

## Faith in the midst of anguish

We have all gone through times of trials in our lives. Some of you may be going through them right now. It's easy to talk about trusting God when things are going well, but do we trust God when life falls apart, when you lose a loved one, lose your job, a family member suddenly ends up in hospital. Faith is really only faith when we can't see the outcome, but trust Him for the outcome, or for answers that we don't have.

Psalm 22

### 1) A cry of anguish (vs. 1 – 2)

- Anguish is extreme pain, distress, or anxiety.
- The Psalmist starts off by expressing his anguish
  - The worst type of anguish is the sense of having been forsaken by God
- His cries are threefold
  - Confusion – why have you forsaken me
  - Not finding answers – you do not answer me
  - Anxiety – I find no rest
- When Jesus was hanging on the cross on Golgotha's hill He quoted this Psalm in His anguish.
  - Although fully God He had become fully man and felt all the pain of humanity
  - However, for the first time in His eternal existence He felt forsaken by God when He took the sins, and the wrath of God for all those sins, of all sinful humanity of all time on Himself.
- A cry of anguish is a normal human response to pain and suffering
  - If you are crying out in pain it is completely normal. It isn't an indication of a lack of faith

### 2) Trust in the midst of anguish (vs. 3 – 10)

- In the midst of anguish, the Psalmist looks up to see his helper
  - Psalms 22:3-5 Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the one Israel praises. In you our ancestors put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them. To you they cried out and were saved; in you they trusted and were not put to shame.
  - He reminds himself of the trials of his ancestors and how God had brought them through them.
  - God was faithful to His word and didn't shame those who trusted Him wholeheartedly.
  - Romans 10:11 As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame."
  - Mockers mock someone when they put their trust in unfaithful and unreliable people as they will be let down, and then shamed for having trusted such a person
  - When we trust in the Lord we are trusting the most faithful and most reliable person in the universe and will never be let down and never be put to shame
- We know that in our heads, but we think that's for others – our ancestors or other people, not us
  - Psalms 22:6-8 But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by everyone, despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads. "He trusts in the LORD," they say, "let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him."
  - In the midst of anguish our self-esteem hits rock bottom and, as the Psalmist, we feel like nothing more than a worm
  - This is brought on by mockery from others – either real or perceived
  - Jesus was mocked when He hung on the cross
    - Matthew 27:38-41 Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!" <sup>41</sup> In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him.
  - Such mockery and the shattering of our self-esteem increases our anguish
- Then we come to the realisation that we can still trust in God regardless of our bad experience
  - Psalms 22:9-10 Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you, even at my mother's breast. From birth I was cast on you; from my mother's womb you have been my God.
  - God has been our God from the time we were born and taught us to trust Him from then until now.



### 3) The reason for anguish (vs. 11 – 18)

- A sense of helplessness in our difficulties – there's no one to help me
  - Psalms 22:11 Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.
  - Even God feels distant
- Then there are others who make our lives difficult.
  - The Psalmist describes them as animals – bulls, lions, dogs
  - They either actively or passively enhance your pain and suffering
- This describes Jesus' anguish on the cross
  - When someone was crucified their bones were jolted out of joint when the cross was lifted up with them on it and dropped into the hole that was dug for it
    - Psalms 22:14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted within me.
  - It was likely that someone had extreme thirst when they were crucified due to the loss of body fluid, and then the dust of the area.
    - Psalms 22:15 My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death.
  - The hands and feet of the crucified person were pierced by nails to the cross
    - Psalms 22:16 Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet.
  - Crowds of onlookers surrounded the cross, observing Jesus' crucifixion, whilst soldiers divided his clothes amongst themselves
    - Psalms 22:17-18 All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.
- We might be feeling helpless with no one to help us. Others might be making our lives difficult. Our trauma may be real
  - Jesus endured the cross seeing what lay beyond it
  - Hebrews 12:1-3 And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

### 4) Deliverance from anguish (vs. 19 – 30)

- We don't lose heart because when we set our eyes on Jesus, our deliverer, we expect to be delivered from our anguish
  - Psalms 22:19-21 But you, LORD, do not be far from me. You are my strength; come quickly to help me. Deliver me from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs. Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen.
  - The Lord doesn't only deliver us from the anguish, but the reasons for us being in anguish – the dogs, the lions, and the wild oxen
- He answers our cries and shows us that He has always been closer than we thought
  - Psalms 22:24 For he has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help.
- Not only does He deliver us from our anguish, but He brings us into a place of rest and submission in His kingdom where righteousness and peace dwell
  - Psalms 22:26 The poor will eat and be satisfied; those who seek the LORD will praise him— may your hearts live forever!

### 5) A proclamation of triumph (v.31)

- It is finished!
  - Psalms 22:31 They will proclaim his righteousness, declaring to a people yet unborn: He has done it!