

Why Was Christ Forsaken?

Matthew 27:46

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Bill Parker

Welcome to our program. Now if you'd like to follow along in your Bibles as I preach this message, I'll be preaching from the book of Matthew. The Gospel of Matthew chapter 27 and my text is verse 46 and I want to read that verse before I give you the title. This is the account of the Lord Jesus Christ dying on the cross for the sins of his people. This is the eternal purpose of God made before the foundation of the world wherein God chose a people and gave them to Christ and put all the responsibility of the salvation of his people upon his son. This is why Christ came into the world, became a man, God in human flesh. Here it is, worked out in time on the cross of Calvary, the redemption of his people. And there's a lot said here in Matthew 27 concerning the experience, the actual experience, of Christ dying for the sins of his people.

But I want you to look at verse 46 and it says in verse 46, it says, "*And about the ninth hour...*" This is during his time on the cross. "*The ninth hour*": that would be about three o'clock in the afternoon as we consider our time. Now that time is important because that was the time that the daily sacrifice was slaughtered. They offer daily sacrifices according to the old covenant and that was about the time. Now those sacrifices that were slaughtered, the animals that were killed, were all types and pictures of Christ. So he's fulfilling those types right here and then during the Passover, that one time of year, when the Passover lamb was killed,

this was the time that the Passover lamb would be killed. Well, that too was the type and a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ and his death on the cross so it says, *"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?"* Now that's a direct quotation in the original language of Psalm 22 and I will talk about that in a moment. Here's the translation: *"that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* That's what he cried with a loud voice. *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"*

Now, the title of this message is "Why was Christ forsaken?" I want to give you some things to think about in this message concerning the death, the substitutionary death, of the Lord Jesus Christ. The redeeming death, what he was doing: redeeming his people. This was a redemption. It was a particular redemption. He died for a people, for his sheep, his church. He purchased his church with his own blood. But why was Christ forsaken? Now someone said, and I want you to mark this down in your minds, write it down if you have a pen and some paper. But here it is: the beginning of sin is man forsaking God. The end of sin, that is the final end of sin, is man being forsaken by God. God forsaking man as it were. The beginning of sin is man forsaking God. The end of sin is God forsaking man. Mark that down. I'll repeat that several times.

Now Christ cried from the cross he said, *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* He's speaking of God forsaking him. God the father forsaking God the son in human flesh. And yet Christ himself, he never forsook God so how can this be? Is God doing something that's unfair here? Is God doing something that's unjust and not right? Well absolutely not. God is always right. God is always just. He's always fair. He always does that which is right. If he

does it, it's right. You see, if God does anything, it's right because God does it. He's a just God. So how can this be? Why was Christ forsaken? Well, as I said, the beginning of sin is man forsaking God. Now that's what Adam did in the garden as the representative of the whole human race when he brought the whole human race into sin and death and ruin. Romans 5:12 says, *"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."* And that is, Adam was the representative of the whole human race. He stood for you and me when he was in that garden. That's the way God set it up in the covenant of works. He created Adam, the first man, and he told Adam he said, you can eat of all the trees of the garden except one and that's the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That tree that represents God's sovereign glory and God's sovereign right to set the standard of good and evil. But Adam rebelled. He forsook God. He disobeyed God. He did not believe God. He dishonored God. He forsook God and the whole human race fell in Adam, ruined by the fall and that's what happened.

Now the Lord said to Adam, in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die, or literally dying, thou shalt die. Dying you shall die. And so the wages of sin is death and that death includes a lot of things. We can talk about physical death. Adam didn't die physically immediately there but the process of physical death started there. We're living in dying bodies. We see that everyday as we grow older. Well, the process of physical death, the inevitability of physical death, began in Adam because of sin. The wages of sin is death and all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. So we can talk about physical death, we can talk about a legal death, that's condemnation. The sentence

of condemnation: that's guilt. Adam was guilty. You and I, we became guilty in Adam but not only guilty in Adam for his sin charged, imputed to us, but also for our own sins. We're born spiritually dead and the Scripture speaks of spiritual death. Man is born without a living spirit that would unite him in fellowship with God. He has no interest in God. He has no eyes to see the glory of God. He has no ears to hear the word of God. He has no heart to love God and to understand and trust God. That's what man is by nature. He's the natural man, the Scriptures says. ..."the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God:... neither can he know them," because he's spiritually dead. **1 corinthinas 2:14** Paul speaking to the believers at Ephesus - he says, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;" **Ephesians 2:1** In other words, to believe the gospel, to believe in Christ, to know him and to love him and to follow him, we have to be born again by the Spirit. You must be born again. We have to be given spiritual life. We have to be literally raised from the dead, spiritually speaking. We have to be given a new heart, a new spirit. So when we talk about death, we can talk about eternal death and right here in Matthew 27:46, when Christ is crying out in a loud way, and what that indicates is he is in extreme suffering and deep soul anguish and what he's crying out, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" Now I want you to notice something: that being forsaken of God is the equivalent of eternal death. One old writer said it's the equivalent of hell. If you want to describe hell, here's the best way to describe it: being forsaken by God, being alienated for eternity from God. Heaven is eternal fellowship with God in Christ. That's what heaven is. Now I know people try to explain in different ways and the Scripture uses some symbolic language but, we really don't know much about heaven, but we know this: it's to be with Christ. **10:40**

