

## WORDS FROM THE CROSS - PART 4

### Forsaken

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Matthew 27:45-46
Subject:	What Jesus cried out cross the cross after darkness had covered the land for three hours
Complement:	My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Exegetical idea:	After hanging on the cross in darkness for 3 hours, Jesus cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”
Preaching idea:	<b>God will never leave you or forsake you.</b>
Purpose	To help my hearers understand that God will never leave them or forsake them.

Idrissa felt forsaken. His father had just died and now his mother was being banished from their village. Idrissa lived in the small West African nation of Burkina Faso. It was the tradition of his Muslim village that if a man died, his wives would be banished from the village. Idrissa was only five years old, but when his widowed mother was banished from the village, she was forced to leave her son Idrissa behind. Can you imagine how Idrissa felt? Idrissa felt forsaken.

What would you have done in that situation? For little Idrissa, only one option made sense: he would run away from his village and search for his mother. How old was Idrissa? Only 5 years old. But run away he did, and for the next 2 years he roamed about in a wild, hostile environment searching for his mother. He survived against impossible odds. Finally, after 2 years of searching, Idrissa found the village where his mother was now living. She had come to that village in mourning two years earlier and had become one of the secondary wives of a village elder. Can you imagine Idrissa’s joy as he made his way to that village? He had found his mother! But when he got there, the entrance to the village was blocked by the village elders. Idrissa was told that he was not welcome there. He was not part of their family. And so little

Idrissa, now still only 7 years old, was driven out into the wild again. Once again, he felt forsaken. Totally abandoned.

Have you ever felt forsaken? Totally abandoned? Perhaps you are feeling forsaken today. You may not be wandering in the wild and hostile territories of West Africa, but you may find yourself in a hostile, hurtful environment. And you also feel forsaken. If so, you'll discover today that Jesus understands how you feel. Jesus also felt forsaken.

This is part 4 of our series on Words from the Cross. Today we are going to consider the most heart-wrenching cry of Jesus from the cross. These words of Jesus are recorded by Matthew and Mark. Their accounts are virtually identical. We'll focus our attention today on Matthew's account, recorded in Matthew 27, beginning with verse 45. "From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?'" That is a curious combination of Aramaic and Hebrew which Matthew translates for us: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'

I want you to imagine this cry of Jesus this morning. He has been hanging on the cross for the past 6 hours, since 9:00 AM. For the past 3 hours, since 12 noon, Jesus has been enveloped in darkness. Now it is around 3:00 PM—the time of the evening sacrifice. Suddenly, Jesus cries out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

What can we learn from this cry of Jesus from the cross? Matthew and Mark record that Jesus cried out in a **LOUD VOICE**, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" There is intensity in this cry of Jesus. Jesus feels forsaken. Abandoned by God. And that experience is causing tremendous spiritual distress.

But there's something else that I want you to notice. In the midst of that spiritual distress, in the midst of feeling forsaken, Jesus is also confessing his faith in God. Jesus doesn't just cry out in a loud voice, "Why have you forsaken me?" or "God, why have you forsaken me?" What are the words that Jesus cries out in a loud voice from the cross? My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? The cry of Jesus is a confession of faith, a confession of trust. Jesus is crying out to His Father.

His enemies would have heard this cry as a confirmation that Jesus had indeed been abandoned by God. Jesus was indeed an imposter. But actually these words of Jesus from the cross speak more of hope than we might first realize. Did you know that when Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" that he was quoting an ancient prophecy, written 1,000 years earlier? Where are those words from the cross found elsewhere in Scripture? Psalm 22. I am convinced that Psalm 22 provides the key that helps us to truly understand this loud cry of Jesus from the cross. In fact, I am convinced that Jesus would have quoted the entire psalm while hanging there on the cross, if his strength had been sufficient.

Please turn to this ancient Scripture song, found in the book of Psalms. Psalm 22 "....." Do you notice that this psalm begins with a desperate cry of feeling forsaken but it ends with words of praise and hope? It was not by accident that Jesus quoted Psalm 22. It had been prophesied that Messiah would feel forsaken, but it was also prophesied that Messiah would hold on in faith, and confess that His hope was in God.

