

“SHOOT THE HARD QUESTIONS AT GOD, NOT OTHERS”

by Rom A. Pegram (10/30/16)

INTRODUCTION: PSALM 22:1-2, 7-19 (NIV).

The writer of Proverbs (22:6) tells us to “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” I believe this was the case in Jesus’ life. His folks brought him up right. He loved the scriptures ... and he knew them! Listen, this morning, to a scripture Jesus may have known from heart. See if this reminds you of another story from the Bible (Psalm 22:1-2, 7-19, NIV)...

¹My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? ²O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, and am not silent.

⁷All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: ⁸“He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him.”

⁹Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you even at my mother’s breast. ¹⁰From birth I was cast upon you; from my mother’s womb you have been my God. ¹¹Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.

¹²Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me. ¹³Roaring lions tearing their prey open their mouths wide against me.

¹⁴I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. ¹⁵My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me [□] in the dust of death.

¹⁶Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced [□] my hands and my feet. ¹⁷I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. ¹⁸They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.

¹⁹But you, O LORD, be not far off; O my Strength, come quickly to help me.

TRANSITION: Jesus may have remembered this scripture at the time of his crucifixion. He was going through a very bad day. And, *he had some hard questions that needed to be answered!* So, how did he do it? What was Jesus’ example to us, as he hung there on that cross on that fateful first Good Friday? And what do we learn from Jesus today about how to get through our ‘bad days?’ Listen to today’s scripture, from Matthew, very carefully. Here are Jesus’ words from the cross for today (Matthew 27:45-46, TEV)...

At noon the whole country was covered with darkness, which lasted for three hours. ⁴⁶ At about three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud shout, "*Eli, Eli,*

lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why did you abandon me?"

Have you ever had a time, in your life, where you felt abandoned? It's not a good feeling, is it?

- When others just don't understand you, you feel abandoned...
- When people suffer from severe depression, they constantly feel abandoned...
- When you're in a position of having to defend yourself and God says, "No, let me be your defender!" you feel abandoned...
- When you're in grade school and your mom forgets to pick you up at a designated time, you feel abandoned...

That happened to my niece, over in Fond du Lac, some time ago. She felt abandoned. She'd been forgotten. Mom forgot to pick her up when they had agreed to meet after school. And, she was the only one that day whose mother had forgotten to pick their child up! Talk about feeling abandoned! Why would your mother forget to pick you up at school? There's a hard question for a 7-year-old to deal with!

Of course, like a lot of kids these days, my niece milked that situation for all it was worth! She was telling me one day on the phone, "Uncle Rom, my mom forgot to pick me up from school. Now, if I'd had my own cell phone, I could have called her and everything would have been alright!"

Well, I guess we all have hidden motives sometimes, but you get the idea. It's *not* a good feeling to be abandoned ... but, that's exactly what happened to Jesus on that first Good Friday ... *wasn't it?* Here's what we all need to do today:

WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND JESUS' ABANDONMENT. Is Jesus just feeling sorry for himself here, as if God had abandoned him ... or did God really abandon him? Maybe this is what we need to ask: Why would God *ever* turn his back on Jesus?

Well, I think the cause of the abandonment can be found in yet another question: *What one thing does God hate and cannot stand in his presence?* The answer is, SIN—willful disobedience to God...

Jesus, at this point, took on all the sins of the world—the sins of those who had lived, were living, and would be living. Have you ever felt the burden of sin in *your* life? Even one known sin—and having to live with it—feels awful! But, Jesus had ALL of the sins of the world on him! The prophet Isaiah said (53:6, *The Message*), "We're all like sheep who've wandered off and gotten

lost. We've all done our own thing, gone our own way. And God has piled all our sins, everything we've done wrong, on him, on him."