That's heaven, but hell is to be forsaken and alienated from Christ. So what Christ is suffering here on this cross and it's real. The anguish of his soul and his mind; we can't even begin to enter in to describe this. I've heard people talk about trying to climb into his mind here and they say well he couldn't think this and he couldn't think that. How do you know or how do any of us know what he could or could not think? I know this: he's suffering there for the sins of his people. He, who is sinlessly perfect in himself.

Now let me show you what I'm talking about there. Now remember what I said: the Bible teaches us that the beginning of sin is forsaking God. When man forsakes God, that's sin. Adam forsook God and plunged the whole human race into sin. The end of sin is being forsaken by God, yet Christ, the one hanging on this cross crying out in his anguish, in his agony. He cries, *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* He himself never forsook God. Listen, Christ is the perfect God man. He's God in human flesh. Every bit God, every bit man without sin. He's the perfect man and perfect God. He's the lamb without blemish and without spot. He never had an evil thought, an evil motive. He never spoke evil. He never thought evil. He always did the will of his father. He kept the law perfectly and he never in himself sinned. And what do we know about his experience on the cross? Now, the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:21, it says, *"For he"* (that is God the father) *"hath made him"* (that is God the son, that's the Lord Jesus Christ in human flesh) *"made him to be sin"* (or literally made him sin) *"for us,"* (that is as a substitute, we're going to talk about that in just a second, that is Christ) *"who knew no sin; that we"* (that is all for whom he died, his sheep, his church, all who would come to believe in him) *"that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."* Now how was he

made sin? Well, I'll tell you that in just a moment, but he himself never forsook God. He never sinned. He was made sin. He was really and actually made sin, but how do we know he never forsook God? Well, you know there are seven statements recorded in the Bible that the Lord Jesus Christ stated on the cross. And if you want to know what was in his mind as he was going through this agony, dying for the sins of his people, read the Scripture. Don't listen to people who try to speculate on what he was thinking without going to the scripture. The only way I know what Christ himself was thinking on the cross is what he said. It's just like in the Garden of Gethsemane. You know, I have heard people trying to climb into his mind and analyze that. Don't do that. I know that in his humanity he was suffering things that he had never experienced before. He was dealing with the weaknesses of the human state, the human flesh, without sin. But I know this: I know that Christ even in the Garden of Gethsemane when he said if it be possible let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, thy will be done. **Matthew 26:39** He's speaking out of his humanity. Now he's God man, that doesn't mean he stop being God. Now listen, I can't explain all this to you, I'm not even going to try, but I'm just telling you this: what does the Scripture teach? It teaches us that he was even then bearing the punishment, the burden, the sorrow, and the grief of the sins of his people charged to him and he himself never sinned. He never had a moment of doubt. He never had a moment of misgiving. He suffered and we can't understand all that, and how he experienced it. We just can't. You see, he's God man. He's God in human flesh, but he never sinned.

But listen to his sayings on the cross, first one that recorded. He said this, now listen, here's Christ made sin, 2 Corinthians 5:21: "*For God made him sin*" and he's hanging

on this cross and here's what he says he says, *"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."* **Luke 23:24a** That's perfect love for his people. That's who he is talking about there. He's not talking about everybody. He's talking about his people because his people, the ones for whom he died, were just as sinful and wretched and depraved and rebellious as all others. We were by nature, children of wrath, even as others, the Scripture says in Ephesians chapter 2. But he says, *"Father, forgive them; they know not what they do."* He said this to the thief on the right. You know when God brought the thief on the right to repentance. He started out railing on Christ with the other thief. And then he said, Christ said to him, he said, *"Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."* **Luke 23:43b** That's perfect faith. He knew, even hanging there on that cross, having been made sin. He knew, he knew that he was going to finish the work. And then there was a time on the cross he looked down, he saw his mother, his earthly mother Mary, and he saw John and he said behold your son, talking about John, and he said, John behold your mother. He was talking about John taking care of Mary because he knew that she had a special grief in her heart for what was going on. She bore him as a child. He was made of the seed of woman. She was the woman. He was conceived in the womb of Mary, the Virgin, by the power of the Holy Spirit and she raised this child. What a mind-boggling thing that is and yet he spoke.

