

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 8 March 2026. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Hours of Darkness

Matthew 27:45-50

Countless believers down through the centuries have had to go through intense, gut-wrenching trials in their lives. Oftentimes, these trials are of long duration—or even for the better part of a lifetime. For some, it is the early and unexpected death of a loved one. For some, it is a chronic illness or disability which causes constant, ceaseless pain. For others, it is a job loss, a sudden financial crisis, or a series of reversals, which results in a prolonged struggle to provide for oneself, or for one's family. For some, it is the piercing pain of rejection and betrayal from people whom they once thought they could trust. For many others, it is the pain of persecution from those who hate the Lord Jesus Christ. Depending on what part of the world they live in, this persecution may manifest in everything from cold snubbing from neighbours, to cruel remarks behind one's back, to open mockery, to threats and bullying, to dismissal from a job, to confiscation of goods, to imprisonment, to beating and torture, to the murder of loved ones, and even death. To some, it is the mental pain of a great wrong that was done in the past, which is hard to forget. Yet, no matter how close one may be to the Lord, there is a question that naturally comes to a Christian's mind when going through intense suffering. That question is, "Why, Lord?"

If you've been there, and you know what I'm talking about, I am here to give you this comforting truth this morning: Jesus understands, because He has been there. He experienced pain that we cannot possibly comprehend. For one thing, there was the pain in His body, during the long hours of His crucifixion. A physician named Truman Davis described the crucifixion of Christ this way:

"At the site of the crucifixion, the crossbeam is thrown down, and the victim is pushed to the ground, his arms stretching over the wood. The legionnaire feels for the depression at the front of the wrist. He drives a heavy, square, wrought-iron nail through the wrist, and into the wood. Quickly, he moves to the other side. Jesus is hauled up and lifted onto the upright post. The left foot is now pressed backward against the right foot, and with both feet extended, toes down, a nail is driven through the arch of each, leaving the knees moderately flexed. The victim is now crucified. As he slowly sags down with more weight on the nails in the wrists, excruciating pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms, to explode in the brain—the nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves. As he pushes himself upward to avoid this stretching torment, he places his full weight on the nail through his feet. Again, there is the searing agony of the nail tearing through the nerves between the metatarsal bones of the feet. At this point, the arms fatigue, great waves of cramps sweep over the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to push himself upward. Hanging by the arms, the pectoral muscles are paralyzed, and the intercostal muscles are unable to act. Air can be drawn into the lungs, but cannot be exhaled. The victim fights to raise himself up in order to get even one short breath. Finally, carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the blood stream, and the cramps partially subside.

Spasmodically, he is able to put himself upward to exhale, and bring in the life-giving oxygen. It was undoubtedly during these periods that Jesus uttered the seven short sentences recorded.”¹

The physical pain that Jesus endured on the cross was unbelievably excruciating; but even the physical agony, horrible though it was, couldn't compare to the agony of spirit that He was enduring. Of the seven utterances that Jesus made on the cross, the one that reveals His agony more than any other was, “***My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?***” In a very real sense, the Father *did* have to forsake His Son while He was hanging on that cross; and the reason He had to do so was that *our* sin was laid on *Him*. We'll be talking about that this morning, in the message which I've entitled ***The Hours of Darkness***.

Read Matthew 27:45-50.

I. The darkened sun (v. 45)

In **verse 45**, we come to a strange statement: Matthew records that there was “***darkness over all the land***” from the sixth hour to the ninth hour. Jesus had already been on the cross from the top of the third hour (9:00 a.m.); and in the three hours between then and noon (the sixth hour), the sun had been shining, as in any other day. But in the *last* three hours of Jesus' life, it was just the opposite. These were hours of *darkness*. At noon sharp, the sky suddenly went black, and stayed black right up until 3:00. Why? Why were there three hours of light, followed by three hours of darkness? Simply this: the first three hours was the time of *man's* wrath against the Son of God; but the last three hours was the time of *God's* wrath against His Son. In the spiritual realm, all the sins of mankind were being laid upon the Son of God; and the Father was pouring out His wrath upon His Son, as though He were the one who had committed all those sins. In the realm of eternity, an eternal price was being paid by the eternal Son of God. **Isaiah 53:6** says, “***All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.***”

