

INFINITE COMPASSION.

I have not known, I would not know,
The love of God to me:
I sought my joy in other things,
And craved for liberty.
Ah, the mistake I made, he said,
I know it now, at last,
And can your God forgive so late
My sin and all the past?

He is your God, as well as mine,
So the disciple said;
How dreary was the way you chose,
How rough a path to tread!
But the road home is very short,
Come and confess your sin;
Christ Jesus is the door of hope,
And he will let you in.

I am ashamed to come so late,
And yet so tired am I,
So weak and worn, so poor and sad,
I can do naught but die;
I will creep homeward to his feet,
And so beseech his grace;
Oh Friend, so slighted and forgot,
How shall I meet his face?

He comes to you, not you to him,
His mercy is so great,
You cannot weary out his love,
You do not seek too late;
Oh weary prodigal! come home,
You have no crown to win,
Your father's heart for very love
In pity takes you in.

They wondered at the peace that lay
Upon the dead man's face,
Because they could not gauge the
power
Or guess the Saviour's grace;
But he who came to save the lost,
And died men's souls to win,
Loved and besought him to the end,
And therefore took him in.

—Marianne Farningham.

Our Pulpit.

THE SADDEST CRY FROM THE CROSS.

BY C. H. SPURGEON.

"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—Matthew xxvii, 46.

1. First, let me utter some thoughts about this strange question, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Jesus was accustomed to address God as his Father. If you turn to his many prayers, you will find him almost invariably—if not invariably—speaking to God as his Father. And, truly, he stands in that relationship both as God and as man. Yet, in this instance, he does not say, "Father," but "My God, my God." Was it that he had any doubt about his Sonship? Assuredly not; Satan had assailed him in the wilderness with the insinuation, "If thou be the Son of God," but Christ had put him to the rout, and I feel persuaded that Satan had not gained any advantage over him, even on the cross, which could have made him doubt whether he was the Son of God or not.

I think our Saviour was speaking then as man, and that this is the reason why he cried, "My God, my God," rather than "My Father." I think he must have been speaking as man; as I can scarcely bring my mind to the point of conceiving that God the Son could say to God the Father, "My God, my God." There is such a wonderful blending of the

human and the Divine in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ that, though it may not be absolutely accurate to ascribe to the Deity some things in the life of Christ, yet is he so completely God and man that, often, Scripture does speak of things that must belong to the humanity only as if they belonged to the Godhead. For instance, in his charge to the Ephesian elders, the apostle Paul said, "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood;" in incorrect expression, if judged according to the rule of the logician; but accurate enough according to the Scriptural method of using words in their proper sense. Yet I do think that we must draw a distinction between the Divinity and the humanity here. As the Lord Jesus said, "My God, my God," it was because it was his humanity that was mainly to be considered just then.

And O my brethren, does it not show us what a real man the Christ of God was, that he could be forsaken of his God? We might have supposed that, Christ being Immanuel—God with us—the Godhead and the manhood being indissolubly united in one person, it would have been impossible for him to be forsaken of God. We might also have inferred, for the same reason, that it would have been impossible for him to have been scourged, and spit upon, and especially that it would not have been possible for him to die. Yet all these things were made, not only possible, but also sacredly certain. In order to complete the redemption of his chosen people, it was necessary for him to be both God's well-beloved Son, and to be forsaken of his Father; he could truly say, as his saints also have sometimes had to say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Persecuted and forsaken believer, behold your brother in adversity! Behold the One who has gone wherever you may have to go, who has suffered more than you can ever suffer, and who has taken his part in the direst calamity that ever happened to human nature, so that he had to cry out, in the agony of his soul, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

What was this forsaking? We are trying to come a little closer to this burning yet unconsumed bush—with our shoes off our feet, I hope, all the while—and in this spirit we ask, "What was this forsaking?" A devout writer says it was horror at the sight of human misery. He affirms, what is quite true, that our Lord Jesus Christ saw all that man had to suffer because of sin; that he perceived the total sum of the miseries brought by sin upon all the past, present and future generations of the human race—and that he must have had a holy horror as he thought of all the woes of man, caused by sin, in this life, and in that which is to come—and being completely one with man, he spoke in the name of man, and said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" That is all true, yet that explanation will not suffice, my brethren; because our Saviour did not say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken man?" but, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" This forsaking was something personal to himself.

