

Matthew 27:45-50 “What Jesus Said on the Cross, and Why?”\*\* [\[1\]](#)

Main Idea: This morning, we’re going to look together at what Jesus said on the cross. We’ll be considering all seven of the statements He made, but giving particular attention to the fourth (and perhaps the most stunning) of His statements as recorded in Matthew 27:45-50.

The Seven Sayings of Jesus from the Cross:

Jesus’ first words: Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing (Luke 23:34).”

Jesus’ second words: “Today you will be with Me in paradise (Luke 23:43).”

Jesus’ third words: “Dear woman, here is your son... Here is your mother,” (John 19:26-27).”

Jesus’ fourth words: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me (Matt. 27:46).”

Jesus’ fifth words: “I am thirsty (John 19:28).”

Jesus’ sixth words: “It is finished (John 19:30).”

Jesus’ seventh words: “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit (Luke 23:46).”

I. On the cross Jesus felt the anguish of sin.

A. He fulfilled prophecy.

1. Jesus identified with Psalm 22.
2. Jesus accomplished Psalm 22.

B. He faced hell for us.

1. Jesus took our sin for us.
2. Jesus became sin for us.

II. On the cross Jesus felt the agony of silence.

A. He asked a question.

B. He received no answer.

III. On the cross Jesus felt the abandonment of a Son.

Challenge: In light of what happened on the cross...

1. Let us thank Jesus.
2. Let us learn from Jesus.
3. Let us hate the sin that brought such agony on Jesus.
4. Let us never forget that He endured the pain of being *alone* so that we might never be *alone* again.

This past Friday, on the day we call Good Friday, our church family invited neighbors and friends from our community to meet in nine different homes to do a Bible study together pondering the subject of what Jesus said on the cross, and why He said it. We explored particularly His first saying, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing (Luke 23:34)."

This morning, we're going to look together at what Jesus said on the cross. We'll be considering all seven of the statements He made, but giving particular attention to the fourth (and perhaps the most stunning) of those statements as recorded in Matthew 27:45-50.

I recognize the fact that today is Resurrection Sunday, also called Easter. Why talk about His death on the day we're celebrating His resurrection? But the fact is, we'll not truly appreciate the wonder of His defeat of death if we don't appreciate the reason for His death. So we'll celebrate this morning, but we'll celebrate more meaningfully if we take time to meditate on the words our Savior uttered from the cross.

I want to take you to the scene of the cross. I know you know the story, but do you know what actually happened on that Judean hillside outside of Jerusalem? Yes, Jesus died, but how and why?

On the cross, our beloved Savior endured many horrid types of pain. The blunt spikes that ripped through His hands and feet. The cruel mockery of the crowd. The thorns that pierced His brow.

Yet as terrible as was this pain, there was an even greater pain. The pain of being all alone. You see, Jesus was forsaken on the cross. He faced loneliness like no other person. We may go through deep valleys where we *feel* alone, forsaken, and forgotten by God. But Jesus *was* alone, all alone.

Oh friends, God the Father turned His back on His Son the day He hung on the cross. We feel the pain of His loneliness as we listen to His fourth saying from the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me (Matthew 27:46)?"

Charles Spurgeon wrote, "I do not think that the records of time, or even of eternity, contain a sentence more full of anguish. Here the wormwood and the gall, and all the other bitterness, are outdone. Here you may look as into a vast abyss; and though you strain your eyes, and gaze till sight fails you, yet you perceive no bottom; it is measureless, unfathomable, inconceivable. This anguish of the Saviour on your behalf and mine is no more to be measured and weighed than the sin which needed it, or the love which endureth it. We will adore where we cannot comprehend (51)."

They nailed Jesus to the cross at nine in the morning. The first words He spoke, as recorded in Scripture, were a prayer uttered in behalf of His murderers, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing (Luke 23:34)." Amazing, while dying a death He didn't deserve to die, He talked about forgiveness. He asked His Father to forgive His executioners for their mindless crime. And of course, whatever Jesus prayed was in tune with God's will, so it ought not surprise us that He answered this prayer. Just a few weeks later, thousands of Jews repented and believed in Christ on the day of Pentecost and experienced the forgiveness of God.

One man experienced forgiveness that very day. To the repentant thief right next to Him, Jesus uttered His second statement, "Today you will be with Me in paradise (Luke 23:42-43)." No one is too far gone for Jesus, no one.

The Lord spoke His third words to his mother Mary and disciple John, words of compassion (John 19:26-27): "Dear woman, here is your son," he told Mary, speaking of John, and to John, "Here is your mother," as He entrusted Mary's care to John.

