

## A Plea for Deliverance

Titus looked from the clock to the motionless body of his roommate. It was 6:45 a.m., and Curtis hadn't budged. Breakfast was from 7:00–8:30 a.m. in the dining hall.

No nurse's aide had come to their room yet this morning. Titus ranked this group from fair to average. In the world of nursing home healthcare workers, turnover was high, and Titus was praying for a better batch eventually.

Titus also ranked the nursing home, where he had been for the past five months, from fair to average. With family obligations, money limitations, and the deaths of his only child, Simone, and Claudine, his sister, Titus had ended up at the Westgate Rehabilitation and Nursing Care Facility. He didn't like it.

Titus had virtually no visitors. The nursing home minister, who held Bible study for the residents once a week, sometimes visited him. But his pastor and members of his church had yet to come. Titus had been a faithful member, youth ministry worker, devoted father, and friend. And this was his reward?

"Lord, is this what You have for me? Will You not provide a way for me to leave here? Or will You not bring good people around me? It just all seems so bleak." Titus half prayed and half cried. "I know You didn't throw me away. But I do feel that way sometimes. Please, God, do something."

**1.** *Why is it natural for Christians to experience periods in their lives when their walk with the Lord feels tiresome and burdensome?*

**2.** *Briefly describe the circumstances of a time when you felt most distant from God.*

**3.** *How do you recover your spiritual vitality when your soul seems far away from the Lord?*

## A Cry to the God Who Saves

*Psalm 22:1–5 KJV*

1 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

2 O my God, I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.

3 But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

4 Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.

5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.

*Psalm 22:1–5 NIV*

<sup>1</sup>My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me,  
so far from my cries of anguish?

<sup>2</sup>My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,  
by night, but I find no rest.

<sup>3</sup>Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One;  
you are the one Israel praises.

<sup>4</sup>In you our ancestors put their trust;  
they trusted and you delivered them.

<sup>5</sup>To you they cried out and were saved;  
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

David wrote Psalm 22 during a time in his life of crisis and persecution. He needed God's help and intervention, and he called on God to act on his behalf. The early church saw in this psalm not only a reference to David's experience but also a prophetic summary of what would happen to Jesus, the ultimate king. No known episode in David's life can account, in a literal sense, for many of the expressions in this psalm. Yet those expressions fit the suffering of David's descendant, Jesus, in a precise way. It is no wonder that this "psalm of the cross" is quoted in the New Testament more than any other psalm.

Even as he began his psalm, David held none of his pain back: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish?" (v. 1). The God who had anointed David His future king four years earlier (1 Sam. 16:1–13) now seemed

nowhere to be found. In his exhaustion and confusion after years of running from the current king, Saul, David lamented the distance he felt from his God and struggled to find a way to experience His presence once more. And yet, he felt his cries were falling on deaf ears: “I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest” (v. 2). Both peace and sleep eluded David as he waited for God to respond.

Then, David “checked himself.” He recalled that the God he cried out to was indeed there, and David recognized Him for who He was, so David declared, “Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the one Israel praises” (Ps. 22:3). No matter what David’s current personal condition was, God remained on His throne. He is holy and blameless; He remained worthy of all praise. This knowledge enabled David to push through his own personal anguish and focus instead on the almighty God. David had cried out to God, but would not be so presumptuous as to accuse Him of wrongdoing. Instead, he would worship Him—and continue to wait for deliverance.

David then recalled God’s previous blessings to His people Israel: “In you our ancestors put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them” (v. 4). The God who had delivered His people after 40 years in the wilderness during the time of Moses (Deut. 2:7) could certainly deliver David from his own current “wilderness experience,” as Saul and his men had literally chased him through the desert for years. So David could say, “To you [the Israelites] cried out and were saved; in you they trusted and were not put to shame” (v. 5).

**4.** *What was David feeling as he began Psalm 22?*

**5.** *How, and why, did David’s perspective change in verse 3?*

**6.** *What did David recall (vv. 4–5)? How did this help him?*

## God Our Only Help

*Psalm 22:6–11 KJV*

6 But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.

7 All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,

8 He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.

9 But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.

10 I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly.

11 Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.

*Psalm 22:6–11 NIV*

<sup>6</sup>But I am a worm and not a man,  
scorned by everyone,  
despised by the people.

<sup>7</sup>All who see me mock me;  
they hurl insults, shaking  
their heads.

<sup>8</sup>"He trusts in the LORD," they  
say,

"let the LORD rescue him.  
Let him deliver him,  
since he delights in him."

<sup>9</sup>Yet you brought me out of the  
womb;  
you made me trust in you,  
even at my mother's breast.

