

Tragedy Of The Cross

Matthew 27:45-49

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Follow with me in your Bibles beginning in Matthew 27:33. Matthew tells us, "And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, 34 They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink. 35 And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet," that is, Psalm 22:18, by the way, "They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. 36 And sitting down they watched him there; 37 And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. 38 Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. 39 And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, 40 And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. 41 Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, 42 He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. 43 He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. 44 The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth. 45 Now from the sixth hour," which is twelve noon, "there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour," which is three in the afternoon. "And about the ninth hour," 3 p.m., "Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying," here it is, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? 47 Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias. 48 And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. 49 The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him."

Of the seven words spoken by our Lord from the cross, this fourth word is the central word in every way. It's found in verse 46 when Jesus cried, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This is the word of tragedy or the word of agony. I believe that on the cross Jesus bore our sin; and in bearing our sin, the Father had to turn away from the Son. At that moment, one of the deepest mysteries of the Cross took place when Jesus cried in agony, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" The protestant reformer, Martin Luther, said, "God forsaken by God, who can understand that?" I don't believe that we can fully understand or comprehend it. I believe that there are mysteries so deep we can never fathom that it's going to take all eternity for God to reveal the depth of His love and His wisdom and His power and His grace and His mercy in the Cross of Jesus Christ. Tonight, as we look at this text and examine these words, we can enter in a little bit to the mysteries of the Cross, to what it meant for Jesus to be separated from God the Father.

There are a couple of mysteries that I want to mention; that is, first of all the mystery of the darkness. It's interesting. Notice in verse 45 of your Bible, it says, "...from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour." Jesus hung on the cross for six hours, nine o'clock in the morning until three o'clock in the afternoon. I believe that these last three hours,

from high noon until three in the afternoon, there was a universal darkness. I don't believe it was just a local darkness. I believe all of creation was groaning and travailing as Jesus, the Son of God, who was the Creator...they are identifying with Him in groaning in this time of Him bearing the sins of the world. Why did this darkness enshroud the Cross? I believe that it was the darkness of sympathy. As I mentioned, Romans 8 says, "...the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain...waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." That manifestation of the sons of God will happen at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ when He comes back and every eye will see Him. When He comes back in power and glory and majesty, you and I, the Church, come back with Him riding on white horses.

I'm not very good on a horse. You don't want to see me ride a horse, and I'm going to be riding really good when that happens because I'm going to be in a glorified body. We're going to come back with Jesus Christ in majesty and power, and all those who are living on earth will see Him. The Bible says, "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be," and Jesus is going to reverse the curse. He's going to reverse the curse, and all the earth will be restored to its original intention by God. It will be a time of peace on earth because Jesus Christ, the Prince of peace, returns to earth. Amen? But, until then, "...we groan, earnestly desiring the be clothed upon with our house," or body, "which is from heaven."

Every morning when I get up I kind of, "Uhhhhh." I have the gift of groan, but it's biblical. I'm a biblical guy. I'm groaning for glory. Are you groaning for glory? When I watch the news and see the terrorist attacks, the rise of ISIS, all the blackness, darkness, and evil in this world, and all the spiritual deception, I groan for glory. Well, creation was groaning for glory; and as the Son of God, the Creator, was hanging on the cross, I believe creation was groaning with Him in this darkness. The Creator was suffering on the cross, and all creation was suffering with Him.

It's interesting that the result of the curse were thorns, and they took a thorn crown and shoved it on the brow of Jesus Christ; so he bore the curse in order to reverse that curse. Someone put it in the words of a song, Well might the sun in darkness hide, And shut His glories in, When Christ, the mighty Maker, died. For man, His creature's sin. It was the darkness where creation was groaning with the Creator, but it was also a darkness of silence. The darkness lasts for three hours, from noon until 3 p.m. During that time there were no recorded words of Jesus from the cross. Seven times Jesus spoke from the cross, and it wasn't until the very end, when Jesus said, "It is finished," tetelestai, paid in full. Then He said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus," He bowed His head and, "he gave up the ghost," or dismissed His spirit. Jesus said, "No man taketh it," My life, "from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." He laid it down, the cross; He took it up, the resurrection. Willingly, voluntarily He died and conquered sin, death, and the grave and rose that first Easter Sunday.

At the birth of the Son of God, it's interesting, there was brightness at midnight. The angels out in the field of Bethlehem arrived to show the shepherds the Messiah was born, and the whole area lit up with a radiant glow of these angels. In the Cross, there is darkness at noon. It was

the darkness of silence. Thirdly, I would say it was the darkness of secrecy. The darkest time of the Cross, that darkness veiled the anguish of the Son of God while He was bearing the punishment for our sins, shutting Him off from the eyes of sinful man. At this very moment, the sins of the world were placed upon the sinless Son of God. This was a very holy moment, and God shrouded Jesus from the eyes of the wicked.

