

# The Darkness of Calvary

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**Bible Text:** Matthew 27:45  
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Take your Bibles and turn to Matthew's gospel chapter 27. We are looking at the miracles of Calvary.

Often we look at the story of the crucifixion of Christ and we see the big picture, but we don't see the details and miss some of the important truths. You know about the crown of thorns on Jesus' head. You know about the lashes to his back. You know, about the nails to his hands, but there are some other details that many times we miss. So let's look at those miracles of Calvary today in Matthew's gospel 27. We will begin with verse 45.

I am going to ask you to stand in respect for the Word of God.

Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" that is, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?"

And some of those who were standing there, when they heard it, began saying, "This man is calling for Elijah."

Immediately one of them ran, and taking a sponge, he filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink. But the rest of them said, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him."

And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many. Now the centurion, and those who were with him

keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"<sup>1</sup>

Did you see the miracles of Calvary there? Now these miracles are a special class of miracles called attesting miracles. In other words, they attest to the divinity of Jesus Christ. They attest to the overwhelming significance of his ministry and of his life and death and resurrection.

Many of the miracles Jesus did during his life were for the purpose of meeting someone's needs. You remember he came to the blind man Bartimaeus and healed him. He gave him sight. He came to lame people and he healed them so they could walk. Many people who were demonized came and he cast out the demons. He healed them. He fed the 5000 because they were famished. And so many of his miracles, most of the miracles Jesus did were to relieve someone's pressing need.

But with these miracles of Calvary no one's needs were being met. Rather they were attesting miracles. They were God's way of shouting, of proclaiming to the universe the significance of the death of his Son, Jesus Christ.

In these attesting miracles three things come out clearly. First, the overwhelming importance of the death of Jesus. Secondly, we see that great theological and historical significance attach to the death of Jesus Christ. And then, thirdly, all important truths about his life, death and resurrection come out in these miracles of Calvary.

Today we are going to look at only one of the miracles of Calvary and that is the miracle of darkness, the darkness that came upon the land, that is mentioned in all of the synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke.

And we see this mentioned in the verse 45 at the beginning of that verse.

It says, "From the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour."<sup>2</sup>

The sixth hour was noon, at 12 noon when the sun is at its brightest, darkness fell upon the land. When the sun is shining its brightest, the darkness came.

This was no mere storm. It was no storm that was coming to bring this darkness. I have seen some movies about the crucifixion of Jesus and sometimes they have a terrific storm coming at this time. But this was no storm causing this darkness. It was no twilight. It was utter darkness that covered the entire land, This was no solar eclipse, first of all because you don't have an eclipse when there is a full moon. And the full moon was always at Passover. Secondly, those of you that have been in a solar eclipse—and I have managed to live through a couple of those myself—it only becomes dark for a few

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 27:45-54.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 27:45.

minutes, not for three hours. But this darkness covered the land from 12 noon to three o'clock in the afternoon.

Now what was God saying to us? What was God shouting to those who have ears to hear and eyes to see through this darkness? Why did God bring darkness over the entire land during those last three hours Jesus was on the cross?

I believe there are three very important truths that God was saying to those who have the eyes to see about the death of his Son Jesus Christ.

First, God was saying through the darkness that his full judgment, his holy wrath over our sins was being poured out into the heart of Jesus. The full unmitigated, undiluted holy wrath of God over our sins was burning itself out in the heart of Jesus during those last three hours on the cross.

You see, darkness in Scripture often symbolizes judgment and hell. For example, over in Joel's prophecy we read in the second chapter speaking about the coming day of the Lord.

I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, Blood, fire and columns of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood Before the great and awesome day of the LORD.<sup>3</sup>

And, again, Amos the prophet speaks of judgment and darkness.

He says, "Will not the day of the LORD be darkness instead of light, Even gloom with no brightness?"<sup>4</sup>

The judgment day of the Lord is spoken of as darkness. Even Jesus himself when he talked about his return in Matthew 24 he uses the darkness.

"But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken."<sup>5</sup>

And then Jesus when he speaks about hell, that eternal, everlasting place of agony and suffering, he uses the term of outer darkness in Matthew 8:12.

He says, "...will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Joel 2:30-31.

<sup>4</sup> Amos 5:20.

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 24:29.

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 8:12.

What is God telling us when he brings the darkness upon the land during those last three hours? He is telling us that hell came to Calvary that day.

People will ask, “Pastor, do you think Jesus descended into hell during the three days he was in the tomb?”

And I say to them, “No, because he experienced hell on the cross.”

Jesus experienced the absolute full undiluted wrath of holy God over our sins during those last three hours on that cross.

