

Some Last Words Part 3

Luke 23:32-39

Today, we'll continue with our study of those last few words that the Lord Jesus spoke as He hung there suffering on that cross. And while yes, we are studying about them first in the Book of Luke, not all of His words spoken from the cross are given to us there. In His Wisdom, the Holy Spirit chose for some of the words to be given to us by the other Gospel writers.

We aren't told why God chose to do it that way, so we'll simply accept His Wisdom and study His Words from the way they are given to us.

And today, we'll study them as they are given to us in the Book of Matthew chapter 27. And as we see from these words, the Lord Jesus had been suffering there on that cross for some time. And in verse 45 we read,

⁴⁵ From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land.

⁴⁶ About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"—which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

⁴⁷ When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah."

⁴⁸ Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. ⁴⁹ The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him." (Matthew 27:45-49)

As we continue to hear these words of the Lord Jesus that He spoke there from the cross, it's clear that God desires for you and me to know intimately about the intense suffering that He bore on our behalf as He hung there. That no, He wasn't in some way shielded from the pain or spared from the agony, but instead endured every agonizing moment of it.

I confess that I am not altogether sure of all of God's intentions in presenting the sufferings of the Lord Jesus in such a vivid and demanding way. But He has, and so we really must strain forward, lean in closely to hear each of the words that He said, and to fully comprehend the anguishing ordeal that was taking place within His body, His Spirit and His soul that day.

Here in this passage, we read that He cried out in a loud voice,

"Eloi, Eloi, Iama sabachthani?"

"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

These are very mysterious and very emotional words. And they give us entrance into one of the most unfathomable ordeals that our minds could ever consider, a kind of suffering that reaches far beyond physical pain, on into spiritual realms of suffering that only God truly knows about, but that we are called here to consider. And not just to consider, but to also ourselves actually "feel", to "experience".

And that should cause us to wonder at such things, about "why" God might want us to go to such depths with the Lord Jesus, and to question if such a thing, such an experience is even possible for us to experience? Can we, in our human condition truly know, feel, experience this kind of deep spiritual suffering?

And folks, I really don't know! Perhaps for some of us we can, at least to some small degree! But for others, we might never permit ourselves to go this far, to agonize in this way. We might, as the suffering gets hard to bear, pull back and refuse to walk this close to Jesus. But I do believe that God really wants us to "want to", or to at least try.

But again, why! Why do I know that each of us needs to "feel", to "experience" these mysterious sufferings of Christ? It is because I sense a compelling unction coming from God for us to step forward and to join with the Lord Jesus in all of His sufferings, that unction that comes from within my spirit to follow the instructions that are given to us within these scriptures. Precious words of instruction like those given in Philippians and in Galatians, and in Ephesians, words that tell us that we are to join with Christ in His crucifixion and to suffer with Him.

Listen to these words, first in Philippians chapter 3 verses 10-11 we read,

¹⁰ I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, ¹¹ and so somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. (Philippians 3:10-11)

And also in Galatians chapter 2, verse 20,

²⁰ I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

And then also in Colossians chapter 1 verse 24,

²⁴ I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church. (Colossians 1:24)

And folks, words of exhortation like these continue on and on throughout these scriptures, urging us on to know and to experience the sufferings of Christ. And not just the physical pain and suffering He experienced in His human flesh, but also, and especially, that mysterious suffering within His Spirit, the kind of suffering that only God Himself could fully know and understand. But He wants us to reach forward and join with Him in it. And we really must!

But also, another reason why we really must earnestly desire to join in with our Lord in His mysterious sufferings is because if we are truly “Born Again”, then our Christian commitment does not allow for a “milquetoast” kind of involvement that so many of us settle for. A True Christian commitment must be an “all or nothing” commitment, with all of our heart, all of our soul, all of our mind and all of our strength. One hundred percent!

And to the extent, to the measure that each of us surrenders ourselves over into our relationship with Christ, that is the extent, the measure to which we will be able to venture into and know about those special “spiritual realms” that our Lord wants us to join Him within.

And especially to take part in supernatural transactions like these that we’re reading about here, those experiences that were taking place there as the Lord Jesus hung on the cross and suffered.

