

In Jesus' name. Amen.

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*As follows in Jesus' name:*

<sup>45</sup> Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. <sup>46</sup> And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?" <sup>47</sup> And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, "This man is calling Elijah." <sup>48</sup> And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to Him to drink. <sup>49</sup> But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him." <sup>50</sup> And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up His spirit. (ESV)

*This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen.* (John 17:17)

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People Loved by God,

You know what it is like to get caught red-handed, as they say, don't you?

Perhaps it was something that you did only one time.

Maybe it was done on a foolish whim...

Or you were coaxed into it by peer pressure... following someone else's example or lead...

Maybe it was something you said – or wrote – in a fit of frustration... with or without thinking.

But then again, it might have been something that you have been doing for awhile...

the first time was hard... you were very careful and sneaky...

the second time was still hard... and you were careful...

But after a number of times, it became easier... you were even able to justify yourself...

...you figured out easier ways to hide it...

and so you were getting away with... or so you thought.

But you know, you don't even need to be caught red-handed.

It could just be something that you became aware of when something caught you off guard...

Someone said something very benign, and yet your heart-rate spiked.

You were listening to a sermon... or reading your Bible...

or in a conversation with a Christian brother or sister...

or even in a conversation with an unbelieving neighbor who tells you that he saw you do something...

...and your palms get sweaty, your mouth dry... you feel flush, or the blood drains from your face...

These are the signs of a guilty conscience.

There are numerous ways to deal with a guilty conscience:

You can try to ignore it.

That's what King David tried to do after murdering Uriah.

He described it saying **when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.**

**For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;**

**my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.** Ps. 32:3-4

The guilt becomes internalized... and it eats you up.

You can try to justify yourself.

It might make you feel better – at least for a while – but people see through it, don't they?

They know you are trying to save face. (They know because they have done it too.)

But the result is that they will trust you less or not at all.

Moses' brother Aaron did this when Moses confronted him about making the golden calf.

But when you know they know what you are doing,

or upon your own self-reflection, you recognize it,

you feel foolish and like a hypocrite and a liar.

Count these feelings as a blessing. Because without them, we would all be in big trouble.

Your conscience is truly a gift from God.

Like a fever, it tells you there is an infection in your body, and tries to fight it off,

except that the conscience can't cure itself...

and just as fevers are no fun, neither is a guilty conscience.

And what would happen if you didn't ever get a guilty conscience?

You would never look for a true solution to the problem.

And I wonder if what we hear happening under the outstretched arms of Jesus,

by the chief priests and bystanders is a case of guilty consciences without a good solution.

...

For a while now, I have wondered why the bystanders would mock Jesus after He cried out,

*"Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?"*

Why would they say that He is calling Elijah, or mock Him by asking if Elijah will come and save Him?

For us Americans who like to use to nicknames, it doesn't seem like a stretch to change Elijah to Eli.

However, what Jesus said on the cross, "Eli, Eli," wasn't just some random cry, or a nickname.

For those of you who partook of our Maundy Thursday service yesterday, you know the source.

This was a direct quote from the first verse of Psalm 22: *My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?*

But it wasn't as if Jesus was just quoting the Psalm, He was actually praying it.

But I wonder if this is a case of smoke and mirrors at the foot of the cross.

As if they are trying to cover over, distract, or misdirect people from the real cry.

The chief priests were no fools, at least not in a very worldly sense.

They knew Psalm 22 extremely well.

And as we read the account of the crucifixion, its really hard NOT to see Psalm 22 played out.

- > They crucified Jesus... fulfilling verses 16 & 14 - **They pierced My hands and My feet.**  
**...And all My bones are out of joint.**
- > As Jesus' clothes were stripped from Him, and as passers-by note the crucifixion – we see verse 17:  
**I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me.**
- > There at the foot of the cross, you have the soldiers fulfilling verse 18 - (John 19:24)  
**They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.**
- > Even the very words of verse 8 become the taunt of the chief priests,  
**"He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!"**
- > And just moments after He cries out, "Eli, Eli," He says, "I thirst" coinciding with verse 15:  
**My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My jaws;**

**You have brought Me to the dust of death.**

So when Jesus cries out, "**Eli, Eli,**" – the first verse of the Psalm enacted before their eyes – do they get that sudden gut punch of guilt?

And what do you do with it?

Well, often some of our first reactions are to try to ignore... or to justify... or even cover it up:

**"This man is calling Elijah."**

But who are you kidding.

Do you want to live with that guilt... internalizing it and sapping your life away?

Do you want people to see you as a liar or a hypocrite?

Does it really save you face?... Or does it just lead people not to trust you?

Or is there another option?

Could you hear these words – the cry of dereliction, as this godly and innocent Man, who had saved so many others... even raised them from the dead – could you hear these words and consider the rest of the Psalm?

> "**Eli, Eli,**" this is not the cry of despair (of hopelessness), but of faith...

Verses 4 & 5: "**My God, My God...**" **Our fathers trusted in You; They trusted, and You delivered them. They cried to You, and were delivered; They trusted in You, and were not ashamed.**

> "**Eli, Eli,**" is the cry of praise.

Verse 3: "**My God, My God...**" **You are holy, Enthroned in the praises of Israel.**

> "**Eli, Eli,**" is not the cry of a godless worm as He suffers for the good He did.

Instead, it is the cry of verse 22: "**My God, My God...**" **I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.**

And so you find in "**Eli, Eli,**" a call to repentance and faith.

Not to ignore... or self-justify... or cover up your sin, but to confess it and be absolved of it, as verse 24 says, **For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;**

**Nor has He hidden His face from him;**

**But when he cried to Him, He heard.**

And then His cry, "**It is finished,**"<sup>John 19:30</sup> opens up a whole flood of relief, as you hear your redemption won and sins atoned for.

> "**It is finished,**" means "I forgive your sin, no matter if it is the first time, on a whim or coerced..."

> "**It is finished,**" means "I forgive your long internally-suffered, carefully hidden, sin."

> "**It is finished,**" means "I forgive your sin whether it has been exposed or covered up."

**The blood of Jesus, God's Son, cleanses you from all unrighteousness.**

None of your sins have gone unpaid. All are forgiven. All are covered in Jesus' blood.

And you are made holy and your conscience is cleansed

so that you may confess your faith in the full salvation won for you by Jesus

in the words of Ps. 22:26 -, "**Eli, Eli,**" "**My God, My God...**" **"My heart shall live forever!**

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

*Soli Deo Gloria*