

When he cried he heard

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Date: 01 January 2000

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[0 : 00] Let us turn now to consider words you will find in the chapter we read together in the book of Psalms. Psalm 22, and we might read at verse 23.

Ye that fear the Lord, praise him. All ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him and fear him. All ye the seed of Israel, for he hath despised not, nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted.

Neither hath he hid his face from him, but when he cried unto him, he heard. Psalm that we have here, without any doubt at all, found its origin.

In the experience of David himself, it arose out of his own experience.

We are not told when, but it was at a time when he was greatly discouraged. And when he was aware of the greatest distress of soul imaginable, God's face being hid from him.

[1 : 28] And out of that experience, this Psalm was born. But the channel of David's own experience, and a narrow channel it was, deepened and broadened into a channel so deep that as the psalm unfolds, you can see very clearly, without even the benefit of New Testament references to it, you can see very clearly that the experiences of this psalm belong to a creator than David.

They belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. And that is why we speak of this psalm as being messianic.

The psalmist in the spirit of prophecy speaks of a greater than himself. It is very true that this psalmist, like the other psalmists, recorded many experiences and encounters that they themselves had with sorrows and with sufferings, with distress and discouragement.

And it was in the depth of these experiences that they came into contact with the deeper sufferings of the Messiah who was to come.

As someone put it, they were caught up in the vortex of his unparalleled sorrow. And thus what began as a passionate complaint, expressive of their own love, ended in a glorious outburst of wonder at the greater sorrows and sufferings of the coming Messiah.

[3 : 46] Now when you turn to a psalm such as this which speaks of the sufferings of Christ, you discover that they speak of the sufferings of our Lord in a most intimate and in a most revealing way.

They give to us great insights into the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ. They become wonderful pictures of the inner sufferings of our Lord.

And that is why someone said of the messianic psalms and of the sufferings of Christ therein portrayed, he said that they are like x-ray plates.

They tell us the inner story of the sufferings and the anguish of Christ. And these divine plates show us what is hidden from the natural eye.

Perhaps there is no prophetic utterance concerning the sufferings of Christ apart from Isaiah 53.

[5 : 01] There is no prophetic utterance which is so clear and so instructive as this one.

Someone writing about this psalm said that it was as though the writer of it had been sitting at the foot of the cross an eyewitness of the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And you know that the gospels, Matthew and John in particular, refer on more than one occasion to this particular psalm.

As does of course the writer to the Hebrews in chapter 2 of that epistle. And there is an interesting thought and connection with this psalm being messianic that I would just leave with you in the passing.

And it is this. You remember that Jesus, during the days of his ministry, instructed his own disciples from the Old Testament and showed them how the Old Testament scriptures spoke of him.

[6 : 14] And you know for example that in Luke it's beginning at Moses and the prophets. He expounded into them all the things concerning himself. And there is a reference also to what he told him about himself in the psalms.

And you cannot but wonder at the tremendous insight that the Lord himself had into a psalm such as this.

You think for example if you were one of his disciples 2,000 years ago, if you had been in his company, you think of Jesus explaining and expounding and interpreting this psalm to his own followers.

A psalm that was all about himself. And there are many, and I think with justification, who believed that our Lord quoted the whole of this psalm on the cross as he suffered unto death.

And you know that it was the practice amongst the Jews that if they wanted to meditate on a passage of scripture, what they did was this, they would utter audibly the first few words of a passage.

[7 : 37] And that, as it were, was a signal for themselves and for those who were in their company to think and to meditate upon that passage in its entirety.

And you know that when Jesus was hanging on the cross, as the darkness fell and enveloped him, it was out of that darkness.

The darkness covered that scene we know for about three hours. It was out of that darkness. At what particular period of time within the three hours, we don't know.

But it was out of that darkness that our Lord cried. The opening words of this psalm, Lama, Lama, Lama, Lama, Lama, Lama, Lama, Sabahni, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

It was out of the darkness that he cried these words audibly. And there are many who believe that the last words of this psalm could be translated, it is finished.

