

Jesus Forsaken by His Father

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 03 February 2008

Preacher: Aaron Hoak

[0:00] Please turn with me in your Bibles tonight to the Gospel of Matthew in chapter 27. I say that many of you here understand the love between parents and children.

Because that's everyone in the room. Everyone here is either a parent or a child or both. And you parents know something then, having loved your children so deeply, something of the pain and agony that comes with having to discipline your children because of that great love you have for them.

There are few things worse than I can think of than having to give one of my sons a spanking. Now, if our love prevented us from disciplining our children, it wouldn't really be love, would it?

But still, that love for our children makes the inflicting of pain on them seem unnatural in many ways. And painful. To do that to your own flesh and blood, it's painful to the parent.

Believe it or not, kids, it really does hurt mom and dad. To punish you. Now, I didn't really believe my dad when he told me that. But I do now.

[1:37] And you will one day, too, understand the pain that they feel when having to discipline you. But the look in my son's eyes when I have to spank them tells me that it hurts them as well.

And I'm talking about more than just physically. The look that says, how could you do this to me, dad? The look that shows that they feel almost betrayed or abandoned by you.

I know that I disobeyed, but why are you doing this to me? That feeling you can see in their eyes. And that increases the pain of the parent.

Understanding something of the pain of the child. Now, you take a feeble example like that and multiply it exponentially. Remove any sin on the part of the father.

If we're honest, we know that our discipline sometimes is in sin. We don't do it as we should. We do it in anger. We do it out of control.

[2:43] We do it without thought. We often do it out of selfishness and not in the best interest of the child. Only looking out for our best interest. But when God the Father punished His own Son at the cross, there was no sinful motive.

No sinful attitude or heart. But that doesn't mean that it was without pain. For both Father and Son. It was unimaginably painful for both of them.

And as we gather for the Lord's Supper tonight, we want to consider the pain particularly that it caused the Son. And not so much that physical pain, but the spiritual and emotional, mental pain that caused Him to cry out, My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?

We're in Matthew 27. And we find those words in verse 46. Just before that, we read that darkness came over the land for three hours.

And in verse 46, about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani, which means, My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?

[3:55] This is the pain we want to focus on tonight. Because as Matthew Henry says, Christ being forsaken of His Father was the most grievous of His sufferings.

He did not say, Why am I scourged? And why spit upon? And why nailed to the cross? Nor did He say to His disciples when they turned their back on Him, Why have ye forsaken me?

But when His Father stood at a distance, He cried out thus. It was being forsaken by His Father that caused Him the greatest pain.

And that is what we want to consider tonight, to see what it meant for Jesus to be forsaken by God. And we can really only begin to scratch the surface with our understanding.

Spurgeon has a sermon on this, and he says, We can't begin to fathom the depths of what it meant for Christ to be forsaken by His Father. He said, I can only lead you up to the precipice and bid you look down in.

[4:55] We can't understand how great the agony was. But we can lead you up to the edge and ask you to look in and to think tonight about what it meant for Jesus to be forsaken on the cross.

And he gets to the end of one of his points, and he says, I feel like I've been prattling like a child. And that's all we'll be doing tonight. It's just child's talk almost. Trying to understand something of what it meant for Jesus to be forsaken.

So first of all tonight, why did Jesus feel forsaken by God? Why did He feel forsaken by God? Oh, the answer may be obvious to you.

And it's very simple. It's because He was forsaken by God at the cross. But what did that mean to be forsaken by God?

Well, first of all, quite literally, He was abandoned at the cross. God sent no angels to rescue Him from His suffering. God did not come and assuage His pain.

[5:57] He left His Son to the hands of an angry mob, carrying out the will of an angry people. Roman soldiers carrying out the sentence of the governing authorities.

There was no supernatural divine intervention to stop what was happening. He was abandoned to these sinful men. God spoke no comforting words to His Son.

Other times when Jesus was troubled, we read that God speaks. And He speaks from heaven at different times. But there's one time in John 12 when Jesus has predicted His own death.

