



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matthew 27:33-46

"The Life of Christ: The Agony of Gethsemane"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We have been studying, as those of you who have been attending regularly know, the general theme of "highlights of the greatest life" in the Gospel of Matthew. And the subject for this morning is "The Death of Christ" and here we begin the Mathian account of that death,

"And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink. And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, 'They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.' And sitting down they watched him there; and set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, 'Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself. If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.' Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, 'He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in

God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.' The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' that is to say, 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, 'This man calleth for Elias.' (Now that's the word for Elijah and "Eli", which means "my God" is very similar to "Eliyahu", which is the name for Elijah, Jehovah is my God.) And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, 'Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.' Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost."

I would also like to read three verses from the Psalm that we studied not long ago, Psalm 22. These three verses have a very close relationship with the account which we have just read in the New Testament. Psalm 22, verses 1 through 3,

"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? Why art Thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the day time, but Thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent. But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel."

May God bless this reading of his inspired word. Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Our Heavenly Father, with a great sense of unworthiness, we come into Thy presence as a congregation of believers in Jesus Christ. We acknowledge, Lord, as the Psalmist has said that Thou art holy and we are unholy and we know that it is impossible for us to stand in the presence of a holy God. Holiness is active. Holiness

hates evil. Holiness despises iniquity. And we know, Lord, that were it not for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who has equipped us by the shedding of the precious blood to stand righteous before Thee, we could never stand in Thy presence. And so, Lord, with an acute sense that our acceptance before Thee is due to Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone, we come to Thee as the children of God.

We thank Thee, Father, for the mercy Thou hast shown us, but we also thank Thee that Thou art a holy God as well. We thank Thee for the fact that Thou art different. That Thou art not a man that Thou dost not deal with us a man would deal with us. And so, we want to worship Thee and praise Thee because Thou art the holy God that inhabitest the praises of Israel and the praises of the church of Jesus Christ.

And Lord, as we meet together this morning, we pray that the sense of Thy holiness may come upon us in a new way, in a fresh way, and the sense also of Thy love may grip us again. We thank Thee for all who are here and for all that is represented here, for the needs as well as the evidence of the blessing of God.

And, Father, we especially pray that if there are some here who do not know our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, may this meeting in which we exalt him be the time when by the Holy Spirit our hearts are lifted to see him as the one who died for us and may there be the response of the Holy Spirit as he moves our hearts to love him in return. And so, Lord, we pray for Thy blessing upon us.

We think of some who are unable to be here; some who are ill; some who have had great tragedies in the last day or so. We especially remember them. We bring them before Thee, some of Thy dearest children, and we ask, O God, that Thou wilt minister to them. May Thy wonderful grace be their strength and be their consolation in the time of sorrow and tragedy.

We thank Thee that in the midst of our days, Thou dost stand and that our dwelling place is with Thee throughout all generations. And, O Father, enable us to turn

to Thee as our Father and love Thee and obey Thee. We commit our meeting to Thee with thanksgiving and praise. In Jesus' name and for his sake alone. Amen.

[Message] The death of Jesus Christ was a very strange death. He did not die as Stephen, as a martyr under a hail of stones. He did not die as a Socrates in scornfully superior resignation. Jesus Christ died with a helpless despairing cry in the most desolate of isolation. How may we explain such a death as the death of Jesus Christ? Why do Christians revere it and revere him so? Paul said, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." He also said, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

Luther said, "*theologia crucis, theologia lucius*" or "The theology of the cross is the theology of light", and strange as it may seem, even unbelievers have acknowledged the significance of the cross of Christ. There is a hymn which we often sing, we Christians, written by a non-Christian. It is the hymn, "*In the Cross of Christ We Glory*." You all know it. You probably did not know that it was not written by a Christian. It was written by a Unitarian and it has in it a verse which reads, "In the cross of Christ, I glory, towering o'er the wrecks of time; all the light of sacred story, gathers round its head sublime." This is a hymn and a stanza written by a Unitarian, not a Christian, and yet he even acknowledges the significance of the cross of Christ.