In His fourth saying, Jesus poured out the anguish of his soul, crying in words we'll ponder carefully in a moment, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken Me?"

His fifth words, spoken after three hours of suffering in the darkness, were: "I am thirsty (John 19:28)."

His sixth words: "It is finished (John 19:30)."

And Jesus' seventh and final words: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit (Luke 23:46)."

Of the seven statements our Savior proclaimed, I'm not sure any can help us grasp what happened on the cross most clearly than His fourth. It is reported that Martin Luther sat for hours without food or rest, silently pondering them, and when at last he spoke, Luther said, "God forsaken of God! Who can understand that?" (Strauss, 68)

Preachers and writers have described this fourth saying in a variety of ways. It's been called "The Cry of Desolation," "The Cry of Desertion," "The Cry of Dereliction," "The Cry of Despair," and "The Cry of Desperation." (Strauss, 68)

Before we ponder His words, allow me to lay out the context. The Gospel writer Luke recorded Jesus' first two pronouncements from the cross. John alone recorded the third. Matthew and Mark both record the fourth. In fact, it is the only saying Matthew and Mark record, and it is the only saying repeated in two different gospel accounts.

Remember, Luke was not an apostle. Matthew was. He had followed Jesus for three years. He had fled for his life that night the soldiers came for Jesus.

Notice, from Matthew's perspective in Matthew 27, some details at the scene of the cross:

- verse 33 -- Jesus was crucified at a place that looked like a skull.
- verse 34 -- He refused any sedative to dull the pain. He chose to endure the full weight of His horrid execution.
- verse 37 -- A mocking sign was nailed above Him.
- verses 39-40 -- The crowd scoffed at Jesus. They scoffed at His prediction (40). They scoffed at His lack of ability (41-42 "Come down!"). They scoffed at His claim (43 "I am the Son of God").

These were blasphemous sins! Jesus could have rightly called the angels to destroy the mob, the world, for this blasphemy. He did not. Rather, He did the unthinkable. He chose to take their sin, and their judgment, upon Himself.

How do we know that? Look what happened in verse 45, "From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land."

Darkness. There's something eerie about darkness. Mysterious. We feel vulnerable in darkness.

When our girls were little, they didn't like to go downstairs to the dark basement alone. Can you relate? "Daddy, will you go with me?" would be their request. Darkness makes us feel defenseless, especially when we are *alone*.

For the Jews, darkness in the land was a sign of judgment and tragedy. Mark tells us that Jesus was nailed to the cross at the third hour (Mk 15:25). That's 9:00 in the morning. He died at the ninth hour, that is, at 3:00 in the afternoon. He was on the cross for six hours. During the final three hours, from noon to 3:00, there was darkness. Why?

That's exactly what God predicted would happen. Eight centuries earlier, the prophet Amos recorded this in Amos 8:9-10, "'In that day,' declares the Sovereign LORD, 'I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. I will turn your religious feasts into mourning and all your singing into weeping. I will make all of you wear sackcloth and shave your heads. I will make that time like mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day.'

And so the words came forth from Jesus in His native Aramaic, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" As we probe

those words one by one we discover what happened on the cross, and why. Jesus endured three horrible experiences. Here is the first.

## I. On the cross Jesus felt the *anguish of sin*.

*"My God, My God."*

Notice He did not pray, "My Father." In His first saying, He cried, "Father, forgive them." In His last He would say, "Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit." But here He calls out, not to "My Father," but to "My God."

Why the difference? I'd like to suggest there were two important reasons.

**A. He fulfilled prophecy.** "My God, my God" are the first words from a psalm of David, Psalm 22 to be specific. Psalm 22 is a messianic psalm. Thus, by quoting from Psalm 22...

### *1. Jesus identified with Psalm 22.* Let's turn to Psalm 22.

There on the cross, Jesus quoted these words penned by David. You'll notice that "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" are the first words of the psalm. I would suggest that by quoting the first verse, Jesus identified with the *whole* psalm.

Verses 1-2, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving ["helping" in the KJV] me, so far from the words of my groaning ["roaring" in the KJV]? O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, and am not silent."

The psalm speaks of the silence of God. Then it moves to the holiness of God (3)--here's why God was silent! "Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the praise of Israel."

The psalm predicts the Messiah's rejection by hateful men (in verses 6-8, 12-13). Then it records a vivid description of the horrors of crucifixion (14-18): "I am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing."

David penned those words ten centuries B.C. And there on the cross, Jesus identified with the 22nd Psalm. It summed up His feelings. But that's not all. By quoting from it...

