looks down from the cross. He had made it very plain that a holy God cannot have anything to do with iniquity and Christ is made a worm. It was sin that made him that, your sin and my sin. And he is no man. And Jesus makes it plain that while he is hanging on the cross he is bearing sin, he is bearing our reproaches. And when he does it God turns his face away from him.

²⁰ Psalm 22:4

²¹ See Psalm 125:1

²² Proverbs 3:5-6

²³ See Psalm 9:10

²⁴ Psalm 22:1

²⁵ Psalm 22:6

²⁶ See Isaiah 53:6

²⁷ See Psalm 22:6

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ See Isaiah 53:3

The first six verses of Psalm 22 explain to you the meaning of that death. They explain to you the purpose of that death. They explain to us the glory and the wonder of the cross of Jesus Christ.

Now after he tells us that God is holy and he is a worm and after he makes it clear that God forsook him because he is bearing the iniquity of us all on his own body on that cursed tree. Isn't it wonderful how Peter explains this this way and Paul explains it this way and again the book of Acts and all the preaching in the New Testament churches explain it this way? And then we have his eyes looking down at the cross, down from the cross to the ground.

“All they that see me laugh me to scorn.”³¹ There's your crowd. They have been yapping at him. They have been hounding him. They have been scoffing at him. He says, “Now, look, look. I see it. I recognize what they are doing. They are laughing me to scorn. They are making sport. They are making fun of me. “They shoot out the lip.”³² They made faces, you see. “The shake the head, saying...”³³ Here they are shaking their heads and jumping around and laughing and carrying on. And Jesus Christ is hanging on that cross between two thieves. Thieves, men who deserved what they were getting, thieves. But here was the sinless one, the holy one, the perfect one, the one who when he was before Pilate had the sentence pronounced upon him.”³⁴

Then, verse eight. There is the crowd at the foot of the cross. Folks, you would have been there if you had been living in those days. Oh, thank God we weren't living then. Thank God we weren't there to be a part of this angry, blood thirsty crowd that wanted to get rid of this teacher of Galilee who had healed the sick and raised the dead and told everybody that he was the Son of David.

Listen. “He trusted on the Lord.”³⁵ That is what they are saying, “that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.”³⁶

Oh, how it did sting. He told everybody to trust in the Lord and now the God in whom he trusted can't take care of him on a cross. Oh, how the jibes, oh how the insults, oh how the blasphemies hit him as he hung on that cross for you and me.

And then verse nine. “But thou art he that took me out of the womb.”³⁷ There's the virgin birth. “Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.”³⁸

³¹ Psalm 22:7

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ John 19:4, 6

³⁵ Psalm 22:8

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Psalm 22:9

³⁸ Ibid.

“That holy thing which is begotten of thee,” the angel Gabriel told Mary, “shall be called the Son of God.”³⁹ While he was on his mother’s breast he was the gift of God to a world in sin and darkness. “I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother’s belly.”⁴⁰

Oh, folks, there he is conceived of the Holy Ghost. You have got the womb. You have got the mother’s breast. You have got the womb again. You have got the mother’s belly. He was prepared. He came to this earth for one purpose and that was to die and he sees it. And when he hangs upon the cross he tells the Lord God of glory, he says, “You sent me for this purpose. I understand.” And here, oh, I just can’t hesitate. I just can’t wait, folks. God sent Jesus Christ to this world. He so loved us that he gave that Son, his only begotten Son.

Talk about abortion on demand. Talk about life not beginning until three months after conception. No, Jesus Christ was the Son of God from the moment the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary the virgin and gave unto her the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is Psalm 22 I am talking to you about, a thousand years before Christ ever hung on the cross. The very words that he would say, the very thoughts that he would have, the very sights which he would behold about that milling, angry crowd calling for blood at the foot of that cross and saying, “His blood be upon us and upon your children.”⁴¹ That is what they yelled.

And then verse 11. “Be not far from me; for trouble is near; [and] there is none to help.”⁴² He is getting ready to die and he knows it. There is nobody that can die with him, nobody that could die alongside of him and help. He alone could bear the price of sin. There was none other good enough. There was none other good enough.

Now he finishes talking to God and he looks back down and there is this crowd. He calls them bulls. Verse 12, Psalm 22.

Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.⁴³

So here he has a scene. He calls them bulls pawing the earth and snorting. He calls them lions roaring for their prey, verses 12 and 13. Isn’t it graphic? But, folks, it’s true. If you don’t believe in prophecy you will have to believe in it here. If you don’t believe in divine inspiration of the words of the Bible you will have to believe in it now. Here Jesus Christ a thousand years before he was born has his death and all that he sees described in

³⁹ See Luke 1:35

⁴⁰ Psalm 22:10

⁴¹ See Matthew 27:25

⁴² Psalm 22:11

⁴³ Psalm 22:12-13

detail by David. And Christ claimed be David's greater son. And David, he said, called him Lord.⁴⁴

And then verse 14. "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint."⁴⁵ This is a crucifixion, you see. This isn't a stoning. It isn't a decapitation. It isn't a...no it is just old Roman crucifixion. "My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my [bones]."⁴⁶ My bowels he said. They are bleeding. "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint."⁴⁷ He had nails through his hands and nails through his feet as he was lifted up on that cross and his bones were yanked and torn out of their sockets and out of joint, suffering excruciating. No man has ever suffered as the Son of God suffered. And when he died on that cross he bore the sins of the world.

God commended his love toward us in while we were yet sinners Christ died for the ungodly.⁴⁸

Folks, this isn't just some beautiful myth. It is a prophecy literally fulfilled. This isn't just some symbolic story. It is Almighty God offering his Son upon the altar in order that the demands of God's justice in the punishment of sin might be fully met and God could be just and the justifier of the ungodly.

Today everywhere people are using the cross as an emblem, as a symbol. It is a symbol of revolution. It is a symbol of the social gospel. It is a symbol of all these different things. Folks, the cross is not a symbol. It was a work, a real objective work of God that took place on the earth where man had sinned. And we have to believe it. And, believe me, my dear friend, when you understand what Christ actually did you are not following some kind of a...some kind of a...what shall I call it? An apparition. You are not following some kind of an allegory. You are listening to what God did on this earth once and for all for the sins of the race. We call it the atonement.

The Bible says he offered himself up to be a propitiation.⁴⁹ Well he didn't appease the devil. What he did was to satisfy the demands of Almighty God's justice against the disobedience of man. Christ was not a sinner. He never committed sin. He didn't need to die for his own sin. He was the only human being that ever walked on this earth that didn't sin or didn't have to die for his sin. And so as one who was free he could freely offer himself in your place and we call it the substitutionary atonement, the sacrifice for you that God provided in Jesus Christ.

You know, when you understand what sin is, it is the breaking of God's law. When you understand, beloved, that the penalty of that transgression is death that is why we have got our graveyards everywhere. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God..."⁵⁰ and

⁴⁴ See Psalm 110

⁴⁵ Psalm 22:14

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ See Romans 5:6-7

⁴⁹ See Romans 3:25, 1 John 2:2, 1 John 4:10

⁵⁰ Romans 6:23

isn't it the biggest "but" in the Bible. "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."⁵¹

Notice verse 13. He is looking down from the cross. "They gaped upon me."⁵²

And then verse 14. He looks at his own physical condition. "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint,"⁵³ again. Oh, just think of this. He refers to it again and again. "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws."⁵⁴ Can you hear him say, "I thirst, I thirst"?⁵⁵ "And thou hast brought me into the dust of death. Thou hast brought me to the dust of death."⁵⁶

Oh yes, ladies and gentlemen, Jesus looked beyond the crowds. He looked beyond Herod. He looked beyond Pilate. He looked beyond the high priest. He looked back into the eternal counsels of God and Jesus said, "Thou hast brought me to the dust of death."⁵⁷ God offered up his Son for us. That is the depth and the fulness of the meaning of the death of Christ.

Folks, it was your sin that crucified him. It was your horrible disobedience of your creator that sent him there to die in your stead so you could be freed from it. This is the gospel that the devil hates. This is the blood that has in it the power to change and redeem.

Verse 16. "For dogs have compassed me."⁵⁸ He looks down there and sees them. They are like a pack of bloodthirsty hounds. "The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet."⁵⁹ It is crucifixion, folks. You can't deny this is not a description of the death of Christ a thousand years before it happened.

I may tell all my bones: they look and stare [at] me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.⁶⁰

There is crap game going on at the foot of the cross. He sees it. Jesus is conscious as he dies. He is fully aware that they are parting his garments and having a crap game at the foot of the cross. He is fully aware of the fact that he has been pierced. "They pierced my hands and my feet."⁶¹

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Psalm 22:13

⁵³ Psalm 22:14

⁵⁴ Psalm 22:15

⁵⁵ See John 19:28

⁵⁶ Psalm 22:15

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Psalm 22:16

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Psalm 22:17

⁶¹ Psalm 22:16

He calls the ecclesiastical leaders “the assembly of the wicked.” That is the Sanhedrin. He calls them a bunch of dogs. Yeah, the dogs, the dogs that trailed him and barked at him. They sought to lay their hands on him. They are dogs and now they had him up a tree. Oh, these political religious leaders of that day who rejected Jesus Christ.