Elizabeth Clephane wrote, "But none of the ransomed ever knew, How deep were the waters crossed; Nor how dark was the night the Lord passed through, Ere He found His sheep that was lost." The Light of the world was dying to save those who were living in darkness. So, now He cries, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" I want you to notice that second mystery in verse 46, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" That's Aramaic. In Aramaic, He was quoting from Psalm 22:1. He's saying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" We have the mystery of the darkness, and now we have the mystery of being forsaken. I believe that Jesus was actually forsaken at this moment by the Father. I have theologians and Bible students that like to argue with me, and that's okay. I don't really want to argue Scripture with you, but I'm convinced (I'm giving you my view, so don't bug me after church tonight, okay?) that Jesus tasted death for every man, and I think in fully (underline the word "fully") tasting our death.

Death. Do you know the etymology of the word "death" means separation? Death means separation. When you die physically, your soul and spirit separate from your body. When you die spiritually, you are separated from God. That's why the Bible says we're born separated from God. We're born sinners, separated from God, so I believe for this moment that the Son of God had to experience the full brunt of our sin which was spiritual death—separation from God.

Think about this. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—the three persons of the Godhead—one God, three persons—had enjoyed communion and fellowship with one another for all eternity. When I say all eternity, I mean there is never a time that they did not exist. You say, "I don't understand that." Welcome to the club. Because we're finite and God is infinite we can't fully comprehend it, but the Bible tells us that God is eternal and this eternal God is three persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Can you imagine the pain that they felt at this moment as God the Father had to turn His back, momentarily, temporarily, on His only begotten Son? The reason He did that was so that you and I would never have to be forsaken. He was forsaken of God that we might never be forsaken of God. Do you know what Jesus said? He said, "I will never leave you, and I will never forsake you." Isn't that beautiful? He will never, ever, ever forsake you. The Bible says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," not only no condemnation, there is no separation. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

It was Charles H. Spurgeon that said, "There could have been no vicarious suffering on the part of Christ for human guilt, if he had continued consciously to enjoy the full sunshine of the Father's presence," so He fully drank the cup. This is what Jesus recoiled from in the Garden of Gethsemane when He said, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." He looked forward at the Cross and realized that He had to take the sin of the world, which was pain in and of itself, but He also realized that He had to be forsaken of God so in His humanity He cried

out in agony, "...why hast thou forsaken me?" God, as the righteous judge, had to be separated from Him for He was bearing the sins of the world, and the wages of sin is death, separation. The God-man, Jesus, endured the divine judgment which we deserved, spiritual death. This is what He recoiled from and why He will never leave or forsake us.

Secondly, I would say that this cry was also a cry of substitution. In Isaiah 53 it says, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities...with his stripes are we healed." Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." You see, the heart of the Cross is substitution. You will never, ever, ever understand the Cross of Jesus Christ unless you understand this important point: Jesus took your place. He took your place. You deserve to die. I deserve to die. We all deserve to die. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." The Bible says, "There is none righteous, no, not one." The Bible says, "For the wages of sin is death," and what He did is He paid the penalty for your sins. This is why Jesus cried in one of His last cries, "Tetelestai," paid in full, "It is finished," because He took my debt. He paid in my place. He was the Lamb of God who substituted His life for my sins so that, this is what the Bible teaches, God could take the righteousness of Christ—who was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died on the cross—He could take the righteousness of Christ and give it to me. He takes my sin and gives it to Christ; He takes Christ's righteousness and gives it to me. That's a pretty good exchange, don't you think? I think that's a marvelous exchange! And, if you've accepted Jesus Christ then you stand tonight complete and forgiven through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, and lastly, it was also a cry of Scripture. As I mentioned, when Jesus cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," He was actually quoting Psalm 22:1, "...why hast thou forsaken me?" Psalm 22:3, gives the answer, where it says, "But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." Because God is holy, He couldn't look on sin. For that moment, He had to turn His back upon His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. He was forsaken. The word "forsaken," it's interesting, is in the aorist tense in the Greek. It means for a moment but it has an affect for eternity; so for that moment, Jesus was forsaken that we might have eternal life. He was forsaken that we might never have to be forsaken.

There was the mystery of the darkness, there's the mystery of the cry of anguish—the separation—but there's a third mystery, verses 47-49, the mystery of blindness. In verse 47 it says, "Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias." He's crying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?...My God, my God..." and they thought he was crying for Elijah. Do you know that every Jew believed that at Passover Elijah might show up. Do you know today, orthodox Jews, when celebrating Passover, leave an empty chair for Elijah to show up! I thought it'd be cool to dress up like Elijah and freak out a Jewish family sometime. "Shalom!" "Ahhhhhh!" Elijah did show up in the person of John the Baptist, and he pointed to Jesus and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." It's a very good possibility that Elijah will show up at the end of the tribulation before Jesus Christ returns as one of the two witnesses preaching to the Jews.

