

The Seven Words of Christ on the Cross: part 4 of 7

Matthew 27:45-47 New American Standard Bible (NASB, 1995)

⁴⁵ Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. ⁴⁶ About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?” that is, “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?” ⁴⁷ And some of those who were standing there, when they heard it, began saying, “This man is calling for Elijah.”

Note: “ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?” is the Aramaic version of Psalm 22:1.

Introduction

Have you ever wondered or asked of God ‘why me’? I have. E.g., Several years ago, I was in a car accident. Although it was my fault, I still asked the Lord why me. Have you ever felt that you don’t deserve what you are going through and even shouted to God, ‘why me, Lord?’ Did you even feel that God has abandoned you, is no longer with you or listening to you? Then, today’s sermon is for you.

Content

Once again, I am going to walk you through verse by verse in today’s text. Please follow along in your bulletin.

Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land **until the ninth hour (v. 45):** It is believed that Jesus was crucified around 9 a.m. and hanging there for the next six hours and expired around 3 p.m. When the New Testament was recorded, people were using the Roman time, calling the 6th hour and the 9th hour: we can convert them into modern time by adding 6 hours. So, the 6th hour makes it, twelve, that is, noon and the 9th hour is 3 p.m. So, while Jesus was on the cross, darkness covered the land for about three hours between noon to three.

About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice (v. 46): He wasn’t whispering. He shouted with a loud voice [in the same manner He called out Lazarus the dead man from the tomb (John 11:43)]. He was quoting Psalm 22:1— *My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?* (אֱלֹהֵי אֱלֹהֵי, לָמָּה עֲזַבְתָּנִי). King David wrote this prayer a thousand years before Christ, and Christ was saying the same prayer as the fulfillment of the Scripture on Him. But it was much more than quoting the verse. It was His heart cry to God. It was made in the throes of agony. I can hear His agonized cry in my heart. Can you?

Let’s listen a little deeper to His heart cry to His Father: *My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?*

“Why...” (v. 46): The English word ‘why’ can be understood as “for what reason?” “upon what ground?” or “to what purpose?” (BDB, p. 554). I looked further up in the Bible. The word ‘why’ appears 391 times in the entire Bible (NASB) from Genesis to Revelation: everybody used it. God used it, so did God’s angels, and so did people (it seems to me that asking ‘why’ is one of the divine attributes that we inherited from God). The first one who ever used ‘why’ in the Bible was nobody but God. When Cain, the first son of Adam and Eve, brought his offering to the LORD, it was rejected by God. That made Cain upset. So, God said to him: *Why are you angry?* (Genesis 4:6). The last ‘why’ in the Bible was spoken by the angel of God to John the apostle: *Why do you wonder?* (Revelation 17:7). Even Jesus the Messiah asked ‘why’ many times in the New Testament. E.g., to Peter, *why did you doubt?* (Matthew 14:31). To Pharisees, *why are you thinking of evil thoughts?* (Matthew 9:4). To the rulers, *why are you testing me?* (Matthew 22:18). To a young man, *why do you call Me good?* (Mark 10:18). To Mary of Magdalene, *why are you weeping?* (John 20:15). It would be worth studying all these why questions of Jesus. In fact, I wrote a book about twelve ‘Why’ questions of Jesus.

Anyway, for now, let’s go back to our text where Jesus cried out ‘why’ to God. This is the one and the only time Jesus ever asked God ‘why.’ Why did He cry out? To fulfill the Scripture, I said. More importantly, He raised that question to His Father when things didn’t make any sense to Him. Especially, when He didn’t do anything wrong.

Have You Forsaken me? (v. 46): the word ‘forsaken’ here means: *left, deserted, left me alone, abandoned*. Consider Jesus on the cross. By now, He was totally forsaken by people. He was despised and rejected by the rulers and the crowd. He was mocked, abused, spat on, flogged, and crucified by the Roman soldiers. Even His own disciples deserted Him. A prophecy in Isaiah 53:3 was fulfilled: *He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him*. So far, Jesus handled such men’s “forsaking” rather well. Yet, not this one, I would call, God’s forsaking. Now, let’s talk a little about the word ‘forsaking.’

Forsaking in the Scripture: In real life, people often forsake God and each other. However, did you know that God too can forsake His people? It seldom happens, but when it does, it happens only under one circumstance: *when the people of God forsake Him first*. Let me elaborate a little more.

