

"Bloodline: Cross Culture"

Psalm 22

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connect groups

PATH

We have already noticed how much the Bible speaks about blood and points to the cross of Christ. The apostle Paul even said, "God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Galatians 6:14). It's as though the cross of Jesus Christ defines the very culture of Christianity itself. In Psalm 22, David points forward to Messiah's great suffering and widespread rejection—and then His ultimate accomplishment.

I. The Abandonment at the Cross (vv. 1-5)

II. The Anguish on the Cross (vv. 6-21)

III. The Accomplishment of the Cross (vv. 22-31)

POINTS

The Abandonment at the Cross

- John Stott said, "I could never believe in God were it not for the cross.... In a world of pain, who could worship a God who was immune to it?"¹ The cross shows that God stepped into our world of pain.
- Christianity is a culture founded on the cross.
 - In the Old Testament, the near-sacrifice of Isaac foreshadowed the cross, the Passover visualized it, the Levitical sacrifices depicted it, and the Prophets predicted it.
 - In the New Testament the symbol of the cross abounds (see 1 Corinthians 2:2, Galatians 6:4), taking up between 20-40 percent of the Gospels' content.
- Psalm 22 is a prophetic look at the death of Jesus on the cross. Written nearly 1,000 years before, King David expressively described the execution of a righteous man whom we now know to be Jesus.
- There is much similarity between the text and Jesus' statements on the way to the cross—His concern for others as expressed to crying women, soldiers, the repentant thief, and His mother.
- Jesus' silence on the cross was broken when He declared, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" For the first time ever, Jesus felt separation from His Father. This was not a cry of disbelief, but a cry of disorientation. Jesus had always been One with the Father, but on the cross, He felt the effects of sin—separation.
- God's character is perfect; He can't be with imperfect beings. Jesus was the perfect One who submitted and substituted for imperfect humanity. We have

imputed righteousness (given to us), not intrinsic righteousness (earned by us).

The Anguish on the Cross

- The text describes a suffering similar to what is recorded in Matthew 27:43.
- A worm is a lowly creature; Jesus took upon Himself a low status. The word for "worm," *towlah*, means scarlet worm. This type of worm was crushed to make scarlet dye.
- Consider the life cycle of this worm. When ready to give birth, the mother implants her body into a tree. After giving birth, she dies stuck to the tree and staining it red. The sun bleaches the red stain white after three days.
- Jesus was a scarlet worm—lowly to look upon, crushed on wood. But His blood is our source of life.
- The root of "excruciating" references the pain of the cross. Notice some of the details:
 - "Poured out like water": profuse perspiration, sweating drops of blood
 - "Bones out of joint": body is suspended, causing bones to dislocate
 - "Heart melts like wax": blood and water in the pericardial sac around the heart crush it
 - Intense thirst: extreme dehydration
 - Piercing of hands and feet
 - Casting lots for garments
- Former atheist Ralph Muncaster noted twenty-three parallels between Psalm 22 and the New Testament accounts of Jesus' death.

The Accomplishment of the Cross

- The second part of the text is about salvation. With verse 22, the crucifixion

is over, death is over, weakness is gone, and suffering has passed.

- The text turns to life, strength, declaration, and praise, indicating that something happened between verse 21 and 22—accomplishment, the resurrection.
- Jesus' death created a family. Notice the familial terms in the text: "brethren," "descendants," "offspring," "assembly," "families," and "people." And the Kingdom of God continues to grow. The heart of the gospel is that Jesus keeps moving the fence, including more and more people within His fold.
- It was (and is) God's plan to save all His people. "Jesus...for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross" (Hebrews 12:2). The joy is the salvation of His people.
- "He has done this" (v. 31). The Hebrew word is *assa-ah* and means done, complete, and finished. Similarly, Jesus declared, "*Tetelestai*" from the cross; "It is finished" (John 19:30). God, in Christ, finished what He began back in Genesis 3:15.
- We must stop trying to convince God that we are good enough to be saved; He knows we're not. And, we must stop trying to add to the cross; we can't.
- For those who are feeling the silence of God, the discipline of God, or the displeasure of God, know this: He was forsaken so you never will be. Jesus wasn't saved from tasting death, so you can be spared eternal death. Jesus was covered by the darkness, so you can experience light forever. Jesus experienced death so you can experience life.

PRACTICE

Connect Up: Discuss the apparent abandonment of Jesus by the Father. Why was it necessary for God, in Christ, to suffer? Consider John Stott's quote: "I could never believe in God were it not for the cross." Why do you think pain and suffering are central to God's plan of salvation?

Connect In: Though we'll never fully understand the anguish Jesus went through on the cross, share a time when you went through excruciating pain. What was it like? Now compare your experience with Psalm 22:14-18. Note the prophetic description in Psalm 22 and compare it to the cross. Why is prophecy an important signpost for God's witness to the world?

Connect Out: How would you describe to an unbeliever what was accomplished on the cross? Articulate what you'd say to someone seeking salvation, describing the finished work of Jesus upon the cross. Now pray for unbelievers this in Easter season, asking God to show you who to invite to Easter services.