Jesus Christ, as He cried on the cross cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He was crying out and they were blind. They stood at the foot of the cross. They heard Him cry Psalm 22:1. They heard Him say, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." By the way, that's an interesting cry from the cross, "Father, forgive them." That would have been pretty awesome. Then, He actually defends them and says, "...for they know not what they do." Not only did He say, "Father, please forgive them," but He actually spoke on their behalf and actually said, "...they don't know what they're doing." That just amazes me! He's hanging on the cross praying for their forgiveness, and He's defending and interceding for them before the Father. "Father, they don't know what they're doing." Such amazing love! As Jesus is hanging on the cross, there was amazing blindness. Because of their sin, they were blind to the Scriptures and did not see that Jesus was their Savior. Do you know the same thing is true today? Because of people's sin, they are blind to the Scriptures and don't see that Jesus is their Savior.

Maybe you're here tonight, kind of going through an Easter ritual of, Yes, we're going to go to church. Yes, we're going to have communion. It's Good Friday. Maybe your eyes have not been opened spiritually and you haven't trusted Jesus Christ only as your Savior. Maybe you think you get to heaven by taking communion. Maybe you think you get to heaven by taking communion at Revival Christian Fellowship. Maybe you think you get to heaven by taking communion at Revival Christian Fellowship on Good Friday. Maybe you think you get to go to heaven by taking communion at Revival Christian Fellowship on Good Friday while John Miller is preaching. It ain't gonna happen! As you stand before God, you're not going to be able to say, "Well, I endured those John Miller sermons. I sat through every one of those boring sermons. You better let me in here!" That's not going to get it. We sing, Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to the cross I cling. You have to come naked, poor, wretched, and blind.

These people were blind, but if they had turned to Jesus like the thief who said, "Lord, remember me." Jesus said, "Today, you will be with Me in Paradise." If we turn to Jesus tonight, all we have to do is look to Him and say, "Lord, remember me. Lord, please forgive me. Lord Jesus, I believe You died in my place and paid for my sins. I believe that You were buried and three days later You bodily, physically, victoriously rose from the dead! I believe that You're in heaven right now and coming back again. Lord, I believe that You are the Savior; and Lord, I pray that You'll forgive me and give me eternal life. Make me Your child." All it takes is to look to Jesus in faith. All it takes is to trust in Jesus and you will be saved.

In the Old Testament, God allowed serpents to come into the camp of the children of Israel because of their murmuring and rebellion and complaining. They were biting the people, and they cried out to Moses, "Pray to God that we might be saved!" The Lord instructed Moses to make a serpent out of brass, put it on a pole, and to erect it in the camp of Israel. The instructions were that anyone who had been bitten by the serpent and is sure to die, that if they would simply look at that serpent of brass on the pole, they would be healed of the bite. Jesus said in John 3, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up," and "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." He went on to say, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever

believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

To believe in Jesus means you put your faith in Him. You put your trust in Him. It means that you rely upon Him and nothing of your own works. Baptism can't save you. Church attendance can't save you. Confirmation can't save you. Communion cannot save you. Christ alone saves. Amen? “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

As we pass the communion elements tonight, we ask that you hold them until we're all served. Then, we're going to pray together; we're going to pray over the bread and cup. As you do that, you do that in remembrance of Jesus who saved you by His grace. You do that with a heart of thanksgiving. You do that with a reverent spirit and a reverential, worshipful heart. In Corinth, some of them were sick and died because they did it irreverently. Tonight, may we properly sanctify this meal. This is a family meal. We're the family of God. God is our Father, and we're gathered around the family table. We're going to break bread, and we're going to drink the cup. Jesus said He wouldn't drink until He drank with us in His Father's kingdom.

Communion looks back at the cross where Jesus died. It looks around, and if you have any ought in your heart or any bitterness or unforgiveness you cannot take communion tonight until you say to God, “Lord, I release that. I forgive them. Forgive me for my bitterness and my hatred and my anger and my unforgiveness.” It looks around, and then it looks ahead. It says, “Lord, I'm looking for You to come again, and I want to eat this bread and drink this cup with You in my Father's kingdom.” Communion doesn't save. It's a picture of Jesus who died and bled. Trusting Him will save you. If you haven't made that commitment tonight, communion will not save you. Those of you that have trusted Christ, you are welcome to partake. If you haven't trusted Christ, do so right now before we serve communion. Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer.