

The 'why' of faith

Lachlan Perrin

Notes prepared in fellowship with Victor Hall for the communion ministry, 28th June 2020

The patience of faith

In this meditation we are considering a well-known but often misinterpreted statement made by Jesus. On the day of His crucifixion, as the time neared 3:00pm, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'My God, My God, *why* have You forsaken Me?' Mat 27:46. The Gospels record that soon after He spoke these words, Jesus made three further statements in quick succession: 'I thirst', 'It is finished!' and 'Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit'. Joh 19:28. Joh 19:30. Luk 23:46. While these final three statements are simple declarations, we note that our key phrase, '*Why* have You forsaken Me?' is a *question*. The purpose of our reflection today is to consider *why* Jesus asked God the Father, 'Why?'

It is helpful to remember that Jesus presented Himself in offering according to the faith that He received in the word of the Father. He testified that He had authority to lay down His life because of the command of the Father. Joh 10:18. Rom 10:17. The faith that Jesus received, which the apostle Paul called 'the faith of the Son', was the faith of the Father to birth a multitude of sons of God and to include them in the fellowship of Yahweh. The prophet Isaiah was referring to the faith of the Son when he wrote, 'If He should put forth His soul as a sin offering, *He shall see seed*'. Isa 53:10.

Jesus laid down His life as an offering for our sin when He joined us in our death and separation from God, in the garden of Gethsemane. This was when the reproaches of mankind against the Father were laid upon Him. Psa 69:9. Each wounding event that caused Christ's blood to flow, progressively accomplished redemption for mankind. We know that His redeeming work was complete because Jesus was able to proclaim to the penitent thief, just before 12:00pm, 'Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.' Luk 23:43.

Jesus made this remarkable declaration as our great High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. This means that every person throughout the church age who, like the penitent thief, responds to the word of the cross and joins the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, is a recipient of this wonderful promise of redemption. Furthermore, as members of Christ's body, we remain joined to Him and to the work of the cross which continued *after* 12:00pm. This is the focus of our mediation today.

Jesus' offering journey from Gethsemane to the cross demonstrated the obedience of His faith. He endured each wounding event by the *patience of faith*. 'The patience of faith' refers to the power of God to protect those who obey His word. 1Pe 1:5. As we walk in obedience to the word of our sonship, faith enables us to testify with the same faith of Jesus, who said, 'No-one takes [My life] from Me.' Joh 10:18. The key point is that our obedience to the word of faith preserves us in the patience of God as we experience the sufferings and trials that accompany the word of faith. We recall that Jesus commended the church in Philadelphia, saying, 'You have kept the Word of My patience.' Rev 3:10. This principle was exemplified in the life of Joseph, who was a

type of Jesus Christ. In Psalm 105, we are reminded to give thanks to God because, 'He sent a man before them, Joseph, being sold for a servant; whose feet they hurt with chains; he was laid in iron, until the time that his word came, the Word of Jehovah refined [tested] him'. Psa 105:17-19.

Like Joseph, Jesus did *not* know when the sufferings of faith that belonged to the word of His sonship would be complete. This is because Jesus did not define the endpoint of His offering. The end of His death, the culmination of His obedient offering, and the birth of new creation were in the hands of the Father. In recent weeks we have considered how those who have experienced abuse, betrayal or treachery can find closure through forgiveness and the love of God. We also considered how the Father found closure for the grief associated with every person who chooses to depart from His house and become a prodigal son. Today, we are considering how the Son found closure through the Father's initiative toward the offering of Yahweh.

The judgement of faith

After Jesus declared redemption for the penitent thief, the Scripture accounts that a great darkness fell over the whole land until 3:00pm. These three hours of darkness signalled another phase in Christ's offering. By midday, Christ had completed His work as our great High Priest, and had accomplished our eternal redemption. Having fulfilled His initiative to priest Himself as a living sacrifice, Christ's offering now rested completely in the hands of the Father. The darkness which covered the whole land occurred as the Father laid the final aspect of His reproach upon the Son. The Son was now forsaken by the Father, His heart broken by reproach. Psa 69:20. The Son of Man described these reproaches as a great flood that overflowed Him, taking Him into the fiery sea of God's forgetfulness; the very Lake of Fire itself. Psa 69:1-2. Mic 7:19.

