

# Seven Words From the Cross - Loneliness

by Warren Wiersbe

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*Jesus' cry of 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' represents the loneliness of the Christ, but ultimately, he was forsaken so that we might never be forsaken.*

**Duration:** 35:11

**Scripture:** Matthew 27:45

**Topics:** "The Cross", "Divine Sacrifice"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the passage from Matthew 27:45-50, where darkness covers the land from the sixth hour to the ninth hour. Jesus cries out, 'My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me?' Some bystanders mistake his words for a call to Elijah. One person offers Jesus vinegar to drink, while others wait to see if Elijah will come to save him. Jesus then cries out again and yields up his spirit. The preacher highlights the significance of the darkness and the loneliness that Jesus experienced on the cross, emphasizing how Jesus' sacrifice reaches out to all of creation.

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## Transcript

We open the Word of God to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 27, reading verses 45 through 50. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice saying, Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani, that is to say, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Some of them that stood there when they heard that said, this man calleth for Elijah.

And straightway one of them ran and took a sponge and filled it with vinegar and put it on a reed and gave him to drink. The rest said, let be, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the spirit.

Forsaken of God that we might never be forsaken. Our Lord's first three statements from the cross do not surprise us. We expect them.

His first statement, he prayed for his enemies. Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. You expect him to say that.

It was Jesus who said that we should love our enemies and pray for those that despitefully use us. And he practiced what he preached. And you would expect the Lord to turn to that repentant thief and say, today you'll be with me in paradise.

Because he came to give everlasting life. The son of man did not come to destroy men's lives. He came to save them.

And so we expect him to say that. And then when he lovingly looked at Mary and looked at John, and he said, woman, behold thy son, son, behold thy mother. We expect that.

Our Lord Jesus fulfilled the law perfectly. And the law says, honor thy father and thy mother. And Jesus did that.

But this fourth statement from the cross catches us by surprise. It catches us somewhat unawares. The word of forgiveness, the word of salvation, the word of affection, these we find it easy to listen to and to accept.

But this word of rejection, this word of loneliness, out of the darkness, the voice crying, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? This comes to us as somewhat of a surprise. Someday I would like to preach a sermon on the paradoxes in the life of Jesus. A paradox is a statement that seems to contradict itself.

When Jesus said, he that saveth his life shall lose it. That's a paradox. When he said, except a grain of wheat die, it abides alone.

That's a paradox. Our Lord Jesus was the light of the world, and yet he dies in darkness. Our Lord Jesus came to reveal the love of the Father, and yet at a crucial hour, he is forsaken of the Father.

The Lord Jesus Christ, from the darkness of Calvary, cried out those words, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And I see in these words three wonders. A great wonder, the darkness of the cross. A greater wonder, the loneliness of the Christ.

And the greatest wonder of them all, the blindness of the crowd. There's a great wonder here, the darkness of the cross. Now this was a supernatural darkness.

Those who go through the Bible and do their best to get rid of the miracles say, well, it possibly was a sandstorm. It was not a sandstorm. It may have been an eclipse at Passover season.

That would indeed be interesting. A cloud passed over the sun. It doesn't say that.

It says a darkness was over all the land for three hours. It was a supernatural darkness. It was a darkness caused by Almighty God.

And in this very darkness, we see a great wonder. We see the wonder of the sympathy of all of nature. So often in our approach to the cross, we think only of the individual sinner.

Christ died for me, and he did. Christ died for the church, and he did. Christ died for the sins of the whole world, and he did.

But we must remember that Jesus Christ in his dying on the cross reached out and embraced all of creation. We are living in a creation that is groaning and travailing in pain. And you and I, as a part of this creation, are groaning and travailing as Christians, longing to have that glorified body that we shall one day receive from Jesus Christ.

In Genesis chapter 3, when the first Adam sinned, God said to him, all right, you're going to die. The wages of sin began to pay in his life. And more than that, I'm going to have to curse this ground.

You came out of the ground, and I'm going to have to curse this ground. And up until now, you've been working, and your work has been a delight. But from now on, your work is going to be a toil, a burden.

By the sweat of your brow, you're going to labor and get your bread. And this ground is going to produce thorns and thistles and all kinds of noxious weeds. And by toil, you're going to feed yourself.

And then along comes the last Adam. The sweat of his brow, drops of blood. He was in a garden.

And in that garden, he wrestled in prayer. And sweat as it were, great drops of blood. He knew thorns.

And the soldiers went and gathered some thorns and wove them together and put a crown of thorns on the brow of the last Adam. The first Adam, by his disobedience, plunged our universe into the bondage and the burden and the bitterness of sin. And the last Adam, by his obedience, reached out and made possible a deliverance from the burden and the bondage and the bitterness of sin.

