

The Cross of Christ – Part 11

Remember, we went through holiness, sin, judgment, Hell and Heaven in order to come to the cross. We prepared to land; this is holy ground. We looked at the God-man in the Garden of Gethsemane—“Not My will, but Thine be done.” The sweetness of suffering—that is, remember, masochism is the willful seeking of pain because of feeling unworthy of pleasure. But the crucifixion of the Christian is the willful acceptance of pain out of devotion to a greater pleasure—namely the glorification of God. Targeted tears—“Don’t weep for Me, weep for yourselves and your children.” The forgiving of ignorance—“Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do.” Paradise promised—“Today, you will be with Me in paradise.” “And darkness fell” - we explored the darkness to try to see into the dark drawing from the sum of the Word of God as truth. Then last time we began on, “Why hast Thou forsaken Me?”

Next poster. As we went through this, we got down into the middle of number 8 last time. We looked at this question from different perspectives. It describes a situation. In a way, it plays a role in determining our destiny; remember, “Who do you say that I am? Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And to understand Jesus Christ and Who He was and what He did and the price He paid and what we gained and so on, you have to come to grips with this question: “Why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Because it was hurled out there into the air, unanswered by the Father God, but in our struggle and wrestling to come to grips with this question as to what it means, it does help us understand in a more profound way, Who Jesus Christ was and what He accomplished here. He also is making a request from His Father. He is conveying His anguish. He’s fulfilling prophecy. Psalm 22:1 (remember?) – “My God, My God, why has Thou forsaken Me?” He’s preaching a sermon to us. Remember, I used Isaiah 61:1 (I think) that Jesus was reading when He opened the scroll in front of the Pharisees and sat down and said, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” So as He speaks this prophetic revelation out of Psalm 22:1, He’s preaching a sermon to us, 2,000 years later, saying, ‘at this moment this prophecy is being fulfilled’; not in your hearing because we weren’t there, but in your understanding of foreknown, foretold, for faith. Psalm 22:1 is fulfilled; and thus, preaching a sermon to us about its fulfillment. He’s standing on Scripture; because remember the Word of God is the source of life, the source of power, the source of faith, and Jesus Christ Himself is standing on Scripture as He articulates it even in the midst of His ultimate anguish. He’s praying without ceasing; and we left it at that point.

Last week, I was commenting on the following: Jesus began with God, just like “In the beginning God.” That’s where we begin every thought, every word, and every deed. He quoted God as He prayed to God; and He prayed in the possessive of My God. So He wasn’t praying to some positive thinking; He wasn’t praying to some philosophic concept; He wasn’t praying to some vague theologic abstraction; He was praying in the possessive, taking it personally of “My God.” And that’s the message for us. Our God, Who is infinite is also personal; our God Who is transcendent is intimate. Jesus had not forsaken *His* God, for He prayed “My God.” This was a one sided forsakenness.

Now let’s look at the next poster. The progressive salutations with which we go through in our Christian walk, in order to see one more point about this, looking only at the top part. Progressively, we questioned before we were believers, “Is there a God? And then we said “God—there is a God”; “I believe there is a God.” And then “my God”; as I began to approach this God in a personal way believing that He cared about Me enough that this is personal. And then the revelation, “Father; I’m born again into Your family” as the Spirit testifies to my spirit by which we cry out to this Father. And it’s not just Father, it’s “my Father”, as we relate to Him in this personal, familial connection. And then the ultimate, intimate “Abba Father”, what is called Daddy—that is to say the tenderest, most intimate

relationship with Him. But the point I want to make here is that Jesus, at this point on His walk, on the cross, has reversed this progression that we go through. In the Garden of Gethsemane in Mark 14:36 – He was at the closest intimacy before the cross revealed by the fact that He prayed, “Abba Father, not My will, but Thine be done.” But that was before the cross, before the darkness. In the Garden, the Father/Son relationship was still existent and still fully operational and still fully intimate. But not now, not at the end of the darkness. Not only had the intimacy of the “Abba Father” been broken; but the very Father/Son relationship had been broken. Jesus didn’t cry out “Abba Father” or even “My Father”, or even “Father”. He went even further back and all He could cry out is My “God”; because He is forsaken. ‘You’re not functioning as Father, but You are still *God* and You are still *My God* though You forsake Me at this moment with the weight of the sins of the world upon Me.’ Now no earthly example can reveal to us the fullness of the anguish that had to be carried at that moment as Jesus cried out, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” But examples from our Earthly existence are not useless so long as we understand their limitations. We don’t want to ever be lulled into thinking that we know based on earthly experience.

So let’s look at some finite human examples to at least grasp the polarity of what Jesus is experiencing, even if not the magnitude of it. Because we don’t want to function thinking that we know; to believe that what He is experiencing is expressible by words is to place more faith in our words (our language) than in the cross, in the reality of what Jesus is experiencing. Now while doing that, using examples while acknowledging their limitations, we’re walking in humility and not pride. Pride would be to see no need to taste of a deeper understanding or to believe that we have tasted fully; and thus, have no need of further revelation. But humility is to believe that we need to taste and to taste all that we can taste—that’s called hunger and thirst, while knowing that we *will not* taste fully. Now how do we feel when we have the perception that we are forsaken by God? We feel rotten; we feel empty; we feel sad, angry, depressed, lonely, hopeless; and we feel that way based on a *perception*, not on a reality. Hebrews 13:5 – “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you.” Now we know the truth of that in our minds; but not always in our emotions. So we often walk by our emotions as we *feel* forsaken, rather than by the truth which is, He will never forsake us. God has not forsaken us—ever—but, we have distanced ourselves from Him at times. I think I told you all before the story of the old farmer and his wife. As he’s tooling down the road in his pickup truck, the wife is over by the shotgun seat door and she says, “John do you remember when we were young, how I used to be wrapped up around you and you had your arm around me as we drove down this same road? Why did we have to lose that, why couldn’t it be that way again?” And the old farmer looked at her and said, “Wife, I haven’t moved.” In other words, he was still sitting in the same place behind the steering wheel that he had always been, even when they were young lovers. The wife had moved, but in her mind there was a distance between them. And sometimes, it’s that way with God where we distance ourselves from Him, feel forsaken; but in reality, the truth is *He hasn’t moved*. He’s the same place He has always been. But if we can feel that low based on a perception, then how low must Jesus have felt at the *reality* of being forsaken by His God? He was forsaken, though we, in truth, have never been forsaken.

Another earthly example: How do we feel when we enter the joy of two becoming one in marriage? As they progressively become one flesh to oneness—unity, over time. How do we then feel when we experience the agony of what had become one, now becoming two in separation and divorce? The degree of agony of one becoming two is based on the degree to which the two had become one. So the more they had become one, the greater is the emotional anguish when now separation and divorce follows. That’s why it’s easy to understand the greatest threat to the law enforcement officers is when they go to domestic squabbles; because of that separation stress and emotion that’s wrapped up when people had taken the marriage vows and had headed toward oneness. And now, use that example to

contemplate the totality of God, the Father and Jesus, the Son. Now, followed by the totality of the separation of those two Who had always been in perfect oneness, now becoming perfect “two-ness”. That is to say separated as One totally forsakes One with Whom He had always been one. So we can taste from personal experience our suffering in order to begin to see the suffering of Christ, but for the following reasons let us never think we’ve tasted fully based on our experiential understanding in our fleshly bodies. Suffering is heightened by the tenderness of the spirit. So I can look at a dead dog and not cry; but my Susan has a tender spirit and cannot do that without beginning to cry. Our spirits are numbed by sin, so we cannot experience the fullness of anguish of separation from God. But that’s not the truth of Jesus; because Jesus had the “tenderest” spirit of all, totally uncontaminated by sin.

So when our fellowship with God dries up, relatively speaking, we lose but little, because it’s based on our limited communion and our limited surrender and our limited oneness. Yet, even then, how horrible do we feel when we feel forsaken by God? But to Jesus, can you imagine what He had lost as His ocean of fellowship with fullness of unhindered communion with the Father is now broken to the point of forsakenness? We have limited hunger and thirst, yet we feel *awful* when we as Christians feel that we have lost communion with the One Who can satisfy that hunger and thirst. But to a truly, completely, always Holy man, Whose very sustenance, Whose very nourishment, Whose very meat was to do the will of His Father; He simply must be in communion with His God. If not, what must He do? He must cry out in a loud voice in the anguish of the forsakenness by the One with Whom He’d always been one. Because He can endure *everything* without crying out, except being separated from His Father.

Next poster. The last point that we want to extract from this sequence is walking by faith. Jesus’ faith did not fail, for He said, “My God.” He did not withdraw from God; He didn’t ask for relief; He didn’t judge the Father as should have done something different. But that loud cry came up from a real absence that was being mourned. The cry of a bursting heart in total anguish of having lost the sustenance of the One Whom He had always done only what He saw the Father do. And always spoke only what He heard the Father spoke and now He asked a question and no answer even comes. II John 6 – “And this is love that we walk according to His commandments.” So did Jesus do that? Did He walk according to the commandments of the Father God? I think He did. You see Jesus was so surrendered to God that He surrendered to be left without God in order to accomplish the *will of God*. He obeyed His God, though He cried out to His God in the anguish of what obedience called for—namely *losing* His God. Is there greater devotion? Is there greater love? Is there greater obedience? Is there greater surrender? Is there greater humility than that? Yes, He showed His uncompromising love for the Father as He *truly* fulfilled ‘until death do us part’. He did so, not just until physical death, but unto spiritual death. And spiritual death, remember, is defined as separation from God. Does God desert His saints in their travail, even their martyrdom? Does He desert His martyrs? Psalm 23:4 – “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for Thou art with me.” And it is always so. Daniel 3:25 – “As Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown into the fiery furnace, He did not forsake them, He joined them.” As the guards looked and said, wait I see a fourth person in the furnace with them. But this time that we are examining today, it is different. This is the *only* time that God *ever* forsook any dying martyr. He did forsake Jesus this one and only time.

Now this was a one time in history event; because this was a one time history behavior by God. You see, other martyrs and the number of martyrs is not yet complete, maybe some of us will even be martyrs; but other martyrs die in loving obedience while doing the will of God. This martyr died in loving obedience while doing the will of God; and thus, to pay the price for the sins of the world. And there is an *absolute uniqueness* to this that separates it from all other human endeavor. You see, others died physically while alive spiritually in communion with their God. This One died physically and

endured death spiritually while forsaken by His God. That's why no man should ever look at nails, and thorns, and whips, and spears, and insults, and conclude that he understands the cross fully based on those things. Our focus on the physical suffering alone, is simply our refusal to look into the darkness, to look at the forsakenness to see what really happened in the spirit of Jesus Christ.

We know that spiritual sufferings are the worst kind of miseries. A man can endure many things if he knows and feels that he can go to his God and that his God is walking with him through that to a higher purpose. Proverbs 18:14 says – “A wounded spirit, who can bear?” Now what more wounded spirit is there than that spirit experiencing the anguish of previously having been in unity for all eternity past with God the Father, now being forsaken by God the Father? Can there be a more wounded spirit than that? But this comment in the form of a question thrown out by Jesus is the revelation of the extent, the reality, the depth of the suffering of Jesus Christ that far transcends the physical things such as whips, and thorns, and so on. This desertion was so real that it seems *unreal* to us. So was Jesus forsaken by the Father? Well, the answer is in the question. He didn't say, 'have You forsaken Me?'; He didn't say, 'will You forsake Me?'; He said, “Why have You forsaken Me?” And recall that this question comes from the One Who is truth. Thus, the question as asked, *is* truth. He *was* forsaken; He *feels* forsaken because He *is* forsaken; because Titus 1:2 reminds us speaking of God Who cannot lie. And the God Who wrote this Bible cannot lie by having Him ask this question if it is, in fact, a lie.

Recall Isaiah chapter 53 speaking prophetically of the suffering Messiah to come. Isaiah 53:4 – “He was smitten by God.” Isaiah 53:10 – “But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief.” Galatians 3:13 – “He, Jesus, was made a curse for us.” And the ultimate curse, of course, is spiritual death. And remember spiritual death for eternity, the price to be paid for sin, means the outer darkness, the absence of God in His love essence with all that flows out of His love including grace, mercy, forgiveness, communion, sustenance, and upholding. And the presence of God as He pours out His wrath; that's the lake of fire; that's the wages of sin, and somehow Jesus paid the wages for us, here, as He became a curse for us. Why did it have to be this way? Remember Habakkuk 1:13 speaking of God – “Thine eyes are too pure to approve evil and Thou cannot look on wickedness with favor.” II Corinthians 5:21 – He made Him, Jesus, Who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf. So the Father cannot look upon the One who has wickedness on Him with favor. Psalm 2:9 says – “Thou shalt break them with the rod of iron”, speaking of the judgment of God. That's simply how it works when you're dealing with a Holy God, Who *is* love, but *also* Who is a fierce but righteous judge. Jesus was broken by the rod of iron of God the Father. He was so broken that God Himself in the person of Jesus the Son cried out in a loud voice, in anguish, “Why hast Thou forsaken Me?” He was broken. He was God. Being God, He could only be broken *by* God; and broken He must be to pay for our countless sins because that's what the wages of sin included. Psalm 42:7 speaks of deep calling unto deep – This is *truly* deep calling unto deep as Jesus the Son of God cries out, in the forsaken state by the Father God, as all the waves of the justice of God Who is fiercely protecting His righteousness now roll upon the One Who has taken all the sin of the world upon Him. He was now not just the Son of God, He was the *forsaken* Son of God.

Now the spirit, and soul and body of the totality of Jesus, the man had come into contact with the infinite justice of God. Jesus was now the battleground in this moment as God, the fierce but righteous judge, fiercely protects His righteousness by waging war against the One Who has the unrighteousness of men upon Him. Psalm 11:3 says – “If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?” Jesus Himself, of course, *was* righteous. But now because He had sin upon Him, had become a curse for us, was made sin on our behalf, now forsaken, His foundations were destroyed. So what can the righteous do? Well, clearly we know from this statement, they cry out in a loud voice in the agony of the lost

foundation. Having lost the foundation, Jesus Himself, was now carried beyond the limits of God Himself to bear the suffering if He lost communion with God. Oneness with the Father was now gone and that was His eternal foundation. Only the unconditional love of God could willingly endure this for someone else. Only God's own wrath, in judgment, could carry the love of God to brokenness. So Jesus here was deprived of all natural comfort; He was deprived of all spiritual comfort; He had lost His foundation; He was now forsaken; His distress was utter and entire, His suffering itself (I don't hesitate to say) had become other than. Because nothing else can ever approach the agony of what was taking place right now as the waves of the wrath of God came upon Jesus in judgment. That's why this suffering (I dare say) is holy ground.

He suffered beyond any mental frame of reference. He suffered beyond any language frame of expression. His suffering was surpassing; His suffering was transcendent; His suffering, we cannot put a limit on; His suffering had become Holy, "other than". Notice also that His faith was "other than"; because the cry includes His testimony—testimony to His faith. You see, faith in the face of understanding is one thing; but how much greater is that faith that is maintained when the *ultimate* suffering beyond which there is no suffering, is carried *beyond understanding* so that the question has to be tossed out; and yet, He still says, "My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" He had the understanding that He was forsaken. If He didn't understand He was forsaken, He wouldn't have hurled out the question. But the anguish of having been forsaken by the One with Whom He had already been one, precluded further understanding. So if understanding was going to come, it had to come from God the Father. And there was no answer to the question. When one is forsaken, and understands that he is forsaken, and thus, further understanding is precluded in the anguish of that forsakenness, can you even contemplate the transcendent faith that's required in that circumstance to still cry out, "*My God*", in the possessive? He stood in a faith that transcended understanding. He could not *see* in his understanding; He continued, though, to fulfill II Corinthians 5:7 as He walked by faith, not by sight. He understood that it is pleasing to God to *seek* to understand by asking the question, without *having* to understand by having God answer that question in order to stand in *faith* in His God in the midst of true forsakenness. He cried out, "My God, why?" No answer came. The Father was silent. You see, as even the Son of God, was not excused from walking by *faith*, not by *sight*. Because without faith it is impossible to please God. So even as God the Father forsook Him in His now carrying of sin, can you imagine the pleasure in the heart of the Father God as His Son cried out "My God", walking by faith in the midst of the forsakenness as the wrath of God was poured out upon Him. That's truly walking by faith, not by sight beyond which there can never be an example.