There is a solution to the enigma of the death of Jesus Christ and it is found in this fourth utterance, which he offered on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" I'm going to suggest to you at this point that this particular utterance of our Lord's upon the cross was thought by the early church to be the most significant one that he uttered.

We do not know which gospel was written first. There is still a debate going on among scholars, though almost all agree that Mark was first, over the priority of the

gospels. Some, however, still maintain that Matthew was the first gospel. Whether Matthew is the first or Mark is the first does not really affect what I'm going to say. It so happens that Jesus uttered seven things when he was upon the cross. These seven sayings are grouped in this way. Three of them are found in the Gospel of Luke. Three of them are found in the Gospel of John. The three that are found in Luke are not found anywhere else. The three that are found in John are not found anywhere else. One of these utterances, the fourth utterance from the cross, is found in two gospels. It is found in Matthew and it is also found in Mark, one of the, which is undoubtedly our earliest gospel.

And so, the early church for some time had as its only written utterance, which our Lord made on the cross, this fourth, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Apparently, this utterance of all the seven made a deep impression upon those who heard it as if to suggest perhaps that they thought that it contained THE lesson, THE teaching, THE revelation that is to be found in this significant death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's review the situation before we take a look at this utterance. Jesus Christ died at a place called Golgotha. We sing about Calvary. I never hope that I shall be able to change the church of God. The name of the place, however, where Jesus died was Golgotha. We have derived the term "Calvary" from the Latin translation, which has a word from which we have derived the English word "Calvary" and down through the years we have come to revere the Latin transliterated word rather than the Hebrew one or the Aramaic one, but Jesus died at Golgotha. That was the name of the place, the place of a skull.

I was preaching on this subject in Charleston, South Carolina, a few months back and I received a letter the other day from a student at Bob Jones University who had attended the meetings. And he said as he concluded the letter, "Yours in the bonds of Calvary (I mean Golgotha)." [Laughter] And so, at least he remembered that part of the message.

Jesus died on Mount Golgotha. The time is stated for us to be, in verse 45, "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice." This utterance then came at about the ninth hour. When we look at the gospel accounts, particularly the Markan account and this one, we notice that the Lord Jesus was on the cross from nine in the morning until three in the afternoon. Nine in the morning was the third hour. The sixth hour was noon. The ninth hour was three in the afternoon. So at about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, but you will notice that there were three hours of darkness in which Jesus hung upon that cross.

I do not know exactly why the darkness began at noon. I know that this would have been a repulsive spectacle had it not been for the fact that darkness came down over the earth at that time. For if you read the things that are stated in the context here, and in some of the other gospels, you notice immediately that Jesus was exposed to a great deal of contumely and reproach on the part of those who were by.

They plucked out the hair of his beard. They placed down upon his head a crown of thorns and the blood trickled down his face. And we know that Isaiah the prophet, in the 52nd chapter of his book says that his face of his visage was so marred more than any man. As if to suggest that the suffering that Jesus took from the Romans as well as the Jews was a kind of suffering that it was impossible to describe.

But that I do not think is really the important thing in the cross which Jesus Christ suffered. Jesus Christ's death is not to be explained by the natural. It is not to be explained by the fact that he died and his blood was shed in the physical sense only. What men saw was only the outward expression of the inward suffering of Jesus Christ. It was bad enough; we're willing to grant that, but that is not the basis of our redemption.

As a matter of fact, I think that the darkness is more significant perhaps than we realize. The darkness in which Jesus suffered was a kind of symbolic thing. If you notice in the Bible, you will discover that often the things that happen in nature are reflected in

the spiritual significance of the events. For example, let me just give you a few illustrations. When Jesus Christ was born, an announcement was made of this fact to the shepherds by an angelic host, as if to suggest that God has a message for men and that message comes from heaven. The angels have a prominent part in the announcement of the birth of Jesus Christ.

Then, if you will move on to the resurrection for just a moment, or rather the transfiguration, take that also as an illustration, on the Mount of Transfiguration, the voice that came to the Son when he was transfigured was a voice that came out of the cloud. The cloud suggestive, of course, of the heavens and the cloud was a kind of anticipation of this heavenly voice that would come' it answered to the heavenly communication. At the resurrection of the Lord Jesus when the disciples went to the tomb, they saw undying angels as if to suggest that the event which happens at the cross is an event that looses our Lord Jesus into the life of eternity.