[8 : 44] The Lord hath done this, it is finished. And therefore, that within the short period of time, between his uttering these words on the cross in the darkness and his death, he could have repeated, or if not audibly repeated it, certainly meditated upon this psalm in its entirety himself.

And it wouldn't have taken very long to do it. It doesn't take you very long to read the psalm. And it wouldn't have taken very long for him to have thought about this psalm and the way in which it portrayed his own suffering.

And I want for a minute today to look with you at the very the thoughts that these verses before us bring before us so clearly.

First of all, this person who was afflicted. Secondly, the afflictions that he endured. Thirdly, the relief that he experienced. And finally, the advice that he offered.

First of all then, the afflicted one himself. Now those of you who know your Gaelic Bible will know that this psalm is said that this verse gives a word which is far more expressive than the word afflicted one.

- [10 : 18] It is the word, of course, truant. What we generally speak of as a person who is really the object of misery.
- a person who is really touching and hitting the depths. There are people like that in society today.
- They draw your attention to themselves and you cannot but sum them up as you see them anyway awkwardly as really a poor and a miserable individual.
- Now that's the meaning of this word the afflicted one in verse 24. He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted one.
- That's the way it should be. Now who was this person? Well you see with that Bible in your hands you've got no doubt no problem explaining who this person was.
- [11 : 25] You've got plenty of problems explaining how the person how this person could have come into this situation. There are many problems concerning that. Problems that we can never interpret.
- But regarding who he was we have no problem. This was none other than God himself. We hear a lot nowadays about many of the sects who are trying to establish a position of strength in this island.
- And two of them in particular the overwitnesses and the Mormons would deny what the Bible so emphatically emphasise about Jesus the son of God.
- And was this he was none other than God himself. He was God in our nature. Now of course if you deny that you deny the Bible. that's a simple fact of the matter.
- So with the Bible in our hands we've no problem here. This was none other than God himself. This was the claim he made to the Jews of his own day before Abraham was I am.
- [12 : 34] This person they said maketh himself equal with God and so he did. He never disclaimed that. He preached it. He claimed it. And when Paul came to write the letter to the Philippians he put it like this.
- He who says who was in this world as a servant he was in the form of God. That means that he was God. All that God was he was.
- This was none other than God. And one of the great wonders of the world is that God should come into a situation in which he was referred to as the afflicted one.
- this poor individual this miserable soul who was seen of men and handled by men and despised by men was none other than God himself.
- Of course it is extremely difficult to understand the great step that God took when he became the afflicted one.
- [13 : 45] he was God. And the Bible also tells us something else about him. The Bible tells us that this person was the son of God.
- The son of God. Now there's a difference between referring to Jesus as God and referring to him as the son of God. when we speak of him as God we speak of him in his eternity in his infinity in his majesty in his omniscience in his omnipresence in his omnipotence you see all that God was he was.

You must hold on to that. And it was he who was God who in this situation cried for help cried for deliverance cried for succor it was he who was independent of all creatures who came into a situation in which he cried as one who was dependent upon God the father and that person was also the son of God he was eternally loved of God and eternally loving God if you speak of God as the eternal father you must also speak of Christ as the eternal son because you cannot think in terms of a father without an offspring and there was no time in which the son ever came into being he was always in being now of course this is one of the great problems that confront so many people and so many young people children for example in the primary school you speak to them about

God and you try to explain that God always was and one of the great problems that they come back to you with all the time was this where did God come from who made God it is so difficult for us to think in terms of eternity to think in terms of a person who had no beginning and who will have no end and the son of God was from all eternity he never came into being he always was the the object this is one of the great teachings of the Old Testament Proverbs chapter 8 he was the object of his father's delight eternally before the world's war before anything was in being he was and he was the son of God and yet it was that person who had no beginning of being who came into this situation in which he cried to God of heaven and this is what the Bible refers to as the wonder of godliness the mystery that is beyond our understanding that the son of

