

Friday: Petitions

Read: Psalm 22:11,19-21a ¹¹ Be not far from me, for trouble is near, [for] and there is none to help...¹⁹ But you, O LORD, do not be far off! O you my help, come quickly to my aid! ²⁰ Deliver my soul from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dog! ²¹ Save me from the mouth of the lion!

<p>Reflect: These verses are petitions to God for help which occur after acknowledging reasons for despair and distress. It is a good pattern to keep in mind: be honest with God, He longs to hear from you; yet do not forget you are talking to the One who can work in any situation. David knew this.</p> <p>In fact this is why he is calling out to God to be near (not far off) “for” he knows trouble is near and “for” (which is untranslated and why it is in brackets up above) he knows no one else can help. Not only does David know no one else can help, he trusts in God doing what is best (cf. the confessions of trust in vs3-5 and 9-10).</p> <p>The “save” in v21 speaks directly to being delivered from a time of danger. In fact, David’s call of “deliver” (v20) is antithetical to (and the same word as) “rescue” in v8. A word can be used for derision in the mouth of a mocker, but ironically it can be a source of trust in the mouth of one of God’s own. The comfort of God being near is what we all need. If you are in doubt of His nearness feel free to voice your concern (e.g., Ps38:21; 71:12).</p>	<p>Respond: How would you like God to work in a situation you are currently facing? Have you asked Him? Have you asked for His perspective?</p> <p>What examples in the Bible can you think of which show how God is not “far off” from His people?</p> <p>How can you be “near” someone on behalf of God this coming week?</p>
<p>Pray: Pray for <i>Emporia Christian School & Shiloh Home of Hope</i> – missions New Life supports. Cry out to God concerning the situation(s) you identified in the “Respond” section. Ask God for His perspective on the situation(s) you are facing. Pray for unity within the Body of Christ.</p>	

Saturday: Doxology

Read: Psalm 22:21b-31 You have rescued me...²² I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you...²⁴ For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted...²⁸ For kingship belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations...³¹ they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it.

<p>Reflect: It seems like the second half of verse 21 and following does not belong with the heart wrenching anguish and despair found earlier in the psalm. Yet this is a picture of God’s work; moving us from despair to doxology.</p> <p>This change in perspective comes about (at least in part) because of the earlier confessions of trust in God (vs3-5, 9-10). There is something mystical about speaking (and believing) the truth of God’s Word. God is always with us; He will never leave us.</p> <p>Yet notice David is not content with things being all better for only him. Far from it. He actually moves from a focus on himself (“save me” earlier) to a focus on others (I will tell them...all). This too is a picture of God’s work. His work on our behalf is not to stay with us. Indeed, just as He chose Abram (Gen12:1), this choosing was to bless everyone (Gen12:3). Much the same, just as He has worked in your life, so He wants you to share that with others. He hears the cries of those around us (v24), will we be used by Him to reach them?</p>	<p>Respond: How has God been with you this week?</p> <p>Who needs to hear of what God has done for you?</p> <p>Does God’s immense love for everyone shape how you view those around you?</p>
<p>Pray: Pray for <i>Strong Tower Ministries</i> and <i>LCREF</i> – missions New Life supports. Ask God to bring to mind instances of His faithfulness toward you. Ask God’s blessing on our time of worship tomorrow at the church building – ask Him what you need to do in order to be prepared.</p>	

Forsaken???

July 11 – 17

Context is King. Some of you may remember that saying from our focus on how to read and study the Bible last fall. Context is King because if we ignore it, we can make any statement (word, saying, etc.) mean anything we want...

While this is dangerous enough in human relationships (e.g., “he said” vs. “she said” arguments), it is lethal when it comes to God’s Word. Why? Because if God has revealed Himself to us through His Word, and we neglect context thereby making a passage say something it does not, we have misrepresented God.

Case in point, many Christians believe God cannot be in the presence of sin. While there are a variety of reasons for this belief, a common proof text for this is Jesus on the cross: “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying... “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” (Mt27:46). This is often used as “proof” that God turned His back on Jesus and left Him all alone on the cross to bear the sins of the world – because that is how horrible sin is.

Sin is “bad”. It is “based” on the Bible. Yet what are some of its implications? Well if you are living in sin God wants nothing to do with you. In fact, God is more than likely angry with you. But what is missing in all of that (besides truth)? Context. Jesus quoted Psalm 22. He did not pull words out of thin air for the first time in history.