Then, of course, you'll also remember if you just read on a verse in our account, that when Jesus Christ died, there was an earthquake. Now the earthquake in the word of God has been symbolic of judgment for down through the pages of Scripture. And so, the evidence here is to the effect is again nature concurs with revelation. And so, it seems very plain to me that the reason that Jesus Christ died in darkness is because God wants to convey to us symbolically the fact that the significance of Jesus Christ's death is only understood if we connect it with human sin. In the Bible darkness is constantly a figure of sin and light is a figure of holiness, but Jesus died in darkness. And so, we are to seek for the meaning of this event in the fact that men are sinners. That is just a kind of clue with regard to it.

But let's move now to our statement which begins in the 46th verse with, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" and I want to stop right here and say a word before we look at these two words, a word of kind of introduction of the significance of

the atonement of Jesus Christ. We must beware of two emphases in the atonement. One is we know nothing of the theory of the atonement, which the Bible sets forth.

Now many liberal expositors of the Bible and preachers today take this viewpoint. They think that it is impossible for us to know anything about the death of Jesus Christ. After all, he died and that is the important thing and somehow or other, God was in that death, but to explain it as a substitutionary theory of the atonement, that is to go far too far. We cannot really understand that.

And if we wanted to find a text of Scripture to support this viewpoint, we might turn to a passage such as 1 Corinthians chapter 13 and verse 12 in which the apostle himself says, "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." And so, we are told we must not speculate about the death of Christ. We must not try to think through why he died and how he died. We cannot really know much about the atonement of Jesus Christ at all.

Well now, we do not accept that viewpoint probably everyone in this auditorium. You realize that it's inconsistent. It's not true to the word of God. There are many things the Bible has to say about the atonement of Jesus Christ that we would have to forget if we believed such a thing as that. But some of us, you know, and perhaps there are some in this auditorium lurking in the corners of it, some of us, you know, think that when we have stated that Jesus Christ died as our substitute that we have stated everything that there is to say about the atonement and, hence, we know everything about why and how Jesus Christ died on the cross at Calvary. We say, "Doesn't the Bible say, 'All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all' that plainly states that he was our substitute. Do we have to ask anything more? Surely that explains the death of Jesus Christ."

Now I do not take that viewpoint myself. Perhaps the majority of you in this auditorium do. Well, that's perfectly all right. Go ahead and take your viewpoint, if you can after what I'm going to say [Laughter]. I would like, however, to suggest to you that it



is not possible for us to know everything about Jesus Christ's death. I fully believe that Jesus Christ died as our substitute and I'm going to say something about that in just a moment. But let me assure you that as far as I'm concerned, I do not think that we can possibly know everything about the death of Jesus Christ.

I have discovered some remarkable things about his death because I've spent about twenty years studying it and I'm still studying it. And every now and then I discover something new about the death of Jesus Christ. It doesn't contradict anything that I've learned before, but I've learned that there is a depth to the atonement of Jesus Christ that defies my ultimate discovery of its full significance. And, hence, I do not accept the theory that says that we can know nothing about it nor on the other hand do I say we can know everything about it. There are some things that I can know definitely about it, but there are other things about which I'm still studying.

Now with that as a kind of basis, let's look at the address, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Now the first thing I want you to notice is that our Lord Jesus when he was hanging upon the cross said, "My God." I've tried to stress to you through the years in which you've given me the opportunity to preach in your presence that every word of Scripture is important. I believe that with all my heart. I think that we shall never really search out the full significance of the Bible until we're willing to study its words. And, hence, we must study every word and particularly these words that occur at climatic peaks of God's revelation. Jesus said, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Now this is remarkable. We may not realize it today, but do you know that Jesus never addressed God as "God", but this one time? Do you know, for example, that Jesus approximately one hundred and seventy times referred to God as Father, but never once except this did he refer to God in prayer or in petition as God? Do you know, for example that in the Old Testament, only fourteen times is God referred to as Father? And do you know that in those fourteen times, God is the Father of the nation Israel? Do you

know, for example that in the Old Testament, we do not have any record of any person addressing God and saying, "My Father"? Do you know that in the Palestinian Judaism of our Lord's Day that there is no record of any person who ever prayed in the individual sense, "My Father" to God?

