

Final Words, Four **My God, My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me?**

Mark 15:33-34; Matthew 27:45-47

1. Aramaic

- *Mark 5:40-43*

2. Anguish

- *Psalm 22:1-2*

3. Abandonment

- *Psalm 37:25; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24*

4. Atonement

- *2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 1 Corinthians 15:3; Galatians 3:13; Isaiah 53:2-12; Romans 8:1; Psalm 22:22-31*

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Final Words: When Love Spoke From the Cross¹ "My God, My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me?"

My mom was diagnosed with brain cancer almost seven years ago, and that was when we learned that my dad had dementia – mom had been covering for him, but she couldn't anymore. That's when they made me their power of attorney, and Shelly and I took over all their bill paying, bookkeeping, and pretty much everything. Then, just after mom's diagnosis, dad had a stroke. A year later, my mom died. A couple of months later we moved my father up from Salem, Oregon into an assisted living facility here in town. We see him at least every week as we continue to oversee his care. During football season I would bring dad to our house on either Saturdays to watch college football or Sundays to watch NFL. The last time we did that was for Superbowl Sunday, and that's likely going to be the last time he's at our house. He's on hospice care now and is getting much weaker.

Because of his dementia, Dad doesn't remember that mom died. A month after it happened, dad was asking where mom was, so we reminded him. It was like he heard it for the first time, and he grieved all over again, so we stopped telling him. Usually when he asks me about mom, he wants her phone number, and so I'm able to say, "I don't have her new number dad, but I'll see if I can get it for you." Then he moves on.

If you've been around dementia, you know that he remembers things that never happened and doesn't remember things that did.

Thankfully, Dad has not forgotten who I am, but if he lives long enough, I know one day he will. He won't remember that I'm his favorite and best-looking son (my brother would dispute that). I know it will be hard if dad forgets me. But I know no matter what, somewhere in the recesses of his soul, dad knows who I am. Here's the thing: *dad might forget me, but I know he has never forsaken me.*

Forgotten is one thing; forsaken is another; *that* would be so painful. There is a huge difference between the two. To be forgotten means they simply don't remember. To be forsaken means someone turns their back on you, to be abandoned or deserted. I can live with dad forgetting me. It would kill me if he would have forsaken me.

¹ Sources:

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And yet, as we come to Jesus' fourth statement from the cross, he cries out in anguish because His Father God has forsaken Him.

The fourth statement from the cross is found in both Matthew's and Mark's Gospels. The Gospels are written accounts of Jesus' life and teachings. This is what the passage says for today:

“At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. Then at three o'clock Jesus called out with a loud voice, *“Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?”* which means “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”” (Mark 15:33-34, *see also Matthew 27:45-47, nlt*)

This is the middle of the seven statements that Jesus made from the cross. Last words are always very important; Every word that Jesus spoke was intentional for us to learn from – even more so his last seven statements – especially when it is the middle one.

We've seen that the first three statements are packed with profound meaning for us, revealing Jesus' suffering and what it has done for us. This one is no different. If you missed the others, you'll want to go to our website to check them out.

Jesus had spent all night being taken back and forth between the religious leaders and governmental leaders, and each time he was humiliated and horribly tortured. By 9am he was nailed to the cross. Between nine and noon, Jesus spoke the first three statements that we've already looked at. Then the Bible tells us that darkness covered the land from noon until 3pm, and Jesus didn't say anything during those three hours. During those six hours, he could hardly breath. That was part of the evil genius of crucifixion. Hanging by his arms with the nails through his wrists, the strain on his ribs was too great. So to breath, he had to pull himself up by the nails in his hands, and push himself up by the nails in his feet. Imagine how excruciating that was. For three hours, from noon until 3, all you would hear from Jesus was the sound of his labored breathing.

Then suddenly at three in the afternoon he says, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” Of all the seven statements from the cross, these are the most difficult to understand. It's said that Martin Luther, the great theologian of the Protestant Reformation once vowed to wrestle with this text until he could explain it – no matter how long it took. He focused on it for days – going without food and sleep. Finally, he stood to his feet and basically gave up, saying “God forsaking God! Who can understand that?!” This *is* difficult to understand completely, but there *are* still some powerful things we can learn from it.

