

PSALMS

Chapter 22

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. 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. 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!” ⁹ Yet you are he who took me from the womb; you made me trust you at my mother's breasts. ¹⁰ On you was I cast from my birth, and from my mother's womb you have been my God. ¹¹ Be not far from me, for trouble is near, and there is none to help. ¹² Many bulls encompass me; strong bulls of Bashan surround me; ¹³ they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion. ¹⁴ I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; ¹⁵ my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. ¹⁶ For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet¹—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. 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! You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen! ²² I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you: ²³ You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him, and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel! ²⁴ For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard, when he cried to him. ²⁵ From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will perform before those who fear him. ²⁶ The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the LORD! May your hearts live forever! ²⁷ All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you. ²⁸ For kingship belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations. ²⁹ All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, even the one who could not keep himself alive. ³⁰ Posterity shall serve him; it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation; ³¹ they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it.

Ps 22† The anguished prayer of David as a godly sufferer victimized by the vicious and prolonged attacks of enemies whom he has not provoked and from whom the Lord has not (yet) delivered him. It has many similarities with Ps 69, but contains no calls for redress such as are found in 69:22–28. No other psalm pointed beyond itself so fully to the circumstances of Jesus at his crucifixion. Hence on the cross he took it to his lips (see Mt 27:46 and parallels), and the Gospel writers, especially Matthew and John, frequently alluded to it (as they did to Ps 69) in their accounts of Christ's passion (Mt 27:35, 39, 43; Jn 19:23–24, 28). They proclaim the passion of Jesus as the fulfillment of this cry of the righteous sufferer. The author of Hebrews placed the words of v. 22 on Jesus' lips. No psalm is quoted more frequently in the NT. (CSB)

Just: “The whole Psalm refers ... to Christ” (*ANF* 1:248). *choirmaster*. See p 993. *The Doe of the Dawn*. Possibly the name of the tune that accompanied this text. (TLSB)

Format: Vv 1–2, no answer or rest; vv 3–5, our fathers trusted You; vv 6–8, scorned and despised; vv 9–11, trust from birth; vv 12–13, surrounded by bulls; vv 14–15, strength is gone; vv 16–18, encircled by dogs; vv 19–21, prayer for rescue; vv 22–24, encouragement to praise the Lord; vv 25–26, praise in the congregation; vv 27–28, the Lord rules all nations; vv 29–31, all shall serve Him. (TLSB)

22:1 *My God* – Has ‘eli (my Strong One) (Leupold)

why ... ? Why ... ? Such language of impatience and complaint is found frequently in the prayers of the Psalter (usually “how long?” or “when?” or “why?”) It expresses the anguish of relief not (yet) granted and exhibits the boldness with which the psalmists wrestled with God on the basis of their relationship with him and their conviction concerning his righteousness. (CSB)

forsaken. Psalm expresses profound loneliness: God seems completely absent. Jesus quoted from this verse on the cross (Mt 27:46; Mk 15:34), as He paid the penalty of human sin. Tertullian: “If you shall still seek for predictions of the Lord’s cross, [this] Psalm will at length be able to satisfy you, containing as it does the whole passion of Christ” (*ANF* 3:166). Melancthon: “This ... describes His obedience at the time when God poured out His wrath upon the Son against the sins of the human race.... He willingly assumed these infirmities for us in order that He might become the sacrifice” (Chem, *LTh* 1:89). (TLSB)

The psalmist did not want to know why God had not respond – he was lamenting the fact that God appeared to be abandoning him. He wanted God to respond to his cry. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

so far from saving. God is omnipresent, but suffering makes relief seem impossibly distant. (TLSB)

The point is that there is no help in sight, and the prayer has taken the form of a desperate cry of great distress; see Psalm 32:3 and Job 3:24. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

No one can read this first verse without at once thinking of Jesus Christ on the cross and the use he made of this outcry. (Leupold)

22:2 *my God* – Has the common designation of God ‘elohay (the One to be feared by me). (Leupold)

Day...night – He cries to the Lord continually, but the Lord does not answer his constant pleas. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

22:3–5 Recollection of what the Lord has been for Israel. (CSB)

22:3 *holy.* Despite the questions and concerns raised in vv 1–2, the speaker knows that God is holy and above reproach. He is not the source of these problems. (TLSB)

