

# The Dark Side of Easter

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**Bible Text:** Mark 15:22-39; 16:1-6

**Preached on:** Sunday, April 20, 2014

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Go with me, if you will, in your Bibles over to Mark 15. You know, before Easter's morning light of hope and new life, there was Calvary's night of doom and of death. A time when the Bible says, "The sun refused to shine." You see there can be no resurrection morning unless there is first Calvary's night. There was judgment night before there was Easter's light. But what just happened when the sun refused to shine until 3 p.m. that day on the day that Jesus died? Let's journey there to the extent that the Scriptures provide and as we journey there this morning this is holy ground and this is reverent territory. We will journey there in that Spirit.

Let's look now, if you will, at the dark side of Easter. Mark 15 beginning in verse 22,

Then they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. They tried to give Him wine mixed with myrrh; but He did not take it. And they crucified Him, and divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots for them to decide what each man should take. It was the third hour when they crucified Him. The inscription of the charge against Him read, "The King of the Jews."

They crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left. [And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And He was numbered with transgressors."] Those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, "Ha! You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!" In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes, were mocking Him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. "Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!" Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him.

When the sixth hour came, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour. At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" When some of the bystanders heard it, they began saying, "Behold, He is calling for Elijah." Someone ran and filled a sponge with

sour wine, put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink, saying, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down." And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed His last. And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. When the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

Now chapter 16:1,

"When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him. Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. They were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large. Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed. And he said to them, "Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid Him."

Now, first of all I would like to say something about sin this Easter morning. We need to understand about sin. Sin is not when you had a bad week and you're having a weak moment with your anxieties or your fears or your doubts or you're struggling with this issue or that issue. That's not sin, it may be the result of sin but that's not sin. The Scripture tells us that sin is something we do. The Bible calls us transgressors and the Bible calls us law breakers. The Bible even calls us the enemies of God. That includes all men, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Sin is something we do. Sin is also something we fail to do. The Bible says, "Sin is like missing the mark." It's as if God made us for a certain purpose and gave us a certain standard and we fall very short. We don't at all reach the mark which God made us to function on and to perform on.

Sin is something we do and sin is something we fail to do but thirdly sin is something we are. It is our inherent nature. We have a sin nature. The Bible says, "We are by nature the children of wrath." That means our nature is so sinful this holy, perfect, and beautiful God has no natural desire towards us but to crush us in wrath. Roman's 3:9-12 and verse 19, "What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; as it is written, "There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one." And verse 19, "Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God." That's a word about sin.

Now, a word about righteousness. First of all, God is righteous and when we say God is righteous we mean God is fully good. God is fully proper. God is fully true. There cannot be anything ungood, I know that's not a word, but it illustrates the theological truth.

There cannot be anything ungood or improper or untrue about God. He is fully and totally righteous. In fact, he gives righteousness its definition, it comes from who he is. God has mandatory righteousness. Mandatory righteousness means that God mandates, God requires that all creatures that he has made be righteous. He cannot let into his presence anything that violates who he is as the good one, as the proper one, as the true one. He mandates, he requires that. As a matter of fact, if God allowed unrighteousness to prevail then he himself would be unrighteous. Now, we have a chief of police in our church and let's say that he would never do this, but he willfully and knowingly allowed wickedness and evilness to prevail and never tried to do anything about arresting the folks and have charges brought against them. Well, you'd say, "Well, that man is an upholder of the law but he by failing to uphold the law is now unrighteous." You would be right. He is a lawbreaker himself. So would God be if he did not have mandatory righteousness whereby he requires righteousness of all of his creatures.

Thirdly, I'd like to say, not only is God righteous and does God have mandatory righteousness but I'd like to say that Jesus is righteous. Jesus is the only human who ever walked the face of the earth who was fully acceptable in righteousness before the heavenly Father. Jesus is righteous. Well, if Jesus is the only one and God is righteous and God mandates all of his preachers to be righteous or suffer the wrath of God, is there any hope for man? Well, yes there is. All that is needed to make you righteous in the sight of God was accomplished for you through Jesus Christ and he did that in those three hours of darkness, from noon until 3 p.m. as he hung on the cross. That is the time and that is the place where he took our place before the true and wholly righteous God. A true and wholly righteous God that must condemn and punish all sin.

