

The Fourth Word

by W.R. Inge

Christ's cry of despair demonstrates His love and compassion for humanity and proves the union between His humanity and Godhead.

Scripture: Matthew 27:46, Romans 5:8, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Galatians 3:13, Hebrews 4:15

Topics: "The Cross", "Divine Sacrifice"

Description

W.R. Inge delves into the profound moment when Jesus, hanging on the cross, cried out, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' This cry was not only to be heard by all but also to awaken our souls to the immeasurable goodness of God, who sacrificed His beloved Son for vile sinners. In this cry, Jesus questions why He, for the sake of thankless servants, was forsaken by God, highlighting the depth of His love and sacrifice. The words 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' also serve as a rebuke to those who diminish the glory of Christ's Passion, emphasizing the severity of His suffering and the weight of His sacrifice for the redemption of mankind.

Transcript

ABOUT the ninth hour our Lord Jesus cried with a loud voice, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" He cried with a loud voice, that He might be easily heard by all, and also that by this wondrous word He might shake off from our souls the sleep of sloth, and cause them to wonder and marvel at the immeasurable goodness of God to us. Therefore He saith, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" For the sake of vile sinners, for evil and thankless servants, for sinful and disobedient deceivers, Thou hast forsaken Thy beloved Son and most obedient Child.

That Thy enemies, who are vessels of wrath, might be changed into children of adoption, Thou hast slain Thine own Son, and given Him over to death like one guilty. "O my God, why, I pray Thee, hast Thou forsaken me?" For the very cause why men ought to praise and give thanks to Thee, and love Thee with an everlasting love; because Thou hast delivered Thy dear Son to death for their redemption, and sacrificed Him willingly, for this reason they will find ground for blasphemy and reproach against Thee, saying, "He saith He is the Son of God.

Let God deliver Him now if He will have Him." Why, O my God, hast Thou willed to spend so precious a treasure for such vile and counterfeit goods? Besides, this word may be understood to have been spoken by Christ against those who seek to diminish the glory of His Passion, by saying that it was not really so bitter and terrible, owing to the great support and comfort which He drew from His Godhead. Let those

who speak and think thus know that they renew His Passion and crucify Him afresh.

It was to prove the error of such men that our Lord cried with a loud voice, and said, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" It is as if He had said these words to His own Divine nature, with which He formed one Person--for the Godhead of the Father and of the Son is all one--wondering, Himself, at His own love, which had so cast Him down and worn Him out and humbled Him, and that He who brings help to all mankind should have forsaken Himself, and offered Himself to suffer every kind of pain, impelled thereto by conquering love alone.

Again, we should not be wrong, if we were to interpret this word which Christ spoke out of the exceeding bitterness of His sorrow in the following way--namely, that His spirit and inward man, taking upon itself the severe judgment of God upon all sinners, and at the same time discerning clearly and feeling and measuring in Himself the intolerable weight of His Passion, on this account cried out in a sorrowful voice to His Father, and complained tenderly to Him because He had been cast into these dreadful torments; as if the goodness of His Father had become so embittered against the sins of men, that in the ardour of His justice He had quite forgotten the inseparable union between His passible humanity and His impassible Godhead, and therefore in the zealously of His justice had quite given up His passible nature to the cruelty and malice of fierce men, that they might waste it away and destroy it.

For this reason, therefore, He said, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" This word has besides an inward meaning, according to which Christ, in His sensitive parts, complained to His Father that He had been forsaken by Him. For as many as contend for His honour, and endure patiently the troubles of this world, our merciful God so moderates and tempers their crosses and afflictions by the inpouring of His divine consolation, that by His sensible grace He makes their crosses hardly felt; but He left His own beloved Son quite without any comfort, and so deprived Him of all consolation and light, that He endured as much in His human nature as had been ordained by the Eternal Wisdom, according to the strictness of justice, as much as was needed to atone for so many sins.

And indeed our salvation was the more nobly and perfectly achieved, in that it was done and finished without any light at all, in absolute resignation and abandonment. For a chief cause of the Passion was to show clearly how great was the injury and insult brought upon His most high Godhead by the sins of the human race. Now as the knowledge of Christ was greater and more acute than that of all other beings, in heaven or in earth, so much the greater and heavier was His sorrow and agony.

Nay more--what is more wonderful than anything--whatever afflictions have been endured by all the saints, as members of Christ, existed much more abundantly in Christ their Head; and this I wish to be understood according to the spirit and reasonably. For all the saints have suffered no more than flowed in upon them through Christ, joined to them as His members, who communicated to them His own afflictions. For He took upon Himself the afflictions of all the saints, out of His great love for His members, and wondrous pity, and He suffered far greater internal anguish than any of the saints, nay, more even than the blessed Virgin, His mother, felt her own sharp sorrow and sickness of heart.

For if an earthly father loves his child so much, that in fatherly pity he takes upon himself the sorrows of his child, and grieves for them as if he suffered them himself, what must have been Christ's Cross and compassion for the affliction of His members, and above all, of those who suffered for His name's sake? Truly He bore witness to His members, how much He suffered from their afflictions, and how great was His inward pity for their sufferings, when He took all their debt upon Himself, and abolished all the

penalties which they had merited, so that they might depart free.

The same is most amply proved by the words which He spoke to St Paul, when He said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" For the persecution which Saul had stirred up against the disciples, the members of the Lord, was not less grievous to Him than if He had suffered it Himself. Therefore He says to His friends and members, "He who touches you, touches the apple of Mine eye." For is there anything suffered by the members, which the Head does not suffer with them, He whose nature is goodness, and whose property is always to have mercy and to forgive?

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