### *2. Jesus accomplished Psalm 22.* He fulfilled the 22nd Psalm. He experienced what it predicted.

It's significant that Psalm 22 does not end in dismay, but in hope. Verse 24 states, "For He has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help."

God did hear! And though the pain was great, notice the result. Verses 27-28, "All the ends of the world will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations."

Do you see the sovereignty of God at the cross? Jesus' death was no accident. When Jesus cried out, "My God, my God," He was saying, "What's happening to Me right now is the very anguish David predicted. God's purpose is happening exactly as planned!"

The physical suffering Jesus endured was unthinkable. Yet compared to the spiritual agony of the cross, it pales. For on the cross, not only did our Savior fulfill prophecy, He also faced something for us.

## **B. He faced hell for us.**

"Bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned He stood, Sealed my pardon with His blood, Hallelujah, what a Savior! / Guilty, vile and helpless we, Spotless Lamb of God was He; Full atonement! can it be? Hallelujah, what a Savior!"

"Was it for crimes that I have done, He groaned upon the tree? Amazing pity, grace unknown, and love beyond degree! / Well might the sun in darkness hide, and shut His glories in, when Christ, the mighty Maker died, for man the creature's sin."

What words! "My God, my God." 2 Corinthians 5:21 is the key which unlocks the mystery of Jesus' fourth saying. What actually happened during those three dark hours of anguish? Ponder Paul's explanation, "For He made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us." Here's what happened on the Cross, two things...

1. *Jesus took our sin for us.* But He not only took our sin, He...

2. *Jesus became sin for us.* That's why He faced hell for us--because He took our sin and indeed became sin for us.

This is holy ground, beloved. Our Savior died as a substitute, *our* substitute, if we have believed in Him. Jesus gave His life *for us*. Consider the following passages:

- John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."
- Isaiah 53:6 "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."
- John 11:49-50 Caiaphas the high priest said, "It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people...And this he spoke not of himself; but, being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die *for the nation*."
- Galatians 3:13 "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."
- 1 Peter 2:24 "Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree."

There on the cross, Jesus took our sin for us. No, more than that, He became sin for us. He endured hell FOR US, in our place. While alone on the cross, Jesus felt the anguish of sin.

That's not all. Our Savior felt a second horrid pain.

## II. On the cross Jesus felt the *agony of silence*.

Notice what Jesus did...

**A. He asked a question.** *Why?* As far as I know this is the only recorded question Jesus ever asked His Father.

And how did He ask the question? The text says that Jesus "cried out in a loud voice." If you know anything about Roman crucifixion, that was unusual. After hanging on a cross for six hours, the typical victim would have great difficulty breathing, let alone, crying out.

Listen to that word. "Why!" Remember what Jesus is doing. He is praying! Though in His darkest hour, He prays. Sometimes the most eloquent prayer is little more than a cry (Hobbs, 58).

Jesus cried, "Why!" Is it ever okay to ask "Why" when we pray? Surely! Our Lord did. We must bring all of our questions, all of our burdens to God. "Why" was not a challenge, but a faith-cry (Strauss, (75).

Jesus cried, "Why?"--the question of a baffled heart. But there was no answer. Jesus asked a question, but...

**B. He received no answer.** Instead, He felt the agony of silence. The sound of that silence was the most terrible sound ever heard. There Jesus hung, in the dark, in the agony of silence.

Have you ever heard the agony of silence? I can guarantee you this. You and I have never heard it to the degree that our Savior did at Calvary. "Why?" He asked. But His question went unanswered--at least for a time.

Jesus felt a third pain that day--first the anguish of sin, and then the agony of silence.

### III. On the cross Jesus felt the *abandonment of a Son.*

*"Have you forsaken me?"*

Is there a sadder word in the English language than this? Forsaken. In the Greek, it is made up of three words (Jones, 54): to leave (meaning "to abandon") + down (suggesting "defeat" and "helplessness") = in (referring to place or circumstance).

In those dreadful hours, Jesus was all alone. He who had enjoyed eternal fellowship with His Father now felt abandoned by His Father. Ponder the contrast...

**A. Prior to this He enjoyed sweet communion with His Father.** During His incarnation, Jesus experienced times of intimate fellowship with His Father. Through prayer. He often retreated to solitary places for such communion--such as the Garden of Gethsemane. But on the Cross there was no sweet communion...

**B. On the Cross, He felt the horror of hell.** In eternity past, the Son of God experienced unhindered union with His Father. When He came to earth, He laid aside the expression of His glory, but still enjoyed intimacy during prayer times.

Now on the cross, even that is gone. No fellowship. Only hell. Jesus went through the fires of hell on the cross. Literally. During those three hours of darkness, the Son of God tasted an eternity of suffering. It's true. On the Cross....

