
The Loneliness Of Jesus

*"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"
(Matthew 27:46b).*

History reveals that the great men of the ages have always been, to some degree, lonely men. They produced their memorable works and thought their exceptional thoughts within the confines of lifestyles that few others understood. This characteristic was true of our Savior, whom Isaiah described in prophecy as a man who "was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; . . . one from whom men hide their face . . ." (Isaiah 53:3a, b).

The loneliness of Jesus was never more evident than at the cross, where He was not only deserted by man but was also forsaken by God Himself. His piercing cry "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" came after six hours of agony on the cross. This is the only one of His seven statements on the cross that is recorded in both Matthew (27:46) and Mark (15:34). Jesus had faced His sufferings alone, and near the end of this living death He quoted the first verse of Psalm 22 to express the darkness and horror through which He was passing. In the Psalms, which filled our Lord's heart, we find one of the clearest interpretations of His life and of His messianic purposes. Two Gospel writers, because of the force and significance of His question, gave the words He uttered: "Eli, Eli,¹ lama sabachthani." Then they gave the translation: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Surely, this cry is a

revelation of the spiritual and physical anguish which our Savior bore for us and is the greatest proof of His love for this world of sinners.

But none of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord
passed thru
Ere He found His sheep that was lost.²

As we consider this question from our Savior's lips, we step into the holy of holies of the passion of Christ. We must ponder individually the six words of His cry.

The first word in this statement, "Eli" (ἤλι, *eli*), was uttered twice. Jesus cried, "My God, My God." His words were not just a question; they were a prayer. The Gospel writers recorded seven utterances that fell from Jesus' lips during His time on the cross. Three out of the seven were prayers. In the throes of an agony that surely compelled the angels to gasp in bewilderment, our Savior prayed one of the shortest and most perplexing laments of all time.

The second word is "why." This moment, a split second between two eternities, is the only recorded time in the Gospels when Jesus looked toward heaven and asked God, "Why?" As we contemplate it, we can simply say that this One who was dying was no ordinary man. His death was no ordinary crucifixion. What event could be so far-reaching, so earth-shattering, that the

¹Matthew 27:46 uses the Hebrew name "Eli, Eli" (ἤλι ἤλι), while Mark 15:34 has the Aramaic name "Eloi, Eloi" (ἐλωϊ ἐλωϊ) for "My God, My God."

²Elizabeth C. Clephane, "The Ninety and Nine," *Songs of Faith and Praise*, comp. and ed. Alton H. Howard (West Monroe, La.: Howard Publishing Co., 1994).

Son of God would pierce the dome of heaven with this heart-rending question?

The third word is “have.” Jesus’ torturous experience on the cross was almost history. His question was not “Will You forsake Me?” but “Why *have* You forsaken Me?” (emphasis mine). He was relating what had happened to Him. He was marking out the journey He had taken, the valley He had crossed. He was voicing a description of the lonely, mysterious night He had endured. Here is the only place in the Scriptures where Jesus, in His own choice of words, depicted what His crucifixion was like!

The fourth word is “You.” Jesus could easily have asked, “Judas, why did you betray Me?” He could have asked, “Peter, how could you deny Me three times?” He could have asked of all the disciples, “Where were you when I needed you the most? Why did you flee?” Surprisingly, He did not ask any of these questions. No! He asked a question of God! He turned His eyes toward the almighty God—the One who always cares for His own; the One who defends the orphans, the widows, and the mistreated; the great God who has never failed to keep a promise and never will. He asked this searching question of the One who is the Friend of the righteous and the Savior of sinners. How could it be that God the Father would forsake Jesus, His own unique Son?

The fifth word is “forsaken.” Jesus was not asking about discipline. He was not inquiring about a delayed response or an answer that was being withheld until a more meaningful time. Rather, He was praying about being utterly forsaken by His Father. The fiercest flame of pain that our minds can comprehend is that of being separated from the Father. Jesus—the pure Son of God, the second member of the Godhead—had never known a moment’s separation from His Father’s fellowship. For Him to experience this cold and tragic isolation from God’s personality and providence must have been the most horrendous aspect of the cross.

The sixth word is “Me.” We might have imagined the thief who was disobedient to God until his last breath asking, “God, why have You forsaken me?” When he inched up to the edge of this life and looked over into an empty,

hopeless, endless eternity without God, he likely cried out to God about the terror of being apart from Him forever. But not Jesus! Never could we have expected this question to come from Jesus! However, it is true. The One crying was Jesus, the Son of God, the divine One, the Messiah, the One who raised Lazarus, the Healer, the Great Physician. The One praying was the pure, perfect, sinless, obedient, faithful Son of Man. Who can comprehend it?

Well might the sun in darkness hide,
And shut His glories in,
When Christ, the mighty Maker died
For man, the creature’s sin.³

This agonizing cry of Jesus indicates that more than physical suffering took place at the cross. Yes, there was suffering—more suffering than we could possibly understand, but the meaning of the cross went beyond suffering. *The cross was not just what Jesus felt; it was what He did.* A great event, a God/man event, the pivotal point of eternity and time, took place. Jesus surrendered Himself to crucifixion, willingly enduring the wrath of heaven and the wrath of hell, as He offered Himself for our sins. He bore in Himself the sin of all time—the violations of the will of God from the first sin of Adam and Eve through every moment of history. He took the sins piled up by each one of us, put them on His back, and carried them away forever from the presence of God, as if in a basket of forgiveness.

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“. . . He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed” (1 Peter 2:24).

“Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him. . . . For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:8–11).

³Ralph E. Hudson, “Alas! and Did My Savior Bleed?” *Songs of Faith and Praise*, comp. and ed. Alton H. Howard (West Monroe, La.: Howard Publishing Co., 1994).