And one of these days, all of creation is going to enter into the glorious liberty of the children of God. And there will be no more thorns and thistles and noxious weeds. And there will be no more bondage to sin and death.

And the lion shall lie down with the lamb. And a child shall even play at the adder's hole. And there will be peace like a river.

Yea, there shall be peace like the waves of the sea that calm down after the storm. It's as though all of nature sympathized with the Lord of creation as he dies, the darkness of sympathy. Well might the sun in darkness hide and shut his glories in when Christ the mighty maker died for man, the creature's sin.

The darkness of sympathy. But it was more than that. It was the darkness of solemnity.

Three solemn hours of darkness. And those of you who know your Bibles, immediately your spiritual computer goes to work and says to you, Aha! Do you remember back in the days when Israel was in Egypt and God was bringing judgment down upon Egypt? The ninth plague. Three days of darkness.

A darkness so thick you could feel it. A darkness that was not merely the turning off of the lights a darkness that was the moving in of a heavy atmosphere of judgment and the very next plague, death. You see the Lamb of God was about to die for the sins of the world.

In Egypt God's next to the last judgment was a thick stifling smothering darkness. And then the lambs were slain and then the firstborn were slain by God. It's as though God is saying to a world, three hours of darkness.

Stand amazed, O world. I ought to go from house to house in Jerusalem and slay people. Yea, even the firstborn.

But instead I will come to Calvary and my firstborn shall die. Behold all of you who are about to take your lambs down to the temple and slay them for the Passover. Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.

The darkness of solemnity. But I think it was something else. It was also the darkness of secrecy.

It's as though God the Father reaches out and draws the blinds. Have you ever been in a hospital where somebody's dying? People rarely die at home anymore. And there you are standing with the loved ones by the bed.

There is that body just barely breathing. And then a nurse comes along or a doctor comes along and he begins to draw the curtains around that bed. The room is busy.

The ward is busy. The hospital is busy. People don't stop everything because someone is dying.

But there is some privacy, some secrecy involved. And they draw those curtains. And many a time I've stood within those curtains just waiting while someone dies.

Here was a mob of people jeering at him and then the darkness fell. Here were soldiers gambling for his few remaining possessions and then the darkness fell. Here were religious leaders scoffing and mocking and shooting out the lip and saying he saved others himself.

He cannot save. Do you remember when in the Old Testament they had the Day of Atonement? Once a year all of Israel stopped work. It was a day of fasting and a day of no work.

And once a year the high priest would come and lay aside his gorgeous garments. They would put before him two goats. On one of those goats he would place his hands and he would confess the sins of the people of Israel.

And that goat would be taken out and turned loose in the wilderness never to be seen again. A picture of our forgiveness. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

And then the priest would take the other goat, an innocent animal, and he would cut its throat. And he would take its blood. He would offer the goat as a sacrifice to God.

He would turn and go into the Holy of Holies alone. Alone. No man was found in the tabernacle when the high priest was offering the blood of the sacrifice to cover the sins of the people.

He did it alone. The darkness of secrecy. God the Father looked down and saw that our great priest was about to make the sacrifice.

What a great high priest he is. Not only is he the priest, he's the sacrifice. Nowhere in the Old Testament does the priest lay himself on the altar to be the sacrifice.

But he does. And God says to his son, you must do this alone. Mary wasn't there.

John had taken Mary home. I fear if Mary had been standing there, someone would have said she is assisting him in the work of redemption. She was gone.

Peter wasn't there. John was there. John saw this.

The veil came down. And a transaction was carried on between God the Father and God the Son that human eyes could not penetrate. And had they penetrated, could not understand.

And had they understood, could not believe. The darkness of secrecy when he finished the work of redemption. For shortly after that, he said, it is finished.

Into thy hands I commend my spirit. And he gave up the goat. A great wonder, the darkness of the cross.

But move with me to a greater wonder, the loneliness of the Christ. Have you ever traced as you've read the life of Jesus how lonely he became? He begins his ministry, great crowds follow him. And then at one point he looks at that crowd and says, except you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you.

And they said, we are Jews. We aren't supposed to eat human flesh. We aren't supposed to drink human blood.

It's not right. He said, I'm not talking about literal flesh and blood. And he surely was not talking about the Lord's Supper.

That had not even been instituted yet. He said, I'm talking in spiritual language. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.

Just as you must receive food into your inner man to have physical life, so you must receive me into your inner man to have spiritual life. And how do you do that? You do that by faith. And the crowd said, we can't take this.

And they left him. They left him. And Jesus turned to his disciples and said, will you also go away? And Peter answered and said, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.