1. *The Infinite One endured an infinite degree of suffering.* How do we know that? Because of what He said, "My God, my God, why have You FORSAKEN me?" Forsaken! Abandoned by His Father!

Or to put it another way, on the Cross...

2. *The Light of the world hung in darkness.* Do you see Him there? The Light of the world hanging in darkness!

And why? Because sin isolates man from God. Sin cut off Adam from God in the garden. Sin cut off Jesus from the Father, too. Not His sin. Our sin.

Herschel Hobbs wrote (53), "If you can imagine every sin that has ever been or ever will be committed being reduced to one nauseous mass, then you can grasp the horror of that which was nailed to that cross...See them as one bundle of writhing snakes! Smell their putrefying odor! Then we begin to get some fair idea of the revulsion that was in the holy heart of God."

I would suggest to you (as Spurgeon observed, 57), that to be forsaken of God was much more a source of anguish to Jesus than it would be to us. Do you know why? It's because He was perfectly holy.

We are not. Unholy creatures hide from a Holy God, like bugs that scatter when their rock is overturned. But for

the Holy Son of God to be abandoned by His Holy Father? O the eternal pain Jesus endured!

Certainly, none of us are immune from trials. We face trials of all sorts. But we cling to the promise, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art WITH ME (Psalm 23:4)." He's always there for us.

But Jesus was all alone. He felt forsaken. Abandoned.

Yes, Jesus felt the anguish of sin, the agony of silence, and the abandonment of a Son. And so He cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Someone has written (Turnbull, 35):

*There was none other good enough, to pay the price of sin.*

*He only could unlock the gate of heaven, and let us in.*

*We may not know, we cannot tell, what pains He had to bear,*

*but we believe it was for us, He hung and suffered there.*

Answer this. The crowd heard Jesus that day. How did the crowd respond to His question? They responded in mocking rejection, didn't they?

Some thought He was calling for Elijah (47). One of them ran and got a sponge of vinegar wine. Why? Out of mercy? No. It was to dull his pain, so he wouldn't die too soon. To prolong His agony.

And then they watched Him, saying (49), "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."

And so, Jesus was all alone.

You say, "I don't understand how those people could have been so cruel to Jesus." Let me ask you a question. What have *you* done with Jesus? It's easy to criticize others for their failures, but let's look in the mirror of God's Word and be honest. What have you done with Jesus?

I'd like to challenge each of us to do four things this morning.<sup>[2]</sup>

### Challenge: In light of what happened on the cross...

1. *Let us thank Jesus.* We deserved the hell He took. God will never forsake us because God forsook His Son on our behalf. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Why did Jesus utter that cry? So you and I would never have to utter it!

Are you thankful for what Jesus endured? Then tell Him. And show Him with your life. Tell others about Him and His amazing love.

2. *Let us learn from Jesus.* We all go through times of grief and pain, times when we feel all alone. As if God has forgotten us. We must learn from Jesus' example. In those times, we must turn to Scripture and prayer. We must turn to God, not away from Him.

3. *Let us hate the sin that brought such agony on Jesus.* What a wretched thing sin is! Sin took our lovely Lord to the tree.

How is it that we can laugh at sin? How is it possible that we can sit in front of a TV, and in the name of

entertainment, watch with delight things that caused our Savior so much agony? How can we tolerate pet sins in our lives, knowing what those sins forced our Lord to endure?

Oh friend, if we really love Christ, we will hate sin. Listen to Spurgeon (68): "O, if I had a dear brother who had been murdered, what would you think of me if I treasured the knife which had been crimsoned with his blood?--if I made a friend of the murderer, and daily consorted with the assassin, who drove the dagger into my brother's heart? Surely I, too, must be an accomplice in the crime!"

"Sin murdered Christ; will you be a friend to it? Sin pierced the heart of the Incarnate God; can you love it?"

If our sin put Jesus through such agony, how can we be so glib about it? Let us hate sin, all of it. Let us rid ourselves of sin, today.

I mustn't leave you hanging. I must tell you the rest of the story. The One who hung on the Cross on Friday is the same One who left the tomb on Sunday. That's the accomplishment we celebrate today. Yes, Jesus is alive, and Jesus is Lord. Is He *your* Lord?

Call upon Him today. Worship Him today. And fourthly...

*4. Let us never forget that He endured the pain of being alone so that we might never be alone again. Amen.*

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\*\* Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

[1] This message has been adapted from a sermon preached earlier at WBC as part of a series on "The Seven Sayings of Jesus from the Cross."

[2] see Spurgeon, 67-8