The Pattern of ‘Forsaking’: There’s a pattern of God’s forsaking in the Scripture: if it ever happens, it is always preceded by people’s forsaking of the LORD first. People forsake God first (Jeremiah 1:16, 2:13), then, as the consequence of their rejection of God, God’s forsaking of His people ensues (Jeremiah 7:29, 12:7, 2 Chronicles 12:5, 24:20). That makes perfect sense to me. Here’s why: God and His people are in a covenant relationship. In this relationship, two parties agree to abide within the terms of the covenant: God be their God and they be His people. As God’s people, we obey His voice and as our God, God will be our

protector and provider. That's the agreement which we call covenant. However, when we God's people reject the LORD saying that we no longer want Him in our lives, God is no longer bound with the covenant, is He? When one party breaks the covenant and no longer abides within the terms, then the other party is no longer obligated to keep the covenant, either. E.g., In the Old Testament, God and Israel were in a covenant relationship. Israel repeatedly turned away from God. Despite the continuous warning from God, they continued to live in idol worship, walked in evil ways including the shedding of innocent blood, and practicing injustice and so forth. Consequently, it left no other choice to God but forsaking them. In other words, if we reject God, it will result in the separation and abandonment from God. Remember the sequence: God's people forsake God first, then God forsakes them.

Take that into Jesus' cry: God's abandonment of Jesus doesn't fit this biblical pattern. Think about it. From the very moment of conception in His mother's womb till the day on the cross, Jesus never displeased or disobeyed God. Therefore, never was He forsaken by God. He never sinned. He never did forsake God. Not even one single moment. Therefore, there was no **ground** for God to reject Jesus. On the contrary, God was always with Him: in His ministry, in His sleep, in His walking, in His prayers, and in His talking. In everything, Jesus did, God was with Him. All the time. Then, suddenly, the Father God left His Beloved Son in the throes of excruciating pain on the cross. What happened?

The Seriousness of Sin: Here's why Jesus experienced God's rejection on the cross: **sin.** He was rejected by God not because of what He has done, but because of our sin. Remember: God and sin don't get along at all like oil and water don't mix. No sin is ever allowed in the presence of God. Jesus was carrying all the sins of the world on His body at that very moment of hanging on the cross. At the cross, God and sin met. At the cross, the sinless was made sin for us the sinful (2 Corinthians 5:21). Because of the sin He was carrying, Jesus was totally separated from God. This was the one and the only time that ever happened between the two; the Father and the Son. The sin that the Son was carrying was so serious and repugnant to the Father God that it even separated the beloved Son from the Father. When the sin of the world separated Jesus from God in that very moment, and when God had to turn His head away from Jesus, Jesus experienced God's total rejection for the first time ever and He shouted, *My God, my God, why have You forsaken (departed from) Me?*

Four lessons:

Lesson 1: *It is alright to cry out to God in our pain.* Jesus did. So did King David. Psalm 22:1 is a good verse to memorize: *My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?*

Lesson 2: *There are things that happen to us not as the consequences of our bad behavior or poor judgments.* E.g., Let's say I stole something. There are consequences for that. I pay the price for my iniquities, and I really can't blame God for my punishments, can I?

However, bad things can happen to us even when there's nothing wrong between us and God, even when we walked uprightly before God and people. In those moments, don't judge. Leave it to God. God may reveal to you in due time the true reasons of your suffering.

Lesson 3: *God is fully aware of what's going on in your life.* He knows your pain and suffering. Consider God who's looking down on His Beloved Son suffering on the cross. Don't you think that God also suffered that day? Yet, He allowed all these mockery, rejection, suffering, and pain to happen to Jesus His Perfect Son for a great cause. Don't lose your faith in God when things don't make sense. God is aware of what's happening to you. He knows what He is doing. He will see you through. Like He made Jesus rise from the dead on the third day, God will make all things beautiful in His time as He promised in Romans 8:28.

Lesson 4: *Take sin seriously.* Sin is not something that we can take lightly or play with casually. Sin always brings darkness in your soul, and the darkness hovers over your soul until sin was properly dealt through repentance. Without repentance, sin will cost us eternal life.

Conclusion

It was the greatest mystery of all that happened on the cross that day: God made Jesus who knew no sin to be sin in our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). The sinless, innocent, and perfect Son of God was punished on our behalf. Since He was forsaken, we are accepted. Because He was afflicted, we are healed. Because of His anguish, we are justified. His sacrifice was not in vain. Now we are freed from sin and death. Rejoice and be thankful to God for what Christ has done for you.

Amen.