Now only Scripture, the inspired Word of a Holy God, was adequate to do all these things in one simple question: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" It describes His situation; it determines our destiny because we must understand it to understand the price that was paid and why it was required; He requests from His Father; conveys His anguish, fulfills prophecy, preaches a sermon to us, stands on the Word of God, prays without ceasing, and walks by faith not by sight in one simple question. Now we can only measure the love of God, if it could ever be measured, by the depth of His suffering for us if that could ever be measured. But from this anguished question hurled out for all of eternity unanswered, we learn that we can perceive no bottom to the pit of suffering of Jesus Christ and our feeble mental attempts to draw a circle around it; and our feeble attempts to express it by language fall woefully short; because this is holy ground. You see, this suffering of Jesus is no more measurable than is the sin that required it, nor the love that endured it, nor the righteousness that inflicted it. So let's just simply fall in love with that which we cannot fully understand. That's to fulfill Ephesians 3:19 – and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowing. Because knowing that it is unknowable, knowing that whatever we know, it goes beyond what we know, is itself a revelation to us of the Holiness of God. So we've begun

from this discussion, I hope, to know the answer to, “Why hast Thou forsaken Me?” But let’s come in a congealed way to that point as to why it exists. Why would a Father forsake His Son? Why would one forsake the one with whom he had always been one? Why would one become two? Why would God forsake God? Well, the voice of grief that phrased this question and hurled it out there is the end of our grief. We go from lost sinners to children of God because of this one sentence that was expressed. You see, this voice of brokenness in this anguished cry tossed out by Jesus, means that we will never be broken by the wrath of God. We will never have the rod of iron placed on our backs. So why did He say, “Why hast Thou forsaken Me?” The answer is really simple - *so that we would never have to say it.*

II Corinthians 11:3 Paul says – “I pray that you don’t be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion of Christ.” You see, the answer to this question is the revelation of the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ; His devotion to you and His faith in the Father. Because He frankly says, I would rather go through the Hell of the wrath of God, including the outer darkness of forsakenness by God *for you*, than I would to spend eternity in Heaven *without you*. I love you that much. And I would rather incur the fullness of the wrath of God and incur the forsakenness by God rather than to disobey God, rather than to think that something else should have been accomplished here. You see, He loves you *that much* and He had faith in the Father *that much*. Can you imagine? Can you imagine? Is your revelation of the suffering of Christ being expanded, whether you literally accept every word that I speak, you’ve got to acknowledge (I think) that the sum of the Word of God would at least point in the polarity that I’m pointing here, that somehow in that three hours of darkness, unwitnessed by human beings, something happened that led Jesus to come out of the darkness and say, “My God, why have You forsaken Me?” And it is so much bigger than thorns and whips and crosses and insults and spears in the side and so on, all of which are only physical models to help us as physical creatures to begin to see what took place in the spirit realm. And thank God that it’s a one time in history event so that *He* said this question and *we* never have to. So thank you. That’s why we know love by this - that He laid down His life for us. And not just that He laid it down, but we begin to be quickened and awakened to what was involved *as* He laid it down. Because *that* revelation is the revelation of the *love* of God for us. So my time is up. Thank you for listening.