

Title: **“I AM A WORM”**
Text: Psalm 22:6
Subject: *Christ’s Humiliation*
Date: Sunday Morning — April 29, 2007
Tape # Z-24b
Reading: *Psalm 22:1-31*

Introduction:

Psalm 22 brings us to “*the place called Calvary.*” Here, as we stand at the foot of the cross, we hear our Savior’s lamentations as our sin-atonement Substitute, when he was made sin for us and died under the wrath of God in our place. Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 portray the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ more clearly than any other part of the Old Testament. Isaiah 53 tells us about the sin-atonement efficacy of Christ’s death as the Lamb of God. Psalm 22 tells us about his sufferings as our Substitute.

The Psalm begins with the agonizing cry of our Savior in the hour of his great darkness, “*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*” It closes with words almost identical with those we read in John 19:30. — “*He hath done it,*” or “*It is finished!*”

Someone called this a “Psalm of sobs,” because in the Hebrew text there is not a single completed sentence in the opening verses, but a series of brief ejaculations, falling from the lips of a man whose breath and strength are failing, who can only utter a word or two at a time.

When we read Psalm 22 and Psalm 69 together, we have the whole story of the crucifixion. The Gospel writers (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) repeatedly call our attention to the words of Psalm 22.

¹ Every time God allows me to preach, let me be certain that I...

1. Deliver a message. — Don’t ramble.
2. Deliver His message.
3. Tell only what I know by experience.
4. Deliver the message in the power of the Holy Spirit.
5. Make Christ the object of my message.
6. My motive is the glory of God.
7. Deliver the message in the language of the people.
8. The message grips my own heart. — If it doesn’t grip my heart, it won’t grip anyone else’s heart!
9. Preach in love.
10. Expect people to believe.

“I AM A WORM”**FORSAKEN**

“My God, my God, Why hast thou forsaken me?” (v. 1; Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34).

(Psalms 22:1-3) *“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 daytime, 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.”*

DESPISED OF MEN

“I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip” (22:6, 7). — *“The rulers derided Him.” “The soldiers also mocked Him”* (Luke 23:35, 36).

“They shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him” (verse 8). — *“They that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said...He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him”* (Matthew 27:39, 41, 43).

“Strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths” (verses 12, 13). — *“Sitting down, they watched him there. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth”* (Matthew 27:36, 44).

CRUCIFIED

“They pierced my hands and my feet.” “All my bones are out of joint”(verses 16 and 14). The Roman method of death by crucifixion – unknown to Jewish law – is prophesied here, — the nailing of our blessed Immanuel to the cross, tearing flesh, muscle and bone.

The very action of the soldiers is given in the words, *“They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture”* (verse 18).

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“My tongue cleaveth to my jaws” (verse 15). *“In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink”* (Psalm 69:21). — *“Jesus...that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. And they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth”* (John 19:28, 29).

A BROKEN HEART

“I am poured out like water: My heart is like wax; it is melted” (22:14). *“Reproach hath broken my heart”* (Psalm 69:20). Here we are told the immediate cause of our Savior’s death. He died of a broken heart. Six times in Psalm 69 we find that word, *“reproach.”* The Lord of Glory bore our and shame and dishonor. The bearing of our sins, the hiding of his Father’s face on account of it, was what broke his heart. Oh, what mercy, love and grace! — *“For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me”* (Romans 15:3; Psalm 69:9).

“Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent” (Matthew 27:50, 51). When the soldiers came to break the legs of those that hung upon the cross, they found that the Lord Jesus was dead already, and broke not his legs. *“But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.”*

Death from a broken heart is a rare thing. It is caused by intense mental emotion. The loud cry, the fact of death occurring so soon, the effect of the spear-thrust into his side, all point toward this being indeed the cause of our Lord’s death. It tallies with his own words: — *“Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself.”* By wicked hands he was crucified and slain. By the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God he was delivered to death. By his own will he laid down his life. These three statements are all true in the mystery of that great sacrifice for sin.

WILL NOT DESPISE

In Psalm 51 we have, not merely the cry of the sinner, but a prophecy of this great sacrifice, the sacrifice of him who was made sin for us that we

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might be made the righteousness of God in Him. — *“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise”* (51:17). The one great sacrifice God cannot despise is the broken heart of his own darling Son! This was the sacrifice our Savior offered for us. He clothed himself in human flesh that he might have a body to offer on our behalf (Hebrews 10:5, 9, 10).

(Hebrews 10:5) “Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:”

(Hebrews 10:9-10) “Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. (10) By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*.”

He possessed a human heart that it might be broken. The way into the holiest is opened up for us through the broken heart of our Savior. No angel could do this. No man, but the God-man, could open the way for sinners to come to God.

(Hebrews 10:12-22) “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; (13) From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. (14) For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. (15) *Whereof* the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, (16) *This is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; (17) And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. (18) Now where remission of these *is*, *there is* no more offering for sin. (19) Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, (20) By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; (21) And *having* an high priest over the house of God; (22) Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”

This is the gospel for sinners. It is this that *“the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth”* (Romans 10:1-13).

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(Romans 10:1-13) “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. (2) For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. (3) For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. (4) For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. (5) For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. (6) But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down *from above*;) (7) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) (8) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; (9) That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. (10) For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (11) For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. (12) For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. (13) For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

A WORM

In the time that remains, I want to call your attention to one short, but tremendous statement made by our blessed Savior, as he “*bare our sin in his own body on the tree.*” I know that I cannot explain its meaning. But this brief statement has been the subject of almost unceasing wonder and praise in my heart for the past two weeks. The more I have contemplated it, the more overwhelmed I have become by it. You will find it in Psalm 22:6. — “*I am a worm, and no man.*”

When I came into my office yesterday morning and opened my mail, I received three church bulletins with the same article by C. H. Spurgeon on these words. Spurgeon wrote...

“This verse is a miracle in language. How could the Lord of Glory

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be brought to such abasement as to be not only lower than the angels, but even lower than men. What a contrast between “*I AM*” and “*I am a worm*”! yet such a double nature was found in the person of our Lord Jesus when bleeding upon the tree. He felt himself to be comparable to a helpless, powerless, down trodden worm, passive while crushed, and unnoticed and despised by those who trod upon him. He selects the weakest of creatures, which is all flesh; and becomes, when trodden upon, writhing, quivering flesh, utterly devoid of any might except strength to suffer. This was a true likeness of himself when his body and soul had become a mass of misery — the very essence of agony — in the dying pangs of crucifixion. Man by nature is but a worm; but our Lord puts himself even beneath man, on account of the scorn that was heaped upon him and the weakness which he felt, and therefore he adds, “*and no man.*” The privileges and blessings which belonged to the fathers he could not obtain while deserted by God, and common acts of humanity were not allowed him, for he was rejected of men; he was outlawed from the society of earth, and shut out from the smile of heaven. How utterly did the Savior empty himself of all glory, and become of no reputation for our sakes!”

Being a worm and no man, our Lord Jesus became “*a reproach of men,*” — the common butt of their jokes and jeers, a jest, a byword and a proverb to them, the sport of the rabble, and the scorn of the rulers.

He was “*despised of the people.*” — The very people who were benefited by his cures sneered at him in his woes. Sin is worthy of all reproach and contempt, and for this reason the Lord Jesus Christ, our great Sin-bearer, was given up to be shamefully “*despised of the people.*”

He emptied himself and humbled himself to the utmost (Philippians 2:7-8), that we might be exalted. The Sun of righteousness went ten degrees backward in the dial of heaven, that he might arise with healing in his wings for our souls. He became a worm, and no man, that we, who are but sinful worms, might be made saints. What is implied in these words, — “*I am a worm, and no man*”?

HIS HUMANITY

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Perhaps there is a reference here to our Savior’s humanity. We are told in Job 25:6 that man is a worm, and the son of man is a worm.

(Job 25:6) “How much less man, *that is* a worm? and the son of man, *which is* a worm?”

A fisherman, when he casts his hook into the river, does not throw the hook in bare, naked and uncovered. If he did, the fish would never bite. So the fisherman hides his hook with a worm. The fish, biting at the worm, is caught by the hook. And, when our Savior came down here to perform the great work of our redemption, he covered and hid his Godhead with the worm of his humanity. And, as one writer (Lancelot Andrewes) put it, “The great water serpent, Leviathan, the devil, thinking to swallow the worm of his humanity, was caught upon the hook of his divinity. This hook stuck in his jaws, and tore him very sore. By thinking to destroy Christ, he destroyed his own kingdom, and lost his own power forever.”

Christ was “*a worm*” in the sense of being what the worm symbolizes: a weak, helpless, and loathsome thing. Man in his native spiritual depravity is such a “*worm*” — “*maggot*” (Job 25:6). When Christ viewed the glory of His divine nature enshrouded in the worm of our human nature, especially with the sins of His people imputed to Him, He cried, “*I am a worm, and no man.*”

DESPISED BY MEN

Certainly, these words, “*I am a worm, and no man,*” have reference to the fact that our blessed Savior was looked upon by others as one who was utterly despised and treated as something less than a man, “*a reproach of men, and despised of the people*” (vv. 6-8).

(Psalms 22:7-8) “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.”

Men scorned Him as they would a weak, helpless, and loathsome worm or maggot. — “*For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised*

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and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not” (Isaiah 53:2-3).

In the eyes of men, the Lord of Glory, the Christ of God, was “*no man*” at all, but a contemptible worm to be trampled under their feet. What men would reproach him? Those who reproach God! Therefore, our Savior cried to His Father, — “*The reproaches of them that reproached thee have fallen upon me*” (Psalm 69:9; Romans 15:3). As men honor the Father by honoring His Son (John 5:23), so men reproach the Father by reproaching His Son.

In the eyes of men who considered Christ a worm and no man, He was “*despised of the people.*” — “*He is despised and rejected of men. ... And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him*” (Isaiah 53:3). But God the Father, “*he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard*” (Psalm 22:24).

“*All they that see Me laugh me to scorn.*” — Our blessed Savior was ridiculed by Roman soldiers in Pilate’s judgment hall (Matthew 27:27-31), by His nation’s rulers (Matthew 27:41), and even by His own countrymen when they beheld Him on His cross (Matthew 27:39).

“*They shoot out the lip, they shake the head.*” — These are gestures of contempt. Men who will not praise Christ with their lips (as in Psalm 63:3, 5)

(Psalms 63:3) “Because thy lovingkindness *is* better than life, my lips shall praise thee.”

(Psalms 63:5) “My soul shall be satisfied as *with* marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise *thee* with joyful lips:”

will stick out their lips and tongues in contempt of Him. Men who will not bow their heads in reverence to Christ (as in Nehemiah 8:6) will wag their heads in contempt of Him.

“*They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in*

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Him.” — Men spoke these very words in contempt of Christ; and the Lord God did the very thing they spoke (Matthew 27:39, 43; Psalm 2:4-8).

(Matthew 27:39) “And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads,”

(Matthew 27:43) “He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.”

(Psalms 2:4-8) “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. (5) Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. (6) Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. (7) I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou *art* my Son; this day have I begotten thee. (8) Ask of me, and I shall give *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession.”

The Jews looked upon Christ as a worm, and treated him as such. He was loathsome to them and hated by them. They trampled upon him, and trod him under foot as men do worms. The Lord of Glory became a weak worm, that he might be our mighty Savior. Though he is both the mighty God and the Son of man whom God made strong for himself, and though “*he liveth by the power of God,*” yet “*he was crucified through weakness*” (2 Corinthians 13:4).

Our Lord Jesus Christ, our ever-blessed Savior, was trodden under foot, trampled on, maltreated, buffeted and spit upon, so mocked and tormented that he seemed more like a worm than a man. What great shame the Lord of Glory endured, that we might never be ashamed! What humiliation he endured, that we might be forever exalted! My soul, my heart, let these things never be forgotten!

In the person of our Redeemer, the two extremes meet — the infinite and the finite — in strange and mysterious, but inseparable and everlasting union. God came down to the humanity — Deity humbled himself to assume flesh and blood. This was humiliation indeed! This was not the creature descending in the scale of creation, but it was the Creator stooping to the creature. “*God was manifest in the flesh.*” — “*He humbled Himself.*” So infinite He is that He could thus stoop without compromising His dignity or lessening His glory.

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But, here, our Savior descends lower. — *“I am a worm and no man.”* Here the God-man sinks, as it were, in the depths of abasement and humiliation below the human. — *“I am a worm, and no man!”* In the lowliness that marked His external appearance, in the estimation in which He was held by men, in the contemptuous treatment He received from His enemies, the trampling of His glory in the dust, and the crushing of His person on the cross, seemed in His own view to have robbed Him, not only of His glory as God, but even to have divested Him of His dignity as man! — *“I am a worm, and no man!”*

Oh, here is grace surpassing all imagination, all thought, all power of utterance! He who sunk so low, is Jehovah, the *“mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.”* Wonder, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth! Meanness and majesty, humiliation and glory, how strangely were they blended in Christ, our incarnate God!

Matthew Henry wrote, “Man, at the best, is a worm; but he became a worm, and no man. If he had not made himself a worm, he could not have been trampled upon as he was.

- He was reproached as a bad man, as a blasphemer, a sabbath-breaker, a wine-bibber, a false prophet, an enemy to Caesar, a confederate with the prince of the devils.
- He was despised of the people as a mean contemptible man, not worth taking notice of, his country in no repute, his relations poor mechanics, his followers none of the rulers, or the Pharisees, but the mob.
- He was ridiculed as a foolish man, and one that not only deceived others, but himself too.”

A REPULSIVE THING

Without question, these words, *“I am a worm, and no man,”* have reference to our Savior’s humanity and to the fact that he was and is despised and rejected of men. But there is another, even more important and instructive implication in the use of these words by our Redeemer in the context in which they are found.

The Lord Jesus has been crying to his Father. His heart is broken because, being made sin for us, he has been forsaken of God, so utterly forsaken, that he declares no other man was ever so forsaken (vv. 4-5).

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(Psalms 22:4-5) “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.”

Then, he cries, “*But I am a worm, and no man!*” A worm is a dirty, repugnant, repulsive, nauseous thing. The word translated “*worm*” in this passage does not refer to an earth worm, or a glow worm, or even a grub worm. **This worm is a maggot.** — **Weak, defenseless, and unarmed** (vv. 14-15).

(Psalms 22:14-15) “I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. (15) My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.”

Yet, the maggot is utterly repulsive. What can be more repulsive than a maggot? Yet, that is what our blessed Savior became for us. He became that which is and must be so repulsive to the holy, Lord God, that God could not look upon him, let alone embrace him. — He was made sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21).

A CRIMSON WORM

The word translated “worm” in our text refers to a scarlet, or crimson worm, a worm that is found in the grain or berry with which scarlet is dyed. Our Lord Jesus looked like a scarlet worm, when by way of mockery he was clothed with a scarlet robe; and especially when he appeared in his blood-stained garments, red in his apparel, when dyed red with his own blood, as one that treads in the winepress, when his body was covered with blood as he hung upon the cross. And it is that precious blood, shed for us, that makes our crimson and scarlet sins as white as wool (Isaiah 1:18).

(Isaiah 1:18) “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

When the female of the scarlet worm is ready to give birth to her young, she attaches her body to the trunk of a tree, fixing herself so firmly and

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permanently that she never leaves it. The eggs deposited beneath her body are protected until the larvae are hatched and able to enter their own life cycle. As the mother dies, the crimson fluid stains her body, the to which she has attached herself, and all her little scarlet worms.

- They are all covered with the crimson of their dying mother.
- They were all brought to life by her death upon a tree.
- They all live by feeding upon the dead body of the one who gave them life.

What a picture this gives of our blessed Christ, dying on the tree, shedding his precious blood that he might “*bring many sons unto glory*” (Hebrews 2:10). He died for us, that we might live through him!

The commercial scarlet dyes in ancient times were extracted from the dead bodies of those female scarlet worms. — It is this very same word that is most often translated “*scarlet*” in connection with the tabernacle and the garments of the high priest in Israel (Exodus 26:1, 31,36; 27:16; 28:5-6,8, 15, 33; 35:6, 23,25,35; 36:8,35,37; 38:18,23; 39:1-3,5,8,24,29). — **The garments of salvation, with which Christ clothes us are garments of fine linen, clean and white, made clean and white by the blood of Christ, who was made a worm for us** (Revelation 7:14).

Psalm 22:6 describes such a worm and gives us this picture of Christ.

On Calvary’s hill of sorrow,
Where sin’s demands were paid
And rays of hope for tomorrow
Across my path were laid.
I see a crimson stream of blood. —
It flows from Calvary!
It’s waves which reach the throne of God
Are sweeping over me.

When gloom and sadness whisper,
You’ve sinned, no use to pray,
I look away to Jesus
And He tells me to say; —
I see a crimson stream of blood. —
It flows from Calvary!
It’s waves which reach the throne of God

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Are sweeping over me.

And when we reach the portals,
Where life immortal reigns,
The ransomed host's grand finale
Will be this glad refrain. —
I see a crimson stream of blood. —
It flows from Calvary!
It's waves which reach the throne of God
Are sweeping over me.

One more thing about those scarlet worms, and I will be done. — **The new born scarlet worms, passing through a stage of metamorphosis, are all transformed into their mother's likeness.** That may be what Paul had in mind when he wrote...

(Romans 12:1-2) “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. (2) And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed (**metamorphosed** — **present, passive, imperative**) by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

Amen.