And we read that He says, Now my heart is troubled. And what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name.

He's troubled in His heart having contemplated His own death. And what do we hear next? We hear a word from heaven. God Himself speaking. I have glorified it.

[6:59] That is My name. And I will glorify it. Now it was spoken for those around, but it was a confirming word, and even a comforting word for our Savior, that He heard His Father speak in the midst of His trouble.

But now at the cross, Jesus is troubled in His soul. And He cries out, but there's no confirming word from heaven, no word of comfort from His Father.

He is forsaken by Him. But there's more than just a passivity here on the part of God in this abandonment. Bring to this, Why hast Thou forsaken Me?

Everything you understand about Jesus' substitutionary, sin-bearing atonement, it was an active abandoning by God's part. Listen to these words that you know well, but listen for what God does. Listen for God's actions in these words. 2 Corinthians 5.21, God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

[8:04] Did you hear that? What did God do? He made Him. He made His own Son. He had no sin to be sin. God did that. To His Son. Galatians 3.13, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.

For it is written, Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree. Christ became a curse for us. Who do you think pronounced that curse on the Son? It could have only been God, His own Father.

Or the very familiar words of Isaiah 53. Listen again for what God does. Surely He took up our afflictions and carried our sorrows, yet we considered Him stricken by God, smitten by Him, and afflicted.

But He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray.

Each of us has turned to His own way. And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. You hear what God does there?

[9:18] He struck His Son. He smote His Son. He afflicted Him. Who do you think gave Jesus the punishment that brought us peace? It is the same Lord who laid on Him our iniquity.

God abandoning His own Son was an active thing. It was punishment. It was the pouring out of His wrath on His Son.

That, hear that, when you hear, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? When Jesus said that, it didn't mean that He ceased loving His God, His Father, trusting Him, believing in Him.

You notice He still says, My God. My God. He doesn't turn away from His God and His anguish. He turns to His God. Even though He feels forsaken and is forsaken, He doesn't turn away.

He turns to God. He takes the words of the Scriptures on His lips. He doesn't say, Your word is no good, Lord, because I've been abandoned. He turns to the Word. He's quoting Psalm 22 here. He's

taking the psalmist words on His lips.

[10:18] And the psalmist often finds himself in despair, crying out, Why have you hidden your face from Me? So Jesus takes up the language of the psalms in faith. My God, My God.

As we find Jesus in agony, He doesn't turn away from God, but to Him. And we'll find that Psalm 22 that He's quoting from ends in praise and confidence.

And so Jesus felt forsaken because He was forsaken. But secondly, why was He forsaken by God? Why was the perfect Son of God being punished for sin when He had no sin?

If ever a son could look at a father and have a claim of righteous innocence. Do your kids ever do that? When they get in trouble and they try to put on this show of innocence, they say, Look, I'm innocent.

I've done nothing wrong. They're still trying to hide it. They don't want you to know and so they feign this innocence. That's not what it was with Jesus. He was innocent. He had no sin.

[11:26] And so what? Pain then to be forsaken by His Father. Why was it this way? Again, very simply, it was because you and I sinned. It was my sin that put Him there.

The reason Jesus was stricken by God, smitten by Him, and afflicted is that the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of me and of you. He was forsaken at the cross because of our sin.

God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us. It was your sin and my sin that was punished at the cross. It's what in some senses makes the Lord's Supper a painful sacrament in remembrance for us tonight because we know we're remembering something that we caused.

We caused this agony that's beyond our comprehension. This abandonment by God of His Son.

Listen to J.C. Ryle as he tries to describe how unimaginable this pain is that we caused. He says it would be useless to pretend, to fathom all the depth of meaning which these words contain.

[12:39] They imply amount of mental suffering such as we are unable to conceive. What may we suppose was the agony of the Holy Son of God when all the sin of the world was laid upon His head, when He felt Himself reckon guilty, though without sin, when He felt His Father's countenance turned away from Him.

