

The Cross of Christ – Part 10

We went through the journey to the cross. When we came to the cross, remember, we prepared our hearts to land; because a prepared heart is going to have more growth rather than just coming into a subject with no heart preparation. Then we looked at the Garden of Gethsemane—the God-man in the Garden. The “sweet suffering” — that suffering which is not sought, but which is accepted to the glory of God. “Don’t weep for Me; weep for yourselves and your children.” “Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do.” “Today you shall be with Me in paradise.” And last time, “and darkness fell.” Remember, we walked into the darkness to see all that we could see from the sum of the Word of God. And today, we move on.

Today, “Why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Recall that Job questioned God incessantly and he was answered, albeit by God asking *Job* questions. Now Jesus asked the question as He comes out of the darkness. And no answer comes; not even a question in response from God the Father directed back to Jesus, but only silence. Recall that when darkness fell at the cross, no explanation in the Gospel accounts is given for what happened in that darkness. To explore that darkness, we had to seek and look at the sum of His Word as truth. Here, we have to have the same attitude. Our attitude is to be in some way like the woman in Luke 8:43-44 who had the issue from the womb. And remember, her attitude was, ‘if I can just touch the hem of His garment, perhaps I will be healed.’ So it would be presumptive for us to think that we can grasp the depth to the fullest of the meaning of a question that God, Himself let hang out there for all time and chose not to answer in a direct sense. But let us try, in humility and not presumption, to touch the hem of the robe of Jesus as He asked that question. Now sometimes, given our fallen natures, we tend to cheapen that which comes easily. You’ve all heard the phrase, “familiarity breeds contempt.” And sometimes we do treasure more that which we must dig for as opposed to that which comes easily. When something comes easily, we often tend to just file it away to possibly retrieve it someday if some situation should come up where we would need it or where more likely we think someone else would need it.

You remember, one of my favorite quotes is, “I love good advice, I’m always quick to pass it on to someone who really needs it.” And sometimes we have that attitude toward Scripture, even if we’re listening to a sermon. Our attitude is not getting the log out of our own eye; our attitude is more commonly, ‘oh, I know who could use to hear that Scripture.’ But if we seek and the answer is given indirectly, through our vigorous pursuit, driven by hunger and thirst, to touch the hem of His garment, by the revelation of the Holy Spirit, confirming to our spirit, consistent with the Spirit written Scripture, then that revelation can truly function as empowered knowledge—to transform us from glory to glory into the image of Jesus Christ. And after all, remember, our goal is not to apply a specific method; our goal is to have a specific outcome. To give God maximum glory, to give God maximum pleasure, and to be transformed from glory to glory into His very likeness by the renewing of our minds. So let’s seek a little mind renewal about the possible meanings and impact of this question that Jesus asked.

Now in the Garden, we saw that Jesus' soul was in agony unto death. And that was manifested in the body by profusely perspiring blood, all at the revelation of what was soon to occur in the spirit on His cross. So we can come to this point and stop with the physical agony and the soulish agony. In fact, most do stop there. There is a certain gloom about trying to press on into the darkness and into this question where we have a tendency to say, 'stop, no more of this. If it's not readily available and it's not perfectly clear, then there's no point in pursuing it.' There's a point where we tend to say, 'well I can't understand, so why press on?' Well, I think God wants us to press on. He said, "seek my face." Remember, when you think that you know is when revelation stops. The man who thinks he knows doesn't know as he ought to know; because had he not thought he knew, he would have received greater revelation. When you say, 'I do not need to know', revelation stops. When you say, 'I do not want to know', revelation stops. So He said, "Ask, seek, and knock" and He doesn't get offended if we obey. He told us two things: "Seek My face" and "No man can see My face and live." So we function, remember, like Moses. We seek His face and let Him decide how much of His face to show us, how much of His face we can see and yet still survive; because if we saw Him in His fullest, we would see the God Who is a consuming fire and we could not live in the face of that. But the point is to let God Himself, be the regulator of how much revelation we receive, not let our weak efforts be that regulator. Because, remember, if we judge to regulate the degree of revelation rather than letting Him regulate it, we're once again in the position of judging God by saying that we can regulate what revelation we would receive (or should receive) better than He can regulate it. And, remember, the tendency to judge God is the root of all sin. So we're to follow Jesus. He is our model, not just our Savior. When He did not understand why He was forsaken, He asked why He was forsaken; and then He let the Father God be the regulator of whether or not to answer and the Father chose not to answer. So that should be our attitude. If we don't understand why Jesus uttered this question, God is not offended when we ask why. Because that's what His Son did and His Son, in fact, is our model. Although God Himself may choose not to answer.

