

## TEXT SERMONS – SEVEN SAYINGS OF THE SUFFERINGS SAVIOR

## SAYING #4

## “WHY FORSAKEN?”

**Matthew 27:45,46*****“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”***

We come again to the place called Golgotha, the hill, the craggy face of which, resembled a skull.

- This was the place where the Roman Government executed criminals;
- This is the place where we see man at His worst and God at His best;
- This is the place where the Son of God died that the sons of men might live;
- This is the place where the Son of God was forsaken that the sons of men might never be forsaken;
- This was the place where the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, was being crucified.

It was here, while suspended between earth and heaven, nailed to the old rugged cross, that Jesus spoke seven times. He had prayed for His persecutors saying, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”; He had promised paradise to the repentant thief and had committed His mother into the care of one of His most beloved disciples.

Now the scene changes for several hours have passed during which a strange darkness had descended upon that hilltop in the middle of the day. This was a most unusual happening, a miraculous thing, and it had a silencing effect upon the jeering throng of spectators there.

The silence was broken by a most startling statement to come from the lips of Jesus as He hung by hands nailed to the crossbeam of that wooden death instrument. He cried out, “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*” This is the fourth time that Jesus speaks from the cross. It is the center utterance of the seven that He spoke. Let us examine this startling and strange statement by thinking about The Intercession, The Interpretation and The Inspiration in this text.

**THE INTERCESSION IN JESUS’ CRY.*****“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”***

This fourth statement of Jesus is a prayer. Three of the seven sayings He spoke from the cross are prayers:

- Number one: “*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*” (Luke 23:34)
- Number two: “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*” (Matt. 27:46)
- Number three: “*Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.*” (Luke 23:46)

However, this, by far, is the most unusual statement Jesus made. Let us concentrate upon these words and examine each word and phrase because of the implications contained in these words. Think about:

***The Manner Of Stating His Intercession.***

These grim words are in the form of a question. This is, so far as the scriptures record, the only question that Jesus ever asked of His Father. During His earthly ministry He always accepted the Father's will without question. Never once did He ask "why", "when", "where", or "how" about anything. He said, "*I do always those things that please Him.*" (John 8:29)

But here we have a question, "*Why have You forsaken Me?*" The fact that this is a question does not prevent it from being a prayer. There are many prayers in the Bible that contain the question, "Why?" For example:

- Moses prayed, "*Why have You sent me?*" (Exodus 5:22);
- Gideon prayed, "*If You are with us, why all this trouble?*" (Judges 6:13);
- Job, in his suffering, asked, "*Why have you made me your target? Have I become a burden to you?*" (Job 7:20);
- David prayed, "*Why, O LORD, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?*" (Psalm 10:1) and "*Why do you hide your face and forget our misery and oppression?*" (Psalm 44:24);
- Jeremiah asked, "*Why is my pain perpetual?*" (Jer.15:18).

But we are surprised that Jesus would ask "Why" aren't we? What do these words mean? Some say that He must have lost courage. Not so! He had previously said, "*Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name.*" Then a voice came from heaven, saying, "*I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.*" (John 12:27,28)

He came for the express purpose of dying for our sins. Hebrews 2:9 makes that abundantly clear: "*We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.*"

Previously He prayed, "Father, forgive them...."; now He prays, "My God, My God." Truly, these are most mysterious words. We cannot understand these things. We notice that there was no reply to His question as to "Why?"

In our lives there are also perplexing situations that force from us a similar question. Let us in such times remember that God's silence does not mean that He does not hear or that He does not care. At the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus prayed to the Father and said, "*I know that You always hear Me.*" (John 11:42) God is not deaf. He is always working our His perfect plan in our lives. Jesus' question on the cross was answered on resurrection morning! He is alive and not forsaken! Whatever we are going through – we are going *through!* We will get through! "Yes, though I walk *through* the valley of the shadow of death" – like Jesus, we'll get through!

### ***The Mystery Surrounding His Intercession.***

*"Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land."*  
(Matt.27:45)

The "sixth hour" was twelve o'clock noon. The "ninth hour" was 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon. As Jesus was being crucified a strange darkness descended upon the scene. It became

midnight at mid-day. For three hours the cross-scene was in darkness. A cosmological phenomenon occurred. Here is a strange paradox – “the Light of the world” (John 8:12) was suspended in darkness!

This is a mysterious development. Something was happening in that dark three hours that cannot be explained this side of heaven. There in that darkness Jesus prayed that questioning prayer, “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*” This cry of the suffering Saviour is deeply mysterious.

