

DEVOTIONS FOR EASTER WEEK

FORSAKEN BY THE FATHER

Tuesday, March 27

Reading: Mark 15

Mark 15:33 *At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34 And at 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?"*

During WWII six Navy pilots left their aircraft carrier on a mission. After searching the seas for enemy submarines, they tried to return to their ship shortly after dark. But the captain had ordered a blackout of all lights on the ship. Over and over the frantic pilots radioed, asking for just one light so they could see to land. But the pilots were told that the blackout could not be lifted. After several appeals and denials of their request, the ship's operator turned the switch to break radio contact--and the pilots were forced to ditch in the ocean.¹

Have you ever felt abandoned? Like someone has turned the switch and left you in silent darkness? No one felt this more than the Savior as He hung on the cross. At noon, darkness descended as if creation itself could not bear to look at what was being done to its Creator. During these terrible hours of darkness, Jesus bore the sins of the world. Paul would declare that "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21). This moment was truly what made Christ agonize in Gethsemane. He had never experienced the penalty of sin for He was sinless. Now every vile thing that mankind has ever done was poured out on Him.

"Wave after wave of the world's sin was poured over Christ's sinless soul. Again and again during those three hours his soul recoiled and convulsed as all the lies of civilization, the murders of a thousand Killing Fields, the whorings of the world's armies, and the noxious brew of hatreds, jealousies, and pride were poured on his purity. Finally he became a curse: Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree' (Gal. 3:13).²

Because of this, in some way that we can never fully comprehend, the eternal fellowship between God the Father and God the Son was broken as the Father turned His back because of the sin His Son was bearing (see Habakkuk 1:13). He was not only taking our sins, but the wrath of God that should have been ours was poured out on Him! This brought the heart wrenching cry: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" This would be the only time Christ would address God as "My God" instead of "Father."

With this cry, Jesus was also quoting prophesy. These words are the opening phrase of Psalm 22 which describes Christ's suffering, humiliation, and rejection. This psalm ends with the final cry recorded by John "It is finished" ("He has done" - Psalm 22:31). Christ paid the wages of sin so He might give us the gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23).

If we define Hell as separation from the love and mercy of God, then Jesus descended into Hell on the cross. He was forsaken by the Father so that we might never be forsaken! After the resurrection, Jesus promised His followers "I am with you always" (Matt. 28:20) and "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb. 13:5).

¹ Today in the Word, October 1991.

² R. Kent Hughes, Mark: Jesus, Servant and Savior, vol. 2. Preaching the Word series, page 207