

Title: Three Hours
Text: Matthew 27: 45-56
Date: February 14, 2021
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Matthew 27:45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

These are the three hours for which the world was made. Saints of old looked to these three hours. Saints since then look back to these three hours. In these three hours God manifest his glory: his righteousness, his holy name. God spoke of this from the beginning—after Adam fell, after sin and death entered making all men guilty before God, God said to the devil

Genesis 3: 15: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Here is the promised Seed—Christ Jesus the Lord—hanging upon the cross—all of a sudden—darkness!

Matthew 27:45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

Proposition: The salvation of God's people was accomplished in these three hours of darkness.

DARKNESS OF HEART

In the darkness we see the natural darkness of our heart. This is the unregenerate heart of those chosen in Christ who Christ came to save.

God came down. God came in human flesh. He had no form, nor comeliness to make men desire him. But this Man is God in human flesh. This is God providing himself a Lamb. He is the Righteousness of God. This is the Holy One. That one on the cross is the Redeemer of his people. He is the Substitute for chosen sinners. This is God's own only begotten Son.

Yet, we see the darkness of every unregenerate heart in this crowd who hated Christ—including the darkness of the natural heart of each elect child Christ came to save. Each of us who believe on Christ should put ourselves in that crowd. This is the enmity, the darkness, of every spiritually dead heart, including us who Christ redeemed, who now believe on him by his grace. God came and dwelt among us and we despised him and rejected him. We made a sport of crucifying him. Every believer sees ourselves in this God-hating mob. We see the enmity of our carnal mind from which we must be saved.

When the governor would release a prisoner the religious leaders stirred up the multitude to cry out for crucifixion of the Lord of glory! That is what most religion is. It is religious leaders stirring up the multitude to crucify the Lord of glory afresh by adding their works to Christ's work. In the darkness of our sin—in religion or out—we were that mob crying, "*Crucify him! Crucify him!*" Then we scourged him and then we were there with the soldiers who,

Matthew 27:...stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. 29 And when [we] had platted a crown of thorns, [we] put *it* upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and

[we] bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! 30 And [we] spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. 31 And after that [we] had mocked him, [we] took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify *him*.

Then we brought him to Golgotha—the place of the skull. Everyone wanted a souvenir so we cast lots for his garments that the scripture might be fulfilled. Then having lifted him up on the cross—

Matthew 27: 36:...sitting down [we] watched him there. 37: And set up over his head his accusation [in mockery] written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. 38: Then there were two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. 39: And [we] that passed by reviled him, wagging [our] heads, 40 And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest *it* in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. 41: Likewise also the chief priests mocking *him*, with the scribes and elders, said, 42 He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. 43 He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. 44 The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.

Then all of sudden it was as if God said this is what your heart is—total darkness fell over the land at high noon and remained for three hours. From the least to the greatest—thieves, common irreligious folks, soldiers, pious scribes and elders—all of us are born with this hard heart of total darkness hating God and hating one another

Some will say, “That is not me! If I had been there I would not have done that!” Then you don’t yet know your sinful heart. You are yet too good to need Christ to be your All. But there were some in that mob for whom Christ was laying down his life because Christ interceded for them saying, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.” And we must take our place among them or we have no part in our Lord’s death for he laid down his life for sinners.

PERFECT OBEDIENCE

Also, we see the perfect obedience by which Christ made his people the righteousness of God in him.

Matthew 27:46: 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?

It was the ninth hour—3 pm. So from noon until 3 pm there was darkness, judgment, wrath upon our Substitute in our place. Then at 3pm—the time of the evening sacrifice—this one who the evening sacrifice typified, cried, “My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?” This was a cry of perfect faith in the midst of judgment, “*MY God...*” This is perfect obedience though forsaken of God, he did not cry, “My Father” but “*My GOD.*”

This is perfect love. Perfect love to the Father. Love that manifests his righteousness, declaring him just and Justifier. Perfect love for his elect. Love which put away our sin and made us righteous in him. Also, perfect love because he is ministering to his people by this cry. He knew why he was forsaken. He is ministering to us by this cry to show us the answer in Ps 22,

Psalm 22: 3 But thou *art* holy,...6: But I am worm and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people

In this cry is the gospel. Why was he forsaken? God is holy. His unyielding justice demands that every sinner must die because we are all guilty. But Christ became the Substitute for his people. The spotless, sinless, Lamb of God was made sin for his people. Therefore, God the Father spared not his own Son but delivered him up to divine justice for all his people!