Peter got the message. Our Lord wasn't talking about literal flesh and blood. He was talking about receiving Christ through the word.

Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. He had 12 who stood with him.

And then one departed to be a traitor. In the upper room, Jesus looked at him and said, what thou doest do quickly? And Judas left. And Jesus had 11.

With those 11, he went down to the garden and took three of them in to pray with him. And they went to sleep. And he came and said, couldn't you watch with me even one hour? The mob came and arrested Jesus.

And the disciples forsook him and fled. And then two of the disciples followed, John and Peter. And then they deserted him.

Peter went out and wept bitterly. But our Lord Jesus had said, all of you are going to desert me, but my Father will not desert me. My Father is ever with me.

I do always those things that please him. And the Father is always with me. Now the Father, as it were, deserts him.

From 12 to 11 to 3 to 2 to the Father. And then at an awesome moment in human history, God the Father did something he had never done to any other person. Something he has never done to anyone since.

He forsook him. I've had people say to me, I think God has forsaken me. And I say to them, no.

If God forsook you, you'd stop breathing. For in Him we live and move and have our being. If God forsook you, the blood in your veins would dry up.

If God forsook you, you'd become just a pile of clay. God has never forsaken anyone except His Son. Here's a strange thing.

We deserve to be forsaken. The sins that we've committed, what we think and what we feel and what we've done and what we are and what we do with what God has given to us, we deserve to be forsaken. If Almighty God looked at us today and said, I'm forsaking you, we'd have no argument except for one thing.

We belong to Jesus Christ. And He said, I will never leave you nor forsake you. He was forsaken that we might never be forsaken.

He went through darkness that we might have light. He faced and felt the awesome guilt of sin that we might one day hear God say, there is therefore now no condemnation. A greater wonder, the loneliness of the Christ.

Now to some of you who are a bit flippant and careless and lighthearted about sin, do you hear this word from Jesus and do you learn what sin does to people? When God took all of the sin of all mankind and by some strange chemistry placed it on the body of Jesus, by some strange mathematics accounted Him to be guilty. When God did this, He forsook His Son. For God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.

Now this is what sin is. Sin is loneliness. That's what sin does to people.

First, sin separates men from God. That awful loneliness of sin. And then sin separates men from men.

As sin continues to work in our lives, it separates husband from wife and parent from child and friend from friend. And do you know what? Sin not only separates men from God and men from men and women from women, sin separates a man from himself. And there are people walking the streets of Chicago today who have divided selves, conflicting selves, because sin has divided them.

Sin is loneliness. Sometimes when I am preaching in rescue missions or when you're ministering to people who are just a little bit under the influence, you'll hear them say, and you trust they don't mean it, well, preacher, I don't care if I go to hell. I'll have lots of company there.

And your heart stops beating and your blood turns cold because there is no company in hell. Hell is a place of darkness and loneliness where men cry out eternally, why hast thou forsaken me? And they know the answer because they forsook the only way of salvation, Jesus Christ. Hell is eternal separation.

Hell is eternal loneliness. A greater wonder, the loneliness of the Christ. He suffered my hell for me that I might one day enjoy his heaven with him.

Hallelujah, what a savior. Which leads us to a third wonder, the greatest wonder of all. A great wonder, the darkness of the cross, but sin is darkness.

A greater wonder, the loneliness of the Christ, but sin is loneliness. The greatest wonder of all, the blindness of the crowd. This man's calling for Elijah.

Well, let's wait and see if Elijah comes and takes him down. The Jews were looking for Elijah. They're still looking for him.

The prophet said, behold, I send you Elijah the prophet before that great and terrible day of the Lord. And they're waiting for him. He had been in their midst and they had killed him, John the Baptist.

Now there will be perhaps people who will say, well, that's a spiritual sense and to some degree that's true. But Jesus said it. The disciples said to him one day, why did the scribes say that Elijah has to come first? They'd just seen his glory in his kingdom on the Mount of Transfiguration.

He said, Elijah does come first. The prophecy will be fulfilled, but Elijah has already come. John the Baptist.

He came in the spirit and the power of and he pointed to the lamb of God and the Jewish people said we won't follow and they allowed John to be killed. This man's calling for Elijah. Let's see if Elijah comes and takes him down from the cross.

You see, these men were blind. That to me is the greatest wonder of all. The darkness of the cross, three hours.

The loneliness of the Christ, that brief moment when forsaken by God he was made sin. The blindness of people, it's been going on for years and for centuries. Blind even though the Holy Spirit is here to open men's eyes.

Blind even though we have a Bible that shines its light. Blind even though we have 2,000 years of church history pointing the way. The blindness of the crowd, they were blind to the scriptures.