As Christ's physical, mortal body hung on the cross for three hours, He experienced the judgement of God's wrath upon the sin of the whole world. Concerning this dimension of His sufferings, Christ testified, 'The pains of death surrounded e, and the pangs of Sheol laid hold of Me; I found trouble and sorrow.' Psa 116:3. Christ was descending to the depths of the Lake of Fire. The cords of death had enveloped Him in His offering body. The book of Jonah describes this, prophetically. Jesus Himself directed us to the account of Jonah because it was a pattern of His own experience. Mat 12:39-40. We read in the book of Jonah, 'Waters encompassed me, even to the soul; the depth closed around me; the seaweed was bound to my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was around me forever; yet You have brought up my life from the pit, O Jehovah my God.' Jon 2:5-6.

Christ was forsaken by the Father for three hours as eternal judgement was exhausted, and everything of the old creation was put to death. In three hours, Christ embodied the fullness of sin and the Lake of Fire. That means that every dimension of sin and corruption were laid upon Christ. But, as an offering for sin, Christ brought all things that are contrary to God, to nothing. During this time, Christ rested in the patience of faith. The faith that He received from the Father, by command, was now His own conviction before God. Rom 14:22.

As the time neared 3:00pm, Christ confessed that He was keeping the word of the Father's patience when He asked the Father, 'Why have You forsaken Me?' It was as though Christ was saying, 'I can wait patiently, by faith, until Your offering is complete.' We read about this

confession of the patience of faith in King David's messianic psalm, 'I waited *patiently* for the Lord; and He inclined to me and heard my cry. He brought me up out of the pit of destruction'. Psa 40:1-2. Having heard the Son's cry of faith, the Father, by the Holy Spirit, reached down and drew Him, the Firstborn of a new creation, out of many waters. Psa 18:16.

When Jesus asked the Father, 'Why?', He silenced the 'why' that belongs to the other law. Unlike Christ, when we cry out to God asking Him, 'Why?', it is the expression of our other law as we struggle to accept our circumstances in life. From midday to 3:00pm, Jesus dealt with the other law. His confession of faith, 'Why have You forsaken Me?', answered every other 'why', for all time. As Jesus was kept by the patience of faith, the *judgement of faith* was invoked upon everything contrary to God. This scriptural principle of the judgement of faith was illustrated when Noah built the ark. Noah was preserved from the floodwaters that covered the face of the earth because he obeyed God. The very same word that kept Noah by the patience of faith proclaimed the judgement of faith upon mankind and all corruption on earth. Noah emerged from the waters of judgement just as Christ was drawn up out of many waters by the loving arms of the Father.

Having earlier refused to drink the wine mixed with myrrh, offered to Him by the soldiers, Jesus declared, 'I thirst.' We recall that, at the last supper, Jesus told His disciples that He would not again partake of the communion until the new creation had been brought forth as a new kingdom. Luk 22:16. When the Father drew Him out of the waters of judgement, the ground of new creation emerged with Him in the same way that the earth emerged from the seas on the third day of creation. Gen 1:9. At approximately 3:00pm, as Jesus drank sour wine from a sponge put on a reed of hyssop, He was signalling the birth of new creation. Jesus then declared, 'It is finished!' and yielded His Spirit into the hands of the Father.

Before Jesus' ascension, which is recorded in the book of Acts, the disciples asked Him, saying, 'Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?' Jesus said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority'. Act 1:6-7. We note that even after Jesus' resurrection, He continued to keep the word of the Father's patience. Remarkably, approximately 70 years passed before the Father permitted Christ to reveal the pattern of restoration for His lampstand churches. We can appreciate why the apostle John introduced himself in the book of Revelation by saying, 'I, John, also your brother and companion in the affliction and in the kingdom and *patience of Jesus Christ*.' Rev 1:9.

The faith of Abraham

The account of Abraham offering up Isaac is a picture of the offering of Christ at the hands of God the Father. We read in the book of Hebrews, '*By faith* Abraham, when *he was tested*, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was *offering up his only begotten son*'. Heb 11:17. We recall that Joseph, and indeed Jesus, were both *tested* until the word of the Father came to pass. The most significant promise that God affirmed to Abraham, on account of his obedience, was that *in his seed* all the nations of the earth would be blessed. Gen 22:18. This is the faith of the Father and the faith of the Son.