Matthew 27:46 – "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Mark 15:34 – "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" And as we'll talk more about shortly, Psalm 22:1 – "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" That Psalm, remember, speaking of the crucified Messiah to come was written approximately 1,000 years before Jesus was on the cross uttering the words. Foreknown, foretold, for faith. Remember, the darkness fell at the sixth hour—namely noon. The darkness ended at the ninth hour—3:00 p.m. But these mournful words articulated by Jesus as He hung on the cross, were at the ninth hour—namely at the end of the darkness. We looked into the darkness last time, we peered in, remember, using the sum of the Word of God to see what we could discern about what happened there. The key point about the darkness was the spiritual suffering of Jesus Christ on the cross. The suffering that, in fact, paid for the price for our sins. That price that had to be paid was not just physical death; because physical death is not the full price to be paid for sin. "Thou shalt surely die" includes physical death; but also includes spiritual death, spiritual death being separation from God Himself. So Jesus, in that darkness remember, endured spiritual death. That is to say total separation, the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, totally

separated from the love essence of God, where there is no love, no grace, no mercy, no forgiveness and no communion, while being the recipient of the lake of fire—that is to say the total outpouring of the wrath of God. We can't fully understand it; but Jesus did it. Verification of it is at least somewhat given by this question at the end of the darkness. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Next poster. Now this statement includes many aspects. The first is it describes the situation. Remember, this is the one Who is hanging there stating this, Who says, "I am the truth." So we cannot say He wasn't forsaken if He, in fact, asked the question: "Why have You forsaken Me?" So it describes His situation. It also, in one sense, determines our destiny or plays a role in it. Remember the key question: Matthew 16:15 – "Who do you say that I am?" That's the question every human being faces and it separates out into two camps: Saints and unbelievers; the saved and the lost. Matthew 16:16 (the next verse gives the correct answer) – "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Now that question: "Who do you say that I am", that is directed to every human being includes the key component of answering that question, "Thou are the Christ, the Son of the living God", is to understand what all is included in this question that Jesus asks as He hangs on the cross: "Why have You forsaken me?" It's a request from Jesus to His Father God. He doesn't say 'Father God' as we'll explore it later; but He says, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

Now we don't want to miss a single potential revelation from this point. You remember, we said before, when an omniscient being asks a finite being a question, it's not so the omniscient being can gather more data with which to upgrade the quality of His analysis and decision making. And when a divine being, hanging on the cross, paying the price for your sins asked the question, it is also so that finite beings will contemplate that question and answer. No answer is directly given; but that doesn't mean we can't learn about things that would be included in the answer, had it been given. It conveys His anguish—the tone of the question. Both Matthew and Mark tell us that when Jesus asked this question, He cried out with a loud voice. That implies emotional intensity. Now we know in our physical selves that if we cry out with a loud voice, it can be from extreme positive or extreme negative things. It can be extreme happiness; it can be from extreme grief, or extreme anguish. So here we know Jesus is not experiencing happiness. Because, remember, happiness is circumstance dependent and the circumstances are unimaginably terrible, unspeakably horrible; so this cry in a loud voice is clearly not from happiness. The tone of the voice is not one of anger. There is no demand here, only a request to God. There is no judging of the Father. Jesus does not tell the Father what He should be doing—that is to say something other than forsaking Him. He simply seeks understanding by asking the question. The tone is one of anguish. The anguish that's being experienced here by Jesus as He comes out of this darkness in His forsaken condition is indescribably horrible.

Remember the Garden. "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death." And being in agony, was praying fervently and His sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground—all before the cross at the contemplation of the cross. So I believe that this grieving and this agony leading to "why hast Thou forsaken Me?" infinitely goes beyond

that which occurred in the Garden at the contemplation of the reality of what was to occur. The anguish in the Garden, remember, led to the only time in Scripture when Jesus, as the Son of Man, gave verbalization to His flesh. It's the only time He said, "May this cup pass from Me." Everything else, He was just in total agreement with the Father. But here He reveals His two natures as Son of God and Son of Man; in the Garden where the man said "May this cup pass from Me." But the Son of God overrules that and says, "nevertheless, Your will be done."

So if this much anguish in the Garden occurred at the contemplation of the cross, how much greater must have been the anguish associated with the reality of the cross, in the depths of the physical and spiritual suffering, to come to the point where the Son of God (Who had always been one with God) has to cry out in a loud voice, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Is it any wonder that His voice was loud. Now remember this is a person hanging on the cross Who is physically spent. He has been beaten, He has been crucified, He has shed blood, and He's hanging there. And yet, even physically spent, the utterance is in a loud voice, giving further testimony to the depth of the anguish within the One Who is uttering it.