I want you to notice first that at noon it turned dark. Make no mistake: this is a supernatural event! Dramatic changes occurred in creation. Darkness suddenly covered the land at high noon – the middle of the day!

You might think this was a solar eclipse, but you'd be wrong. The darkness lasted from noon to 3pm. That's impossible because darkness in a solar eclipse lasts only minutes, not hours.

We know for sure it wasn't a solar eclipse because Jesus was crucified the day after Passover, and Passover is *always* at full moon stage, so it is impossible to have a solar eclipse at this time of year – only a lunar eclipse can happen at this time. During a full moon, the sun and moon are opposite each other from earth, therefore the darkness at

noon was not natural in origin. *It was supernatural.*

This event is corroborated in history too. Even non-Christian historic documents speak of a strange darkness over the land on that date.² So what was going on? I'll tell you: all creation was responding to the Creator's suffering, as the creator took on the sins of the world. This is a powerful testimony, verified historically, and declares that Jesus is who he said he was. As darkness covered the land, the world itself convulsed with an earthquake.

We know that what's happening in Jesus' fourth statement from the cross is cosmically painful and significant.

So what does his statement tell us? Well first, we've got to make note of the fact that Jesus' words are recorded in the...

1. Aramaic language.

Notice that the statement is recorded exactly in the language just as Jesus said it. God himself has made sure that throughout the ages it was recorded that way, not translated into our language. In Aramaic, it is "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani!"

Why does it appear like that? Well, you should know that Jesus was trilingual; he spoke fluent Greek, which was the common language of the Roman Empire. He spoke fluent Hebrew, which was the language of much of the Old Testament Scripture and the synagogue teaching and Temple ritual – including Psalm 22, which Jesus was quoting; yet he did so in Aramaic. That's because Jesus' heart language from birth was fluid Aramaic, the common language of that area. Jesus probably also even understood some Latin, since it was the primary language of Roman government, law, and literature. So Jesus was *at least* trilingual.

There is only one other time that Scripture records Jesus in Aramaic. That's probably important, isn't it? So let's see when that was: it's in Mark 5:40-43, and it's when Jesus raised a little girl from the dead. Scripture tells us:

"(Jesus) took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, "*Talitha koum!*" (which means "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished." (Mark 5:40-43, niv)

That it is recorded in Aramaic is important because Jesus is speaking his heart language, and it was the first time that he showed he had power over death. So if it's recorded for *that* reason, and then it only happens again *here*, these two events are linked: it's like these statements are a hyperlink to each other, to show us that Jesus has power over death – even when it comes to his own. We're given this sort of Easter egg to say, as horrible as this is, don't despair... Christ has power even over death.

And then see something else: we're going to talk more about this in a little bit, but you've got to understand; of all the statements from the cross, this one is the middle one. This one

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crucifixion_darkness

is Jesus' deepest anguish. His worst pain. So it makes sense that during this most intensely painful time, Jesus would revert to his mother tongue, his heart language. It's said that during our times of deepest emotion, whether pain or pleasure or ecstasy, our hearts speak out. By the way, this is why we worship in both English and Spanish – to our bilingual and Spanish speaking folks: we know you want to worship in the language of your heart. So some of you sing out in Spanish – while others of us will sing out in English. And together, our voices rise around God's throne and ring with heavenly praise.

So because this is Jesus' heart language of Aramaic, we get a better understanding of the true anguish and isolation of Jesus' soul – and that's so we can better understand just how forsaken Jesus really was on that day.

So what did that cry mean? What was Jesus saying when he said he was forsaken by God? What is revealed here is the incredible depth of Jesus'...

2. Anguish.

The Bible says that after the third statement, Jesus was silent and the land turned dark for three hours. Then suddenly at 3pm out of the depths of that darkness came the anguished shout of the abandoned Son of God.

If you watch this scene on most of the movies and shows that have been made about it, They show Jesus very weak – struggling to barely get the words out. But that is *not* what the Bible says happened. No, God's Word tells us that Jesus' fourth cry from the cross was a *thundering* cry! Matthew says that "Jesus cried out with a ... *loud* voice." It doesn't say that about the other six statements, but this one – Jesus screamed it.

You see, the original Greek words for "cried out" come from a combination of two words. One means "to shout" and it is prefixed with the word "UP" – so it meant, "to shout/scream up." In the Scriptures this combination of words is used to refer to a guttural scream or a passionate, loud, roaring groan.

Psalms 22 gives us a clear prophecy of this moment. That Psalm, written a thousand years *before* this event, describes in detail what is happening here. Verses 1-2 says:

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest." (Psalm 22:1-2, niv)

That word for "anguish" is literally, "roaring." This same word, used to describe a guttural roar and scream, is used to describe the roar of a lion. That's the same word to describe what Jesus did. So picture it: it's dark and quiet; it's been that way for three hours, and then suddenly a screaming roar comes from the lips of our Lord.

Can you imagine the roar of a lion in the middle of the night coming out of the darkness, shaking the jungle? Then you get the picture that has been painted here. Jesus' 4th statement from the cross was a cry that must have exploded from the top of that skull-shaped hill called Golgotha and echoed off the canyons. It must have struck the hearts of those standing there and caused the hair to stand up on the back of their necks! It truly was a cry of anguish. Why? What was causing him such great pain? It was *not* the pain of

crucifixion, as awful as that was; there were two criminals hanging on crosses next to Jesus, and we don't read about them crying out like this. This was something more than the physical torture of crucifixion.

True, Jesus was now carrying the sins of the entire world. Yes, there was intense pain in that. But it was more than even that. Jesus' shout of pain was what happened as a *result* of that sin that he now carried for us. You see, up until this point, Jesus had always been in perfect, uninterrupted intimacy and oneness with his Father and with the Spirit. The Holy Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, were in complete fellowship and love. It was perfect and it was holy; untainted and unpolluted, completely clear of any sin. Absolute, unbridled unity and intimacy between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But now suddenly the Son has sin. And the Father who is just and holy must turn away. As a result of taking on our sin, the Father has forsaken the Son. Until that moment, the eternal God were completely unified. Suddenly they are ripped apart because of sin. If you could visualize it, it would be like me walking up to you and tearing your arms and legs from your body. That gives you a picture of Jesus' pain like a drop of water gives you a picture of the ocean.

You see, what Jesus is now experiencing from his Father is complete...

3. Abandonment.

God has forsaken his Son. This word that we translate "forsaken" means to be abandoned, to be neglected, to be banished, to be deserted.

Now why would this happen? Why would a loving God forsake his own Son? After all, God says in the Bible:

"I have never seen the righteous forsaken." (Psalm 37:25, niv)

There's no one more righteous than Jesus, so why would the Father abandon Jesus, his son? Well, for this first time in all eternity until this moment, Jesus was *not* righteous. He was not pure and sinless, and God turned his back on the Son. This is what the Bible means when it says:

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:21, niv)

And Peter writes about this in his first letter:

"He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed." (1 Peter 2:24, niv)

I know this might be confusing, and certainly it is ultimately beyond our ability to fully comprehend all that transpired, but we do know this: all the sins of all of humanity have been gathered into one pile of evil and somehow that pile was laid on Jesus Christ. All the lust, all the idolatry, all the materialism, all the lying and hatred and envy and murder, all the pedophilia and abusiveness, all the drunkenness and addiction, all the racism and prejudice and pride and every sinful thought and sin of omission; *all of it*. It *had* to be so for us to be free. It's hard to imagine what that was like for the Father, to see all that on his Son. In equal amounts of justice and heartbreak the Father turned his back on his Son.

Listen: just one of your sins – that tiny little lie – separates you from God. So multiply that by billions and billions of times, and we might begin to get some feeling of why Jesus was forsaken by the Father and why he cried out in desperation.

To help us understand this, we have to go back to the Old Testament and Leviticus 16 to see what occurred there. It was a foreshadowing of what happened at the cross. What we find there are instructions for the high priest on how to atone for the peoples' sins. Instructions were given to Aaron, the first priest of the Temple and the children of Israel as to how to offer animal sacrifices for the sins of the people. That's how God would forgive their sin – the individual animal in the place of the individual person's individual sin.

But there was also the problem of the collective sins of the people. So God had a solution. The solution came through a chosen goat. Here's how it worked:

The High Priest placed his hands on top of the goat's head and said, "upon you I place all the sins of all the Children of Israel. All of the envy, adultery, all the lying, and all the lusting, all the sins are placed upon you." (*Leviticus 16:7-10, 21-22*)

Then they took the goat out to the desert, far away so that it could not make its way back to the camp. That goat was called the "escape goat" or what we call the "scapegoat." That's where we get the word from. One man was appointed to take the scapegoat out into the desert and release it to be abandoned with all the sins of the people on it.

That practice began nearly 1500 years before Jesus hung on the cross that day. Here's the point if you haven't figured it out already: *Jesus is our scapegoat – once and for all*. God laid his hands on Jesus' head and placed on him all the sins of humans. Such is the agony and abandonment of Jesus for us.

But in that painful moment there is hope for us. And that hope is...

4. Atonement.

Atonement happens when someone makes reparation for a wrong or an injury in order to make things right. Jesus became the atonement – the scapegoat – for all of us. He gave his life to make things right between us and God the Father. Because Jesus was willing to be forsaken by the Father, we don't have to be. He took our place so that we could be atoned for with God our Father. The Apostle Paul explained it this way in the Bible:

"Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. He died for everyone so that *those who receive his new life (repeat)* will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them." (2 Corinthians 5:14-15, nlt)³

In other words, this cry from the cross reminds us that Jesus is our atonement. He died for us. *We* were the ones who deserve to be on that cross, but the Only One who did *not* deserve to be there *was* there for you and me.

So the Bible says:

³ italics and parenthetical statement added

“I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said.” (1 Corinthians 15:3, nlt).

And in Galatians:

“But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing. For it is written in the Scriptures, “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”” (Galatians 3:13, nlt)

And you’ve got to hear this. I want to read to you from Isaiah 53. It is an incredible and precise description of Jesus, written over 700 years before he arrived. And yet it tells us so much about Jesus. This is what it says:

My servant grew up in the Lord’s presence like a tender green shoot, like a root in dry ground. There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him.

He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care. Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins! But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God’s paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all.

He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter.

And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth. Unjustly condemned, he was led away. No one cared that he died without descendants, that his life was cut short in midstream.

But he was struck down for the rebellion of my people.

He had done no wrong and had never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man’s grave. But it was the Lord’s good plan to crush him and cause him grief.

Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have many descendants. He will enjoy a long life, and the Lord’s good plan will prosper in his hands.

When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied.

And because of his experience, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins.

I will give him the honors of a victorious soldier, because he exposed himself to death.

He was counted among the rebels. He bore the sins of many and interceded for rebels. (Isaiah 53:2-12, nlt)

You see, the truth is, on the cross Jesus did for us what we couldn’t do for ourselves. He

was a pure offering – he had no sin – so he was able to carry ours to the cross. He offered himself as a sacrifice for our sins, *once and for all!*

Never again would the Priest have to make sacrifices in a Temple. Never again would it be necessary for blood to be shed for the forgiveness of sins. Never again would a scapegoat have to wander and die in the desert. Christ was God's One, final acceptable sacrifice for our sin. And having made that sacrifice, Christ opened up the way for us to be in relationship with God and to know him personally and intimately. Jesus being forsaken by God meant that we would be accepted by God. God the Father abandoned his Son, *so that He would never abandon us.*

Because of the cross, the Bible says that God told us, "I will NEVER leave you, I will NEVER forsake you, I will NEVER abandon you." (*Deuteronomy 31:6, Joshua 1:5, Hebrews 13:5*)

Jesus went through darkness so that we might have light. Jesus was cursed so that we might be blessed. Jesus suffered hell so that we can gain heaven. Jesus was wounded so that we might be healed. Jesus drank the cup of sorrow so that we might drink the cup of Joy. Jesus died so that we might have life. Jesus was condemned so that we could be free:

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"
(Romans 8:1, niv)

Jesus was forsaken so that we might be forgiven!

The bottom line this morning is that *Jesus cried out so that you wouldn't have to.* Jesus cried out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" So that those words would never have to be spoken by you and me, as soon as we accept what Jesus did for us.

Prayer

There's one last thing I want to share with you before we close. When Jesus cried out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me," he was quoting Psalm 22.

The Jews who were there on that hill and heard Jesus cry out like this, they would've known that Psalm by heart. Let me show you what it would've been like: I'm going to say something and let's see if you can add the next line:

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound....

That's exactly what would've happened with every Jew there. They were *very* familiar with the twenty second Psalm. They had it memorized and often sang it. So when Jesus cried it out, in their minds at least, they would have finished it. After having seen all the prophetic details played out right in front of them from that Psalm, they would remember the last verses of it, too. I want to read them to us before we go. Would you stand with me? Again, remember that this is the conclusion to the cry that starts this Psalm when it says, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?" It concludes this way:

I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters. I will praise you among your assembled people.

Praise the Lord, all you who fear him! Honor him, all you descendants of

Jacob! Show him reverence, all you descendants of Israel!

For he has not ignored or belittled the suffering of the needy. He has not turned his back on them, but has listened to their cries for help.

I will praise you in the great assembly. I will fulfill my vows in the presence of those who worship you.

The poor will eat and be satisfied. All who seek the Lord will praise him. Their hearts will rejoice with everlasting joy. The whole earth will acknowledge the Lord and return to him. All the families of the nations will bow down before him.

For royal power belongs to the Lord. He rules all the nations.

Let the rich of the earth feast and worship. Bow before him, all who are mortal, all whose lives will end as dust.

Our children will also serve him. Future generations will hear about the wonders of the Lord. His righteous acts will be told to those not yet born. They will hear about everything he has done." (Psalm 22:22-31, nlt)

Here's the point: even as Jesus cried out in agony and abandonment, Jesus was also worshiping God in the midst of it all. No matter what you are going through, you can trust him because of what he went through for you if you'll accept Him. You can pray this prayer: "Because Jesus was forsaken, I am not. I have God to get me through this." (*repeat*) In fact, we can worship him for what he's done for us. How? Not just by singing here, but also living for him – out there and always.

One of the big ways we can do, according to Psalm 22, that this statement from the cross points us to: we need to do what that last verse says: we need to make sure that future generations hear about everything Jesus has done. You and I *must* tell others what Jesus has done for us. Have you? Will you?

Benediction:

(May you) grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. (2 Peter 3:18)

Life Group Questions

Final Words: When Love Spoke from the Cross

“My God, My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me?”

Week of March 22, 2026

1. The sermon draws a distinction between being forgotten and being forsaken. How have you experienced either of these in your own life, and why is that difference so significant?
2. Read Mark 15:33-34. When Jesus cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” what stands out most to you about His suffering: Physically? Emotionally? Spiritually?
3. Pastor described Jesus’ use of Aramaic as His “heart language.” How does that idea deepen your understanding of Jesus’ anguish and humanity in that moment? Read Mark 5:40-43. This is the only other time Jesus’ use of Aramaic is recorded. Pastor said this means these two events are “hyperlinked” together. Why did Mark want us to connect these two events? What does that tell you about what Jesus is doing?
4. The sermon explains that Jesus experienced true abandonment so that we would not have to. How does that truth impact the way you view your relationship with God?
5. The concept of the “scapegoat” from the Book of Leviticus is used to explain what Jesus did on the cross. Read Leviticus 16:7-10, 20-22. How does this imagery help - or challenge - your understanding of atonement?
6. Psalm 22 begins with despair but ends in worship and hope. Why do you think Jesus referenced this Psalm, and what does that teach us about what Jesus has done for us? What does it teach us about trusting God in suffering?
7. The sermon ends with a call to share what Jesus has done with future generations. Who are you currently sharing this good news with? Who do you hope to share this with? What are some practical ways you can live that out in your current season of life?
8. Close in prayer for one another.