God God himself could come into a situation could take to himself our nature so that in that nature he could cry to God his father for help well that was the afflicted one secondly let us look more detail at the afflictions of the afflicted one and this is what the psalm is all about now for God and for the son of God to become afflicted one thing was absolutely essential he had to take to himself a nature in which he could experience affliction he had to take to himself a nature in which he could experience these things it was impossible for him to experience them otherwise impossible there were no afflictions in the person or in the mind of

[18:17] God so this God had to take to himself a nature in which he could experience these things God in other words became man and in our nature he went through these afflictions now what were they what were the afflictions of this person well two or three things about them first of all it was affliction for him to be in this world at all he was referred to as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief some of you in this church today probably know what it is to suffer to be afflicted because of the kind of world in which you live there are things going on in this world that pain and grieve your heart and rightly so know that look at it like this if this world so affects you like that do you wonder that God the son of God who took to himself a nature he who was holy do you wonder that he who never had a bad thought he who never wants sin do you wonder that he was afflicted in this world the world in other words the world into which he came afflicted some of you may have come across one of the great statements of a theologian of past ages

Dr. Kennedy was in Dingwall who said that our Lord was in this world he said and he had eyes like his all and ears and senses and these for example these eyes and these ears that he had were avenues through which they're poured into his holy soul all the filth and all the darkness and all the evil which was in this world and there are times when you rise and you hear are avenues through which the darkness and the evil and the filth of this world pours into a mind which is full of sin and you think of all that darkness and all that evil pouring flooding into a mind which was holy and then you can understand something of his afflictions ah how ridiculous picture that some people paint of our lord in this world as though he were in this life enjoying it as though he didn't have a care in the world and as though he smiled his way through adversity oh my friend whatever else you can say about this black picture you have to say this about it it is totally unbiblical and therefore untrue untrue we bring our lord down to our level when we paint him in these colours and then he was afflicted in this world because of the hostility that this world met him with wicked men the psalm is full of it full of that kind of picture the wickedness of an evil world meeting our lord head on the world didn't want him the world didn't want him at all the world doesn't want him today the world despised him then and despise him today there is no spark of kindness in the natural heart towards our

Lord none there is only malice and wickedness he was in a hostile world in a hostile environment and that was difficult that was an affliction it's an affliction for you when you meet hostility and opposition and envy and enmity and violence how much more so for him and then thirdly there was the affliction of meeting face to face the darkness of this world I think it was the same Dr.

Kennedy referred to who has our most interesting thought in this connection can you ever think of this you know that the Bible's account of the origin of sin is an interesting one do you know where sin originated in heaven in heaven no of course don't try to ask how could that be there's no answer to that question the Bible's answer to it is it just the mystery of in in in in in in in in in in heaven and the angels fell this is the Bible's account from heaven in other words this is the point that dr Kennedy has there was a time when the devil as the fallen injured there was a time when the devil was in heaven do you know that before he was cast out and this is the point that he makes he knew the son of god at one time he served and here now is the son of god and our nature and the world and he comes face to face with the devil again you just imagine the hatred the enmity of hell that welled up in the devil's mind and heart and out directed against the law think of the malice and the venom that was poured out from the mind of

Satan against our law now this psalm this psalm is what fills us in with many details concerning that conflict the psalm tells us that when our lord was afflicted in the world that he identified himself with us in our afflictions you have that at the beginning of the psalm in the beginning of the psalm it tells us that in his afflictions he was humbled and humiliated more than any other person he was treated as less than a man who and I deal with people in the world today no matter what depth they descend to at least it is our duty and responsibility to deal with people as human beings human beings it is no mark of advancement that a person should talk down to somebody else who are we and what are we anyway but creatures of the dust and worthy in the presence of God who are you who am I that you should think yourself a cat above anybody else it is our responsibility under God to treat our fellows as our fellows and as our equals and that's only right as human beings but look at what the psalm tells about this person the afflictions of the afflicted one but as for me he says