The only solution of the mystery is this, Jesus Christ was forsaken of God because we deserved to be forsaken of God. He was there, on the

cross, in our room, and place, and stead; and as the sinner, by reason of his sin, deserves not to enjoy the favor of God, so Jesus Christ, standing in the place of the sinner, and ensuring that which would vindicate the justice of God, had to come under the cloud, as the sinner must have come, if Christ had not taken his place. But, then, since he has come under it, let us recollect that you and I, who believe in him, might never be left of God. Since he, for a little while, was separated from his Father, we may boldly cry, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" and, with the apostle Paul, we may confidently affirm that nothing in the whole universe "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Before I leave this point, let me say that the doctrine of substitution is the key to all the sufferings of Christ. I do not know how many theories have been invented to explain away the death of Christ. The modern doctrine of the apostles of "culture" is, that Jesus Christ did something or other, which, in some way or other, was, in some degree or other, connected with our salvation; but it is my firm belief that every theory concerning the death of Christ—which can only be understood by the highly cultured—must be false. "That is strong language," says someone. Perhaps it is, but it is true. I am quite sure that the religion of Jesus Christ was never intended for the highly-cultured only, or even for them in particular. Christ's testimony concerning his own ministry was, "The poor have the gospel preached to them;" so if you bring me a gospel which can only be understood by a gentleman who have passed through Oxford or Cambridge University, I know that it can not be the gospel of Christ. All the modern gospels that leave out the great central truth of substitution, prevent the message from being of any use to the great mass of mankind. If those other gospels which are not gospels, please your taste and fancy, and suit the readers of Quarterly Reviews, and eloquent orators and lecturers, there are the poor people in our streets and the millions of working-men, the vast multitudes who can not comprehend anything that is highly metaphysical; and you can not convince me that our Lord Jesus Christ sent, as his message to the whole world, a metaphysical mystery that would need volume upon volume before it could even be stated. I am persuaded that he gave us a rough and ready gospel like this, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost;" or this, "With his stripes we are healed;" or this, "This chastisement of our peace was upon him;" or this, "He died the Just for the unjust to bring us to God." Do not try to go beyond this gospel, brethren; you will get into the mud if you do. But it is safe standing here; and standing here I can comprehend how our Lord Jesus took the sinner's place, and passing under the sentence which was tantamount thereto, could cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

2. Now, in closing, I am going to draw a few lessons from this utterance of Christ.

The first lesson is, Behold how he loved us! When Christ stood and wept at the grave of Lazarus, the

Jews said, "Behold how he loved him!" But on the cross he did not weep, he bled; and he not merely bled, he died; and, before he died, his spirit sank within him, for he was forsaken of his God. Was there ever any other love like this—that the Prince of life and glory should condescend to this shame and death?

Then, next, as he suffered so much for us, let us be ready to suffer anything for his sake. Let us be willing even to lose all the joy of religion if that would glorify God. I do not know that it would; but I think the spirit of Christ ought to carry us even as far as Moses went, when he pleaded for the guilty nation of Israel, and was willing to have his own name blotted out of the book of life rather than that God's name should be dishonored. We have never had to go so far as that, and we never shall; yet let us be willing to part with our last penny, for Christ's name's sake, if he requires it.

Another lesson is that, if ever you and I should feel that we are forsaken of God—if we should get into this state in any way, remember that we are only where Christ has been before us. If ever, in our direct extremity we should be compelled to cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" we shall have gone down no deeper than Christ himself went. He knows that feeling, and that state of heart, for he has felt the same. This fact should tend greatly to cheer you. Your deep depression is not a proof of reprobation; that is evident, for Christ himself endured even more. A man may say, "I can not be a child of God, or else I should not feel as I do." Ah! you do not know what true children of God may feel; strange thoughts pass through their minds in times of storm and doubt. A Puritan preacher was standing by the death-bed of one of his members who had been for thirty years in gloom of soul. The good old minister expected that the man would get peace at last, for he had been an eminent Christian, and had greatly rejoiced in his Saviour; but, for thirty years or more, he had fallen into deep gloom. The minister was trying to speak a word of comfort to him, but the man said, "Ah, sir! but what can you say to a man who is dying, and yet who feels that God has forsaken him?" The pastor replied, "But what became of that Man who died, whom God did really forsake? Where is he now?" The dying man caught at that, and said, "He is in glory, and I shall be with him; I shall be with him where he is." And so the light came to the dying man who had been so long in the dark; he saw that Christ had been just where he was, and that he should be where Christ was, even at the right hand of the Father. I hope, brothers and sisters, that you will never get down so low as that; but I beseech you, if you ever meet with any others who are there, do not be rough with them. Some strong-minded people are very apt to be hard upon nervous folk, and to say, "They should not get into that state." And we are liable to speak harshly to people who are very depressed in spirit, and to say to them, "Really, you ought to rouse yourself out of such a state." I hope none of you will ever have such an experience of this depression of spirit as I have had; yet I have

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