Now, why was it so dark? Was this just an unusually gloomy day, with heavy cloud cover? No, it was not. There was nothing natural about this darkness; and it didn't cover merely the region around Jerusalem. It didn't even cover merely the land of Israel. It covered the whole world! Ancient records indicate that in **A.D. 33**, there was darkness not only in Israel, but *everywhere*. In A.D. 52, the **Samaritan** historian Thallus recorded that “Upon the whole world there came a most fearful darkness. Many rocks were split in two by an earthquake, and many places in Judea and other districts were thrown down.” In **A.D. 137**, the Greek historian **Phlegon** recorded that “In the fourth year of the 202nd Olympiad, there was ‘the greatest eclipse of the sun,’ and that it became night in the sixth hour of the day, so that stars even appeared in the heavens. There was a great earthquake in Bithynia, and many things were overturned in Nicaea.” The Chinese recorded an unnatural darkness in **7th year of Han Emperor Guang Wu** (the same year as Christ's death and resurrection). The annals say that “In the day of Gui Hai, the last day of the month, there was a solar eclipse...[The emperor]

avoided the Throne Room, suspended all military activities, and did not handle official business for five days.” (No wonder they were afraid, since a solar eclipse is not even possible during a full moon! They called it an “eclipse,” because they didn’t know what else to call it: but it was *not* an eclipse. It was an unnatural darkness. God literally “turned off” the light of the sun.) The annal went on to say, “The sun and the moon were eclipsed. *The sins of all the people are now on one man.* [The emperor] proclaims pardon to all under heaven.” Little did Guang Wu’s chroniclers realise how right they were when they said that “the sins of the people are now upon one man”! Isaiah prophesied that Jehovah’s Servant would bear “*the sin of many,*” and make “*intercession for the transgressors.*”

Now, as we are about to see, this darkness was yet another fulfilment of prophecy. Let’s go to the book of **Amos**, and see what God said about the unusual day of Jesus’ crucifixion.

Read Amos 8:9-10.

The book of Amos is filled with prophecies of the tragedies that would befall Israel (both in the near and far-off future) because of their sins. However, what we are reading in these verses is a prophecy of the greatest tragedy in Israel’s history: the day when they, as a nation, would murder God’s Son! First, the LORD says that He would cause “*the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day.*” This prophecy was fulfilled between noon and 3:00 p.m., on the day of Jesus’ crucifixion. During those hours, God brought supernatural darkness upon the whole world, in order to hide from men’s eyes the awful agony that His Son was enduring. The sins of the world were placed being upon Him, and as He endured the Father’s wrath against sin; and God *symbolised* this intense spiritual darkness by “turning off” the physical light of the sun. During those hours, the Father had to forsake His own Son, thus causing the Son to cry out, “*My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?*”

Amos 8:10 continues to foretell Christ’s agony, and the agony that His disciples would go through as He hung on the cross, and was buried in the tomb. Their “*feasts*” (the Passover, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which they were observing that week) would be “*turned into mourning*” for Jesus’ followers, instead of a happy time; and their “*songs*” would be turned “*into lamentation.*” Of course, Jesus’ *enemies* didn’t mourn over His death: they rejoiced over it—just as Jesus had foretold. The previous night, Jesus had told the disciples, “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice.*” On the day of Christ’s crucifixion, only those who loved Jesus mourned for Him. However, a day is coming when *all* the house of Israel *will* weep and mourn over the Lord Jesus Christ. On the day when Christ returns to earth to set up His Kingdom, the “*inhabitants of Jerusalem*” will “*look upon*” Him, and mourn for Him, “*as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.*”

Read Zechariah 12:10.

Read John 19:34-37.

Two thousand years ago, the house of Israel looked “*on him whom they pierced,*” while He was hanging on the cross; but this was only a foretaste of the mourning that is coming in the future. The inhabitants of Jerusalem did not *all* mourn for Jesus as He hung on the cross; but they *will* all mourn for Him when He appears in the clouds at the Battle of Armageddon. The Jewish believers that will be saved during the Tribulation will mourn at the thought that they had once rejected their own Messiah; and the *unsaved* Jewish survivors of the Tribulation will mourn at the realisation that this One whom their nation pierced will now be their Judge. Not only Israel, but the *whole world* will mourn when they see Christ in the clouds, because they will know that their doom is imminent.