*“Oh, how dreary, how distressing  
Bosom rending, soul oppressing  
Was that terrifying hour;  
When the Son poured out His being,  
Shed His lifeblood for the freeing  
Of mankind from Satan’s power!”*

### **THE INTERPRETATION OF JESUS’ CRY.**

Each aspect of the crucifixion contains elements that we do not fully understand. This is especially true of Jesus’ cry, “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*” Here was a cry of desolation and separation. Jesus asked, “Why?” When we come to this statement we also ask the question, “Why?” The answer can never be complete this side of eternity. However, there are several rays of light from scripture that will help us understand Jesus’ forlorn utterance.

#### ***Jesus Was Fulfilling Prophecy.***

Psalm 22 is the Psalm of the Suffering Savior. The opening words are, “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*” *Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning?*” This is history pre-recorded.

#### ***Jesus, The Sinless One, Became Sin For Us.***

*“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”* (2 Corinthians 5:21).

*“Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.”* (1 Peter 2:24)

#### ***The Holiness Of God Demanded That Sin Be Judged.***

Jesus had no sin of His own. He had no sin *in* Him, but He had our sin *upon* Him, therefore He was experiencing the judgment of God for all sin. Jesus answered His own question in the prophecy in Psalm 22 when He said, “*O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; and in the night season, and am not silent. But You are holy....*” (Psalm 22:2,3)

In that dark hour we see demonstrated the absolute holiness and justice of God. Because of

that, God had to turn away from Jesus. As Jesus bore that weight of sin, He was experiencing abandonment by God for the only time in all of eternity.

This is more than a creature forsaken by its Creator; this is the God-man forsaken of God. During the thirty-three years He had been on earth He enjoyed unbroken fellowship with the Father. The withdrawal of God resulted in the feeling of loneliness by the Suffering One.

### ***Here We Have The Meaning Of The Prayer In Gethsemane.***

*“O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”* (Matt. 26:39)

What was in that “cup” Jesus referred to? Not only a cruel death upon the cross; not merely desertion by His disciples; not only the ignominy and shame of the public ordeal. No, down in that “cup” He saw the necessary and temporary abandonment He would have to experience.

That God could “forsake” Jesus is inconceivable to the human mind. It is so incredible to commentators that C. H. Spurgeon said, “Frankly, as I come to this verse, I cannot preach on it, for I do not understand it.” Martin Luther said, “God forsaken of God, who can understand it”? It may seem that I am being presumptuous to attempt an explanation, but, as humbly as I know how, I have simply tried to restate the obvious. For the complete explanation and understanding of Jesus’ cry on the cross, we will have to wait until the shadows flee away, *“For now we see through a glass, dimly, but then face to face.”* (1 Cor. 13:12)

Now we follow Jesus’ Intercession and our Interpretation with Inspiration for us all from the lonely cry on Golgotha’s hill.

### **THE INSPIRATION FROM JESUS’ CRY.**

What inspiration there is for saint and sinner in contemplating Jesus’ cry, *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”* Ordinarily, one would not look for inspiration in another’s agony. However, the Person and the pathos seen here make this a lesson not easily dismissed. There are two glaring points of inspiration for us here:

#### ***Because of Jesus’ Cry God Provided For The Lost.***

*“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”* (Isaiah 53:5,6)

Paul said, He *“loved me, and gave Himself for me.”* (Gal. 2:20) That is why He came into the world. Jesus said, *“The Son of man is come to seek and to save the lost.”* (Luke 19:10) The atoning death of Christ was the means whereby God could bring sinners alienated by their sin back to Himself. When He cried, *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”* the answer, from the human perspective, is so that we who trust in Him might never be forsaken. What hope in His hurt; what life in His death; what salvation in His sufferings!

#### ***Behind Jesus’ Cry God was Proving His Love.***

*"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends"* (John 15:13). The supreme evidence of Christ's love for us is seen in the suffering of body and soul that Jesus endured. Jesus' example of sacrificial and selfless suffering for us is the greatest love act ever performed. It is John 3:16 fleshed out. No one can ever say that they are not loved!

*"O Love that wilt not let me go,  
I rest my weary soul in thee;  
I give thee back the life I owe,  
That in thine ocean depths its flow  
May richer, fuller be."*

- George Matheson

Inspired by an expiring Person! John Flavel describes the sacrifice Christ made for sinners as follows:

"Lord, the condemnation was yours, that the justification might be mine; the agony was yours, that the victory might be mine; the pain was yours, and the ease mine; the stripes were yours, and the healing balm issuing from them mine; the vinegar and gall were yours, that the honey and sweet might be mine; the curse was yours, that the blessing might be mine; the crown of thorns was yours, that the crown of glory might be mine; the death was yours, the life purchased by it mine; you paid the price that I might enjoy the inheritance."

## CONCLUSION

Jesus' example is the perfect model of endurance for us. We too are faced with difficult and trying situations, although certainly not on the scale or scope of Jesus' trial on the cross. Let us take courage from Him and be inspired to "run with endurance the race that is set before us."

***"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."*** (Hebrews 12:2,3)

JdonJ