Now, I have an important question to ask you. Was Jesus really forsaken by God at the cross, or did Jesus just feel forsaken? What do you think? The prophet Isaiah tell us in Isaiah 53:4-6, "Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him

stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Jesus our Savior carried the weight of all of our sin on the cross. Have you ever sinned and felt separated from God? Can you imagine how Jesus must have felt when the iniquity of us all was laid upon Him? I’m convinced that’s what killed Jesus. That’s what broke his heart. Not the beatings. Not the dehydration. But the weight of our sins. And under the weight of that sin, Jesus felt forsaken.

But I ask again, Was Jesus really forsaken by God? I looked up that word “forsaken” this week, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament. It’s found in 2 Cor 4:9 where the apostle Paul testifies that he was persecuted but not forsaken. This same verb is also found in the book of Hebrews. The author of the book of Hebrews reminds us in Hebrews 13:5 that “God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’”

That’s actually a quotation from the Hebrew Scriptures. Where are those words found? Does anyone know? Deuteronomy 31:6. “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.” That promise is repeated in Deuteronomy 31:8. And the psalmist David confesses in Psalm 27:10, “Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me.” Listen to the word of the Lord through the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah 49:13-16 “Shout for joy, O heavens; rejoice, O earth; burst into song, O mountains! For the Lord comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones. But Zion said, ‘The Lord has forsaken me, the Lord has

forgotten me.’ Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands...”

I’m thankful for those promises, aren’t you? Some of you have been forsaken by your father and mother. Some of you have been forsaken by your spouse. Some of you have been forsaken by your best earthly friend. But God promises that He will never leave you or forsake you. He will receive you. Aren’t you thankful for those promises today?

Now, I have a question for you. Is God faithful to His promises? He promises that He will never leave us or forsake us. Is He faithful to His promises? If He is faithful, then the Father did not forsake His Son when Jesus was hanging on the cross. Even in His darkest hour, God did not forsake His Son.

But you say, “Jesus felt forsaken! He cried out in a loud voice, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” And you’re right about that. Jesus experienced the spiritual distress that the lost will experience when they face the final judgment without a Savior. Jesus tasted that anguish.

This past week, I was reading my favorite book on the Life of Jesus, *The Desire of Ages*, and the author describes this scene on the cross with these words:

Amid the awful darkness, apparently forsaken of God, Christ had drained the last dregs in the cup of human woe. In those dreadful hours He had relied upon the evidence of His Father's acceptance heretofore given Him. He was acquainted with the character of His Father; He understood His justice, His mercy, and His great love. By faith He rested in Him whom it had ever been His joy to obey. And as in submission He committed Himself to God, the sense of the loss of His Father's favor was withdrawn. By faith, Christ was victor. {DA 756.3}

Yes, Jesus felt forsaken on the cross. The weight of the sins of the world was crushing His heart. But He was not alone. His Father was with Him. And He will also be with us. He will not leave us or forsake us!

Perhaps you're wondering whatever happened to Idrissa. Well, he didn't die out in that wild, hostile environment. He survived lion and snakes. He moved to a small town in the center of the province and lived in the market place. When Idrissa was 9 years old, a U.N. worker came to that market place and noticed this helpful young boy. The U.N. worker was single, but God impressed him to adopt Idrissa as his own son. It was in his new home that Idrissa learned about Jesus. It was there that he learned that even though everyone on earth forsakes you, God will never leave you or forsake you. And that's a lesson that we are need to remember!

Idrissa's story is just one person's experience. But we each have a story, and at some point in our lives, we all come to the place where we know that we are facing more than we can handle. That's when we especially need to remember than even when we feel forsaken, we are not forsaken by God. Even if your mother forsakes you. Even if your father forsakes you. Even if your husband forsakes you. Even if your wife forsakes you. Even if your child forsakes you. No matter who forsakes you, God will never leave you or forsake you. .

There was a time in my life when I felt forsaken by God. For too long, I'd been telling God to get out of my life, to leave me alone. And one Friday night, I felt that God had finally answered by prayer. I felt forsaken. Totally abandoned. And I was desperate. But God had not abandoned me. He is more willing to hear my cry than I am willing to cry out to Him. He will never leave us or forsake us. Oh, we can forsake Him. We can't beat our way past His love and mercy. It is possible to be lost. If we insist that He forsake us, He will honor our demand. But

that is not God's will for any of us. He wants to save us all. And when you feel forsaken, remember that God is faithful to all of His promises. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. God will never leave you or forsake you!