

‘This is a remarkably profound book. Concise, clear, and compelling, author Paul Mallard takes us back to the glories of Calvary and the hope of the resurrection. He reminds us that all the Old Testament ultimately points to Christ by walking through Psalm 22 as it unfolds both Christ’s death and resurrection. I could not put the book down, and as I raced to the finish, I was filled with joy, which Mallard reminds us comes not from performance but from proximity. Read this book as it will help you gaze at Christ’s love and remind you that Jesus is our sure and steady anchor.’

Dave Furman, Senior Pastor, Redeemer Church of Dubai and author of *Being There*

‘These are wonderful meditations on the Cross and Resurrection of Christ through the lens of Psalm 22. We are invited to reflect in a fresh way on Christ. More than that, we see that the sufferings and glory of Christ provide the keys to our own Christian life and experience. Spiritually refreshing!’

Bill James, Principal, London Seminary

‘Paul Mallard guides us skilfully through Psalm 22, tracing Christ’s suffering at Calvary and the triumph of his resurrection, inviting us to meditate on the Saviour’s love for sinners and his passion for God’s glory. The victory cry, “He has done it” points to Christ’s supremacy, leads us to worship and infuses our faith with hope. This short book is packed with rich treasure.’

Elizabeth McQuoid, Digital Resources Director,
Keswick Ministries

‘Christ-exalting; heart-warming; soul-nourishing; perspective-giving; praise-provoking. This walk-through Psalm 22 affirms the fact that the cross and resurrection of our Lord Jesus truly are the anchor for our souls. This short book is like a pair of glasses that enable us to focus afresh on the sufferings of Jesus and the glories that would follow. We see other things more clearly as we fix our thoughts on the Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith.’

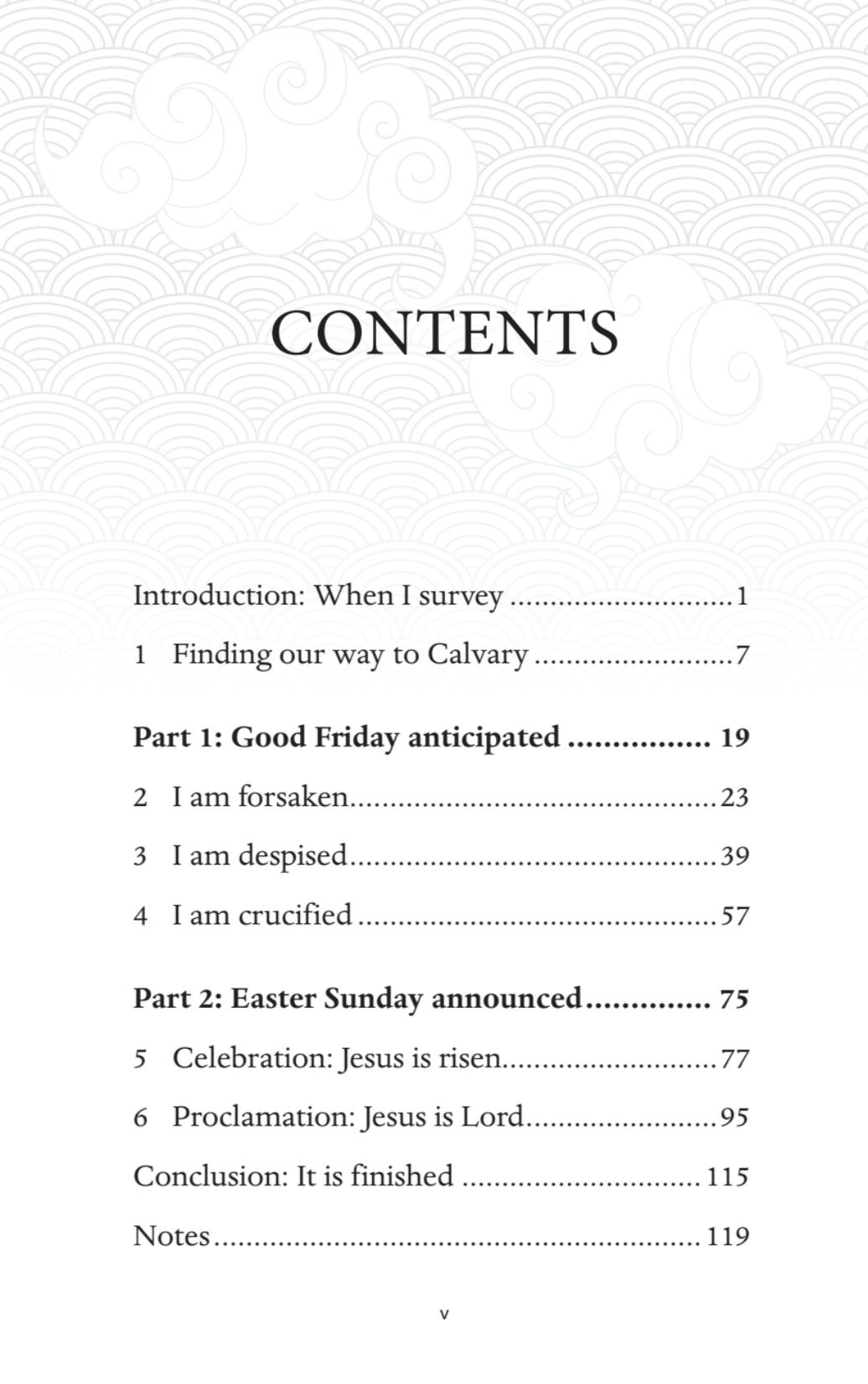
Johnny Prime, Director for London of
the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical
Churches (FIEC)

AN
ANCHOR
FOR THE
SOUL

*Beholding
the cross and
resurrection*

PAUL MALLARD

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Introduction:

WHEN I SURVEY

We can all remember a sermon that has had a profound effect on us.

For me, that occasion was when I was in my late teens and attending a Christian conference with other members of our youth group. The sermon that evening was engaging, but I don't think that I had particularly connected with the message until the speaker reached his conclusion:

A few years ago, I was preaching in India. There were huge crowds and I had to speak through an interpreter. The young man was very gifted and we had a great rapport.

I was there over Easter, and on Good Friday I was preaching about the cross of Jesus. I was

speaking and my friend was interpreting. Everything was going well.

I came to the point where I was beginning to describe the suffering of Jesus. I paused and waited for the interpretation to follow. Nothing happened. Perhaps I had spoken too quickly? So I repeated my last sentence. Still no interpretation. When nothing happened after a third try, I looked at this young Christian brother.

He was in tears. He was choked up. He could not speak. A fresh sight of Calvary love had gripped his heart. His heart had been smitten and his love had been rekindled.

Then the preacher paused, as preachers often do.

How about you today? Do you love Christ as you did at first? Does he still move your heart? Are you still amazed at grace? If not, go back to the cross and gaze again at the wonders of Calvary love.

God spoke to me that night. I remembered my first sight of the cross and longed for the freshness of that first love.

We all know how easy it is for us to drift. We need an anchor. The cross and resurrection of Christ provide such an anchor.

When I was growing up, my pastor would regularly take us to the cross of Jesus and beyond that to his glorious resurrection. With tears in his eyes, he would urge us to never lose sight of Jesus Christ: 'Whatever you face in this life, Jesus, his cross and his empty tomb are the answer.' How right he was!

Sometimes our love for Jesus grows cold and our faith seems to be a mere formality. Yet we wear a mask to hide the deadness of our hearts. Diligent in our religion, we are distant in our relationship.

On other occasions we flirt with sin and fall into its vice-like grip. Overwhelmed with a sense of guilt and worthlessness, we wonder how God could ever love failures like us. We find ourselves on a treadmill as we try somehow to earn God's approval, but never quite meet our self-imposed targets.

Or maybe pain and grief have invaded our lives and stamped a dark question mark over our faith. We question why a loving God would treat us so badly.

If you have ever been in any of these places, Jesus, his cross and his empty tomb *are* the answer.