Now, please look again at **Amos 8:10**. (Read **Amos 8:10**.) That phrase “*mourning of an only son*” is important. This reminds us of several Scriptures. It reminds us of **Zechariah 12:10**, where Jehovah Himself said that Israel will mourn for “*me whom they have pierced,*” as one would mourn for His “*only son.*” This also reminds us of **Genesis 22**, where we are told of how Abraham offered up his son Isaac on Mount Moriah, in obedience to God’s command. On that day, the LORD commended Abraham for not withholding his son, his “*only son*” from Him. It’s interesting that God referred to Isaac as Abraham’s “*only son,*” is it not? Biologically, Isaac was *not* Abraham’s “*only son*”; but Isaac *was* Abraham’s *unique* son, in that he was the son of promise. That’s what “*only son*” means: it means “*unique son*” —like none other. That is why, in **Hebrew 11**, Paul referred to Isaac as Abraham’s “*only begotten son.*” Folks, that statement is incredibly significant! Why? Because it so happens that Isaac is the *only* person other than Jesus that was ever called by that title “only begotten son.” God called Isaac by the title “*only begotten son*” because he was a prophetic picture of *His* Son Jesus, who would one day willingly go the altar of the cross, and lay down His life for us. The title “*only son*” has strong messianic meaning—both in **Genesis 22**, **Amos 8**, and **Zechariah 12**. *Jesus Christ* is the only begotten Son of God; and as the second Member of the Trinity, He Himself *is* Jehovah—the one whom sinful men “pierced.”

II. The despairing Son (v. 46)

(Read **Matthew 27:46** again.) If you were here last week, you’ll remember that we looked up portions of **Psalms 22** several times during the message. **Psalms 22** is an amazing prophetic passage! In this psalm, the Son of God spoke to Israel through the pen of King David; and He foretold of many things that would happen on the day of His crucifixion. Among the things that He foretold were the very words of mockery that the people would hurl at Him while He was on the cross (“*He trusted in God; let him deliver him, if he delight in him*”). However, this wasn’t the only utterance that was foretold in **Psalms 22**. Here in **Matthew 27:46**, we are told of an utterance that *Christ Himself* made on the cross; and, once again, this utterance was foretold by Christ Himself, in **Psalms 22**. Let’s look it up.

Read Psalm 22:1-3, 11, 19-21.

In the very first verse of **Psalm 22**, Christ's future words of anguish on the cross ring out: "**My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?**" Christ, the Author of all Scripture, knew that He was fulfilling Scripture as He uttered these words. Yet, He didn't say these words merely to "tick off the boxes" of prophecies that needed to be fulfilled. This was a genuine cry of agony from the depths of His spirit. This cry reveals the true *humanity* of Jesus Christ, and the unique relationship between Him and His Father.

You see, throughout His life, Jesus constantly called His Father "**Eli**" ("my God"). This doesn't mean that Jesus is *less* than God; it simply shows that He is 100% man, *as well as* 100% God. In His human nature, He had to pray to, rely upon, and worship God the Father, as all men must do. He also had to suffer the hardships of life, as all men must do. For Jesus, life on earth was not a "virtual reality" trip, void of actual suffering. As a man, He felt all the pain and sorrow that we feel. On the cross He experienced the agonising (yet very human) perception that the Father had forsaken Him. In that hour, He poured out His soul in grief, and respectfully, yet passionately, asked "Why?" Yet, He did not sin by *blaming* God for His suffering, or by becoming bitter against Him.

Brethren, Jesus is our great High Priest; and as our High Priest, He knew that the suffering that He was going through on the cross was for *us*. Not only would He *make atonement for our sins* through His suffering; but through His suffering, He would be able to understand *our* sufferings, so that He can comfort us with true empathy. The Bible says, "**For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.**"

In an almost unfathomable sense, the Father did abandon the Son during those hours on the cross. In His *human* nature, Christ was separated from the Father during that time, because our sin was laid upon Him. The darkness that enveloped the whole world was the Father's way of showing mankind that for that time, that He could not look upon His own Son. By the way, the statement in **Psalm 22:2** about Jesus' crying in the "**daytime**" and in the "**night season**" is yet another prophecy of the darkness that would cover the earth during Christ's crucifixion. Jesus spent three hours in the daylight; and He spent the last three hours in darkness. Though it was not nighttime according to the clock, the darkness *made* it nighttime.

Now, please look again at the end of **verse 1**. Here Jesus asks, "**Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?**" The Hebrew word for "roaring" has the idea of a deep, agonising rumbling or groaning. Since the Father could not render help to His Son during these hours, Christ was filled with the bitterest grief. Yet, He knew the answer to His own question; and He *answered* His own question when He said, "**But thou art holy, O**

thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.” What Jesus was saying is that *because* the God of Israel is holy, He is therefore separate from sinners; and because He is separate from sinners, Christ understood that the Father must withdraw His presence from Him. Why? Because the sin of all mankind was upon Him! Our sin was barring Jesus from His Father’s holy presence: yet, Jesus willingly experienced this painful separation *for us*. He experienced the eternal darkness of separation from the Father so that *we* would not have to be punished in everlasting darkness, away from the presence of the Lord.

