

Good Friday

Matthew 27:46 reads “About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’” The cries of this from Jesus upon the cross are a direct quote from Psalm 22:1, where David too exclaims in agony. We often talk about how Jesus is the Savior of mankind. Any Christian worth their salt can tell you about how Jesus is the propitiation (the payment) for our sins. Most will also talk about how that payment took place, upon the cross. We often take this for granted that Jesus had to die in order for us to live. We take it for granted that this was His plan, as He makes clear all throughout the Gospels. What we sometimes miss is the pain that comes with this. Death, Beloved Congregations, is painful, and Jesus endured that pain to its fullest for us. Furthermore, He bore our sins in His death... something infinitely more horrible than simply perishing as we think of it.

“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” is a hard piece of scripture to understand. Isn’t Jesus God in human flesh, fully God and fully man? If so, then how can God forsake Himself? Well, Jesus is fully God and fully man, but we must remember that fully man portion. The wages for sin, as we read in Romans 6:23, is death. This isn’t an earthly death, but a second death, a complete separation from God. For us as Christians this world is as bad as it will ever get. This will be the furthest we ever are from perfection, from everlasting joy, from knowing our Creator in the fullest. For those who do not know Jesus as Savior, this is as close as they will ever reach. For Jesus to, therefore, be able to pay our burden means that He had to endure that second death, that total separation from the Lord. The words “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” show the extreme agony that Jesus is in not from fleshly wounds (although those too are painful) but from the pain of bearing our sins.

Here on Good Friday we must remember that the price paid for us was not small. This was not a trivial matter for the Lord of all creation, fully God and fully man, to go to the cross. Jesus being fully man bore all the physical pain that you or I would. He bears all the agony of being tortured and bereted. Ultimately He also bears the pain that you and I will never know if we call upon Him, the pain of having to atone for our sins. In the darkest of ways this scripture reminds us that our Lord paid much for you and me. Praise Him that He loved us enough to go in our place and take our pain.

There is one final note to make from this verse in Matthew. The Psalm that Jesus quotes in His agony, it doesn’t end in the same agony it begins with. Instead Psalm 22 ends with a promise of joy for all the earth, that to the ends of the earth people will “remember and turn to the Lord.” Praise be to the Lord that the cries of agony from Jesus are not the end, but only the beginning.

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