It fulfills prophecy. We spoke of Psalm 22:1. Recall that David is described in I Samuel 13:14 as a man after God's own heart. Now that has two meanings and Jesus is exemplifying both. The first meaning of being after God's own heart is like the original to which one is being compared. So if a father with a gentle, soft, humble spirit has a son with a gentle, soft, humble spirit, the son is said to be after his father. Certainly Jesus is like His Father; and thus, a man after God's own heart. The second meaning is in passionate pursuit of. A man in passionate pursuit of business success is said to be after success. So Jesus is certainly in passionate pursuit of God's own heart as He cries out on the cross, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" In Psalm 22, remember, testifies of the suffering Messiah Who will be crucified. As Jesus hangs on the cross, His direct quotation out of Psalm 22:1 is the fulfillment of prophecy: foreknown, foretold, for faith. Now I used to argue with Susan back before I was a believer that if the Scripture says the Messiah will come riding in on a donkey, and a man knows that's the Scripture and arranges to ride in on a donkey, does that mean He's the Son of God? So I used to say that whenever Jesus fulfilled prophecy such as that, that it wasn't testimony He was the Son of God, it could as easily been the testimony of a manipulative man who knew the Scriptures. But I don't think that's the situation here; because we're not going to have a man hanging on the cross, undergoing this agony to manipulate the human race by pretending to be the Messiah. The proper interpretation is: this is obedience. I only do that which pleases the Father; and it pleased the Father for the Scriptures to be written; it pleased the Father to foreknow and foretell; and it pleases Me to obediently fulfill that which I know the Father wanted fulfilled.

Also, Jesus is effectively preaching a sermon to the bystanders, and to us 2,000 years later by asking this question. The analogy I use is this: In Luke 4:20-21 (Jesus is sitting and reading Isaiah 61:1, remember) "He opened the scroll and read. Jesus then sat down and said, today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." In other words, He's giving a message to the people listening that this Scripture is being fulfilled, as I stand

before you, basically as the Messiah. And He's doing the same as He speaks from the cross, testifying to us 2,000 years later as well as to the ones in attendance within earshot of the cross, the prophecy of the Messiah to be crucified, and Psalm 22 is being fulfilled within your hearing today.

He's standing on Scripture to pass His test. Recall that before His ministry began, Jesus went into the wilderness to be tested. That's described in Luke 4:1-13. And each time, recall that Satan tested Him, Jesus answered by quoting Scripture, namely from the Old Testament which is all that was written at that time and He is again our example. Here on the cross, as He's ending His ministry, He follows the same principle, as He's in the midst of His ultimate test, ultimate anguish, and ultimate suffering, He quotes Scripture. There's no better way, no other way to withstand the test. Now the testing in the wilderness was real and was severe. But no test can approximate the test that He's in the midst of now. But His response and our response are to be the same. In the midst of the test, we quote Scripture. Well, why do that? Because we're quoting God, Who wrote the Scripture. And the Scripture consists of words, but they're not just words. Hebrews 4:12 – "For the Word of God is living and active." Thus, this living word speaks life into us as we speak it in the midst of the test. So we are to speak the Word of God into our lesser tests; because there is no test which can approximate the ultimate test that Jesus is going through right now. Our heart preparation is to teach us to speak the Word of God into our lesser tests which are sure to come, and then our greater tests, which are sure to come. And receive the revelation that we can pass no test, in a spiritual sense, unless we too are standing on the Word of God. Why is that? Because the Word of God brings faith; it brings power; it brings life. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. And that comes not only by hearing me or someone else speak the Word of God; it comes by hearing yourself speak the Word of God. Faith comes with the Word. Also, the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. The Word of God circumcises the heart; it splits soul from spirit; it'll show you what is flesh and show you what is spirit. The words that I speak are spirit and they are life. So what more can you do to pass the test in the spiritual sense than to speak the Word of God in the midst of the test; because the Word of God is living; the Word of God brings life; the Word of God brings power; the Word of God brings faith. And that's part of the grace of God which is sufficient for that particular situation.

So Jesus spoke a question. But He also is making a statement including within His own hearing just like David. I Samuel 30:6 (in the King James version) – "David encouraged himself in the Lord, his God." So here Jesus encouraged Himself in the Lord, His God. He did so as He fulfilled the prophecy of Psalm 22:1. So as He quotes the Messianic Scripture, He's fulfilling the Messianic Scripture. How can He help but remind Himself as it comes into His own hearing; the reminder of just Who He is and just what He is accomplishing as He is articulating this question. He is the Messiah; He is redeeming the world; He is paying the price for the sins of man; He is reconciling men to the Father; He is paving the way for your adoption as children of God into the family of God; He is ensuring your eternal destiny with God. How could all that not remind Him of the joy that's before Him as He's hanging there redeeming the world. And that joy of the Lord, remember, is your strength. That's the joy that is before Him and joy that He's hearing;

and joy that He's speaking; and the joy that becomes His strength as he quotes the Word of God. That's enabling Him to complete His mission, by speaking only that which He has heard from the Father in the Word. So He's quoting the Word of God, while fulfilling the Word of God, drawing from the Word of God, encouraging Himself in the Lord, His God. Now how pure is the spirit, who in His worse test and in His deepest anguish, cries out to His God, while quoting the Word of His God as He fulfills the prophecy of His God, walking out the plan of God, to fulfill the purposes of God, while displaying the character of God, and modeling for us the Son of God, and how we too are to walk as sons of God, even when we feel forsaken by our God and even when we can't hear the voice of God directly. We do so by standing on the Word of God, drawing from its strength, drawing from its power, drawing from its faith, and drawing from its life, even if we don't feel the presence of God as we feel forsaken. So He's not just fulfilling Scripture, He's modeling for us how to walk in Scripture as the adopted children of God.

He's also praying without ceasing. He asked the question, but we have to remember who the question is addressed to...to God. So the question itself is a prayer. So in His greatest test, in the ultimate test, His response is to turn to God in the only two possible ways: the Word of God and prayer to God. He knows where to begin, remember, "In the beginning God." So any thought, word, or deed that can't be traced, and isn't rooted in the beginning, God, will be a misguided thought, word, or deed. So He quotes God as He speaks to God, by beginning with God, saying "My God". Whatever He understands about His situation has come from God. If there is any further understanding that's going to be spoken into the situation, it will come from God. There is no other source of truth; because, remember, truth is what God is and how God views everything else. So this question, phrased to God, and all questions phrased to God are really the same global question: 'My God, how do You view this reality?' Striving for truth is simply to ask that question. And only God can answer it by His Word and by His Spirit, and by the example of His Son. Only God can tell you how He views the reality of any of your life situations.

This is a prayer. Now recall that Satan in Job 1:11 – he effectively told God to let me at Job and I will make him curse You to Your face. But Job never cursed God. Now like Job, but far beyond Job, Jesus endured the pits of Hell in the three hours of darkness, yet did not come out of the darkness cursing His God. Job said in Job 13:15 (in the King James version) – Though He slay me (meaning physically), yet will I trust in Him. Now Jesus is effectively saying, though He slay Me (not just physically, but physically and spiritually, by forsaking Me), yet will I trust Him and cry out to Him; because He is where I begin, My God, and He will be My Omega regardless of what happens in between and regardless of whether He articulates an answer to Me from Heaven or not. And notice the purity of the heart that's crying out to His God. Again, Jesus is transcending Job. Job in Job 13:15 said – "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him"; yet the verse doesn't end there. He continues to say, "nevertheless, I will argue my ways before Him." Job's thrust was that if he could just gain access into the courtroom of God, he would defend his own righteousness before his God. But that was not the attitude of Jesus; because He didn't seek a courtroom in which to defend Himself; He only sought to hear from the Father. He let God be the judge and rested in God as the judge rather than

pronouncing Himself as the judge of God and seeking to defend His righteousness before God. He had no drive to argue any case before His God. He rested in His God, in the midst of His forsakenness, even when confronted with the silence of His God in response to His request. So He obviously continued to walk in humility as described in Philippians 2:8 – “He humbled Himself by being obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross”, and I might add even while forsaken by the Father, receiving only silence in response to the anguished question. So Jesus continued in His humility. ‘My God, if further understanding comes into this situation, it’ll have to come from you because You are God and I have nothing to teach You and I refuse to judge You even if You don’t answer. So I ask and I rest in You as God, whether or not You answer in the midst of my anguish.’

So Jesus began with God; He quoted God; He prayed to God; but He also prayed in the possessive...My God. He’s not praying to a philosophic concept; He’s not praying to a vague theologic abstraction; He is not utilizing positive thinking; He’s not saying ‘I’m okay, You’re okay’; He’s taking it personally. He’s praying to the omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, infinite, Holy God; the God Who is infinite, yet personal; the God Who is transcendent, yet intimate. Jesus has not deserted His God as He prays, My God, praying in the possessive. Though You forsake Me, yet do I worship You and I regard You as My God even if I don’t hear from You in the midst of this anguish and the midst of this forsakenness. The ultimate test...and I ask you, is Jesus passing the test as He rests in His God while forsaken by His God, hearing nothing but silence from His God in response to the anguished question?

So my time is up for today and as always, I thank you for yours.