You see, we live in 1966, and we live having received the revelation of the New Testament and we think that this was common; it was not. When Jesus arrived on the scene and began to refer to God as "My Father" or "Father", the Jews were amazed. In fact, they were so amazed that they accused him of blasphemy. They accused him of making himself equal with God: My God, my Father, Father. And do you know this that Jesus referred to Father with the personal pronoun twenty-one times? Most of the times he said Father; twenty-one times he attached the personal pronoun "my." He said, "My Father, my Father, my Father." Do you know that this is the only time in which he said, "My God"?

Now why is this? Well, I think that the only explanation is that he was standing in a relationship to his Heavenly Father, at this point, that he had never stood in before. And the reason that he said, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" is because he is trying to get over to us the fact that here he stands in a judicial relationship to God not a paternal relationship to God. In other words, there is a kind of suggestion here of the fact that Jesus is here for us even in the term that he uses with reference to his Father. Here it is "My God" I stand before Thee as a judge and not as a Father at this moment.

Now if, however, he had said, "Oh God," I might have wondered has some how or other the relationship between Jesus and the Father been broken? Is it possible that here for one moment he has begun to mistrust God? May I interject something at this point? It's very personal. I would appreciate it if you wouldn't repeat it.

A very, very close friend of ours lost their young son, only son, about twenty-four hours ago, thirty-six. This woman is a very lovely Christian, fine Christian. Has had a remarkable testimony, but this came with such a shock and there was so little preparation

for it that yesterday morning, I heard a Christian say, "Oh God, why did you do it?" And then I heard the Christian turn to others and say, "Don't say that there is a loving God to me."

Now I want to say and say in full sympathy, that I might well have uttered that myself. I'm a human being. There comes a time when my relationship to God is not perfect. There are many such times. There comes a time when I cannot trust God because I'm a person with a sinful nature. There comes a time when occasionally my faith snaps and breaks, but there never came a time in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ when he said, "I do not believe that there is a loving God in heaven." And because there never came a time with him, I know that now, even though my faith does slip, that he's still my God in heaven and he still loves me. Jesus did not say, "O, God, o God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" but "My God, my God why hast Thou forsaken me?"

When we are in our trials and tragedies, we turn to others. We speak of what has happened to us to others. Jesus turned to God, his faith never snapped even when he was our substitute on the cross at Calvary. And when you remember that he was saying, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" the text from Psalm 22, it becomes even more remarkable; for Jesus was not uttering some thoughtless word that came into his mind on the spur of the moment as we do when tragedy strikes us.

He reached up for a divine word that had come from his Father. And he took this divine word of the Old Testament Scriptures, which he had learned as a little boy, on the knees of Joseph and which he had studied through the years, in which he had applied to himself, and in the midst of the greatest tragedy of human history, he took the text of holy Scripture which had come from heaven and he offered it back to heaven as the prayer of his lips. As someone has said, "He was not wondering around in some cosmic darkness in some deserted no man's land. He was praying within the congregation of the faithful."  
" My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Now we look at the last part, "why hast Thou forsaken me?" I said that we do not know everything about the atonement of Jesus Christ. There have been three well known theological answers to the atonement. Abelard said, "Jesus died as our example. We are to look at Jesus' death as an example of how we are to live. We are to look at him as one who died in obedience to the will of God and we are to obey God's will."

Now that is a scriptural, a very scriptural theory. Peter said, 1 Peter chapter 2 and verse 21 that Jesus Christ had suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should walk in his steps. He died as our example. There is nothing wrong with Abelard's theory unless we take Abelard's theory and say, "This is THE theory of the atonement of Jesus Christ." That's another matter.