He said, “I came unto my own and my own received me not.”⁶² “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God who were born not of the will of man nor the will of the flesh.”⁶³

Ladies and gentlemen, you have been again by the blood of the Lamb shed on Calvary’s cross for your eternal life.

The dogs of that...

Well, “I may tell all my bones.”⁶⁴ He sees he is naked, the shame of it.

“Be not far from me,” verse 19, “O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me.”⁶⁵

“Deliver my soul from the sword.”⁶⁶ Here comes the sword, the death, “my darling from the power of the dog.”⁶⁷ My darling, my darling. He has a sweetheart. Oh, how I love to think on that. In the midst of his agony and his suffering foremost in his own understanding and thinking and his love was “my darling.”

Well, who is his darling? Who is his sweetheart? Whom did he love so much that he offered himself up for their sins? Well, his bride, his Church, that’s it.

“Don’t let the devil get my Church, the big dog. Don’t let Satan have his way with my people.” That is the prayer. That is John 17, the entire intercessory prayer that John gave to his disciples there just at the very end. He goes into that garden of Gethsemane and the agony of it. He cries out, “Deliver my darling.”⁶⁸

Oh, beloved, Jesus died for his own. He died for his bride. He died for the elect. He died for those to whom his blood had been appointed for cleansing.

His death, ladies and gentlemen, was for the whole world. He died. His sins, the sacrifice was sufficient, sufficient. It was of infinite merit for the sins of all mankind, but it has been efficacious only for those of us to whom it has been applied. We are his sheep. “I know my sheep and they follow me and I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my Father’s hands.”⁶⁹

⁶² See John 5:43

⁶³ See John 1:12-13

⁶⁴ Psalm 22:17

⁶⁵ Psalm 22:19

⁶⁶ Psalm 22:20

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ See Psalm 22:20

⁶⁹ See John 10:27-28

And then verse 21 he dies. “Save me from the lion’s mouth.”⁷⁰ He is going right down into the jaws of death. “For thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.”⁷¹ He knows he is going to be raised from the dead.

And then, verse 22, it all changes. “I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.”⁷² Now he is alive. He told his disciples, “I will go before thee and I will see my brethren in Galilee.”⁷³

Ye that fear the LORD, praise [ye]; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel. For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted.⁷⁴

No, he took it upon himself. “Neither hath he hid his face from him.”⁷⁵ God put his face. His face shone again. Oh, how the face of God beheld the Son of God when he lifted him out of the grave and set him alive forevermore. When he cried he heard him.

You know, we start out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”⁷⁶ He didn’t hear him. Now he says, “He has heard me. He has brought me up from the grave. Whenever I finished the sacrifice, whenever I made the atonement he brought me up alive.” And the resurrection is the guarantee that the death was adequate and sufficient and all that you needed.

And then we come down, of course, to the great heavenly scenes and, “All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD.”⁷⁷ There will be a day when the knowledge of the Lord will cover this earth like the waters cover the sea.⁷⁸ And all the kindreds of the nations shall worship thee for the kingdom is the Lord’s.⁷⁹

The kingdom of God is the Lord’s. And the only way you can get into it, folks, is by a new birth, “except a man be born again.”⁸⁰ And on this Good Friday when you people are listening wherever you are I want you to believe, I want you to rejoice in the sacrifice. I want you to tell others that Christ died. That’s the gospel.

⁷⁰ Psalm 22:21

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Psalm 22:22

⁷³ See Matthew 26:32, Mark 14:28

⁷⁴ Psalm 22:23-24

⁷⁵ Psalm 2:24

⁷⁶ Psalm 22:1

⁷⁷ Psalm 22:27

⁷⁸ See Isaiah 11:9, Habakkuk 2:14

⁷⁹ See Psalm 22:27-28

⁸⁰ John 3:3

And in verse 30 it says, “A seed shall serve him.”⁸¹ Let’s serve him. Let’s serve him today. And we shall come and say to a generation that shall be born, a people that is to be born that he hath done this.⁸²

This is Good Friday. This is Carl McIntire your 20th Century Reformation Hour. Oh, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”⁸³

Have a happy Easter!

⁸¹ Psalm 22:30

⁸² See Psalm 22:31

⁸³ Romans 1:16