I cannot recall all of the run-ins with this psalm (Ps22) I have had. Yet I recall when a “God-hater” was spewing filth about God on a news channel because “*Who in their right mind can worship a God who abandoned His own son? I would never abandon my own child...*” Sadly, in my arrogance, I dismissed this poor, despicable, mis-informed person (idiot) as missing the bigger picture – that of God knowing about the Resurrection so this temporary abandonment did not “matter”. (Thank God for changes in my life...)

Later I started to read the Bible more for myself. I started to learn how the New Testament makes use of the Old Testament. I learned chapter and verse divisions were not added until hundreds (and hundreds) of years after the Bible was written. Questions started to form; uneasiness set in because what I had been taught in the past was being challenged... Then a professor (Dr. Billy Strother) made a passing comment in a preaching class about people having a “whacked out Theology” of the Trinity being severed because of sin. I was led to look again at Psalm 22 and God led me to conclude:

- the context of Psalm 22 is one of complete trust and confidence in God, while being real about circumstances, and ultimately one of triumph...
- God can be in the presence of sin (examples of this in Scripture abound)...
- God never leaves us...
- a God who would abandon anyone (let alone His own Son) in a time of need is certainly not worthy of worship...

So many have been impacted by this lie (i.e., God not being able to be in the presence of sin) because the actions of so many show it by running from God, inflicting personal punishment before accepting His forgiveness, holding on to guilt and shame, etc. Praise God He is bigger than sin. May our understanding of Him continue to grow...

Monday: *Anguish*

Read: Psalm 42:1-2 ¹ My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? ² O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.

<p>Reflect: Forsaken – what an ugly word. It paints a picture of physically leaving an object behind (e.g., Gen39:12), of someone who turns their back on a way of living (e.g., Prov2:13), of leaving someone all alone who is helpless and will likely die (e.g., 1Sam30:13), along with many other bleak pictures of being abandoned...</p> <p>Notice in verse two how David is crying out 24x7 (i.e., “by day”...and “by night”) to no avail. Because God does not answer there is no rest. Do you remember what we learned about Psalm 23:2? There can be no rest because there is fear, aggravations, conflict, and hunger... Indeed, the feeling of having prayers “bounce back” unanswered can be draining.</p> <p>The bottom line is David feels forsaken because of the perceived distance from God; i.e., “far from saving me”. Yet any good Hebrew knows God does not abandon His own. In fact YHWH has not “forsaken” those who trust in Him (e.g., Ps9:10), just as He promised through Solomon (cf. 1Kgs6:13). In fact, even though parents may “forsake” a child, God will be there (cf. Ps27:10).</p>	<p>Respond: Have you ever felt forsaken by God? Why? What did you do?</p> <p>Have you ever given up on a prayer to God? Why or why not?</p> <p>Do you know of someone who might benefit from the focus of the sermon this week and the Devotional Guide? Will you share them?</p>
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Pray: Pray for Ryan Nelson and 33 Church in Olathe, KS (who is supported by the CEA, a mission New Life supports). Ask God to help you be continuously in prayer about things that matter to Him. Ask God to make you sensitive to those who may feel forsaken by Him. Praise God for not leaving you – ever; ask for eyes of faith to see this truth.

Tuesday: *Appraisal*

Read: Psalm 22:3-5 ³ Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. ⁴ In you our fathers trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. ⁵ To you they cried and were rescued; in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

<p>Reflect: There is a night and day difference between verses 1-2 and verses 3-5. Why the shift? It happens because of Who God is...which we know in part because of what He has done.</p> <p>The word “enthroned” is translated as live or lived over 200 times. This is not to say God “literalistically” lives on words praising His goodness, but it does paint a picture of God’s fame being spread because of what He has done. It is a beautiful cycle: God works in history, people praise Him for it and more hear of how He works; He keeps working, people praise Him and more hear of it...</p> <p>The parallel nature of verse five highlights how crying out to God is a form of trusting Him. Yet we must keep in mind this crying out is to be done in the confidence God can work in our circumstances. I.e., don’t merely cry out “woe is me” just to complain. Similarly, when we recall how David had experienced being “rescued” (e.g., 1Sam19:10-12; 22:1) we see another insight into His confidence.</p>	<p>Respond: These verses give us the basis for worship; praising God for what He has done. What has God done for you lately?</p> <p>Does the cycle to the left make sense to you? How can you be a part of it? How are you a part of it now?</p> <p>Be assured, God will work on the behalf of His people (e.g., Ps37:40; 91:14). How is He working for you now?</p>
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Pray: Pray for LCS, MCC, and OCC – missions New Life supports; pray for the staff and faculty as they both relax and prepare for the upcoming year of school. Pray Brent McCrory – the Preaching Minister of New Life – will trust God more and more. Thank God for His work in, around, and through you lately.