I've sat in theological classes when this theory has been ridiculed. The only thing you lose by this is the truth of God and that's a great thing to lose. It's good for Christians to take a look at Jesus Christ. He's the pattern of our faith and to remember that he is our example, but that doesn't explain the cross of Calvary in its depth. The classic theory of the atonement, the old Latin theory, which most emphasized in the earliest days of the Christian Church was the theory that Jesus Christ's death is to be related to Satan in some way.

Now some moderns have misunderstood that and have said, "Jesus paid no ransom to Satan" and I thoroughly agree with that. But that wasn't the classic theory of the atonement to start with. It's some kind of straw man that modern day theologians set up, often among those who are fundamental in the faith, and slap it down and say, "You see, that's bad and I'm good, because I can criticize the theories of the great saints down through the centuries."

I want you to remember this that in Genesis chapter 3 and verse 15, when the seed of the woman was promised that seed was said to be one who come and crush the serpent's head. And the first announcement of the death of Jesus Christ is an announcement that says that in the death of Jesus Christ there is the overthrow of Satan.

And any theory that does not include that aspect of our Lord's death is not a biblically complete theory.

Now when we turn to the New Testament and we read, for example, in Colossians chapter 2 and verse 15 that the Apostle Paul writes, that Jesus "spoiled principalities and powers, and made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it," we know that Paul believed in this classic theory of the atonement. Perhaps he would have explained some of its features in a slightly different way, but he knew that Jesus died in order to defeat Satan at that cross. And not only did Paul, but John says as well that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil. And the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews is not behind them for he says that Jesus Christ also came to die in order that he might deliver us from him that had the power of death; that is the devil. And any theory of the atonement of Jesus Christ that does not relate that work to Satan and how we are delivered from his clutches, his clutches of sin, is not a complete theory of the atonement of Jesus Christ.

But even that does not do full justice to this statement, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Anselm of Canterbury said, "Jesus Christ died as a penal substitute." That is, on the cross of Christ when he shed his blood God's holiness and justice were satisfied, Jesus Christ had paid with his death a penalty that satisfied the divine justice. And down through the years that has been the aspect of the atonement of Jesus Christ that has been most stressed by evangelical Christians and I say, rightly stressed more than anything else.

For the word of God is full of the fact that Jesus died as a substitute for us and died as one who rendered satisfaction to divine justice not in order to appease an angry God, for God has never been angry with us, he loved us. Jesus Christ did not come in order that God might love men. He came because God loved men. He is the Father's love expression to us, but in the shedding of his blood, he has satisfied the divine justice for had the divine justice not been satisfied, we would all have been lost. We can never

stand in the presence of a holy God not any one of us. And Christians too, in yourself, you could not do it. You're still a sinner. James still calls us that.

The Lord Jesus said, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many; a ransom for many." And so, when we look at the atonement of Jesus Christ, we must say that Jesus died as an example. He died to overthrow Satan, but most of all; he died in order to satisfy divine justice. And any theory of the atonement that does not include this last one cannot be an atonement to which I will yield allegiance. Jesus was my substitute there.

Now he says, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" I said this was a cry of distress, but not a cry of distrust. Jesus said, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Why did he cry like this? Why he cried like this just as you will when you come in distress for when you come into distress, the first thing you want to say is "Why has this happened to me? Why has it happened?"

I can remember as a little boy hearing my mother say this when my sister was severely injured, "Why did this happen? Why did it happen?" She wanted to know the answer. She was looking for information and that is why Jesus cries, "My God, my God" out of his perfect humanity, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Not distrust, distress. Not sin, humanity, perfect humanity, asking for the answer, "Why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Now I want to say (we're coming close to the end of the hour), there is only one explanation for this. The explanation of that word "forsaken" is related to the fact that Jesus died as our substitute. Let me ask you just a question or so. Would a loving God forsake the only good man who ever lived? David said, "I have been young and yet I am old and I've never seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread." The Father's voice came from heaven at the baptism and at the transfiguration and said, "This is my beloved Son (adding at the baptism), in whom I am well pleased." Would a loving God forsake the only good man who ever lived? Would a loving God injure the only innocent

man who ever lived? Is it possible that in this universe there can come a person in our midst who lives the perfect life and then God, a loving God, allow him to hang upon the cross at Calvary?