The term “holy” means set apart, unique, distinct. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

enthroned. God’s heavenly throne (see v. 7) has its counterpart on earth in his temple at Jerusalem, from which center he rules the world. (CSB)

In the tabernacle, God was enthroned over the Ark of the Covenant, flanked by cherubim. The praises of His people testify to His identity. (TLSB)

The praises are so numerous that God is said to sit enthroned on them. God was obviously answering prayers. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

praise of Israel. The one Israel praises for his saving acts in her behalf (see 148:14; Dt 10:21; Jer 17:14). (CSB)

Time after time God had delivered his people when they called to him in distress. God's ability to help is beyond question. (PBC)

22:4 *fathers trusted* – One would have expected that on this platform faith would find a secure footing and fearlessly face the future. (Leupold)

You delivered them. God delivered Israel from oppression, particularly in the exodus. David asks God to deliver him also. (TLSB)

The psalmist was familiar with the glorious acts of God in Egypt, the wilderness, and the periods of the conquest, the judges, and the sanctuary as expressions of gratitude. (The Expositor's Bible Commentary – Psalms)

22:5 *not put to shame* – The figure was intended to convey the opposite. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

22:6-8 In this second cycle the psalmist laments his suffering at the taunting of his enemies. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

Contrast with vv 3–5. (TLSB)

22:6 *a worm and not a man.* The lowest, most helpless creature, held in contempt. The Messiah was despised by many who saw Him (Is 53). (TLSB)

A reference to utter helplessness and frailty. (Leupold)

In the eyes of his enemies he is worthless because no one cares if he lives or dies. He is not regarded as a valuable human by his enemies; they consider him to be a worthless pest. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

Scorned by mankind – A reproach is a cutting taunt, an insult or ridicule intended to hurt or destroy people – or their faith. The word can be illustrated with Esau who “despised” his birthright (Gen. 25:34). (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

22:7 *hurl insults, shaking their heads.* The most frequent weapon used against the psalmists is the tongue (for a striking example. The psalmists experienced that the tongue is as deadly as the sword (see 57:4; 64:3–4). Perhaps appeals to God against those who maliciously wield the tongue are frequent in the Psalms because only in God's courtroom can a person experience redress for such attacks.). (CSB)

They were making all kinds of gestures and facial expressions as they taunted his faith. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

mock. Vividly fulfilled at Jesus' crucifixion (Lk 23:35–37).

They laughed him to scorn, or mocked him; and they shot out the lip and shook their heads. The other gestures are insulting gestures of astonishment and mockery. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

make mouths. Others look at him with their mouths hanging open in disgust or mockery. (TLSB)

It is the universality of the mockery that is especially highlighted as was actually the case in the sufferings on Golgotha: all men present seemed to share in the scoffing that began with the high priests. (Leupold)

22:8 The psalmists frequently quote their wicked oppressors in order to portray how they mock God and his servants. (CSB)

he delights in Him! The sufferer trusts God. (TLSB)

This passage is included in Matthew 27:43. What was happening there is that Jesus' enemies were taunting him at the cross. They knew that he had claimed to be the Messiah, and they knew that Psalm 22 was in their tradition a messianic psalm about the suffering Messiah. And so they simply used a line from the psalm to mock him on the cross – not realizing that at that very moment they were fulfilling the psalm. It is an amazing case of spiritual blindness. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

22:9–10 Recollection of what the Lord has been for him. (CSB)

Jesus knows that the taunts of the enemy cannot be true. From the beginning of Jesus' life the Father had declared his love for him. Angels announced his future glory to Mary and Joseph even before he was born. On the day he was born angels announced the peace he would bring. The Father himself had declared his pleasure in him at his baptism and transfiguration. (PBC)

The development of the introduction follows these ideas: God seems to have abandoned him (vv. 1-2), but God has a history of not abandoning his people (vv.3-5); others were taunting his faith (vv. 6-8), but his faith has gotten him through life so far and so he would not abandon it now (vv. 9-10). (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

Faith and hope begin to reassert themselves. (Leupold)

22:9 *took me.* Safely brought me through childbirth. (TLSB)

trust You. From infancy, the speaker has had God's gift of faith. As a baby is loved and fed by its mother and trusts her, so God's child continually receives His blessings and responds in faith. Cf 8:2. (TLSB)