Isaiah 53 speaks to this very truth as we read. Isaiah 53 he says, “But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief.”<sup>7</sup>

Look at that. The Lord, God the Father was pleased to crush. And that word “crush” means to beat down, to crush him, Jesus, putting him to grief. The Father was pouring out hell on Jesus.

In a sense you could say it was God who afflicted his Son, who pierced him through. It was God who laid the whip upon his back, who nailed the nails into his hands. It was God who was crushing him for our sins.

You may say, “Well, wait a minute, preacher, now I thought it was just sinful men having their evil way. You are saying God had something to do with the death of Jesus?”

Look at what Peter says in his preaching in Acts four. Look closely.

He says, “For truly in this city [Jerusalem] there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel.”<sup>8</sup>

Now look at this verse.

“...to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.”<sup>9</sup>

Yes, these sinful men were acting out of their own selfish, sinful impulses and actions. No, God did not make them do this. But God permitted it. He allowed his Son to undergo such humiliation and pain and suffering, to experience not only the wrath of man, but to experience his holy wrath for our sins, for us.

God could have stopped it. He could have said, “Enough.” But he didn’t.

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<sup>7</sup> Isaiah 53:10.

<sup>8</sup> Acts 4:27.

<sup>9</sup> Acts 4:28.

Everything that these sinful men, the slaps with the stick, the fists in his face, the pulling out of his beard, spitting in his face, the lashes to his back, the nails into his hands were all under the permissive will of God. Not only that, but Jesus himself said it is necessary that the Son of man go to Jerusalem and suffer, be killed, to be raised again on the third day. It was necessary.

Why? Why would God pour out his full undiluted holy hatred of our sins on Jesus? Why would he allow hell to come to Calvary that day and put his Son in hell for three hours for us? Why pour out his holy wrath on his sinless innocent Son? Because of his great love for us.

In 1 John chapter four verse 10 we read, “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”<sup>10</sup>

Don’t let that word “propitiation” throw you off. It means an atoning sacrifice. It means to appease the anger of one who has been offended by the payment of a price. What John is saying is, “Because of God’s great love for us, he was willing to suffer the punishment we deserved because he loved us.”

You see, God’s holiness, God’s righteousness demands that sin be punished. There can be no other way. Sin must be punished. And who has sinned but us? Who deserves the punishment but us? And what do we deserve? Eternity in hell. But because of God’s great love he says, “I will satisfy my righteous holiness. I will satisfy my justice by pouring out my full punishment and wrath on my own Son, because of my love for my own people, my chosen ones, because of my love.”

And God looked upon him who was crushed. Isaiah says he looked upon the one who was afflicted and he was satisfied. God was satisfied. His righteous holy justice was satisfied during those three hours Jesus died on that cross, full payment was made for our sins. That is what the darkness tells us first of all, **that hell came to Calvary during those three hours.**

**Secondly, the darkness tells us of the indescribable suffering and agony that Jesus experienced during those three hours.** And it is as if God pulls the veil of darkness across the scene so sinful man cannot look upon such suffering and agony by the sinless Son of God.

Notice the silence of Scripture. We are not told what happened during those three hours. We have to look back in the Old Testament to see what happened, to get a better understanding of what took place. But, oh, the depth of his suffering, the agony for those three hours are beyond our comprehension. It is indescribable. I cannot describe it to you.

And I will try just to give you glimpse. But in silence he suffered the full fury of holy God. Again, we turn to Isaiah chapter 53 to get a better understanding of what Jesus was

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<sup>10</sup> 1 John 4:10.

going through as God was pouring out his full fury, the indescribable suffering and agony he was experiencing.

The physical torture was horrendous. Historians of that day said there was no death that was more painful than death by crucifixion. But I want you to know the physical pain was nothing compared to the emotional and spiritual pain that he experienced.

Isaiah 53 says, “Surely our griefs He Himself bore.”<sup>11</sup>

Now this word “griefs” in the Hebrew means sicknesses, diseases. What is it saying? This is saying when Jesus died on that cross, he took our sicknesses, our diseases upon himself. You see, disease was not a part of God’s original plan for creation. Disease came because of sin and the fall of creation.

And so when Jesus died on that cross it was necessary for him to take upon himself the full curse of sin. And a part of that curse is disease and sickness.

I believe that during those three hours on the cross that Jesus experienced all the agony and pain of all the disease known to mankind. I believe during those three hours on the cross he experienced excruciating nausea. He experienced the pain of cancer, bone cancer, the excruciating pain of bone cancer. I believe he experienced the pain of kidney stones. I believe he experienced even the pain that a woman goes through in labor because he was taking on the full impact of the curse that is upon creation as he died on that cross.

He experienced the pain of seizures, the bone wracking spasms that can come upon us as our muscles cramp, the migraine headaches, all the pain you have ever experienced in any sickness you have ever had. I believe Jesus experienced it during those three hours on the cross as he bore our sicknesses.