The agony of that season must have been something past understanding. And brothers and sisters, we caused it by our sin. All this pain, all this suffering, why not just let it go?

If God wants to save the people, why not just overlook our sin? Sweep it under the rug. Why does He have to punish someone for it? We know that God cannot overlook sin.

Sometimes we as parents overlook disobedience in our children for various reasons. We neglect to discipline them at different times. Maybe we're too tired to deal with it, so we let it go.

We're sick of dealing with it, and so we ignore it and pretend like we didn't see it or hear it so that we don't have to deal with it again. We let it slide.

[13:55] We get frustrated, and so we just leave it alone. Maybe we don't know what happened. We don't know that there's been an infraction, that there's been disobedience, and so it goes unpunished because we're never aware of it.

We'd be fools to think that we caught every instance, every time our children disobeyed. Maybe in mercy, we choose to teach our children a lesson about grace versus strict justice.

But with God, He never gets tired. He never gets frustrated. He never gives up. And He certainly never misses something that we've done wrong.

And He can't just sweep sin under the carpet as though it had never happened. He can't show grace and mercy without punishing sin. God is holy and just.

We've learned this. We've heard it. And so sin must be punished. And God in mercy to us has seen fit to provide a substitute, His Son, to punish for our sin.

[15:02] He took all of our sin and He put it on Jesus. And He punished His own Son. And so it came at the cross that when God looked at His Son, He saw our sin.

And as a just and a holy God, even though it was His own Son whom He loved, He had to punish it. And so we're taken back to our opening thought of a parent being pained at having to discipline their child.

Painful for God and painful for the Son. Forsaking His Son in the ways we've described. He cried, punishing Him, pouring out His wrath on Him, causing unimaginable pain for both. And so it was that Jesus cries out.

He cries out in a loud voice. This word cry out is used in the Old Testament in the context of death. And it's the word that's used of Esau when He cries out, is there no blessing for me?

He's feeling betrayed by His father Isaac because He gave the blessing to Jacob. He cries out. Is there nothing for me? That's what Jesus does. He cries out. What a thing to hear this loud cry from the lips of our Savior after those three hours of darkness and quiet.

[16:15] Jesus felt forsaken because He was forsaken. And He was forsaken because we sinned. And God cannot overlook sin. So what does it mean for you and for me, thirdly tonight, that Jesus was forsaken?

First of all, maybe most obviously, it means that all those who are in Christ have their sins forgiven. Jesus being forsaken at the cross, being punished there for our sins, means that our sins can be forgiven.

those who are in Christ, those trusting in Him for their salvation, those who have called upon the name of the Lord, those who have confessed with their mouth and believed in their heart that Jesus is Lord, those who have repented and believed, those who are God's children, His people, for these, their sins are forgiven.

They are not counted against them. They are removed from us. As far as the east is from the west, they are buried in the depths of the ocean. And so we need not fear being punished for our sins because Jesus has already been punished for them at the cross.

God abandoned and punished His Son and that means that we will not be abandoned. We will not be punished. That's what it means for us that Jesus was forsaken.

[17:34] It means our sins are forgiven. It also means that we must hate our sin and seek to lay it aside. We're reminded tonight of how heinous, how wicked our sin is when we see what a price was paid.

Again, we can't begin to scratch the depths of the agony of the suffering we're talking about here.

But when we see just an idea of how great it is, we must see how horrible our sin is.

And so we're encouraged to walk in holiness. Let me give you just a taste of Spurgeon speaking about this. He says, Sin murdered Christ.

Will you be a friend to it? Sin pierced the heart of the incarnate God. Can you love it? Oh, that there was an abyss as deep as Christ's misery that I might at once hurl this dagger of sin into its depths whence it might never be brought to light again.

Be gone, O sin. Thou art banished from the heart where Jesus reigns. Be gone. For Thou hast crucified my Lord and made Him cry, Why hast Thou forsaken me? How can we go on in our sin knowing the price that was paid for our sin?