Now, let’s bring this down to everyday Christian living. In the introduction to this message I asked the question, “Have there been times of darkness in *your* life—times when you have found yourself crying out, ‘Why, God?’” Perhaps there have been times when you went so far as to ask, ‘God, why have you *forsaken* me?’ If so, I’m here to assure you that it is not wrong to ask “Why?”; nor is it necessarily wrong to *feel* as though God has forgotten you. There are seasons of fiery trial when it really does *feel* as though God were nowhere nearby: and it’s not always this way because of unconfessed sin in your life, either. (If you doubt what I’m saying, just read through the Psalms, and see how many times David, who was filled with the Spirit, said things such as, “***How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever?***”) Jesus is the sinless Son of God; yet, even *He* asked the question “***Why?***” Even *He* asked, “***Why hast thou forsaken me?***” Even though He *knew* the answer to that question, He still asked it, because at that moment, His soul was overwhelmed with the crushing sense of His Father’s absence. During those terrible three hours, the Father *was* silent. He *did* withdraw His face, and He *did* refrain from offering help to His only begotten Son; and that was far more awful than any other sorrow that Christ had felt in His entire life. In His humanity, Christ had to bear the horror of being separated from His Father’s presence. Yet, during that three-hour period (which was literally *eternity* in the spiritual realm), Christ knew that this time of suffering *would* come to an end. Several times Christ prayed, “***Be not far from me,***” “***haste thou to help me,***” “***Deliver my soul,***” and “***Save me from the lion’s mouth.***” The Father forsook His Son, so that you and I might be saved; yet, Christ clung to the promise that deliverance *was* coming. At 3:00 p.m., Christ would dismiss His own soul in death, to go to Paradise; and three days later, He would arise from the grave victoriously.

Christian, it is not wrong to ask God “***Why?***”—*if* you do not ask this question in anger, or in bitterness against God. God *may* answer your “why” at a later time; or, He may wait until you are in His presence in Heaven before showing you what He was accomplishing through your suffering. But whether He ever fully answer your question in this lifetime or not, you may cling to the promise that He *is* with you, and that He will never forsake you. As for Christ, the Father *actually did* forsake Him during those three awful hours; yet, Christ looked *beyond* that time, to the hour when the Father would deliver Him, and draw near to Him again. In contrast, *you* have the sure promise that God will *never* leave you—not even for three hours! Because Christ suffered an eternity of separation from His Father in three hours of earth time, we who are saved will never have to suffer separation from the Father *again*—neither for the remainder of our time on this earth, nor through the endless ages of eternity. **Hebrews 13:5** says, “***Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.***”

Christian, I don't know what dark times you have gone through, or may be going through right now; but I *can* tell you that your Saviour *is* with you through your night of weeping, and He *will* give you "**joy in the morning.**" Believe His Word, and cling to His promises!

III. The dying Saviour (vv. 47-50)

(Read Matthew 27:47-50 again.) The time was now approaching for Jesus to finish His earthly life and ministry; and, as we've already seen, Jesus had just cried out, "**Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?**" ("**My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?**"). Now, apparently, when Jesus uttered these words, there were some people standing nearby who misheard the Hebrew word "**Eli**" ("my God"); and they thought that they had heard Jesus crying out to the prophet Elijah for help. (They must have figured that since *God* had forsaken Jesus, He must be crying out to Elijah for help instead.) At any rate, they responded with mockery—and with fake mercy. The soldiers had already mockingly offered Jesus a powerful narcotic to drink, to dull his pain; and now, for a second time, someone again put vinegar on a sponge, and lifted it to Jesus' mouth on a reed. Let's go to **John's Gospel**, and see what else Jesus said at this time, and how it had a direct bearing on the actions of His enemies.

Read John 19:28-29.

In these verses, we find Jesus fulfilling some more prophecies that had been written 1,000 years earlier. For one thing, it had been prophesied that Jesus would suffer extreme thirst while He was on the cross. In **Psalm 22:15** David wrote, "**My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws.**" However, that is not the only prophecy that Jesus was fulfilling. As we saw a couple weeks ago, it was also prophesied in **Psalm 69**, "**They gave me also gall for my meat: and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.**" This was a prophecy of the nasty narcotic that the Roman soldiers put to Jesus' mouth.