2 Corinthians 5:21 is a powerful verse that ought to just pierce us with conviction but with joy. "He made Him who knew no sin," that's Jesus "to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." This text says he knew no sin. Hebrews 4:15 says "Jesus is without sin." 1 John 3:5 says that, "In him there is no sin." So what does the writer Paul to the church at Corinth mean when he says, "He made him to be sin"? He made him to be sin. What it means is that God looked upon Jesus as if he were a sinner and God treated Jesus as if he were a sinner so that God would not have to look upon us and treat us as if we are sinners. What a Savior. On Calvary's cross God treated his Son as if he were a sinner. He was becoming our substitute and he took our place at the judgment and that is what happened in the three hours of darkness as Jesus hung on the cross.

Let's break it down into three areas, three distinct things that happened as God the Father treated his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as if he were a sinner. I. God the Father punished his Son as if his Son Jesus were a sinner. In 1 Peter 2:24, the Bible says, "He bore our sins in his body on the cross." That word "bore" means he carried the weight of it. His body was the sacrifice for our sins. The punishment for our sins fell upon him literally, on his body. And by the way, this wasn't something God did on the spur of the moment. God predetermined in sovereignty that he would save for himself a people and he predetermined that he would lay the sin burden, the guilt, the unrighteousness and the wrath for that unrighteousness on his Son in the children's place. Isaiah 53:10 says, "But

the Lord," that's picturing God the Father "the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering." Now, think on that. This is written hundreds of years before Jesus was born and the prophet is prophesying about what Christ would do for us. And he says, "The Lord God the Father was pleased to crush him, his own Son if he would render himself as a guilt offering." The Father, not that he took some sort of morbid pleasure but, was pleased in the plan of salvation, that just means he provided, to free the children from their sin and from the wrath they deserved for their sin. He became the guilt offering.

Now, in the Old Testament when the priest would present a guilt offering he would lay his hands on the head of a goat and he would pray over that goat confessing the sins of the people and it was as if the sins were transfused from the people into the goat and then the goat was sacrificed for the sins. That's the picture of Jesus. Our sins were imputed into Christ as he hung and died on the cross. The holy, pure, sinless Son of God was crushed because he was being treated by his Father as if he were a sinner. He was crushed in divine wrath as if he were a liar because we all have told lies. He was crushed in divine wrath as if he were a thief because we all have stolen in our lives. He was crushed in divine wrath as if he were an adulterer because we have all at least lusted in our hearts. He was crushed in divine wrath as if he were an enemy, a rebel, a traitor because all of us come forth from our mother's wombs speaking lies and seeking our own way, not allegiance to God. This was the Lord's design and the law required that one must endure wrath if they break the law of God.

You know, if Jesus was to fulfill the Father's plan and redeem the children, then he had to suffer as a law breaker. Listen to Galatians 3:10, "For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform." You would have to keep all the things of all the law all of your life and keep them perfectly if not God says, "You're cursed." And that's why Jesus hung on a cross because that was a picture of being a curse in the eyes of God. The Bible says if we violate just one commandment of the law we are guilty of all and Jesus was punished as a lawbreaker as if he were guilty of all. Galatians 3:13 the Bible says, "Christ redeemed us from the curse." It means to take out from under. He took us out from under. He stood between us and the divine wrath of God and received the wrath of God that was supposed to fall on us. You know, when God punished his Son during those three hours of darkness on the dark side of Easter it must have been a gruesome scene. Jesus' body must have convulsed in pain and in agony, the pain exceedingly greater than the physical pain of the crucifixion. It's a blow that had the force of omnipotence behind it and the breath of hell within it and he was doing it for us.

Sid Galloway spoke here and shared this some years ago and he worked in a zoo and he was I think like an associate zookeeper and they had a pen full of orangutans. Orangutans are very smart and they knew when they were doing wrong. They knew when they were being obstinate and were not cooperating with the zookeepers. And on one day they were being very contemptuous if you will, and not honoring the zookeeper's request and they worked with them and worked with them and nothing got them to cooperate. Finally they knew what they were going to have to do: the one thing an orangutan hated was to be

sprayed with water. They'll do anything to keep from being sprayed with water. The zookeepers had a hose that wasn't like your garden hose, it was a high pressure water hose and so they dragged it out and brought it over there and they opened the gate to the orangutan pen and they brought the hose up and right when they turned the valve to set it on the leader of the orangutans, a male, I guess you'd call him the leader of the orangutan gang, I don't know, immediately when the water was turned on he jumped in front of the others and put out his arms and the blast hit hit in the chest and he just stood there taking it, deflecting all the blow. That's what the Lord Jesus has done for us. He took our place. He stood between us and the holy wrath of God and it crushed him, for us. He was punished in our place. The Father punished him as if he were a sinner so that we would not have to be punished although we are sinners.

