

14 The Psalm That Starts With Despair and Ends With Victory

April 5, 2026 (Easter Sunday)

He is risen.

After the desolation of Friday and Saturday, the followers finally saw the light - Jesus had overcome the darkness of death, and many were witnessing Him alive.

Today we celebrate the empty tomb. The resurrection. The victory over death.

But before we get to the joy of Sunday, I want to take you back to Friday.

To the cross.

To the moment Jesus cried out:

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Those words aren't original to Jesus.

They're from **Psalm 22**.

A song written by King David 1,000 years before the crucifixion.

A song that starts with despair.

And ends with victory.

A song that Jesus quoted on the cross - not just to express His pain, but to point every witness to a Psalm they knew by heart.

A Psalm that begins with abandonment and ends with triumph.

And maybe - just maybe - it's your song too.

When God Feels Absent

Psalm 22 opens with a cry of anguish:

"My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? Why are you so far away when I groan for help? Every day I call to you, my God, but you do not answer. Every night I lift my voice, but I find no relief." (Psalm 22:1-2, NLT)

David is desperate.

Abandoned.

Calling out day and night - and hearing nothing.

Sound familiar?

Do you feel God has forsaken you?

Maybe you've been praying for years and God feels a million miles away.

Maybe you've cried out for healing, for breakthrough, for deliverance - and nothing has changed.

Maybe you've read all the right books, sung all the right songs, done all the right things - and still, you feel utterly alone.

If that's you, you're in good company.

David felt it.

Jesus felt it.

And God didn't reject either of them for feeling it.

The Psalm doesn't start with faith.

It starts with honest despair.

And that's okay.

God can handle your questions.

He can handle your pain.

He can handle your "Why have you forsaken me?"

Because He knows something you don't yet:

The Psalm doesn't end there.

When People Mock You

The Psalm continues:

"Everyone who sees me mocks me. They sneer and shake their heads, saying, 'Is this the one who relies on the Lord? Then let the Lord save him! If the Lord loves him so much, let the Lord rescue him!'" (Psalm 22:7-8, NLT)

David is being ridiculed.

Humiliated.

People are using his faith against him.

"You trust God? Then where is He? If He loves you so much, why aren't you being rescued?"

And Jesus?

Matthew 27:39-43 records the exact same mockery at the cross:

"Those who passed by hurled insults at him... 'He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him.'"

Are you mocked, bullied, insulted?

Maybe not physically.

But maybe in subtler ways.

Maybe people roll their eyes when you mention faith.

Maybe they dismiss your struggles as weakness.

Maybe they've labeled you - "too sensitive," "too broken," "too much."

Maybe the mockery comes from inside your own head.

The voice that says you're not enough.

Never were.

Never will be.

That voice is a liar.

And the Psalm isn't done yet.

When You've Given Everything

The Psalm gets more desperate:

"My life is poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax, melting within me. My strength has dried up like sunbaked clay. My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth. You have laid me in the dust and left me for dead." (Psalm 22:14-15, NLT)

David is empty.

Exhausted.

Poured out with nothing left to give.

Are you so desperate that you feel like you've given everything with little or nothing in return?

Maybe you've poured yourself into a marriage or relationship that's falling apart.

Maybe you've desperately tried to find relationship but have been unable to - and you feel so alone.

Maybe you've given everything to a job that doesn't appreciate you.

Maybe you've served, sacrificed, tried, prayed - and you're bone-dry.

You feel like sunbaked clay.

Brittle. Cracked. Ready to crumble.

And God feels distant.

Like He's laid you in the dust and left you for dead.

I know that feeling.

But here's what I need you to hold onto:

The Psalm still isn't over.

When Enemies Surround You

David continues:

"My enemies surround me like a pack of dogs; an evil gang closes in on me. They have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. My enemies stare at me and gloat. They divide my garments among themselves and throw dice for my clothing."

(Psalm 22:16-18, NLT)

Read that again.

"They have pierced my hands and my feet."

David wrote this long before crucifixion was even invented.

And Jesus - on the cross - fulfilled it exactly.

The Roman soldiers did divide His garments and cast lots for His clothing (John 19:23-24).

Every detail.

Prophesied.

Fulfilled.

Do your enemies surround you?

Maybe they're real people.

Maybe it's a boss who undermines you. A family member who tears you down. A friend who betrayed you.

Or maybe your enemy is closer than that.

Maybe you are your own worst enemy.

This is what the castle does.

When we build walls to protect ourselves from pain, we don't just keep others out.

We trap ourselves in.

The moat widens between us and God.

The tower isolates us from community.

The dungeon locks us in shame.

The walls grow higher until we can't see the sun anymore.

And we become our own enemy.

The voice in your head that says you're worthless?

That's not God.

The thoughts that replay every failure, every mistake, every reason you don't deserve love?

That's not God either.

The castle you built to survive has become the prison keeping you from living.

But here's the beautiful thing:

The Psalm doesn't end in the dungeon.

Sorrow and Love Flow Mingled Down

There's a hymn written by Isaac Watts in 1707 called "*When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.*"

The third verse says this:

*See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?*

Sorrow and love flow mingled down.

That's the cross.

That's Psalm 22.

That's Good Friday.

Jesus felt the sorrow - the abandonment, the mockery, the exhaustion, the enemies closing in.

But love was flowing down at the same time.

He could have come down from that cross.

He could have called legions of angels to rescue Him.

He didn't even need the angels. He's the Creator of the universe - the one the Apostle Paul says in Colossians 1:16-17, "**all things were created through him and for him... in him all things hold together.**" He could have spoken one word and released the atomic forces binding all matter. The universe would have been obliterated in a moment.

