

# THE SCROLLS

## Meeting The Messiah | Mark 15:33-41

### Life Lesson

Suffering isn't always a sign that something is wrong, but it is always an opportunity to respond correctly. At the cross, Jesus shows us that even when God feels silent, He is still working with purpose. Because Christ endured darkness, we are never truly forsaken. You might not understand why you are suffering, but you can choose how you endure it. Will you let suffering harden your heart, or will you let it draw you closer to God? When you anchor your life in Christ, suffering is no longer meaningless—it becomes a platform for God's glory and your growth.

### Examine Scripture

**33** *When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. 34 And at three Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lemá sabachtháni?" which is translated, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" 35 When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "See, he's calling for Elijah." 36 Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, fixed it on a stick, offered him a drink, and said, "Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down." 37 Jesus let out a loud cry and breathed his last. 38 Then the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. 39 When the centurion, who was standing opposite him, saw the way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" 40 There were also women watching from a distance. Among them were*

### What Took You So Long?

In this week's text, we find ourselves once again at the foot of the cross. One can imagine the bloody ground, the pleas for mercy from the criminals, the jeers and taunts from the crowd, and the mocking from the soldiers. At the foot of the cross, we also hear Jesus' final words. In seven very brief breaths, Jesus manages enough strength for seven phrases: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34), "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43), "Woman, behold, your son" and "Behold, your mother" (John 19:26-27), "I thirst" (John 19:28), "It is finished" (John 19:30), and "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46). Yet, the words revealing the depth of His suffering and pain as He bore our sin are: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (v. 34).

There are perhaps no words more filled with despair than these. It seems as if Jesus is questioning God or even His plan of redemption. Yet, as we know, Jesus has already proclaimed "not what I will, but what you will" (14:36). There is something else found in the midst of these words. Amidst the words of incredible suffering and despair, we find overwhelming hope!

Now, in our superficial piety and shallow spirituality, we might deny ever speaking words like these; however, if we are honest, we will admit that at some point in our lives, we felt completely abandoned by God. At some moment in our journey, during suffering, we wondered where God was! In fact, some of you may be currently in the midst of pain, worry, and suffering, asking: "God, where are you? Why have you abandoned me?" During tough times, it's easy to fall into despair and let doubt dominate our thoughts, such as: "If God is good, then why do bad things happen?" or "Why do bad things happen to good people?" or even "If God is a loving God, then why is there suffering in the world?"

Suffering goes beyond the superficial layers of theology, religion, and superstition, pushing us into reality. It acts as a wedge that can either draw us closer to God or push us away. Suffering is a tool that can shape you into a more committed follower of Jesus or cause you to turn your back on Him. There is a dangerous misconception that often

**Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. 41 In Galilee these women followed him and took care of him. Many other women had come up with him to Jerusalem.**

- Underline “darkness came over the whole land” in (v. 33). Write “judgment” above it, showing how darkness and earthquakes are used to show apocalyptic judgment.
- Circle “lemá” in (v. 34). Write “for what purpose” above it. List the purposes of the crucifixion in the margin.
- Underline “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” in (v. 34). Write “Psalm 22” above it to show the Scripture Jesus is quoting.
- Bracket “the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom” in (v. 38).
- Circle “Truly this man was the Son of God!” In (v. 39).

## Personal Notes

sneaks into our thinking: “If I am suffering, I must have done something wrong.” Some believe that every hardship is a direct punishment from God for a hidden sin. However, Scripture does not support such a limited view. Suffering can result from sin, but it is not always the case. Not only is some suffering permissible, but it can also be providential. In other words, there are times when suffering is not just allowed by God but also ordained by Him. This is a hard truth to accept because our culture has been shaped by the Therapeutic Gospel that is self-serving and self-centered. We instinctively think that if something causes pain or discomfort, then it must be wrong.

Here’s the point: we don’t always understand why we are suffering. We don’t always realize if it is by God’s permission or providence. Still, we can choose to endure suffering well. It’s less about “why,” and more about “how.” It’s not about why you are suffering, but how you will respond in the midst of it. Without Jesus, we are completely unprepared for suffering. However, because He suffered greatly, through Him, we can endure suffering for His glory.

### Vs. 33-34

Though suffering is not always the result of sin, sin always leads to suffering. When we look at the crucifixion account, especially the darkness that covered the land and the earthquake that followed, we are witnessing more than just historical events. These are symbols of divine judgment. Throughout Scripture, darkness represents judgment. At the very moment when the sun should have been at its brightest, the world was plunged into darkness. Creation itself responded to the weight of sin being placed upon Christ.

Sin does three things: it brings judgment, produces darkness, and causes separation. God is perfectly righteous and just. Sin must be dealt with. At the cross, judgment fell—not on sinners—but on the Savior. Yet even in our own lives, sin carries consequences, whether through God’s discipline or the brokenness it creates in relationships.

Jesus’ birth was announced with light piercing the night sky (Luke 2:9). But at His death, the Light of the World was covered in darkness. Sin does the same to us. It slowly pulls us away from the light until darkness feels normal. Over time, our spiritual eyes adjust, and the very light that once guided us begins to feel uncomfortable, even painful. That is the deceptive nature of sin.

In one of the most heart-wrenching moments in all of Scripture, Jesus cries out: “My God, My God, why have you abandoned me?” (v. 34). The Son, who had enjoyed perfect, eternal fellowship with the Father, now experiences separation. The silence of heaven is deafening. This is what sin does; it separates us from the fellowship we were created to enjoy with God.