When Yahweh first spoke to Abram, He commanded Him to go out from His country into a land that He would show him. Gen 12:1-4. The book of Hebrews accounts that '*By faith* Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out into a place which he was afterward going to receive for an inheritance'. Heb 11:8. The Lord further ministered faith to Abram when He declared, 'Fear not

Abram, I am your shield [of faith] and your exceeding great reward.’ Gen 15:1. We recall that Abram believed Yahweh when He said, ‘Look now toward the heavens and count the stars, if you are able to count them. And He said to him, “So shall your seed be”.’ Gen 15:5. Because Abram believed in this word, by faith, the Lord counted it to him for righteousness. Gen 15:6.

In the same way that Christ asked the Father, ‘Why have You forsaken Me?’ Abram asked God, ‘By what shall I know that I shall inherit it?’ Gen 15:8. This statement was the ‘why’ of Abram’s faith. As the Father met Abram’s confession of faith and accredited it to him as righteousness, He similarly met the Son’s cry, ‘Why have you forsaken Me?’, and accredited it to *Him* as righteousness. We know that the Lord instructed Abram to make offering. We read in the book of Genesis, ‘As the sun was setting a deep sleep fell upon Abram. And, behold, a horror of great darkness fell upon him! The sun went down, it was dark and behold, a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp passed between the pieces [of Abram’s offering]. In the same day Jehovah made a covenant with Abram.’ Gen 15:12,17-18. The darkness and great horror that Abram experienced represented Christ’s three hours in the Lake of Fire. This was the ‘smoking furnace’ that fully consumed Abram’s offering. At the conclusion of Abram’s offering, the Lord made a covenant with him. Gen 15:18. Similarly, the completion of Christ’s offering marked the ratification of the New Covenant.

In Genesis Chapter twenty-two, we read about God testing Abraham by asking him to offer up Isaac as a burnt offering. We recall that, after a three-day journey, Abraham said to his servants, ‘You stay here. I and the boy will go on to this way and worship’. Gen 22:5. We note the similarity of this account to Jesus drawing aside from the disciples in the garden of Gethsemane to pray with the Father. We note also that the Father proceeded with Christ through every aspect of His offering journey until 12:00pm on the day of His crucifixion. We recall that as Abraham stretched out his hand, taking a knife to slay his son, an angel of the Lord intervened, saying, ‘Now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only one, from Me.’ Gen 22:12.

Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw that a ram was entangled by its horns in a thicket. Abraham took the ram and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. Gen 22:13. The final aspect of the Father’s reproach, which He laid upon Christ at 12:00pm, was the ‘knife’ that pierced the Son’s heart. There was no ‘ram caught in a thicket’; Jesus was the Lamb of God who offered Himself once for all time for the redemption and salvation of mankind.

The ‘why’ of faith

The book of Hebrews defines faith as, ‘The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen’. Heb 11:1. In the New Covenant, when we respond to the word of the cross in the obedience of faith, this is a fully *objective* course of action. Walking by faith, keeping the word of the Father’s patience, *is* the end of a matter. Our other law entices us to use the knowledge of good and evil to be self-defining. In other words, when the word of the cross is proclaimed by Christ’s messengers, we have a fallen propensity to define what the fruit of that word looks like. Those who walk according to this self-definition, mistakenly believe that this is an objective approach to life. However, they are walking in darkness!

Like Joseph, Abraham, and indeed Jesus, we must recognise that the timing and definition of the fruit that the Father is looking for in every season is not in our hands. It is not for us to know the times or the seasons which the Father keeps in the power of His hand. We can take

great comfort in Christ's example. He has not only demonstrated the patience of faith; He also ministers this same faith to us in the communion word. By faith, Jesus was not drawn to answer His disciples when they asked Him about the timing of the restoration of the kingdom of God. And, by faith, Jesus was kept by the word of the Father's patience as He offered Himself to fulfil the Father's will.

In this present season, the word of the cross has ministered faith to us so that we can find closure on various matters. In the same way that Christ found closure by the patience of faith, we too can find closure through the obedience of faith. The Lord is setting us free from our need to define the end of these matters. He is delivering us to the fellowship of His offering, where we are kept by the word of patience.

We can take heart in the apostle Paul's testimony. He said that he counted all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ. He desired to be found in Him, 'not having a righteousness of [his] own derived from the Law, but that *which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith*'. As Paul lived by the faith of the Son, he was able to forget those matters that lay behind him and, instead, reach forward to what lay ahead. Paul was able to walk on in Christ, finding closure on the matters of his past, because of the obedience of faith. Php 3:7-14.