There could be none to help our Redeemer. At this hour there could be no strengthening angel could come. It pleased God for all fulness to dwell in his Son, for his Son to have all preeminence, for his people to be made complete in Christ. Therefore, our Redeemer must tread the winepress of the fury of God's wrath alone. He alone must bear the curse and condemnation to the full satisfaction of justice on behalf of his people. Christ alone manifests the Righteousness of God. He alone is the Righteousness of God for his people.

JC Philpot said, "Here we see the sacred humanity of the blessed Redeemer lifted up, as it were, between heaven and earth, to show to angels and to men the spectacle of redeeming love, and to declare at one and the same moment, and by one and the same act of the suffering obedience and bleeding sacrifice of the Son of God, the eternal and unalterable displeasure of the Almighty against sin, and the rigid demands of his inflexible justice, and yet the tender compassion and boundless love of his heart to the election of grace."

This is the perfect obedience unto the death of the cross by which all his people are perfected forever. We see it in that our Savior was in control of yielding up his spirit at any time. Yet he patiently endured, waiting, trusting the Father for 3 hours until justice was satisfied and our eternal condemnation ended.

Matthew 27: 50: Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

Do you see perfect obedience in that? He said no man takes my life, I lay it down of myself. He was in control of yielding up the ghost. But he waited for 3 hours in total separation forsaken of God, under incomparable agony due to that separation.

I think to myself, now what was that supposed "great thing" that made me grow impatient? He commands us be patient in tribulation. Endure. Wait on the Lord. Trust the Lord. Then he sends some light affliction—light compared to his—and we fail. Then he turns us from us to him to behold our perfect obedience. He is our righteous obedience who patiently waited as he died our death on the shameful, cruel, heart-crushing cross. His is the obedience by which we are made the righteousness of God through faith. He says, "Cast all our care on him, for he careth for you"—and we see his great care for us on the cross!

THE ACCOMPLISHMENT

Matthew 27: 51: And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; 52: And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, 53: And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth. He fulfilled the law and the prophets, delivered us from the curse of the broken law and put an end to the old covenant worship so that Christ is the way by which we are welcome to God in the holiest of holies. That is why the veil rent from top to bottom.

Hebrews 10: [having perfected his people, the Holy Ghost bears witness in our hearts, declaring] 17: And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. 18: Now where remission of these *is, there is* no more offering for sin. [the veil is rent from top to bottom] 19: Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20: By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh [through his broken body and shed blood]; 21: And *having* an high priest over the house of God; 22: Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Christ's blood applied by the Holy Spirit shakes our vain foundation, breaks our hard heart and delivers his child from death, typified in that, "*the earth did quake, and the rocks rent.*" In the first hour and throughout the life of faith it is the gospel of his sin-atoning, precious blood by which he breaks all our vain foundations and breaks our stony hearts like he made the earth quake and rent the rocks.

He delivers us, and continues delivering us, from the grave of death—like as he opened the graves, "*the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.*" He makes his child arise and depart the graveyard of our sin, depart graveyard religion, and he makes us enter into the holy city as witnesses that he alone did this.

So from the first hour until the last, he keeps reverence in our hearts so that we cry out with this centurion in verse 54, "*Truly this [is] the Son of God.*" He never ceases revealing himself, working grace in our hearts, delivering us from death throughout the life of faith. He does it by this gospel of his broken body broken for us and his precious, sin-atoning blood which made all God's promise yes and amen to us. Thus he keeps fear in our hearts and keeps us confessing him to truly be the Son of God!

Hebrews 9 declares three appearings. Verse 26 says, "Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." It is finished! Verse 24 says, "he has gone into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." Come to him to ask grace to help in time of need. Then one day he will shake this earth one last time; the only thing remaining will be those he created anew in righteousness as verse 28 says, "unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

May God grant us repentance and faith to continually believe on him. May he keep us looking only to him. May we be found in him in that day. Christ gave the ordinance of his table for those who believe on him. He gave it for us to remember him until that day.

1 Corinthians 11:26: For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, YE DO SHEW THE LORD'S DEATH TILL HE COME.

Amen!