[26 : 56] I am I am and no man I reproach of man and despise the people all that see me laugh me to scorn they shoot out the lip they shake the head saying he trust in the Lord that he will deliver him let him deliver seeing he delighted him that was the depth of his humiliation he was treated as less than a man that you trample into dust you crush that's how people to death that's how people dealt with the Lord the psalm also tells us about the publicity the publicity that this person received in his sufferings or at least how he not publicity but that he was that in his sufferings he was exposed to the public gaze he was exposed to the public gaze you know it's an awful thing to be exposed this is what we call almost speaking with reverence when you're kicking a man when he's down you expose to the public this person in his sufferings and in his affliction and this is something that people that enormous circumstances you would try to avoid those of you are here today engaged in the medical profession one of the things that you do for people out of sympathy for themselves and for the people who belong to them is that you try you try to hide from the public gaze as much as you possibly can the sufferings of people and people in their sufferings and one of the few privileges that you extend to them in this life as their life ebbs away is that you seal them off you screen them off from the public gaze and that's only that as it should be the animal itself seeks privacy in the suffering that it endures in the throes of death not alone they look at me they gave their mouths look at how the new testament puts it sitting down they watched him there he wasn't afforded that privilege that privacy and that privilege and you know there's a reason for it there was more to this and the violence and the enmity of man to the savior the son of god there was more than that to it what was in it it was this it was necessary that he should suffer publicly why well maybe that's a question you would like to turn over in your mind why was it necessary for a lord to suffer publicly well

I'll tell you because sin expresses itself publicly that is why sin of necessity breaks out it is seen it is exposed and because he bore our sins in his own body his sufferings had to be public because he was a sin bearer that's the answer but then there was something else about the sufferings of our lord the exact opposite of their openness their inwardness there was something about the sufferings of our lord that couldn't be exposed that couldn't be public and these were the sufferings that were peculiar to himself what the theologian referred to as the intensive sufferings of our lord he suffered extensively the same as the thieves who were crucified with him but he suffered intensively as no one else could

I am poured out like water he said my heart is like wax it is melted in the midst of my bowels my strength this is his inwardness my strength is dried up like a pot my tongue it cleaveth to my jaw and the inwardness was as necessary as the openness of the sufferings for this reason sin is also inward sin is also inward it is there before it manifests itself out and therefore he had to suffer intensely just as he had to suffer extensively perhaps the greatest strand and depth of the inward suffering of our

Lord was the sheer agony of his aloneness in his suffering and this is where the psalm reaches its crescendo as it explains to us the sufferings and the afflictions of the afflicted there was one thing above all other things that bruised to spirit and that troubled soul verse 15 at the end we read here thou hast brought me into the dust of death when he speaks of the violence of his sufferings in terms of dogs and bull and sword and lions and unicorns that gives the idea of his suffering but there's nothing compared to this thou hast brought me to the dust of death and thou hast hid thy face from me this was the depth of all depth of all suffering far be it for me to try to explain the depth that is in that cry itself why hast thou forsaken me just to say this whatever it means it meant this every day that our

Lord was in this world from the time he was born into it he was never without the consciousness of the father's presence with the father's faith and the father's delight in he never for a moment he was never denied that consciousness all the days of his life until on the cross and in the darkness of that cross he cried out why hast thou forsaken you whatever it was it was this it was the suspension from the consciousness of oh lord of the favour and the presence of the father with the son and it was out of that darkness it was out of that abyss that he cried why hast thou forsaken me that was the death of his people that he was dying that was him going into their situation into their position into what the old testament refers to as the far off land that's where we were cut off from the life and the fellowship and the favour of

[35 : 30] God and was into that position that our Lord went and out of which he cried why hast thou forsaken me the cry was heard from the far off land and what this verse tells us something interesting the third point and the final point is this it tells us that he was not despised by God in his sufferings it tells that he was not abhorred by God in his sufferings it tells that God heard when he cried it tells that the face of God was not hid from it these four things and I just want to deal with them in conclusion very briefly first of all he was not despised by his father in his suffering and you may ask this question how do we know that he wasn't despised by his father in his suffering for this reason it was impossible for the father to despise him is it possible naturally for a father to despise his son well