22:10 *cast from my birth ... my God.* Throughout his life, David was utterly reliant on God. Chemnitz: "The making by God applies not only to the raw material, the dust of the ground but also to the procreation of men of all time" (*LTh* 1:169). (TLSB)

From the time he was at his mother's breast he was brought up to trust the Lord: "making me trust" (s.v. Ps. 4:5) means that from the very start of his life he was taught to trust the Lord and was in positions where he had to trust the Lord. Since God made him trust throughout life, this

event was another opportunity to trust in him. Therefore, he would not give in to the taunts of the wicked. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

22:11–18 The psalmist’s deep distress. In vv. 12–13, 16–18 he uses four figures to portray the attacks of his enemies; in vv. 14–15 he describes his inner sense of powerlessness under their fierce attacks. (CSB)

These pictures and others vividly portray the suffering which led him to cry “I thirst.” (PBC)

22:11 THERE IS NO ONE TO HELP ME – But somehow assurance does not come to the troubled heart with this prayer. Again the poor sufferer relapses into distress at the thought of those who are against him. (Leupold)

22:12–13, 16 *bulls ... lions ... Dogs*. Metaphors for the enemies (see note on 7:2 – As a young shepherd, David had been attacked by lions (see 1Sa 17:34–35). But it is also a convention in the Psalms to liken the attack of enemies to that of ferocious animals, especially the lion.). (CSB)

22:12 *surround me* – Figuratively, Christ’s enemies continually hovered around him, shutting off every avenue of escape. (Leupold)

The sufferer feels alone even though surrounded by others. He compares the people to bulls, ready to gore or crush their victim. (TLSB)

Bashan. Noted for its good pasturage, and hence for the size and vigor of its animals.. (CSB)

Grazing area east of the Sea of Chinnereth, famous for producing large bulls. (TLSB)

22:14 *I am poured out* – A symbol of the feeling of utter helplessness and weakness that overwhelms this poor individual. (Leupold)

The exhausted sufferer can no more hold himself up than water can hold a specific shape. (TLSB)

bones ... heart. Here “heart” is used in combination with “bones” (v. 3) to refer to the whole man (body and spirit). (CSB)

22:15 *tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth* – When men are in great physical suffering the dryness of the tongue as it cleaves to a man’s jaws seems to be one of the chief elements of discomfort. (Leupold)

dust of death. He is nearly dead and ready to be buried. Humanity, created of dust, will return to dust at death (Gn 3:19). (TLSB)

22:16 *dogs* – Dogs come under the head of scurrilous creatures, especially when one thinks of the packs of them that run through the streets of Oriental cities as scavengers.

The oppressors, earlier compared to bulls (v 12), are likened to a pack of wild dogs, attacking a helpless victim. (TLSB)

pierced my hands and my feet. As dogs bite the limbs of their victim, so evildoers have wounded the sufferer. These verses find their highest fulfillment in Jesus’ crucifixion. (TLSB)

22:17 *I can count all my bones.* Perhaps better, “I must display all my bones.” The figure may be of one attacked by highway robbers or enemy soldiers, who strip him of his garments. (CSB)

The speaker, deprived of food, is in a pitiful, emaciated state. On the cross, Jesus’ body was stretched out, making His bones easy to discern. (TLSB)

22:18 By parting them and casting lots over them they emphasized the thought that this man was completely done for. (Leupold)

They randomly chose someone to receive Jesus’ clothing. John cites this verse as a fulfilled prophecy when the soldiers cast lots for Jesus’ clothing (Jn 19:24). (TLSB)

22:19-21 The focus turns from the oppressors to God, his only hope. Just: “The remainder of the Psalm makes it manifest that He knew His Father would grant to Him all things which He asked, and would raise Him from the dead” (ANF 1:252). (TLSB)

22:19 *be not far off* – Nearness of God is what he wants to be assured of. (Leupold)

help – God Himself. (TLSB)

22:20–21 The psalmist’s prayer recalls in reverse order the four figures by which he portrayed his attackers in vv. 12–13, 16–18: “sword,” “dogs,” “lions,” “wild oxen.” Here “sword” may evoke the scene described in vv. 16b–18, and thus many interpret it as an attack by robbers or enemy soldiers, though “sword” is often used figuratively of any violent death. (CSB)

22:21 *save me.* The NIV text note gives the alternative translation “you have heard me,” which would mean that the psalmist experiences the assurance of having been heard. The sense would be: You have heard my petition and will answer me by delivering me from death at the hands of my enemies. (CSB)

wild oxen. Aurochs, wild ancestors of domestic cattle; or possibly oryxes, large straight-horned antelopes. (CSB)