And no, we’ll never fully comprehend all that was taking place, especially to know about such things as while He was hanging there on the cross, He was also, at the same time, out there somewhere in the mysterious eternal realms, presenting Himself within the Trinity of God, settling and satisfying debt for the sins of men, and then washing those sins away.

Because that, my dear friends was what was taking place within the depths of these special spiritual sufferings.

But then also, from these words we can know that for some very important reason, God has also chosen to intermingle into Jesus' spiritual suffering a very agonizing physical pain. And He wants you and me to know about that suffering also.

But why the physical suffering also? Perhaps it's because physical suffering is the most realizable connection that our limited minds can have to all the rest that was taking place there on the cross.

And remember, God is a Father and this is His dearly beloved Son. And as He commands us to deny our self and take up our cross daily, He's not just presenting us with some hypothetical circumstance for us to think about. He really does want us to know, in intimate detail, some of the sufferings that His beloved Son had to go through to bring you and me salvation. Jesus paid a great and painful price that day, and God wants you and me to know about it.

In Psalm 22, God spread it all out before us so that we could read about it and begin to take it all in. I would like to read those words for us, so please turn there to Psalm chapter 22 and hear as King David prophetically describes in intimate detail the travail of Jesus' suffering.

Listen carefully to our Lord's cries and groanings!

¹ My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? ² O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest. ³ Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. ⁴ In you our fathers trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. ⁵ To you they cried and were rescued; in you they trusted and were not put to shame. ⁶ But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people. ⁷ All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads; ⁸ "He trusts in the Lord; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!" ⁹ Yet you are he who took me from the womb; you made me trust you at my mother's breasts. ¹⁰ On you was I cast from my birth, and from my mother's womb you have been my God. ¹¹ Be not far from me, for trouble is near, and there is none to help. ¹² Many bulls encompass me; strong bulls of Bashan surround me; ¹³ they open wide their mouths at me, like a

ravening and roaring lion. ¹⁴I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; ¹⁵my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. ¹⁶For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet— ¹⁷I can count all my bones— they stare and gloat over me; ¹⁸they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. (Psalm 22:1-18)

These were words of prophecy written by King David. Did David even know what he was writing about, I don't know.

But such is the nature of prophecy. Here, interspersed within the personal sufferings of King David during one of his own very difficult travails, God tells us about the Lord Jesus, His intimate sufferings and even His innermost thoughts as He would hang there on the cross some one thousand years later.

These words give a vivid picture of understanding and leave no doubt about the personal suffering and pain that Jesus endured as He hung there, his bones pulling out of joint, needing something to drink, knowing He was dying for the sins of men, with some of those very men strutting about beneath the cross jeering and mocking Him.

Surely, within the depths of His humanity, Jesus was tempted to use His divine power to simply reach down and to crush His adversaries. But thankfully, He did not do that. He humbly stayed the course and instead gave salvation to any and all who would receive Him as Savior and Lord, even perhaps to some of the worst ones there that day.

And again, all the while that Jesus was enduring the physical pain and suffering, there was an even greater suffering being laid upon Him, the suffering that comes from taking the sins of all men and women upon Himself.

He, Jesus, the Pure and Holy and Spotless Lamb of God, who knew no sin, became sin, so that He might fully pay the penalty for it, and so remove it from the souls of men, from you and me.

And yes, those are concepts and provisions that we can't fully comprehend. But by faith we are able to know that it was all absolutely necessary and all absolutely true.

And we can trust that these words of the Lord Jesus, as He spoke them from the cross, were given to us as a witness that that was exactly what was taking place.

It has been said by many bible scholars that as Jesus took the sins of men upon Himself, God the Father was unable to look upon His dear Son, that His holiness would not permit Him to actually gaze upon the sin that Jesus had taken upon Himself.

And perhaps that is true, I don't really know. But we do know that something of that nature was taking place, as Jesus uttered those words, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?

Some bible theologians believe that because of the Holiness of God, some form of separation took place in those moments, that a kind of division took place within the very foundation of the Trinity of God as Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself and He became sin for us settling the penalty that needed to be paid, satisfying the "expiation" and the "propitiation" that would be required for us to enter into the eternal life that would be ours in God's presence.