They were blind to the scriptures. He had just cried out, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And someone should have turned and said, that sounds familiar. That sounds like Psalm 22.

Yes, he's quoting from Psalm 22, verse 1. And you read the first 21 verses of Psalm 22 and you have the most graphic picture of crucifixion in any literature anywhere. You say, what's so remarkable about that? The Jews didn't crucify people. They stoned them to death.

Crucifixion is not a Jewish form of death. And yet in Psalm 22, David, who never crucified anybody, gives to us a perfect picture of our Lord's death. In verse one, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? In verse two, you have the light and the darkness.

Oh my God, I cry in the daytime. Thou hearest not. In the night season, I'm not silent.

Verse six, the treating of the people, a reproach of men, despised by all the people. All they who see me laugh me to scorn. They shoot out the lip.

They shake their heads saying, he trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him. Let him deliver him, seeing he delighteth in him. That's Calvary.

Look at verse 13. They gaped upon me with their mouths. Look at verse 14.

I'm poured out like water. All my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax.

It's melted within me. You've got the picture here of crucifixion. And if nothing else, verse 18, they parted my garments among them and cast lots upon my vesture.

They were blind to the scriptures. And people today are still blind to the scriptures. The God of this world has blinded the minds of them that believe not.

And they open the word of God and the pages are blank. They were blind to the scriptures and they were blind to the Savior. There he hangs on the cross.

There he is made a curse for them. There he is bearing their sins. And they say, he waits for Elijah to come.

Let's see if Elijah will take him down. Come down from the cross. Whenever I think of that statement, come down from the cross, I think of the reply of Nehemiah.

Remember what Nehemiah said? They sent word to him to come away from his work and meet them that they might kill him. And Nehemiah said, I cannot come down. I have too great a work to do.

They were blind to the Savior and people are still blind to the Savior. Oh, if I speak just now to someone who's never trusted Christ, my dear friend, the spirit of God wants to open your eyes to the Savior, not the teacher, the Savior, not the example, the Savior, the one who died for you, the one who on the cross bore your sins. But most of all, they were blind to their own sin, standing before the cross, seeing what God does to sin.

They were blind to their own sin. On Calvary, it's as though God is saying to the world, come, look, this is what sin is. It's ugly.

Sin is death. Sin kills. Sin defiles.

Sin isolates. Sin separates. Sin means loneliness.

Sin means darkness. Come, behold it. But they were blind to their own sin.

The darkness had moved into their own minds and hearts. And instead of trusting him, they mocked him. Now, my friend, this greatest wonder is still with us.

I marvel that in the city of Chicago where you can punch on the radio and hear the gospel, where you can walk into a bus station and be handed the gospel, a library, there is the gospel, a drugstore, a dime store, there is the Bible, where there are thousands of Christians, some of whom are witnessing faithfully for God. I marvel at the blindness of lost sinners. In the city of Chicago where you can walk down the streets and see what sin does to people, I marvel at the blindness of sinners.

The greatest blindness of all is spiritual blindness. People don't go to hell because of their IQ. They go to hell because they reject the Savior.

And so I would say to you today, have you seen the Lord Jesus? Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. By faith have you seen him? Many of you have read the short stories of O. Henry, one of America's truly great writers. And when he was dying, he said to those standing by, please lift the shade.

I don't want to go home in the dark. Are you going to go out into the dark? Jesus didn't. The darkness lifted a voice of triumph, a shout of victory, and the work of redemption is ended.

The greatest wonder of all is that you could sit in the moody church and hear the word of God sung and preach and still be blind and still reject him. And God graciously waits and God graciously calls and the Holy Spirit graciously wounds. Jesus said, while you have the light, believe in the light, lest the darkness come.

At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light and the burden of my heart rolled away. It was there by faith I received my sight. And now, says the songwriter, I'm happy all the day.

Behold the Lamb of God who takes away your sin and the sin of the world. Our Father, we rejoice that today our Lord Jesus is enthroned in light in heaven. In him is no darkness at all.

Around him is no darkness at all. He dwells in light, unapproachable. And we're thankful, Father, that he went through the darkness for us.

And he has made us by faith the children of light. And he's called us to walk in the light as he is in the light. But, O Father, there are many who are in darkness, mental darkness and moral darkness, spiritual darkness.

And, Father, we would win them. We would woo them. We would bring them to the cross, lest they should die and have eternal darkness.

O gracious Father, by the Holy Spirit, through the word, apply the word to hearts here. And not only here, but wherever this message shall be heard, that there might be those who will trust Christ and be born again. Translated out of darkness into your marvelous light, out of the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of your dear Son, I pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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