Again, his enemies are compared to wild beasts. Here they are oxen, ready to gore their victim. (TLSB)

22:22–31 Vows to praise the Lord when the Lord’s sure deliverance comes. The vows proper appear in vv. 22, 25. Verses 23–24 anticipate the calls to praise that will accompany the psalmist’s praise. Verses 26–31 describe the expanding company of those who will take up the praise—a worldwide company of persons from every station in life and continuing through the generations. No psalm or prophecy contains a grander vision of the scope of the throng of worshipers who will join in the praise of God’s saving acts. (CSB)

22:22 *my brothers* – God’s deliverance moves believers to worship. Heb 2:12–13 applies this verse to Jesus and identifies us as these brothers. (TLSB)

22:23 *fear the LORD.* Those who honor God and order their lives in accordance with his will. (CSB)

all you descendants – Three parallel phrases declare that all of God’s people should praise Him. (TLSB)

22:24 *afflicted* – God notices and responds to all human needs (cf v 26). This applies to Christ, who was afflicted by God (Is 53:4). (TLSB)

22:25 *assembly*. The worshiping assembly at God’s sanctuary. (CSB).

God’s people gathered for worship at the tabernacle. God’s deliverance is cause for worship. (TLSB)

VOWS – Cf v 22. He repeats his promise, confident in the Lord’s deliverance. (TLSB)

22:26 *the afflicted* – A proverb. God delivers His people, and they should respond in worship. (TLSB)

will eat and be satisfied. As they share in the ceremonial festival of praise (see Lev 7:11–27). (CSB)

Response to God’s blessings could include a peace offering. Cf Lv 3; 7:15. (TLSB)

22:27 *All the ends of the earth*. They too will be told of God’s saving acts. The good news that the God of Israel hears the prayers of his people and saves them will move them to turn from their idols to the true God. (CSB)

Christ’s Great Commission foreshadowed (Mt 28:18–20). (TLSB)

Will bow down – Not every person will come to faith, but the Gospel will spread to all nations. (TLSB)

22:28 The rule of the God of Israel is universal, and the nations will come to recognize that fact through what he does in behalf of his people (see Ps 47; Ge 12:2–3; see also Dt 32:21; Ro 10:19; 11:13–14). (CSB)

22:29 *All the rich ... all who go down*. The most prosperous and those on the brink of death, and all those whose life situation falls in between these two extremes. (CSB)

People from all nations will join in the worship depicted in v 26. (TLSB)

dust. Of the netherworld, as in Mesopotamian descriptions of it. (CSB)

All mortals, anyone subject to death. (TLSB)

22:31 *righteousness*. Very often the “righteousness” of God in the Psalms (and frequently elsewhere in the OT) refers to the faithfulness with which he acts. This faithfulness is in full accordance with his commitments (both expressed and implied) to his people and with his status as the divine King—to whom the powerless may look for protection, the oppressed for redress and the needy for help. (CSB)

Jesus’ kingdom will be spread throughout the earth and through every generation till the end of time. Since he is the Savior of all people, both rich and the poor will receive the blessings of his

kingdom if they turn to him in faith. All who believe in him will be fed at the feast of eternal life. Although his enemies thought that Jesus was abandoned by God, in the end they will see the glory of his kingdom, but they will never enter it. (PBC)

it ... it. God's great deliverance will not be forgotten. He has brought deliverance in countless ways, but most wonderfully in Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. (TLSB)

Ps 22 Facing great opposition, the psalmist initially feels that God has forsaken him and is ignoring his prayers. After remembering God's faithfulness and deliverance, he believes that God will deliver him and commits himself to telling that message to others. We, too, may feel alone and forsaken by God. Truly we deserve to be forsaken by Him because of our sinfulness. But, as this psalm foretells, God Himself came to be our Redeemer. While many human beings have shared these feelings, this psalm finds its greatest fulfillment in Jesus Christ, who spoke it from the cross (Mt 27:46). Christ truly was forsaken by His Father and died alone so that we could be reconciled to our God. We are never alone because our crucified, resurrected Savior is with us. • Loving Savior, Your death and resurrection have made us Your people. Lead us to proclaim Your constant care. Amen. (TLSB)