

Chapter 87

"Why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Matthew 27 vv 45 and 46

Mark 15 vv 33 and 34

Luke 23 vv 44 and 45

The hours pass slowly by. The sun rises higher and higher. The mocking and jeering of the elders and of the people continue.

But ... suddenly the murmuring of the voices is stopped. It becomes quiet, nervously quiet. Why is that then? Has something happened? ...

Yes, indeed! Something certainly does take place. Something wonderful, something extraordinary.

It is now the middle of the day. The sun shines in its full power. The hill of Calvary is bathed in clear sunlight. In the Bible it says that it was the sixth hour, which would be twelve o'clock midday with us.

And then ... suddenly ... it becomes dark! No, the sun does not sink, that cannot be so, for it is only twelve o'clock. The sun is in fact just at its highest point. How does it come about then that it becomes dark? ... Well, the sun is darkened! God takes away for a moment the light of the sun. It is just as though the sun does not want to shine upon this fearful scene. It becomes completely dark, as dark as night. And that darkness reigns not only in the region about Jerusalem or in the land of Canaan only, but God's Word tells us that this darkness came over the whole earth.

For three hours that frightening darkness lasted.

So it is not surprising that the jeering

ceased. We may well believe that their hearts beat heavily with fear.

Usually the greatest scoffers become the most frightened if anything happens. Then the jeering mouths are stopped, then frequently beads of perspiration appear on their anxious foreheads. Are there any of you who thus mock and jeer? ... If so, then I have for you a terrible message, if you do not forsake it. The day will shortly dawn when God shall laugh, with holy derision, when you are cast into everlasting perdition. Read it in Psalm 2, verse 4.

Oh, how anxious the Jewish elders and people must have become. Perhaps they even entertained a fear that it would never more become light.

That darkness though is also a figure of the everlasting darkness which, as a consequence of sin, shall reign in hell.

Through this three hour period of darkness the suffering of the Lord Jesus became even greater. There hangs the Saviour completely forsaken. The soul agony through which the Lord passed in those three hours, I cannot tell you, for words cannot describe it.

The wrath of God against sin burned afresh in the pure soul of the Lord Jesus. Again I say, He himself was not guilty, but His people's sins were laid upon Him. God punished the sins of His elect people in His Son. Oh, how dreadful

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that was.

Forsaken by His heavenly Father.

Besides that, the attacks of the prince of darkness. Here too the Lord Jesus suffered in His soul the pains of hell.

At last the sufferings of the Saviour are so great, that He cries out plaintively: "Eloi, Eloi, Lama, Sabachthani." That means in our language: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

It befits us to deal with this portion with awe and reverence. The depth of this painful suffering cannot be fathomed. And then to think that He took all this willingly upon Himself to save hell-deserving sinners from everlasting ruin.

But, boys and girls, just think for a moment about eternal misery. In hell, eternal darkness reigns. There, God's anger will burn for ever in the souls of all those who are lost. I do not write this to make you frightened, but do give more thought to the seriousness of our life. Don't seek your satisfaction in this world, and do not live only for fun and enjoyment. Rather bend your knees and plead continually that the Lord will be gracious to you. Ask Him to renew your heart. The door of grace stands open yet, perhaps tomorrow it will close.

Matthew 27 vv 47-50

Mark 15 vv 35-37

Luke 23 v 46

John 19 vv 28-30

Directly after the Lord Jesus had spoken for the fourth time from the cross, the light returns and the sun shines again in its full power.

Probably a sigh of relief arose from the hearts of the many beholders. All look again

towards the Prophet of Nazareth who still hangs there. Everything has returned to normal.

The soul conflict of the Saviour has ended. The prince of darkness had to retire in defeat. Yet now that the soul agony decreases, He feels doubly the agony of His body. A burning thirst attacks Him.

Listen! Suddenly His voice is heard: "I thirst."

One of the Roman soldiers hearing that, springs up and fetches a sponge. This sponge he drenches in a jar of vinegar.

Some say that by vinegar is meant sour wine. Others conclude that it was just water mixed with vinegar.

If it was wine, then it was poor wine, the very cheapest. Well then, the sponge was dipped in that vinegar. Then the rough Roman warrior impales the sponge upon a reed and in this way brings it to the dry lips of the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus sucks a little of the vinegar out. Why does He do that? .. He does that so that everything which had been foretold about the Lord Jesus, might be fulfilled. David had prophesied that they would give Him vinegar to drink in His thirst (Psalm 69). That prophecy is here fulfilled. Oh, the Lord Jesus paid in full, not just half, for sin.

Yet even that is begrudged the Saviour, for ... just listen to what the others say: "He calleth for Elias. Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save Him." This they cry mockingly.

However can they begin to mock again? Has that three hour darkness made no impression at all? Have they forgotten that already? ...

Yes children, alas, it is so. What evil men, were they not? ... You are much better behaved than that, are you not? Do you think you are? ...

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Well, what about when a heavy thunderstorm comes in summer time, then surely you are frightened? Then perhaps you pray the Lord to preserve you from harm, but scarcely is the storm passed, and you forget everything. Yes sometimes perhaps you laugh derisively and tell stories about a little brother or sister who crept close to father or mother and burst out crying. Oh, how often such things happen. Then with you too there is not the least impression remaining of God's Majesty. Yes, it may even be that you are later ashamed of your anxiety during the storm. Can you see that you are no better? By nature we all have an evil, corrupt heart. We forget God's warning voice, or we pay no attention to it.

On Calvary's hill too there was yet again derision of the Saviour's words, though He spoke from the depth of soul-felt need.

Moreover it was not the truth which they were saying. Jesus had not called for Elias to save Him. He had cried: "Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani!" The Son of God did not need Elias to save Him; He is the Almighty God and had He so willed He could have saved Himself.

As soon as the Saviour had taken the vinegar, He cries with a loud voice which resounds over the whole of Calvary, so that all can hear and understand: "It is finished." It is as though the Lord says: "The purpose for which I came upon earth is now fulfilled. I have done everything which I came to do. It is finished!"

Now He has borne God's wrath over sin completely, and without the slightest omission. He has paid for His people's sins. "It is finished."

When that word echoed over the hill of Calvary, the devil fled trembling. Here they suffered their greatest defeat. The Lord Jesus was victorious and the devil was defeated for

evermore.

That day, the day that Christ died, is still remembered every year. This remembrance day is called "Good Friday". Truly, that day is Good Friday for all God's people, for on that day the King of Israel obtained for them eternal salvation. Certainly the Lord Jesus suffered during the whole of His earthly life, but still more particularly upon the cross.

God had said in Paradise: "The day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

Adam and Eve were disobedient to the Divine commandment. They ate the fruit of the forbidden tree and thus death came into the world.

All men are sinners in God's sight. All men must therefore die. All are subject to the threefold death. These are the terrible consequences of sin.

The Lord Jesus is not a sinner. He is completely free from sin. Death therefore had no claims upon Jesus. The Lord Jesus did not need to die for His own sins, for He had none. But He was willing to die as a substitute and Saviour for His people. Through His death He would remove the sting of death for His people.

All men die first, and then, when they are dead, their head falls upon their breast. But it was just the other way round with the Lord Jesus. First He bows His head, and then He dies.

Listen! ... Just once more He cries with a loud voice: "Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit!"

Death comes to all men irresistibly. Then there is no question of "Will you die?" or "Can you die?" Death snatches life away. But the Lord Jesus gives His life. Men are bound to die - most of them against their will. The Lord Jesus was

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willing to die and He lays down His life freely.
Can you understand that? ... I know, that it is

difficult, but I had to say something about it. I
hope that you can follow what I mean.