Secondly, not only that but he was abandoned on the cross as if he were a sinner. He was abandoned. In our text Mark 15:34 notice it says there, "At the ninth hour," that's the end of this darkness, the end of the three hours of darkness, "Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani??" which is translated, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" Now, some scholars argue that the phrase here in the original language can be amplified to say, that Jesus was actually saying, "My God, my God, show them why you had to forsake me. Show them what we are accomplishing for them. Reveal to them the truth of what we are doing here today." You do understand that the cross is not an ambulance sent to the scene of an accident, it was the predetermined plan and the foreknowledge of God that God would perform this for his children. God abandoned his Son there and Jesus cries out, "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?" It was a cry of anguish and a cry of grief but it was also a cry of complete trust. It's just as if he's saying, "This agony is overwhelming, this agony is beyond my strength but yet I know, Father, you know what we're doing. I know you understand what we're accomplishing." During the darkness of Calvary for the first time, the last time and for the only time, God the Father was separated from God the Son, Jesus Christ. From eternity past they had enjoyed perfect unity and oneness. We can't grasp it. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit have a unity and a oneness that is beyond anything known in the human experience but in Calvary's darkness Jesus, God the Son, was treated like he was a sinner. Habakkuk 1:3 says that, "God cannot look upon sin." Isaiah 59:2 says, "But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear." Sin separates. Jesus became sin the Bible says, "The Father looks upon him as if he were sin." So the Father forsook his Son and abandoned his son on the cross as a sinner. And the great gulf between heaven and hell was experienced between God the Father and God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus experienced hell in that darkness. You see, hell is hell because you are cast away from God in your sin. Jesus experienced for all believers of all the ages, the agony of being forsaken by God. Did you hear that? He felt it. He entered it. He experienced it. The agony of abandonment by God because God was looking upon him and treating him as if he were a sinner. He was abandoned by God as if he were a sinner so that we do not have to be abandoned by God though we are sinners.

In those three hours of darkness and death, the dark side of Easter, he was punished as if he were a sinner. He was abandoned by his heavenly Father as if he were a sinner and

then lastly he died as if he were a sinner. You see death is the consequence of sin. Ezekiel 18:20 says, "The soul that sins shall die." Romans 3:23 says, "The wages of sin is death." God did not create man to die. Death is that consequence that came when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden. God promised Adam and Eve, "You can have anything and everything of all this wondrous paradise but do not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because the day you eat thereof you will surely die." Satan, the father of all liars, comes to Adam and Eve and says, "God's not telling you the truth, they may not be great but God knows that when you eat of that tree you will have knowledge like he will know, like he knows and if you eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil everything will be great." And she believed the lie and she ate. Then she seduced Adam into eating and he ate and men have been dying ever since. Right up to today's obituary column. Every time you read of someone passing this life, it's a reminder that sin reigns in the human race.

But Jesus entered death that he might conquer death, plunder it once and for all. That's one last part I want to bring out to the Savior's work that's being done. You see, God the Father and God the Son had this appointment made before the foundation of the earth that they would meet on Calvary's cross and they would work out the salvation of the children and one of the things that they would do is accomplish the overcoming of the vanquishing of death. Jesus Christ entered the door of death because he must path through the door of death and experience the blow of death's sting. Three quick sections of Scripture. John 10:11, Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." John 10:15, "Even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep." John 10:17-18, "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

God turned the world dark at 12 noon as Jesus, his Son, hung on the cross. It stayed pitch black until 3 o'clock and in that darkness was the great paradox of all the ages: God died. A songwriter said,

"Well might the sun in darkness hide  
And shut his glories in,  
When Christ, the mighty Maker died,  
For man the creature's sin."

