

God-forsaken **Mark 15:34 Psalm 22:1 and 7-18**

‘My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?’ This is the second sermon in our series on the words Jesus spoke from the cross.

The movie ‘The Passion of the Christ’ was a must-see event back in 2004. Students at Spurgeon’s College encouraged everyone to see it. If you did not go, they even doubted if you were a real Christian. It was the highest-grossing Christian film of all time.

Yet I disagreed with the students. I didn’t need to see this movie. I don’t need to see all the suffering of Jesus! Why not? Because of these words of Jesus from the cross! He was Godforsaken – so I don’t have to be. And I don’t need to undergo what He suffered. I could not understand it anyway. So there is no clip today; I am not showing you anything to do with Jesus’ suffering.

No human being can imagine how heavy Jesus’ suffering was. And the evangelists are very brief, very restrained, in their descriptions! They are very brief indeed.

In what Jesus suffered on the cross, we can distinguish between the physical agony and the mental/spiritual agony. The latter must have been particularly bad, of a different order to any human suffering. That is because Jesus carried not only the dirt of one evening news broadcast or one newspaper, but all of them. He took all the sin of the world upon Himself. Yours and mine included. He carried God’s hatred of sin. The apostle Paul comments on these things:

Galatians 3:13: ‘Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.’

2 Corinthians 5:21: ‘God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.’

‘My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?’ The most piercing cry in the whole Bible.

Spoken not to us but for us. On our behalf. Jesus here quotes Psalm 22. Many aspects of this psalm are prophetic and it is worth reading it in its entirety today. In the life of Jesus, the entire Psalm resounds, including the positive end.

‘My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?’ Do these words mean that Jesus was in doubt about his work? About God? After all, at that moment the darkness seems to be victorious. No, I don’t think He is in doubt. He sides with the faithful in Israel who had been singing Psalm 22 throughout history. He is lonely, suffering, forsaken, unaware of God’s presence – but He is not doubting. He is seeking God’s face. The very fact that He addresses God assumes that He knows that God hears Him.

We can feel forsaken by God – and I don’t trivialise the suffering of some of us. But we can safely say that our suffering is insignificant, trivial, compared to his. He not only suffered physically but he was carrying the sin of the world. We have no clue what it means when God really disappears. It’s called hell. And we don’t need to know, thank God. Thanks to Jesus’ god-forsakenness, we will never be godforsaken!