Why is it that Jesus' prayers are not answered here when they are answered elsewhere? "My God, I cry unto Thee in the day time and Thou hearest not and in the night seasons and am not silent." And yet this same person can stand at Lazarus' grave and say, "Now Lord, I'm addressing you not because I do not think that you answer my prayers, I know that you answer my prayers. You always hear my prayers, but for the sake of those who are standing by." And yet at the cross we read, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Why the answer, of course, must be it can only be the fact that there he stands in judicial relationship to the Father as a substitute for us.

Sometimes, you know, ignorance can get to the meaning of holy Scripture before scholarship. There was a colored woman whose name was Dinah. She always talked about the word atonement and so her friend came to her one day in the course of conversation and said to her, "Dinah, does you understand the word atonement? You keeps talkin' about it so much?" And she said, "Honey, need I does. It means jus this: He die or me die. He die so me no die." Sometimes, you know, even the simplest can understand the word of God and this pretty little girl on the second row is smiling at that, even she understands that. That's Jesus' death.

A few years ago, Professor J. S. Stewart of the University of Edinburgh, under whom I studied for some time, was giving the stone lectures in Princeton Seminary and in the midst of them he said this, "The heart of the atonement is simply this, Jesus died in the stead of sinners." Now that may have been the language of scholarship, but it wasn't any more to the point than "He die or me die. He die so me no die." "Why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Now in the light of this, let me read you a statement from one of our outstanding preachers. Dr. George Buttrick has made this statement, "If God dealt with him as if he

were a sinner and the greatest sinner, then we must say of God (as a cynical Frenchman did say of the God of these penal theologies), your God is my devil." In other words, if it's really true that Jesus Christ died in the stead of sinners as a penal substitute, for Dr. Buttrick, that God is my devil.

I prefer to believe Paul and I prefer to believe our Lord Jesus Christ though I respect the scholarship of Dr. Buttrick. "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" the only answer is the necessity of substitution. Go back in the Old Testament, (I wish I had time) Abraham stood before God and finally he spoke out before God and he said, "I don't have any right to stand before you, which am but dust and ashes." He recognized the holiness of God. Job stood in the presence of God and said, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore, I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." Daniel stood in the presence of this God and said, "His comeliness, his beauty."

How often we human beings think we're beautiful. Cassius Clay thinks he's the most beautiful, "I'm the most beautiful. I'm the greatest." But a lot of people, who wouldn't dare utter what that man dares to utter, have a kind of feeling like that on the inside. Daniel said, "My comeliness is turned in me into corruption." Isaiah stood before a holy God and Isaiah was a holy prophet, holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit and he was one of them. The holy man, the holy prophet before the holy God said, "He was in the midst of a people of unclean lips" and he himself was a person of unclean lips. And John in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, the holy Son of God, must fall at his feet as if dead. "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil and canst not look upon iniquity", Habakkuk said. And then you'll remember that Paul said, "He hath made him who knew no sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in him." The truth of the matter is that when Jesus said, "My God, my God", he was there as sin for us. He was there as the curse as Paul says in Galatians 3:13.



The only explanation, of course, is that he is there for me. Jesus was not like that. The Psalmist said, "O my God, I cry unto Thee in the day time and Thou hearest not and in the night seasons and am not silent, but Thou art holy." You see, he fell substitute, he's dying for us. He's there as the curse and he senses the separation that has come between him and the Father because he's now the Son of God under the judgment of God, my judgment. If you want to understand something about what it cost Jesus Christ, you can study it for the rest of your life.

If I were to take one of these lovely young children sitting on the front row here and take them down to a place in Dallas to a house of prostitution and turn them over to the harlot, you would have immediately a sense of revulsion. Now if you magnify that sense of revulsion to infinity, you have only the beginning of understanding what it cost Jesus Christ to die for us.

All through the Bible God tried to get over this point to us. He told us about the leper because that stands for sin. He told us about the sin offering and all of the terrible things that were done with parts of that offering. And then he told us about the brazen serpent, Jesus as a serpent, the serpent, the figure of our Lord Jesus Christ and he used it of himself. The serpent, mind you, the symbol of the judgment of God upon sin. Yes, Jesus was the brazen serpent's anti-type on the cross. There, if you had looked spiritually at Calvary, you would have seen a serpent coiled around that cross for that was what Jesus was then for us, willing to become it because he loved us. No other explanation. Stop talking about theology and start talking about the things that touch the heart for this is the love of God (my time is up).

Jesus is called the light of the world. There was a time when that light went out. He was in darkness. If you want to understand what hell is like then look at Calvary. Hell is separation from our Father in heaven. When you hear the loving parents of a child that is lost weeping because of separation, then you have only a kind of pointer to the separation and the weeping and gnashing of teeth of all eternity. Paul said that when

Jesus comes the second time and executes judgment; it will be in flaming destruction in which there will be everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, separation from God, that's hell. That's what hell really is, separation from God.

Have you ever wondered why Jesus cried with a loud voice? I don't know that I know. I know this, Jesus didn't have to cry to hear the Father or for the Father to hear him. Some years ago, I was coming back from my home in Charleston back to Dallas after I'd given a series of meetings there in the First Presbyterian Church of that city. I was giving a series of messages in Dallas on, "The Seven Sayings of Christ" and I had my Greek Testament with me meditating upon the fourth one, the message I was to give on the next Sunday. And as I was on the plane from Atlanta to Dallas, I remember thinking about that expression, "Jesus cried with a loud voice" wondering just exactly what that meant. As I thought about it, I realized, of course, that Jesus didn't have to cry with a voice at all for the Father to hear him. I had just read the 11th chapter in which Jesus had said, "I don't have to speak to you, Father, but for the sake of those that are standing by that they may believe that Thou hast answered me, I say, Lazarus come forth."

And, you know, it came home to me that when Jesus cried on that cross and cried with a loud voice, he, of course, cried out of his humanity because he was perfect man in experiencing all the things that you and I would experience. But nevertheless that from the standpoint of God, from the standpoint of the holy Scriptures, the reason that Jesus cried with a loud voice is ultimately so those standing around the cross may have some kind of pointer to what was happening on that cross. In other words, Jesus cried with a loud voice on the cross of Calvary because God loved me and he wanted me to know what was going on there otherwise I would never have known. He did it for others, not for himself; ultimately, he did it for us. He cried with a loud agonizing shriek, that's the meaning of the Greek word, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Henry Mabry was one of our great missionary statesmen. Mr. Mabry once in one of his books told a story of the preaching of the gospel for the first time to an African

tribe. The missionary related the story of the cross. The chief and others listened with great attention. The chief stood up when he finished and said, "Sir, would you tell us that story again?" And so, the missionary told again the story of the cross and when he came to the cross and related its details finally the old chief couldn't stand it any longer and he stood up and he said, "Hold on! Hold on! Take Jesus Christ down from that cross. Jesus Christ doesn't belong on that cross! I belong on that cross!" And the Holy Spirit had pierced through to the sin darkened and blackened mind of the ancient chief to realize that he died for others. He died for us. He died for me. "In perfect love he dies. For me, he dies, for me. All atoning sacrifice I cling by faith to Thee." That's the response God wants you to make in your heart.

If you've never believed in the Lord Jesus, why don't you turn to him and say, "O all atoning sacrifice, I cling by faith to Thee." That's my hope, the Christ of the cross. May God help you to do that. If you felt the tug of the Holy Spirit that's the love of God; he wants you in the family of God. He wants you to know the Son. He wants you to be free. He wants you to know the joy of the Lord and in the tragedies of life, though our faith fails to know that we have him and we have a foundation. May God speak to your heart. Shall we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit, be with those who know him in sincerity in our meeting. And, O Father, for any who may not be here who have never yet known the grace of God in Christ, O may at this very moment they say, "I thank Thee, O God, for Jesus Christ. 'O all atoning sacrifice, I cling by faith to Thee'" for with that faith comes life and the blessing of God.

And now throughout this week, Lord, enable us to testify to the marvelous grace of the Lord Jesus and to snatch brands from the fire which is to come. For Jesus' sake. Amen.