And then it's recorded here what is said in verse 46 of Matthew 27, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Now before he said "Father, forgive them" but here he doesn't say, Father why hast thou forsaken me? He says, *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* Now what's happening here? Well in this moment he's expressing, now he's not asking this for information when he says, "why hast

thou forsaken me?" He knew exactly why he was going to be forsaken, because he told his disciples that. He told his disciples for this purpose he came into the world, but what's happening here? He's testifying on the cross of the fact that while he's hanging on that cross, God is dealing with him as a judge. He's being judged for the sins of his people charged to him. And he must die because he's guilty, not because he forsook God. He's guilty because he's taken upon himself the guilt of his people. That's how he was made sin. What is guilt? Guilt is deserving damnation, deserving death. Christ put himself in this position and God the father laid upon him the guilt of his people. He deserved death, not for sins he committed, but for the sins of his people charged to him. Somebody said guilt cannot be transferred, well that's not in the Scripture friend, that's just something you came up with. Oh yes it can be transferred. God laid it to his charge and that's why he's been forsaken. But I want you to notice something about this phrase: he said, *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* Even in this moment, some say this was his lowest moment. I don't know, it may have been. But even in this moment, what does he say? He doesn't say, God, God, why hast thou forsaken me? He says, "My God, my God." Even in this lowest moment he himself did not forsake God. He said, "My God, my God..." He was forsaken. He suffered unto death here. He really died and that's to be attributed to his humanity yet it was an act of his entire person. The God man died on that cross and he suffered the equivalent of a sinner being eternally forsaken of the father yet he still cried, "My God, my God..." Later on he said, "I thirst." That's his humanity. That's the infirmities of the flesh. It's not a sin to be thirsty, my friend. This proves his humanity.

Then he said, "it's finished." John 19:30 records that.

What's finished? Well, there's so much that we could talk about there. The whole purpose of God in the redemption of his people is finished. *"For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."* **Hebrews 10:14** Christ satisfied the law and justice of God. Daniel 9:24, he finished the transgression, he made an end of sin, he brought in everlasting righteousness, he sealed up the vision and the prophecy, he brought in the fulfillment of the holiest of all, everything. All the prophecies of the Old Testament, all the types and the pictures of the Old Testament, it's all finished. Redemption is accomplished. That's what the Gospel is. It's not come and finish the work that he started. The gospel is come and partake of his finished work and he sat down at the right hand of the father. And then in the end he says, father, into your hands I commit my spirit. You see so according to these saints, he never forsook God. You know, somebody said in the beginning of his earthly ministry, at his baptism, the father testified this: he said, this is my beloved son in whom I'm well please. But here at the end of his earthly ministry, as far as his death on the cross, he says, *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* Why was he forsaken by God? I'll tell you why, because he had to suffer in the stead, in the place, as the substitute of his people, the full penalty due unto all their sins charged to him, imputed to him. And that's what the full penalty of sin is. *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* But he himself had no sin. He himself did no sin. He himself knew no sin yet he himself was made sin. He took upon himself all the sins of all his people. Let me just give you these three things quickly.

1. Why was he forsaken? Because of substitution and imputation. What is a substitute? It's one who takes the place of another. God gave Christ a people from the

foundation of the world. They are called God's elect. Who were they? They were sinners: fell in Adam, ruined by the fall and the only way they could be saved is to be redeemed by the blood. And so Christ substituted himself in the place of those people. He became the surety of those people. What does that mean? Well it means the debt that they owed because of sin to God's law and justice became his debt. It was made his debt. That's what it means when it says he was made sin. He became accountable. It was charged to him, their debt. He was numbered with the transgressors. That means counted with them because he bear the sins of many. The Bible says he bore our sins in his own body on the tree. How did he bear our sins? He bore the penalty of those sins. Over in the book of Isaiah chapter 53 it tell us. It says, he bore our griefs in verse 4, he carried our sorrows, he was stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. *"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement" (the punishment) "of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."* **Isaiah 53:5** That is how he bore our sins, the sins of his sheep, the sins of his people. And it was a particular redemption. It was for a particular people. Who are they? All whom he redeemed and all who come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit.

2. This is the reality, this is no legal fiction. This is no type or picture. The blood of bulls and goats, that was type, but they can't take away sin. This is the blood of the son of God and he personally bore those sins in his own body. It was all real. It was not an "as if". He suffered for sins unto death. *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"*

3. It was a satisfaction. Now there's two things that prove that Christ got the job done. There's two things that show

that when he died, when he said it's finished, when he cried out "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" it was a successful and finished work.

a. Number one is his own resurrection. He was raised from the dead. He justified his people. Just like the sins of his people were charged to him, his righteousness is charged to me, to all his people.

b. And the second thing that shows this to be successful is the new birth. Out of Christ's death, his people have life. You see, we fell in Adam, ruined by the fall, we're redeemed by the blood, and as a result of that blood, the death of Christ, the righteousness of Christ established, we must be regenerated or born-again from above by the Holy Spirit. And that's what happens; we're born spiritually dead, we need spiritual life. Where does that come from? It comes from the death of Christ. It comes from Christ, who cried out in a loud voice, *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* From his death comes the life of his people. That's what the Holy Spirit does. He takes the life of Christ and he applies it to his people in each successive generation. He brings them under the preaching of the gospel of God's grace in Christ and gives them life and gives them faith to believe and brings them to repentance.