The purpose of this little book is to take us back to Calvary and to the empty tomb so that we gaze again at the mystery of grace and the profundity of love poured out for us there. Our joy in Christ comes not from performance but from proximity.

We could approach our subject in a variety of ways. I have chosen to focus on the cross and resurrection through the lens of Psalm 22. In what follows, we will see how the psalm was perfectly fulfilled in the life of Jesus. Beyond that, we will discover how amazingly relevant and vital its message is for us today. Here is an anchor for our souls that will give us stability through the raging tempests of life.

After all, the events of Jesus' death and resurrection were not an afterthought – they were in the mind of the triune God before the creation of the world. Revealed in prophecy and accomplished in history, they are now

the theme of our worship as well as the anchor for our souls.

Come back with me to a thousand years before the cross and see how God shared his secrets with King David.

FINDING OUR WAY TO CALVARY

Three simple questions

I became an RE teacher in 1978. In those days, there was still a strong emphasis on the Gospels. Most kids were familiar with the significance of Christmas and Easter, and had a rudimentary knowledge of the life and teaching of Jesus. Sadly, today, much of that has gone with the wind. But back in the seventies, if you talked about the cross and the resurrection to children, they would understand.

Each year, just before Easter, I would print out Psalm 22 and give it to my RE class of thirteen- and fourteen-year-olds. There was nothing on the handout identifying either the author or

the context of the passage. Along with the text, I posed three questions:

1. What is this passage about?
2. When do you think it was written?
3. Who do you think wrote it?

For the five years that I taught, these questions produced very similar answers:

1. 'It's about Jesus dying on the cross.' Not everyone understood this truth – and very few identified the fact that the passage goes on to speak of the resurrection – but the story of Good Friday was known well enough for most children to get the right answer.
2. There was less unanimity about question two. Some of the children thought that it might have been written almost immediately after Calvary since it contains so many details. Other answers ranged from five years to fifty years after Jesus' death. Where they were all in agreement

was that it obviously must have been written after the events of Good Friday.

3. Answers to the last question ranged from Peter to Paul to John. I guess that these were the only names they could remember. The majority of the pupils had no idea and said so! What they did agree on was that whoever wrote the passage must have been an eyewitness since the details are so precise.

The references to the cross in Psalm 22 are unmissable:

*All who see me mock me;
they hurl insults, shaking their heads.
'He trusts in the LORD,' they say,
'let the LORD rescue him.
Let him deliver him,
since he delights in him.'* (Verses 7–8)

*Dogs surround me,
a pack of villains encircles me;
they pierce my hands and my feet.
All my bones are on display;*

*people stare and gloat over me.
They divide my clothes among them
and cast lots for my garment. (Verses 16–18)*

In addition, if you read the Gospel accounts of Jesus' death, you will discover that they are saturated with the whole of this psalm.

Back to my RE lesson. After everyone agreed that this psalm was about Jesus, I would give out copies of the Bible and get the class to turn to Psalm 22. While the psalm is about the cross, it is also about the resurrection. But what is most remarkable is that it was written by King David over a thousand years before the events it describes with such clarity, detail and precision. Perhaps even more amazing, it was written almost five hundred years before the first recorded example of a crucifixion. David was not describing something which he had witnessed. Indeed, he was describing something which no one had witnessed before.

Like most people when presented with the miraculous nature of the Bible, some of the kids were amazed, others were sceptical and most were totally indifferent.

One remarkable psalm

Like a third of the psalms, Psalm 22 has elements of lament in it. Mark Vroegop puts it like this:

Lament is how we bring our sorrow to God. Without lament we won't know how to process pain. Silence, bitterness, and even anger can dominate our spiritual lives instead.

Lament is how Christians grieve. It is how to help hurting people. Lament is how we learn important truths about God and our world.¹

As a typical lament, Psalm 22 moves from complaint to prayer and on to faith. It flows from a bruised and broken heart. The psalm's historical setting was perhaps when David was being pursued by Saul and felt abandoned by God. But it transcends its context and reaches forward as it predicts the cross of Christ.

There is so much in the psalm which goes way beyond anything which David experienced. Most obviously it culminates in describing the death of the psalmist while he is still very much alive: