

Good Friday Matthew 27:45–56

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[0 : 0 0] We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe.! Yet at the very same time, we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.

This is probably the most well-known quote by the late pastor Timothy Keller. He loved to say this. He always found ways to intertwine it into his books.

He always found ways to intertwine it into his sermons. If you're familiar with his work, with his sermons, you've definitely heard this quote before. We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe.

Yet at the very same time, we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope. How does this quote even make sense? Can these things coexist? Can they come together? Can they come together? See, in our culture, we are told that someone is only useful to us until they are not. If they start to cause us problems or we begin to not like them anymore, we are to offload them.

[1 : 0 8] So we can find someone better or something better. And obviously, we need to protect ourselves and others from abuse. But that's another conversation. See, the mindset that I'm talking about here, that I'm describing, is that we only need to surround ourselves with people who please us.

We can never live by Timothy Keller's quote. We can never do it. But the thing is, as we reflected on this text, God is not like our culture. God is not like us.

He does not think like us. With this, God is able to live by this quote. He can do it. See, today is Good Friday. As Daniel said, Palm Sunday has happened.

The triumphant entry has happened. Jesus has talked with his disciples in the upper room discourse. The betrayal of Jesus has happened. Jesus has been abandoned by his friends. He's been flogged. There's been a fake trial. And now, we come to him crucified on the cross. How does this quote, we are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time, we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope make any sense?

[2 : 2 6] How does it make any sense? Well, the passage we're going to look at this morning shows us exactly how this makes sense. So, if you have your Bible, turn with me to Matthew chapter 27, verses 45 to 56.

If you do not have a Bible, there's some at the back. Feel free to get up at any time and to grab one. So, we're going to look at this. And we're going to look at it in three ways. And we're going to look at it in point one, forsaken Jesus.

Point two, the triumphant Jesus. And point three, first witnesses. So, point one, look with me at verses 45 to 50. Now, from the sixth hour, there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice saying, Eli, Eli, let me step back to me. That is, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

And some of the bystanders hearing it said, this man is calling Elijah. And one of them at once ran and took a sponge and filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink.

[3 : 3 6] But the others said, wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him. And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.

So, a couple of things to clarify here. In verse 45, it says the sixth hour. That's 12 p.m., lunchtime. And the ninth hour is 3 p.m. The bystanders, when they hear Jesus say, Eli, Eli, most likely misheard him.

And they heard Elijah. It would have been easy to mishear Jesus in this moment because you've got to think about it. He's being crucified with two other people.

And they're screaming and they're riling, they're mocking him. And then there's all the commotion around Jesus. It would be hard to hear. It would be like if we are standing on one side of the room and on the other someone is saying something and there's commotion everywhere.

It would be hard to hear that person properly. And lastly, it says sour wine. Sour wine is a cheap drink that soldiers drank and then lower income people drank.

[4 : 39] It actually hydrated you but at the same time got you a bit drunk. So let's focus now in on verses 45 and 46. Now from the sixth hour, there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.

And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice saying, Eli, Eli, let me sabathone. That is, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

See, up to this point in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus is called God, Father. And now, he calls him, my God. What is going on?

See, our current sermon series that we're going through, we're going through the book of Romans. And in the book of Romans, Paul, the apostle who's the writer of it, builds a case. That no matter who you are, you have fallen short of the glory of God.

As he says in Romans chapter 3, verse 23. See, if you are an unbeliever, one who does not follow God, whether you live a life of sensual indulgence or are the best member of society, you have fallen short of the glory of God.

[5 : 48] If you are a follower of one of the major religions of this world, and follow it to a T, you do everything it says, you have fallen short of the glory of God.

If you are here and you call yourself a Christian, and live a super pious life, and trust in all your own works, you have fallen short of the glory of God. See, not a single person is right before God.

All deserve God's righteous wrath, as it's said in the Gospel of John that we read about. God is perfectly holy. And anything that is not perfectly holy, God has to forsake.

If he didn't, he would not be perfectly holy. Oftentimes, when we think of sin, or we hear people talk about sin, we think that it's just, oh, are we just breaking rules? It's just these rules that have been put in place.

It's like how parents make rules for their children. But that's not the case. John Stott, who was a famous pastor, famous writer, famous preacher in the UK, in his book, The Cross of Christ, he quotes Emile Brunner, who says this, Sin is defiance, arrogance, the desire to be equal of God, the assertion of human independence over against God, the constitution of the autonomous reason, morality and culture.

[7 : 14] This is what happened in the garden, way back in the book of Genesis, in the Old Testament, in chapter 3, which caused the fall of humanity. It was not a simple rule being broken.

It was the desire to defy God's holiness, to be equal with him. It was not an event that is often caricatured as simply eating an apple, and that's what did us all in.

But someone may push back. Isn't God a loving God? Didn't it say in Keller's quote that I'm loved? See, the God that you are talking about, Matt, does not sound like a loving God.

To quote John Stott one more time in his book, he says this, God is love. Yet, we have to remember that his love is holy love.

Love which yearns over sinners, while at the same time, refusing to condone their sin. In a marriage, we make vows.

[8 : 18] If you're married, you make vows. And you make vows with this person that you're standing in front of, and these vows are a sign of your deep love for that person.

And if you are a member of this marriage, if you completely disregard the vows or the commitment you make to that person, it falls apart. The love is gone. If the spouse is allowed to run rampant and plainly disregards the vows or the commitment, that is not love, that is indifference.

See, God is a God of love because he is perfectly holy. And he cannot just sit back and let humanity completely disregard him.

He has to give out his wrath and forsake humanity. So this leaves us with the question, what is going on when Jesus says on the cross, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why is he even there in the first place? Isn't he the son of God? See, as I referred to in Genesis, when humanity falls in the garden, God in his justice curses humanity and sends it out.

[9 : 40] That now they would experience death. And this death is a physical death and a spiritual death, a separation from God. And since then, humanity has been under his curse, this curse that he gives.

But God, at the same time, in his loving kindness, promises he would provide humanity a way out, that he would save humanity. And the rest of the Old Testament plays this out before us.

In the prophets, it's promised that God would send a Savior to save his people. They prophesy about it. It's spoken about. It has been spoken about long ago.

And when this Savior came into the world on Christmas, in the middle of the night, and now we see this Savior hanging from a tree, cursed in the middle of the day, but there is darkness.

Douglas Webster writes, at the birth of the Son of God, there was brightness at midnight. At the death of the Son of God, there was darkness at noon. Those words, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

[10:51] Tell us something so profound. They tell us how much we are loved by God. God, in his love for the world, sent his only Son to take our place, to experience the death we so rightly deserved because of our defiance of him.

This curse, sorry, this curse could not be fulfilled by merely a human because that would lower the seriousness of it, of the sin.

It could only be fulfilled by someone who is perfectly holy. And this curse could not be fulfilled by just a God because it was a human sin and the curse is on humanity.

God had to come in the form of man and in the form of God, fully God and fully human. God had to experience human physical death and spiritual death.

Jesus, who is, who is God and man, fully God and fully man, becomes utterly forsaken by God so we would not have to be.

[12:02] He experienced the crushing weight of sin of the world and God forsakes him because God cannot look on sin because he is perfectly holy. That is why he cries out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

See, he could only say, my God and not my Father in this moment because God has turned away from him. God sees the sin that Jesus now puts on himself but it's not Jesus' sin.

It is our sin. It is my sin. It is your sin. It is the sin of the whole world. And Jesus in this moment experiences a separation from God, the spiritual death.

In moments, in moments, in a couple of moments, he'll experience the physical death. See, in this moment, before this moment, he experienced this deep love with the Father that he could commune with the Father and then in this moment, when he stands before God in our place, he can only say, my God.

He experiences the utter separation of God. See, it's like a courtroom.

[13:19] See, we stand on trial before God, completely guilty. The case is closed and we wait for the gavel to drop as the judge gives his sentence. But at the last minute, Jesus takes our place.

He says, I will stand in their place and then we go free while he continues to stand there. See, some people might ask, well, did he actually die? Did Jesus actually die?

The thing that's very interesting is that all historians who have researched during this time of the Romans can confidently agree on this. Jesus died. See, the Romans knew how to kill people.

They crucified thousands of people. They knew how to do it and do it effectively. Also, who would put their faith and trust in a guy who is half dead and who would most likely have died a couple days later from being flogged and then being crucified.

There's no way you can survive it. It's impossible. But how does this affect me? Well, this brings us to point two. Triumphant Jesus. Look with me at verses 51 to 54.

[14:28] And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom and the earth shook and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised.

And coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. When the centurion and those who were with him keeping watch over Jesus saw the earthquakes and what took place they were filled with awe and said, Truly, this was the Son of God. Three main things happen in this section. The curtain of the temple is torn in two. Dead people are raised and Romans confess that Jesus is the Son of God.

So the temple was made up of two sections. There was the main section where the daily ceremonial rituals would happen for the cleansing of the people. And then there is the other section which was called the Holy of Holies which the curtain separates the two rooms.

Separates the people from God in a sense. the high priest would go in once a year only once a year into this section the Holy of Holies to make atonement with animal blood for his sins and the sins of the people of Israel.

[15 : 50] If anyone else went in there they would be sentenced to death. The role of the high priest was to represent the people of Israel. No one could have direct access to God.

They needed a representative. But the problem with this atonement is that it would never suffice. It had to happen annually because of animal blood could never pay the price of sin.

So the people were stuck in a continual cycle. So what does it mean that the curtain was torn from top to bottom when Jesus breathes his last? See because humanity can never rid themselves of sin they can never have access to God.

God can never allow that since he is perfectly holy. When Jesus stood in our place and went to the cross as a sinless sacrifice he opened the way for those who put their faith and trust in him as Lord and Savior to have access to God.

See no longer was there separation as the curtain represented. Notice that it was torn from top to bottom as it says not from bottom to the top. See this represents that it is God who tore the curtain not man.

[17 : 03] If it was man it would be from the bottom up. But it's God it's top down. God opens the way out of sheer grace and of sheer love. But you might be lost and just thinking about well Matt it says dead bodies were raised.

See only Matthew's gospel speaks of this moment that it's happening. I don't want to distract from what it means because Jesus rose from the dead and then there would be nothing wrong in saying that this happened if Jesus truly rose from the dead.

But notice in verse 23 it says and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city Jerusalem and appeared to many.

See this happens three days later after Jesus rises from the dead on Easter morning. Because of Jesus' finished work the curse of death no longer has hold on humanity when they trust in Jesus' work.

No longer is humanity under the burden of physical and spiritual death. God has provided a way out of his deep love and that's through his son. The people being risen from the dead in this moment signals that those who trust in Christ will also face a resurrection.

[18 : 19] They will face eternal life. And lastly in this section we see the Roman soldiers in verse 54 saying truly this is the son of God. See we shouldn't put that much stock in that they say this.

That they actually confess that Jesus is Lord. Because Romans believed that the people around them some people in their culture were gods. If you just look at their emperors that gives us an example.

Hence why the emperors always demanded worship. Because they viewed themselves as God. But Matthew includes this because it represents something very profound. The religious leaders and most of the Jewish people would have left by now because they have to go do the Passover sacrifice and prepare for the Passover.

Which is interesting because this happens right when Jesus breathes his last. You can make a whole sermon out of that. See only the Romans, Jesus' disciples, any passerby is present in this moment.

Up to this point only the people of Israel were considered God's people. But they had utterly gone astray. They had become lost in their pride, lost in their self works, relying on following the law to make them right before God instead of relying on God himself.

[19 : 41] But here we see the Gentiles, non-believers, saying this was the Son of God. What Matthew is doing is showing that through Jesus' death, no longer do you need to be an ethnic Jew to be God's people.

Now it's open to all who trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior with their lives. And as the sun began to set, when everything from the outside appears that Jesus had failed, that he was a liar, that he was a crazy person who claimed to be God, a blasphemer, but in reality Jesus was truly triumphant.

through the cross, a way for sins to be forgiven has been provided out of sheer love and grace. Through the cross, a promise that death no longer has the final say has been given.

And through the cross, a salvation has been offered to all, not by a certain nationality, but by being a follower of Christ. And then lastly, we come to our last point, first witnesses.

Something that would have been unheard of for an ancient biographer to write was to include women as having an important role in a story, in a biography, or to give testimony.

[20 : 57] It would have been considered worthless in that time. But here we see Matthew including women. Look with me at verses 55 and 56. There were also many women there looking on from a distance who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Joseph the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

If you ever wonder, this is kind of like a Bible geek moment, why certain books, other books aren't included in the Bible. One, it's because they are written many, many years later, but another reason is because they downplay this very fact that women were the first witnesses, that women were present.

because in ancient times, it was considered embarrassing to have this point. With Matthew including this in his gospel, as the other gospels also include, it shows us that this biography is trustworthy.

It shows us that the disciples were willing to show their weaknesses and flaws to face ridicule for having the testimony of women because it was fact. That the power of the gospel message is more powerful than any other human power.

Jesus' death on the cross and then his resurrection three days later show us that we are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe.

[22 : 23] Yet at the very same time, we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope. The cross shows us the depths of how much we are lost, but it also shows us how much we are loved.

See, if you are here and seeking after God or just checking out what the heck do Christians do on this holiday, I challenge you to look to the cross. Research the cross.

Read good books on the cross, ones that aren't influenced by the culture but influenced on seeking truth. There's a reason why these disciples, after witnessing Jesus being crucified, go into hiding and are terrified.

And then three days later, they have this unshakable boldness and confidence. It's because their Lord and Savior went to the cross and three days later rose again and the tomb was empty.

That is the power of the cross. The cross is this great hope that anyone who comes to Jesus as their Lord and Savior will be saved and have this hope of eternal life.

[23 : 26] who