But He didn't.

Because **love kept Him there.**

Love for you.

Love for me.

Love for every person who's ever felt forsaken, mocked, poured out, surrounded.

Sorrow and love met at the cross.

And that's where the Psalm turns.

The Victory That Was Coming All Along

Suddenly, Psalm 22 shifts:

"I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters. I will praise you among your assembled people. Praise the Lord, all you who fear him! Honor him, all you descendants of Jacob! Show him reverence, all you descendants of Israel! For he has not ignored or belittled the suffering of the needy. He has not turned his back on them, but has listened to their cries for help." (Psalm 22:22-24, NLT)

Wait.

What happened?

God didn't abandon him after all.

God **heard.**

God **listened.**

God **didn't turn His back.**

David thought he was alone.

But he wasn't.

Jesus cried "Why have you forsaken me?"

But three days later, the tomb was empty.

God was there the whole time.

The Psalm continues:

"The poor will eat and be satisfied. All who seek the Lord will praise him. Their hearts will rejoice with everlasting joy. The whole earth will acknowledge the Lord and return to him. All the families of the nations will bow down before him. For royal power belongs to the Lord. He rules all the nations." (Psalm 22:26-28, NLT)

This isn't just personal deliverance.

This is global victory.

The whole earth.

All nations.

Future generations.

And listen to how it ends:

"Our children will also serve him. Future generations will hear about the wonders of the Lord. His righteous acts will be told to those not yet born. They will hear about everything he has done." (Psalm 22:30-31, NLT)

The story doesn't end with you.

It echoes into eternity.

Your children.

Your children's children.

Generations not yet born.

They will hear what the Lord has done.

When You Feel Forsaken, You Build Walls

Here's what happens when we don't know the end of the Psalm:

When we feel forsaken - when God seems absent and enemies surround us - we build castles.

We raise the drawbridge.

We widen the moat.

We retreat to the tower.

We lock ourselves in the dungeon.

We build walls so high that no one can hurt us again.

But those same walls keep us from being rescued.

God hasn't abandoned you.

But the walls you built to survive might be keeping you from seeing Him.

The castle that was supposed to protect you has become your prison.

And you've become your own worst enemy.

But here's the hope:

The same God who didn't abandon David.

The same God who didn't leave Jesus in the tomb.

That God is with you.

Even when you can't feel Him.

Even when the heavens are silent.

Even when enemies surround you and your strength is gone.

He is there.

And just like Psalm 22, your story doesn't end in despair.

He Is Risen

Today is Easter Sunday.

The tomb is empty.

Death is defeated.

Sunday came.

And Psalm 22 - the Psalm Jesus quoted on the cross - proves it was always going to end this way.

David started with "Why have you forsaken me?"

He ended with "Future generations will hear about everything he has done."

From abandonment to victory.

From despair to hope.

From death to resurrection.

That's your story too.

Maybe you're in verses 1-18 right now.

Feeling forsaken. Mocked. Poured out. Surrounded.

But that's not where your story ends.

Verses 22-31 are coming.

God hears your cry.

He hasn't turned His back.

He's listening.

And the victory that was always coming?

It came 2,000 years ago when Jesus walked out of the tomb.

And it's coming for you too.

Maybe not today.

Maybe not this year.

But it's coming.

Because the God who wrote the end of Psalm 22 is the same God writing the end of your story.

Some stories have tragic endings on earth - suicide, accidents, deaths that shatter us and make no sense.

But **earth isn't the end.**

The final chapter is resurrection.

Sunday came for Jesus.

And it's coming for everyone who belongs to Him.

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

Isaac Watts ends his hymn this way:

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*

Love so amazing.

So divine.

That's what kept Jesus on the cross when He could have come down.

That's what raised Him from the tomb when death tried to hold Him.

And that's what's holding you right now.

Even when you can't feel it.

Even when you can't see it.

Love so amazing, so divine.

It demands your soul, your life, your all.

Not because God is a tyrant.

But because anything less than total surrender leaves you trapped in the castle.

He wants all of you.

Not so He can control you.

But so He can free you.

It is finished

You don't have to wait for Sunday.

Sunday is here.

On Friday, Jesus declared "**It is finished.**"

Not "I am finished" - defeated, giving up.

But "**It is finished**" - the work is complete.

Tetelestai in Greek - the same word stamped on paid receipts in the ancient world: "**PAID IN FULL.**"

The price for all the sin of the world had been paid. Every sin - past, present, future. Yours. Mine. Humanity's.

The debt was satisfied in full.

No more sacrifice needed.

No more blood required.

Done.

And three days later, the empty tomb proved God accepted the payment.

The tomb is empty.

The victory is won.

And Psalm 22 - the Psalm that starts with despair - ends with this:

"Future generations will hear about everything he has done."

You're part of that story.

Your children.

Your children's children.

Generations not yet born.

They will hear what the Lord has done.

In David's life.

In Jesus' life.

And in yours.

So if you're in the middle of Psalm 22 right now - feeling forsaken, mocked, poured out, surrounded - hold on.

The Psalm doesn't end there.

Neither does your story.

He is risen.

He is risen indeed.

And because He rose, you will too.

If you're struggling:

- Christian Faith-Based Resources: <https://mentalhealthhotline.org/christian-faith-resources/> or call 1-866-903-3787 (24/7)
- Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 988 (call or text)

You matter. Your life matters. And Psalm 22 doesn't end with verse 18. Keep reading. Please stay.

William James Meyer is the author of "Do You Live in a Castle? Breaking Free from the Walls That Hold You Hostage." He writes from a Christian perspective as someone who's learning that even when God feels absent, He's writing the end of the story.

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