I suppose that there are situations unfortunately in life where that has been said that a father despised his son but this father couldn't despise his son why well let me try to explain have you noticed how the psalm puts it here he didn't despise him that's a negative way of stating something else what is he stating that his father delighted in him you see these these these just the other way of putting it his father delighted why do I say that well if you put it simple like this why was Jesus suffering do you know the answer to the question he was suffering because he was obedient to his father's will and the more a son obeys the father the more the father delights in him a father never despises a son who obeys him and similarly he did not abhor him of course we know that sin is abhorrent to God it is abhorrent to God sin is abhorrent to God and yet here is a person his own son bearing out sins upon himself and the father abhorred the sins that he bore but he couldn't abhor the son who bore them he loved him unto death he was called to this position by

God and in that position he sought to glorify God and as he was afflicted in the situation far from abhorring him God loved him and the other third thing is this he didn't hide his face from him but he heard him when he cried to him but then you see you may say to yourself but he did hide his face from him my God my God why hast thou forsaken me that was the hiding of his face what then does this mean he did not hide his face from him but he heard when he cried him well you remember this darkness covered the cross as our Lord suffered on but always remember this he did not die in that darkness before our

Lord died the darkness lifted from off the cross and he died with a smile of God upon his face and he who knows the saviour saying in the light that now shone after the darkness lifted thou heardst me when I cried to thee you see he cried from the darkness to the father why hast thou forsake it was a cry of faith from the heart of the sun it was made only by the darkness and the desertion and the dereliction of the cross but he persevered in crying his faith was neither shaken nor broken and was vindicated when the smile of

God was returned consciously into his mind and into his heart and into his affections and to all the faculties of his soul thou hast heard me when I cried to thee he was as it were abandoned condemned by the judge but the father heard and the smile of the father returned consciously the father never ceased to love the son on the cross nor in the darkness and the desertion of that cross it wouldn't be accurate to say that the father never loved more than he did that because it is not possible for the love of the father to increase it is a love which was it is a love which is infinite and you cannot add to that but we have to say this that the father never ceased to love the son and the son died gave himself to death in the conscious assurance of that love and of that delight he heard him when he cried and he gives you and me this advice today ye that fear the

[42 : 56] Lord praise him ye the seed of Jacob glorify him all ye the seed of Israel fear him this is the advice that Jesus gives you and me from the cross before he died you know the way that one of the great day commented from the psalm put it that when our Lord emerged from the darkness of the cross his mind moved in its accustomed channels and these were the glory of God and the good and the prosperity of his own church that's what he refers to when he speaks of the congregation the seed of Israel the seed of Jacob you that fear the Lord these are the people who are the love the called of God by his grace those for whom

Jesus died and he gives them this counsel glorify God in all that you do fear him in all your ways praise him for all his gifts and his benefits and that's advice that you and I need today and it comes to us from the lips of the Savior on the cross and it asks us if we really are in this attitude of mind and heart is this your meat and your drink today you think of this you think of the channel which our Lord's mind travelled as he died on the cross the glory of God the praises of his father think of it and ask yourself as an individual in this world today is that the channel in which your mind is operating as an individual today do you want to glorify

God do you want to ascribe praise and glory and honour to his name well my friend you take that thought with you today and you ask yourself that is really where your mind your heart your affections are being directed by the grace of God as you live in this world let us pray bless us we pray thee help us to put our trust in thyself oh do thou teach us to love thee teach us to honour thee give us grace that we might live as he lived that we might look by faith to the

Lord who lives and to the Lord who reigns we thank that he came into this world that he died our death that he took out sins upon his own body to the tree remember us this day and prepare us for our evening worship and forgive our sins for Jesus sake Amen