Someone asked in a class I was in one time, "Who is the most evil person who has ever walked the face of this earth?" The class thought about for quite some time and then the answers started to come: Herod (in Jesus' day), Attila the Hun, Genghis Khan, Hitler (a popular answer), Mussolini, Idi Amin, Saddam Hussein, Osama Bin Laden, and the list could go on and on... The correct answer, our professor taught us that day, was instead ... Jesus, as he hung on the cross and bore all of the sins of the whole world. "And God has piled on all our sins, everything we've done wrong, on him, on him"...

And, here's something else: Jesus carried this load ... *alone*. What we're seeing here in this story of the crucifixion is *the Son of Man*. The Son of Man voluntarily emptied himself of the Son of God ... for us! This was the very human Jesus, without the Father, that was crying out here! He'd voluntarily shed his divinity, in order that he could take care of the business of sin for us! And, *he did it alone. What a feeling of abandonment!* (By the way, many medical doctors state that Jesus probably died of a broken heart—literally. It was the emotional pressure, instead of just the torture of crucifixion that caused his death. Because of the water and blood that poured out, when his side was pierced, some physicians say this points to the possibility that Jesus actually died because his heart just burst...)

And, *he went through all of this for you and me ... to give us a 2-part gift: forgiveness of sins AND his Spirit of love* that empowers us to live without the burden of sin in our lives. We don't have to carry the load of sin any longer; Jesus took care of that business for us! But, Jesus had to be *abandoned* by God in order for this to happen. Holiness and un-holiness cannot co-exist! So, God had to temporarily leave (HELL) ... because of the sin that Jesus was carrying for us! Those are the realities of Jesus' abandonment on that first GOOD FRIDAY. Now, *we need to move to this ...*

WE NEED TO LEARN FROM JESUS' ABANDONMENT. What do we need to learn? First, *shoot your hard questions at God ...and DO IT WITH CONFIDENCE!* WHY? For these reasons...

YOUR PRAYERS WILL NEVER FALL ON DEAF EARS. Jesus found this out ... in the end. Just ask yourself: *Where is Jesus today?* Didn't God take care of *him* during this very bad day ... in spite of temporary abandonment? *It's the final outcome that's the most important, folks, and Jesus ended up seated at God's right hand;* it just doesn't get any better than that! So, *know* that your prayers—like those of Jesus—will never fall on deaf ears; we *can* shoot our hard questions at God, anytime! *And...*

GOD'S TIMING WILL ALWAYS BRING AN ANSWER IN YOUR BEST INTEREST. Why is it that we always think we know the best timing for our lives? "Well, God just doesn't answer my prayers," I hear people say. Or, do they really mean ... God doesn't answer their prayers *the way* they want them answered and *when* they want them answered? Folks, God lives in the 'eternal realm' and sees time much differently than we do—much clearer than we do! Remember: God's timing is always better than ours ... and, if we wait for God's timing, the answer will always be in our best interest—better than we could ever do ourselves! Jesus found this out, too, didn't he?

So, *shoot your hard questions at God*, because God will be there ... and knows what's best for us ... but, there's a flip side of that (*secondly*)...

Don't shoot your hard questions at others... Human words cannot compare to the explanations God wants to speak to your heart! You can trust that God—and God alone—has all the answers to your tough questions ... and wants to hear and answer your prayers! So, don't take your tough questions out on those you love...

Folks, *just as Jesus knew to direct his tough questions at God, the Father, with confidence from the cross ... so too can we do the same!* And, in light of that holy wisdom, let me ask this...

- What baggage do you need to deal with today?
- What hard questions have caused you too many bad days in your life already?
- Which hard questions have you—maybe not even consciously—taken out on those you love, those around you?
- (And you remember what I've told you before...) Which ones do you need to leave at the foot of the cross this morning—totally turning those circumstances, those individuals, those hard questions ... over to God?
- What do you need to let go of ... *today*?

Get on your knees right now, have a conversation with God, shoot the hard questions at God, then leave them at the foot of the cross ... never to pick them up again! If you'll be faithful to do that—what Jesus did on his very bad day, God will be faithful to speak to your heart and get you through your very bad day too...