



This Sunday we reached the middle of Psalm 22. We came to the climax of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. We looked at the cross and then thought about those who suffer for the sake of Christ in our world today and asked ourselves how we can best pray for them, setting David's prayer as a model.

The Persecutors

However, before thinking about prayer we thought about those who are doing the persecuting (v12-18) . We saw a) their nature/character – people described like wild beasts vicious and out kill. They're beasts that work together in packs gang up against the weak and helpless prey. We saw, b) their behaviour – encircling the victims, mocking and snarling, then we saw the description of the cross, as they pierced his hands and feet and cast lots of his clothing. These verses clearly foreshadow the crucifixion.

The Persecuted

We then turned our attention to the persecuted, we looked at their physical and mental pain as David describes the process of death and wasting away. We read some passages from the NT to see the fulfilment of this at the cross. Then we took a moment to think of those who in following Jesus are willing to follow him even in to death as they suffer at the hands of those who have the nature and behaviour of wild beasts; God haters, Christians haters, those out for our blood.

The Prayer

Finally, we thought how we can pray for those who suffer. How can we pay more attention to those who, this kind of suffering is a reality every day. We looked at

David's plea in verse 11, 19-21 and suggested two ways of prayer. 1. Prayer for God to give Christians physical and mental strength to endure without giving up on Christ and trust his promises. 2. Prayer for God to bring salvation from suffering, or that God would save them through death and more so that God would save those who do the persecuting through the witness of those who suffer.

Questions to aid your study and discussion and motive your prayers.

How do verses 12-18 describe those who persecute? What do you learn of their nature and behaviour? In what ways is this behaviour evident at the cross? Do you see these attitudes and behaviour in people/countries who persecute today?

How is the suffering and death of Jesus described for us in Psalm 22 and where do we find its fulfilment at the cross? Look up these passages – Matt 27:27-31; Luke 23:35-28; John 19:23-24, 28-29.

What is the content of David's plea? Are praying for strength to endure and salvation of self and our enemies the right things to pray for? How else could we pray?

Suggestions for prayer. Spend more time praying for suffering Christians including yourselves

Should and if so how can praying for the persecuted church be higher up on our agenda/priority list?

Share any stories/reports you know of, of people who are suffering and share of how we can best pray for them.

Pray for current situations that we have heard recently (consequences of the Egyptian executions, church destroyed in Lahore, Christian pastors imprisoned etc)

If you have internet access check out these websites and encourage home group members to pray for requests on there or even sign up to receive prayer information. www.opendoorsuk.org; www.csw.org.uk; www.releaseinternational.org; www.barnabasfund.org