You can see now why God pulled the veil of darkness so no man could look on such intense suffering and pain.

But not only did he bear our sicknesses, but it says, “And our sorrows He carried,”<sup>12</sup> our sorrows, the heartaches, the disappointments, the pain, grief, the pain of losing a loved one, the gut wrenching, heart searing pain of losing a child, a spouse, a parent, a sibling. I believe Jesus took that to the cross because death came as a result of sin. That was not a part of God’s original plan either.

And so he had to take the curse of death upon himself and all the sorrow and pain that goes with that.

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<sup>11</sup> Isaiah 53:4.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

You have experienced heartache? Jesus has experienced every bit of that heartache that you have experienced. And compounded with that all the heartache of his people for all ages and you are beginning to get a glimpse of what he suffered during those three hours.

And then we go on to read in verse five, “But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities.”<sup>13</sup>

Jesus took on the guilt of our sins.

Now you and I know something of guilt. We all have probably felt guilty. And just think about the feeling of guilt over one sin, how that guilt can just crush you, how it can just weigh you down. And that is just for one sin. Now you take the weight of the guilt for all of your sins and imagine how crushing that is.

Now you take the weight of the guilt of not only all of your sins, but all of the sins of all of his people from all ages and pour those on the Son of God and imagine how crushing that guilt was, because he was crushed for our iniquities.

And then it says, “The chastening for our wellbeing fell upon Him.”<sup>14</sup>

Not only did he take the guilt of our suffering, but he experienced the punishment that we deserved because of our suffering.

Now what punishment do you deserve for just one of your sins? Think about it. Hell. Hell for eternity is what we deserve for one sin.

Now you add all of your sins, the hell for eternity and it won't pay the price, because it doesn't stop. Jesus took on the hell for eternity over all of your sins during those three hours on the cross, not only over your sins, but all the hell for all of eternity, for all the sins of his people. He took that hell at the cross.

Now think about this for a moment. Eternity is without end. We deserve to spend eternity in agony and pain and suffering, separated from a holy God for eternity. Now for Jesus to be punished for you and me and to pay the full price, do you know what that means? That means he had to experience the full pain and agony of an eternity in hell for not only you, but for me and for all of his people. And hell was compressed not into 1000 years, not into 100 years, not into a decade, but it was compressed into 180 minutes.

Now you take the sun's light and it is warming and it is soothing. But you take a magnifying glass and you concentrate that sun's light and it will burn you. You cannot stand it. Now you concentrate the pain and agony of hell for eternity and you concentrate that into 180 minutes. You concentrate that into three hours and that is what Jesus

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<sup>13</sup> Isaiah 53:5.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

experienced on that cross. And that is why he said, “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?”<sup>15</sup>

The full holy anger of righteous God, the hell that you and I deserve, Jesus experienced it in three hours in its fullness. That is why He had to be God. No man could have taken that.

Why would Jesus do this? Only because of his great love for us. Jesus said in John 15, “Greater love has no one than this that one lay down his life for his friends.”<sup>16</sup>

It was love that kept Jesus on that cross, not those nails. It was love. He could have come down. He could have wiped them all out. It was love, his great love for us.

**The first thing the darkness tells us is that hell came to Calvary that day. The second thing the darkness tells us is that Jesus experienced hell for you and me during that day for three hours. And then the third thing the darkness tells us is that unimaginable heartache of the Father.**

Imagine pouring out your full anger on your sinless son because of what someone else did. Imagine punishing your child for someone else’s sin. Imagine pouring out your full, undiluted, unmitigated, holy wrath on your sinless child, giving up your own child.

As hard as it is to give up the life of a child, some of you have experienced that. You know that pain. But how many of you would not have stopped it if you could, would not have said, “No. I have a choice. I am stopping this. I will not give up my child for anyone else.”

The Father had a choice. He could have stopped it. Imagine his heartache. Why would he do that? Because of his great love.

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”<sup>17</sup>

What love, such a great love demands a great response. How will you respond today to God’s great love for you, for Jesus’ great love for you? How will you respond?

There is only one response that is fitting and that is total and absolute surrender to him as Lord and Savior, to fall down before him in worship.

It is all grace. We didn’t deserve it.

Fall before him and say, “Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Father. I give myself unreservedly, absolutely to you. I am yours. Thank you.”

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<sup>15</sup> Matthew 27:45.

<sup>16</sup> John 15:13.

<sup>17</sup> Romans 5:8.



Let us pray.

*Father, words cannot express what you have done for us. We cannot even come close to plumbing the depths of your suffering and the pain of the Lord Jesus for us. I pray your Spirit would open our eyes to see and our hearts to feel something of your great love for us that we might respond in great love for you in Jesus' name. Amen.*