

**CHRISTIAN STRESS MANAGEMENT**  
**"Part III: Emergency Procedure For Sudden, Severe Stress"**  
**(Psalm 22)**

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) While working one evening around midnight in 1974 as an Assistant Chaplain at the Baylor University Medical Center, my beeper went off, telling me to call regarding a medical emergency. The operator directed me to go to the surgical floor where a seventeen year old young man had just died on the operating table of head injuries suffered by being struck with a vehicle driven by a drunk driver.

I met the mother and father of the son on the elevator and rode with them up to the surgical floor. They had just rushed in from their home upon hearing that their son was in surgery due to an accident. They knew no details. They did not know that he was gone yet. I was the one the doctors had assigned to inform the parents on the details!

When we got off the elevator, the surgical nurse met us and led us over to another elevator door and opened it to show the body of the youth on a stretcher. At the time I felt it was an incredibly thoughtless action on the part of the surgical staff, and it was by far the most traumatic event that I have ever seen any parent experience! In the midst of their expressions of great unbelief and grief on that elevator, the youth's mother asked me simply, "Chaplain, why?!"

What a time that was for me -- seeking to fill in the blanks for that mother and father on that elevator that night!

If, but **when!**

When it happens, what will we do to deal with it?

**Need: "There are times when life dishes out trials that are so severe that we cannot analyze all of the details to counter our having a painful reaction! We just go numb!! How can one survive then?!"**

- I. **Jesus gave Christians the example on facing suffering, 1 Peter 2:21.**
- II. **At Calvary, Jesus suffered His greatest stress. ADDED to His feeling the emotional, mental and physical agonies of crucifixion, the Father ALSO turned His back on Jesus as He bore our sins, producing deep spiritual pain, 1 Peter 2:24 with Matthew 27:46.**
- III. **Thus, while suffering on the cross, Jesus exemplified how we can handle the most severe of stressful experiences in life:**
  - A. At the height of his suffering, just prior to death at 3 p.m., Jesus cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46) and then "It is finished" (John 19:30); both of these utterances respectively address the start and the end of Psalm 22 !
    1. The phrase in Matthew 27:46 is taken from Psalm 22:1a .
    2. John 19:30, though not a direct quote, is nevertheless Christ's emotional commentary that what future Christian saints in Psalm 22:31b would declare to even coming generations of believers in **their** futures had **just been** fulfilled! The way of salvation was opened as Jesus died for our sins!
  - B. If we examine Psalm 22 as it pertains to Christ's experience, we understand the pathway of handling monumental stress as He did:
    1. Step One - Select a lament psalm that opens by addressing the need that matches the thought, concern or question we have in our distress. This lets the Scripture do our thinking **for** us as we cannot **think** adequately at such a numbing time!
      - a. There is no question but that Psalm 22 was recorded Scripture in the time of Christ. David is its author as verse 1 in the Hebrew says and which appears in the psalm's title subscription the English Bible. Matthew 27:35 uses Psalm 22:18 as prophecy to describe the parting of Christ's garments.
      - b. Psalm 22 precisely matches the sufferings of Christ: "verses 14-16 prophetically describe crucifixion, a means of execution not known until Roman times: the pain, the extreme thirst, asphyxiation and agony to the hands and feet" all portray this event, Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, fn. to Psalm 22:11-18.
      - c. Thus, Jesus used the Scripture that matched His crisis!
    2. Step Two - Make the psalm's solution our own!
      - a. Though Jesus opens Psalm 22 by quoting it, He concludes it not as a quotation, but as a personal paraphrase : Psalm 22:31b actually states: ". . . for he has done it" where **Jesus** takes the thought, applies it to the fact that He was then fulfilling the passage, and cries, " **It IS** finished!"
      - b. Thus, Jesus made the psalm's solution His own as follows: He asked the Father to deliver His life (Ps. 22:20-21a) which occurs in the resurrection, and trusts God to fulfill the **rest** of the psalm like He had the **first 18 verses!**

3. Step Three - Jesus then countered the stress by relishing the pure joy offered in the victorious outcome of Psalm 22!
  - a. Hebrews 12:2 informs us that Jesus endured the cross because He anticipated the joyful results of Calvary!
  - b. Psalm 22's stressful beginning shifts toward the end to focus on the "future worldwide worship of the Lord," Ibid., fn. Ps. 22.
  - c. More precisely, verse 31 anticipates that future believers will tell others yet to be born (including 1995 Nepaugers!) that God has accomplished Christ's resurrection! **This telling of that good news is the means whereby hearers are saved unto eternal life, the whole purpose of Christ's sufferings at Calvary.** 1 Cor. 15:15:1-4.
  - d. As Jesus relished the coming salvation and rule of God's eternal kingdom by means of His Cross, He shouted its victorious hope of Ps. 22:31b, cf. Mt. 27:50 & Jn. 19:30!

**Lesson Application: To handle a monumentally troublesome situation with its numbing stress, (1) receive Christ as our Savior from sin by believing in Him to qualify to follow His example of suffering, John 3:16 & 1 Peter 2:21. (2) Then, rather than trying to analyze our heart on our own which we cannot do well under the circumstances, use a lament psalm to do our thinking FOR us: (a) select the psalm which starts off expressing our overpowering burden. (b) Then, simply make THAT psalm's stated solution which appears after the introductory expression of the burden and apply it to our situation! Then (c) anticipate the joy of the application's outcome as the way to counter our anxieties of the moment!**

**Conclusion: (To illustrate and augment the lesson involved . . .)**

(1) While Nadine and I attended Grace Bible Church in seminary, a group of its elders were flying a small plane together when it crashed, killing all on board. This event was a trauma for the whole church, let alone for the surviving families. But one of the widows later testified that what calmed her the most was not so much the kind words of the congregation **after** the accident, but the Scripture she had recalled the pastor preaching in a message **just before the crash!**

(2) Here is a **partial** list of lament psalms for such use (as follows):

Psalm 34, 40 - For male heads of households in deep distress!

Psalm 58 - When facing unjust decisions by overseers. Psalm 62 - When one's financial nest egg is threatened!

Psalms 3 and 4 - For parents when maturing children rebel.

Psalm 27 - When feeling despised even by close family. Psalm 83 - When facing great injustice from sinful relatives. Psalm 12 - When bothered by being in the godly minority. Psalm 37, 73 - When fretting about the advance of evil. Psalm 11 - When troubled by the destruction of institutions. Psalm 86 - When facing formidable insubordination as a leader. Psalm 20, 46 - When facing war or international upheaval. Psalm 5, 17, 54, 64, 70 - When facing calamitous plots.

Psalm 8, 9, 10, 14, 27, 57 - When facing intimidating foes.

Psalm 13 - When troubled by the long time of being persecuted.

Psalm 35, 55 - When betrayed by a former close ally.

Psalm 15, 26, 28 - When trying to discern true from false guilt. Psalm 32, 51 - When realizing that God is punishing us for sin. Psalm 25 - When presently suffering due to sins of past years. Psalm 6 - When God uses evil people to punish our sins.

Psalm 36, 38 - When facing formidable temptation to sin.

Psalm 39 - When troubled over repeating an habitual sin. Psalm 69 - When paying the penalty of a sin we did not do!

Psalm 7, 31, 41, 56, 59 - When facing slander or verbal abuse. Psalm 42, 43, 88 - When depressed. Psalm 71 - When facing vulnerability in one's old age. Psalm 16 - When troubled at facing death and dying. Psalm 44, 74 - When God is silent or doesn't make sense.