He was punished as he hung on the cross as if he were a sinner. He was abandoned as he hung on the cross as if he were a sinner. And he died hanging on that cross because the Father was looking upon him as if he were a sinner. In summary you could just simply says, "Jesus went to hell that day that we wouldn't have to." Hendrickson in his excellent commentary says, "This was an intense and unforgettable darkness and it occurred at the least expected time. The darkness meant judgment, the judgment of God for our sins. His wrath, as it were, burning itself out in the very heart of Jesus so that he as our substitute suffered most intense agony, indescribable woe, terrible isolation and forsakeness. Hell

came to Calvary that day and the Savior descended into it and bore its horrors in our stead."

But here's the glorious side of it. Because of the darkness our Lord entered, because of the punishment and the abandonment and the death that he tasted, now believers are free forever from death, hell and the grave. Hebrews 2:9, "But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus," he let the glorious realm of the angels in heaven and came down for a little while, "namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone." He came into death and he took death and he tasted death and he vanquished death for us. Hebrews 2:14-15, "Since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same." The children God wanted to save are flesh and blood humans so Jesus put on flesh and blood humanity to save them. Continuing, "that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives."

I love the Old Testament story of Samson when he was in the city and he heard in the middle of the night that his enemies had a plot to destroy him. At sunrise, they knew Samson was going to leave the city so they had plotted that at sunrise they would go down to the gate of the city and all pounce on Samson and kill him so Samson just got up in the middle of the night and went down to the gate of the city and put his great big massive shoulders under the gate and ripped it up post, gate, bars and all and carried it up on a mountain and threw it down as if to say, "Now what are you going to do about it?" That's what Jesus did to the gate of death. He put his massive shoulders under it and he ripped it up, gate, post, bars and all and he's thrown it away. Listen, there's a gaping hole in the house of death.

We remember that the Scripture says that when Jesus died they put him in a borrowed tomb because he wasn't going to need it very long. You see, death is a lot like I was driving down the road, I don't remember where I was, I've traveled a lot lately and there was a building being demolished and they had completely wrecked the entire thing, it was just rubble. One little section of wall had a door in it. I thought, "A lot of good that door does. They're not even building there anymore." But that's the way death is. There is still a door. You have to enter the door but when you go in the door, the house is no more. It can't hold you. It can't contain you. It can't keep you. It's just a door. Jesus has literally turned the house of death inside out. That's hard to picture in your mind, isn't it? How can a house be inside out? Here's what I mean by that: because when you enter the door of it, you're actually leaving it at the same time. When you go into death as a Christian, you're actually going right out of it at the same time. It's not a house that holds you, it's now a house that guides you to Christ. It's been plundered and destroyed completely by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

So for the believer, death is no longer a problem. Death for you is a promotion. For the believer, death is not a fearful thing. Death is now a fortunate thing. Death is now that kind messenger that takes you to a better home. Look at our text again, look at Mark 15,

verses 37 and 38. "And Jesus uttered a loud cry." We know from the other gospels that cry was, "It is finished." "And breathed His last. And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom." When Jesus cried out at the end of those three hours of darkness, the final thing for him to do is taste for us. He cried, "It is finished," and when he cried, "It is finished," that meant, "I have been punished as if I were a sinner so that children who are sinners would not be punished. I have been abandoned as if I were a sinner so that children who are sinners would not be abandoned. I am tasting and abolishing death as if I were a sinner so that the children who must go through death can pass through and death cannot hold them." When Jesus shouted, "It is finished," is shook the glory bells of heaven and the Bible said, "And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom." An unseen hand of God reached into the temple in the Holy of Holies that no man could go in but the priest one time a year, the place that symbolized that barrier between God and man, a godly arm from heaven ripped the veil in two and the open passageway now to God is there and it's through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The dark side of Easter, in fact, it's not dark to us at all. That three hours of darkness has brought us an eternity of light. He was treated as if he were a sinner so that we being sinners could be treated like his beloved Son. He was punished as if he were a sinner so that we as sinners would not bear the weight of that punishment. He was abandoned as if he were a sinner so that we as sinners would not face that abandonment. He entered death as if he were a sinner so that we as sinners could never be held by death. Up from the grave he arose with a mighty triumph over his foes. He arose a victor from the dark domain and he lives forever with his saints to reign. He arose. He arose. Hallelujah. Christ arose. You don't get Easter's morning without Calvary's night but thank God in Jesus they're all finished for us.

Let's stand together in prayer.