For myself, I don't know that I can comprehend how such a separation could be possible, so I'll leave those considerations to others.

Again, for myself, to simply say that "God turned His face away" might be the best explanation that my small mind can comprehend . . . and that might be enough.

Above all else, we must know that this, His crucifixion, is the "real reason" that Jesus came to be among us. He came to seek and to save those who are lost and this is what it took to do it. And thanks be to God that He did!

May I venture some final thoughts as we consider these words and these special moments in the life of the Lord Jesus? And may I have permission to use some imagination within my thoughts. And please do keep that in mind as I give these next thoughts.

First of all, may I suggest that while these agonizing hours must have seemed to the Lord Jesus to be unbearably long, in comparison to all that was taking place

"outside of time", out there in those mysterious realms of God, an eternity of transactions were actually taking place.

Behind that veil that obscures the eternal spiritual realms, during these few hours, eons and eons may have actually passed.

Why does my mind consider such possibilities? It is because, in those moments, as Jesus became sin for us, He actually and really did reach into my personal life and He took from me every individual sin that I have ever committed, and ever will commit. And He bore the full penalty for them there on the cross.

But then also, in those same moments, He did the same for you. He, in some miraculous and unfathomable way also reached into your personal life. And He took away each of your sins, both past and future. And He then also did that same thing for each and every person that has ever received Him as Savior and Lord, in all of times past, times present and times future.

And that surely might have taken a long, long time . . . time that we don't know about, time that is concealed behind the veil of God's eternal realms.

And as Jesus accumulated all those vile sins upon Himself, He became so abhorrent, so putridly vile Himself, that God the Father had to in some manner or another "forsake" Him. That is why we read here that Jesus cried out those words, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" . . . "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?

Folks, I know that our minds are so small and so limited, and that the Trinity of God is so vast, so eternal, and has power and might beyond all measure. But we must try to hear and receive what is being said here.

God wants you and me to know that sin, even one sin, sin of any kind, and to any degree, is so wrong, so awful, so unbearable to his holiness, that He is forced to separate Himself out from it, even to the forsaking of His beloved Son.

And why would we ever want to do that to such a loving and gracious Father? How could we be so selfish, so uncaring, so self-centered that we would force our dear and loving Savior to go through such agonizing pain and suffering, even to be forsaken by His Father?

These words, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" . . . "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me", they bear out that we have been that wrong, that wretchedly sinful.

May I put it in human terms? All this that we are reading about here in these words, the agonizing suffering that Jesus endured is truly our fault. And we really ought to be the ones that have to pay for it, not Him, not the Lord Jesus. He did no wrong.

In today's culture, people everywhere are crying out that they are victims, that they are being mistreated and that life is so unfair. But folks, they don't know mistreatment! They don't really know unfairness! This that is taking place with the Lord Jesus, this is mistreatment! This is unfairness.

This thing that your and my sin has done and so often still does to the Lord Jesus, putting Him there on the cross and then strutting around beneath His cross whining about our own silly, self-inflicted problems and failures, that's unfairness, that's mistreatment.

And may I add one more wretched behavior that is so prevalent within our culture during these present days. Our psychology-driven counselors and therapists are so quick to say to us that the miseries we are involved in each day are "not our fault", "not our fault". But oh dear Christian, as I take an honest look at most all of my miseries, they are my fault. They really are my fault. I caused most every one of them. My wretched self-centeredness is at the forefront of most all of my troubles. And they are my fault!

It truly is a wonder that God the Father has not utterly destroyed me . . . and yes, most all of us.

But thanks be to God, He hasn't. Thanks be to God, Jesus has intervened with "Grace and Mercy". And through His gracious and loving suffering there on that cross, He has provided forgiveness and mercy to you and to me. And you and I had better hasten to receive it.

We'll close for today, but may I give us one final warning! Folks, our sins really are this awful, this egregious to God and He really will not tolerate them.

If we ever hope to get past our sins and on into the kingdom of God, surrendering our hearts to Him in thankfulness for all that Jesus did for us is the only path that we can take, the only path! He truly is the Way, the Truth and the Life. And none of us can come to the Father except through Him. And thanks be to God for His indescribable free gift!

Pray with me!