Now, stop and think about how this prophecy played out. Jesus, being the all-knowing God, knows everything that *will* happen, and everything that *could* happen. That means that Jesus had the power and foreknowledge to make prophecies *not* happen, if He had wished to do so. For example, consider this prophecy concerning the gall that He was given to drink. What if Jesus had *not* wanted to suffer the indignity of having gall forced up to His mouth? All He had to do to avoid this unpleasant experience was to keep silent, and *not* utter the words "**I thirst!**" If Jesus *hadn't* said "**I thirst**" immediately after saying "**My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me,**" His enemies wouldn't have gotten the idea to mock Him by giving Him gall to drink; and the Scripture would not have been fulfilled. Jesus was constantly aware of the prophecies that needed to be fulfilled; and He uttered the words that needed to be said, and did the things that needed to be done, so that the events would take place. Even though Jesus

knew that being given gall to drink would be unpleasant and humiliating, He submitted to this prophecy. Jesus *always* fulfilled the Scriptures, because He is the God who cannot lie.

Now, there were two more statements that Jesus said one after the other, just before He died. Matthew doesn't mention what those statements are: he simply says that "**Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.**" However, Luke and John do tell us what Jesus said. As we close this morning, we will look at these two cries that Jesus made just before departing to Paradise.

Read Luke 23:46.

Read John 19:29-30.

Brethren, there are several incredibly important truths that we can learn from these last words of Christ on the cross. First of all, Jesus' words, "**Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,**" show that Jesus has a real human spirit, just like every other man. He wasn't a phantom: He was a real man! Secondly, these words show that Jesus had power to lay down His life at will. He was able to dismiss His spirit at exactly 3:00 p.m., when the first Passover lambs were being slain in the Temple; and He did this to show that He is the *true* Lamb of God. Needless to say, you and I do *not* have the power to determine the day or hour when we depart this world. People who believe that they are the captain of their own fate may naively *think* that they have that power; but they do not. God, in His sovereignty, *permits* people to take others' lives, or their own lives; but they succeed in doing so only because God allowed them to do it: and they *will* be judged for their crime. There will come a time, during the Tribulation, when for five months, people will *want* to die, but won't be able to do so! Why? Because a person literally *cannot die* until God says so.

What does that tell us about *Christ*, then? If Christ dismissed His own spirit at will, what does that say about who He is? It tells us that He is God! Jesus said, "**I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.**" Jesus also said, "**I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.**"

Now, let's look at the very last statement that Jesus made—the words "**It is finished.**" Folks, this is the most wonderful proclamation of the ages. In the Greek language, this statement is only one word—the word *Tetélestai*; and *Tetélestai* was an important business term in the Roman world. When a payment for an item was completed, a stamp with the word *Tetélestai* was pressed into hot wax on the bill of sale, to show that the debt had been "paid in full." What does this mean, then? It means that when Jesus cried "**It is finished,**" He was making a

victory cry! Jesus was *not* saying, “Well, it’s all over now. My life is done.” No, this was a shout of victory! Jesus was saying, **“The debt of the sins of mankind is now *paid in full!*”**

Friend, do you realise what this means? This means that those who have received God’s precious gift of salvation have received something that is *complete*. There is no payment to be made on your part, whether by religious rituals, or good deeds. Why? Because Jesus has already paid for your sin in full. Not only that, but salvation cannot ever be taken away from those who *are* saved! Because Jesus has already paid the full price for every sin that you and I have ever done, or ever will do, we can be saved, and *saved forever!*

Conclusion: In **Hebrews 10**, the Apostle Paul says that those who are saved are **“*sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all!”*** The debt of sin has been paid in full; and the way to the Father has been opened. Every soul who comes to Jesus in simple faith is saved for all eternity. Have *you* received the gift of salvation? If not, then you are being invited to do so today! In your heart, repent of your sin, and believe on Christ, and receive Him into your life as Lord and Saviour.

If you are saved already, perhaps today’s Scripture has struck a chord with you. If you are going through dark times, remember that God has *not* forgotten or forsaken you (even though it may *feel* as though He isn’t there). Christ endured the pain of separation from the Father, so that you don’t have to be separated from Him anymore. It’s O.K. to ask “Why?” when going through a trial; but whether you get a clear answer or not, trust His Word! Weeping may endure for a night; but joy *will* come in the morning!

In the meantime, a good question to ask *yourself* is, “Why should *He love me*, a sinner undone? Why? tell me why should He care? I do not merit the love He has shown—Why? tell me why should He care?” Then, after asking yourself this question, *answer* yourself in this way: “All my iniquities on Him were laid—He nailed them all to the tree. Jesus the debt of my sin fully paid—He paid the ransom for me.”

¹ Dr. C. Truman Davis, “A Physician Testifies about the Crucifixion,” in *The Review of the News*, April 14, 1976, cited in Robert J. Morgan, *Preacher’s Sourcebook of Creative Sermon Illustrations* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2007), pp. 171-172.