## Personal Notes

When suffering attempts to silence us, Scripture speaks. In His agony, Jesus does not speak randomly; He quotes Scripture, specifically Psalm 22. Even in His suffering, the Word of God is on His lips. There are moments in suffering when we don't have the words to pray. Grief silences us. Pain overwhelms us. Questions flood our hearts. But in those moments, Scripture speaks for us. The Holy Spirit brings truth to mind. Passages we have read before suddenly come alive with comfort, clarity, and even conviction. God's Word becomes our voice when we have none. Suffering may quiet us, but it never silences God.

God uses suffering for His greater glory. At first glance, Jesus' cry from the cross sounds like despair. But when we understand the deeper meaning of His words, we see something else: purpose. In Aramaic, Jesus says, "Eloi, Eloi, lemá sabachtháni?" which is translated, 'My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?' (v. 34). Jesus is not questioning the Father. He is not merely asking "Why? He is expressing "For what purpose?" In Aramaic and Hebrew, "lemá" is not simply "why." It means "for what purpose or intent?" And God's answer comes swiftly.

1. The veil is torn (v. 38).
2. The earth shakes, and the rocks split (Matt. 27:51).
3. Saints were resurrected and left their graves (Matt. 27:52-53).
4. The centurion confesses, "Truly this was the Son of God" (v. 39).

### **Vs. 35-36**

While on the way to the cross and on the cross, Jesus is mocked by four different groups. On the way to the cross, those who were just crying out, "Hosanna!" are now blaspheming and wagging their heads at Him (v. 29). The next group is the soldiers who were casting lots for His clothing and continuing to mock Him as "the King of the Jews." The third group was the religious leaders. They continued their mockery and blasphemy by saying that Jesus is calling out for Elijah to save Him. Lastly, the criminals beside Jesus were also mocking Him, though later one would repent and believe.

As they mocked Jesus and said He was calling on Elijah, they offered Him sour wine to drink. This was not only a mockery of Jesus and a fulfillment of (Ps. 69:21), but also a way to keep the crucified alive longer and prolong the torture. In any case, the mockery continued with the religious leaders saying, "Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down" (v. 36). They did not realize that Jesus was held to the cross, not by nails, but by divine purpose and love. Jesus was not trying to escape the cross; He endured it 'for the joy that lay before him' (Heb. 12:2), that is our salvation.

## Personal Reflection

1. When have you gone through a season of suffering where God seemed silent or distant? How did you respond at that moment—and how do you view it now in light of Jesus' cry from the cross?
2. How do you usually respond to suffering—draw closer or drift away? Does it strengthen your dependence on God or create distance?
3. Is there any sin in your life that is leading you into darkness or creating distance from God? Are there areas where your “spiritual eyes” have adjusted to darkness, making conviction uncomfortable?
4. Do you allow Scripture to speak into your suffering? When pain silences your prayers, do you turn to God's Word? How can you intentionally hide Scripture in your heart so that, like Jesus, it becomes your voice in suffering?
5. Do you trust that God can use your suffering for His glory and your good? Even when you don't understand the “why,” can you surrender to the “purpose”?

## Commentaries

*Exalting Jesus in Mark* by Daniel Akin

*MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Mark 9-16* by John MacArthur

*BECNT: Mark* by Robert Stein

## Mt. Zion's Mission

*Mt. Zion Baptist Church exists to*  
**MAKE, MATURE, and MULTIPLY**  
*disciples of Jesus Christ.*

### Vs. 37-39

Mark's account of Jesus' death is less climactic than his counterparts'. Mark simply states, “Jesus let out a loud cry and breathed his last” (v. 37). Luke and John record what Jesus said: “Father into your hands I commit my spirit” and “It is finished.” What is interesting is that, even with the expertise of the Romans to cause crucifixion to be a long, painful form of death, Jesus died quickly. This demonstrates what Jesus said in (John 10:17-18): “I lay down my life so that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have the right to lay it down, and I have the right to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

What happens after His death reveals the purpose of the cross: restoring relationships and confessing faith. First of all, the veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom. Although Mark does not explain the meaning of this, it is very symbolic. It could be a judgment on the temple itself as Jesus had prophesied. However, a greater implication is that the veil which separates man from God—the Holy of Holies, the very presence of God—was completely removed. Because of Jesus' death, man can now be restored to his intended relationship with God. By grace, through faith, we can now boldly approach the throne of grace, unhindered by rituals or religious leaders (Heb. 4:16).

Secondly, the centurion's confession highlights the holiness and power of this moment: “Truly this man was the Son of God!” (v. 39). Perhaps the centurion recognized Jesus's control over life and death. He knew Jesus should have lasted longer, but with a word, He surrendered His life. Notice that the centurion did not confess Jesus as the “king of the Jews,” as on the inscription above Jesus, but instead acknowledged Him as “the Son of God.” What a powerful confession from someone who was guilty of driving the nails into His hands and feet!

### Vs. 40-41

Once again, we see the incredible faith and devotion, not of His disciples, but of the women who followed Him. Throughout the Gospels, these women demonstrated their devotion to Jesus, even when others did not. Interestingly, our culture condemns Scripture for being offensive or demeaning to women. Yet here and elsewhere, women are depicted positively, even in the face of the culture of their time.

God did not waste a single moment of Christ's suffering—and He will not waste yours either. God does not cause suffering, but He can use suffering for His greater glory. Consider what was accomplished through Jesus' suffering. His forsaking brings our acceptance. His death brings our life. His suffering strengthens our endurance. His example gives us hope. It is against the dark backdrop of suffering that the glory of God shines most brightly.