Wednesday: *Despair*

Read: Psalm 22:6-8 ⁶ But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people. ⁷ All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads; ⁸ “He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!”

<p>Reflect: Apparently David feels as if he is less than those God has helped in the past. Once again, circumstances are influencing beliefs. Yet you do know David was king right? If anyone, from a worldly point of view, should be above struggling with self-worth issues you would think the king of a (prosperous) nation would fit the bill...let alone one “handpicked” by God (cf. 1Sam16:12).</p> <p>Yet if David can struggle with “self-worth,” how much more might an average person (like us)? (Also, keep in mind David’s ultimate confidence in God already expressed in vs3-5.) Yet building up one’s self-worth is not the answer. Ironically, losing one’s self-worth and having it remade because of Jesus is the answer; a focus coming in a month or so.</p> <p>The word “trusts” (v8) is interesting; it paints an image of heaping all one has onto God in an act of dependence (e.g., Ps37:5; cf. a related word as figuratively piling up stones in a heap in Gen31:46-52). One can only trust this much in YHWH if God is a person’s true desire (cf. delight in v8 and its use elsewhere, e.g., Gen34:19; Ps18:19; Ezek18:23).</p>	<p>Respond: Do you know of anyone who feels as David did in these verses? How can you help them?</p> <p>Before knowing Jesus did you ever mock people? How has that changed since meeting Him?</p> <p>What areas of your life have you not “heaped up” (trusted) into God’s realm of influence?</p>
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Pray: Pray for King Solomon Christian Service Camp – a mission New Life supports. Pray Bob Griffin & Larry Hayes – elders of NLCC – will delight in God more and more. Pray for someone you know who is struggling with the issue of self-worth; pray they submit to Jesus.

Thursday: *Reason(s) for Despair*

Read: Psalm 22:12-18 ¹²... strong bulls of Bashan surround me; ¹³... like a ravening and roaring lion. ¹⁴ ...my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast...¹⁶ For dogs encompass me...they have pierced my hands and feet— ¹⁷ I can count all my bones— they stare and gloat over me; ¹⁸ they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

<p>Reflect: While reading these verses it seems quite clear why Jesus quoted this psalm on the cross (cf. Mt27:35-44). Though David was not being crucified, the emotive language he used points to the intensity of his situation. E.g., he was likely emaciated from a lack of food due to running from Saul (22:14). Also, in this time period (and surrounding region) lions were captured and put in cages to devour those who were oath-breakers (e.g., perhaps ones not following the king).</p> <p>This is not the only time a heart is like wax and melted in Scripture (cf. Deut1:28; Josh2:8,11,24; 5:1; 7:5). It happens to those opposing God, but it can also happen to God’s people when we allow circumstances to divert our attention from Him.</p> <p>The “bulls of Bashan” bit is intriguing... Bashan was a fertile region east of the Jordan River which was ideal for raising livestock. Amos berated God’s own people for oppressing the poor and needy (cf. Amos4:1 – women in context, though they could not have done it without the help of their husbands) while calling them “cows of Bashan”. Amos repeatedly rebukes God’s people for oppressing the poor and needy for profit (Amos2:6-7; 5:11-12; 8:4-6). It is sobering how there are many parallels between Amos’ day and our own...</p>	<p>Respond: How can the lament to God you have written help others?</p> <p>When are the most recent times you have lost confidence due to losing sight of God?</p> <p>What strikes you about the last paragraph to the left?</p>
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Pray: Pray for Cookson Hills – a mission New Life supports. Pray Ed Asbury, Keith Krause, & Mike Haag – deacons of New Life – will continue to keep their focus on God. Ask God to remind you of His faithfulness whenever you feel abandoned.