<sup>10</sup>From birth I was cast on you;  
from my mother's womb you  
have been my God.

<sup>11</sup>Do not be far from me,  
for trouble is near  
and there is no one to help.

David next spoke of his own condition, before both God and men: "I am a worm and not a man, scorned by everyone, despised by the people" (v. 6). Only the all-powerful God, whom David was as nothing ("a worm") compared to, could see his plight and restore him. Though this declaration has been misapplied by believers throughout the years, it was still an accurate reflection of David's standing. David also captured the sneers of those who despised him in verses 7–8: "All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads. He trusts in the LORD . . . let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him." Such insults have always

followed those who follow God—and would be echoed as Jesus hung on the cross (Matt. 27:43).

David again turned from his own pain and toward the God who could deliver him. His words in verses 9–10 echoed those of Psalm 139:13–16: God had known David from the womb; He had shaped and formed David; he was “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps. 139:14). And since that time, “you made me trust in you, even at my mother’s breast . . . from my mother’s womb you have been my God” (Ps. 22:9–10). David owed his very life to God, from birth to the present. God had also called him to become king; and so, despite the ongoing pursuit from the current king, David prayed that God would continue to preserve his life. David had honored God, and now prayed that God would restore his honor.

Despite the distance he felt from God in his current distress, David continued to place his hope in and petition God for deliverance: “Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help” (v. 11). “Trouble” had dogged David’s steps for four years now. If God would not help David, no one else would, or could. Thus, David chose to place his trust in the God who could rescue him—and had, even up to this point.



*Gustave Dore's 19th-century engraving of the crucifixion. David's description in Psalm 22 fits remarkably with what happened to Jesus.*

*Public Domain*

**7. How did David describe his current condition and his circumstances?**

**8. How did David's perspective change yet again, in verses 9–10?**

**9. What did David ask of God?**

## Dark Night of the Soul

Juan de Yepes y Alvarez (1542–1591), better known as John of the Cross, wrote the classic, *Dark Night of the Soul*, which relates how believers in Christ still must experience times when their souls feel as though the Lord has woe-fully abandoned them. How God delivers them from such spiritual turmoil has comforted and inspired countless Christians from the sixteenth century to today.

It should encourage us to know that even the greatest saints have endured these dark nights of the soul. The apostles each had to confront their own lack of faith when Jesus was arrested and crucified. Furthermore, Paul, who became a devoted follower of the Lord, had to face moments when his weaknesses seemed to separate him from Christ (2 Cor. 12:7–10).

The most startling example of feeling abandoned by God was when Jesus cried out from the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46). Even God’s Son, who had never sinned, felt far away from His Father as dark clouds covered the sky above Him. And yet, at the moment of His death, Jesus surrendered His soul into God’s embrace.

How can we not do what Jesus did—cry out to God and offer our souls to Him in our darkest moments? For those of us who are faithful, our story does not end with our loud lament and our passionate outcry. The Lord promises a fulfillment of our hope in that heavenly place where the Lord “will wipe every tear from [our] eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain” (Rev. 21:4)

**10.** *How would you describe your “dark night of the soul”?*

**11.** *What did those periods in your life teach you about God?*

**12.** *What insights from such experiences would you share with other believers?*

## A Prayer Letter

When David wrote Psalm 22, he was in deep anguish. Later, Jesus echoed his words while He was dying on the cross. Both cried out to God, both felt abandoned by God—and both were raised out of their distress. Their experiences tell us that even though we might feel alone in our affliction, we really aren't. Although we don't see Him, or we might think He's not listening to our prayers, He really is with us and will respond to our pleas.

► *Take a few minutes to write a prayer letter to Christ Jesus, which may be for yourself or a loved one. Relate how much you need His sovereign and distinctive aid although you feel He is not listening to your cry for help. Nevertheless, you will trust in Him because you still have faith in His goodness and mercy.*

### KEY VERSE

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

—Psalm 22:1 KJV

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish?

—Psalm 22:1 NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

#### Week of October 14 through October 20

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

- Mon.** Ephesians 1:3–14—Redemption through Christ's Blood.
- Tue.** 1 Peter 1:3–12—Praise God for New Birth.
- Wed.** Daniel 6:10–17—May Your God Deliver You.
- Thu.** Daniel 6:18–28—God Shut the Lions' Mouths.
- Fri.** Judges 5:1–5, 12–22—Deborah's Song of Deliverance.
- Sat.** Luke 17:11–18—Praising God with a Loud Voice.
- Sun.** Isaiah 25:1–10a—God's Victory Feast.