[18:50] And so as we gather tonight, we're reminded to hate our sin. We're reminded of our sins forgiven. Our faith is strengthened to again consider the great grace of God shown to us in the face of Christ.

That face and such agony on the cross now crowned with glory. But Christ's being forsaken on the cross means that we, His children, will never be forsaken.

It means that God's promise to never leave us or forsake us is true. Christ has purchased that surety for us at the cross. Peter's at Pentecost and he's preaching.

We read it this morning in Acts 2. He was reminding the Jews who with the help of wicked men had put Jesus to death by nailing Him to a cross. He reminds them that though Jesus was forsaken for a time on the cross, He was not finally abandoned.

He was not finally forsaken to the grave. And he quotes a different psalm. Not Psalm 22 now, but Psalm 16 saying, because you will not abandon, and that's our word, forsake. You will not abandon.

[19:56] You will not forsake me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. Jesus was not finally abandoned. God raised Him from the dead. And so now Jesus is seated at the right hand of God.

He is our High Priest. He is our Intercessor. He is there ever living and pleading for you and for me. And that means that we have hope. Jesus is not still in the grave.

And so our sins are surely forgiven. And we have someone to help us every step of the way.

Someone to keep us. Someone to preserve us. Someone to protect us. To guard us on our way to glory as we walk that narrow road that leads to life.

And so, we find great comfort in knowing that God won't leave us or forsake us. The end of Psalm 22 that Jesus quotes. It begins, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

But listen to where it goes towards the end. I will declare your name to my brothers. In the congregation, I will praise you. You who fear the Lord, praise Him. And listen to this.

[20:54] For He, the Lord, for He has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one. He has not hidden His face from Him, but has listened to His cry for help.

That's where Psalm 22 ends. There's more after that, but that's where it goes. God does not abandon us. He does not forsake us. He hears our cry for help. And so there is great comfort in the fact that Jesus underwent the greatest of abandonment that we might not be abandoned.

And so Jesus makes Psalm 22 true for us. There may be times when we feel abandoned, forsaken. You read the Psalms and you can't escape it. Why? Have you hidden your face from me?

But in those times, we must, as the psalmist does and as Jesus did, not turn away from our God, but go back to the pages of the Scripture and plead the promises of God before Him.

Confess our weakness that we do feel abandoned by Him. And come to the promises and know that He will not leave us. Hebrews 13.5 Be content with what you have because God has said, Never will I leave you.

[22 : 02] Never will I forsake you. That's our word. Forsake. And so we can pray as David did in Psalm 38. O Lord, do not forsake me. Be not far from me.

O my God, come quickly to help me. O Lord, my Savior. And we pray that knowing that He will answer us. For Jesus' sake. That's what Jesus purchased for us at the cross.

The assurance that we will never be left or forsaken. Praise God for what He has done, what He's doing, what He will do for us in Christ. That is what we observe tonight.

That is what we remember. The depth of the agony of Christ that has purchased such great blessing for us. If you know nothing of these blessings tonight, you're not in Christ.

You haven't trusted Him. Repented of your sin. And should you continue on in your rebellious independence, you will be forsaken by God even as Jesus was.

[23 : 05] Many people seem to go on in their sin thinking that somehow God will look past it, that they'll find forgiveness, and that God really isn't as bad as what everybody says.

He's not really a just judge. And I don't know how people convince themselves to continue on in their sin, but do you really think for a moment that if when God saw His own Son bearing all of our sin and didn't withhold His hand of punishment from His own beloved Son, do you think for a minute that He'll withhold His hand of punishment from you?

A rebel, not His Son. He won't. It'll come in wrath and power against you. And everything that we've described about Jesus being abandoned tonight will be true for you.

You will be forsaken by God. You will be stricken and smitten and afflicted by Him. Your punishment will be poured out on your own head. You will take the cup of God's wrath and drink it. Psalm 75, verse 8, In the hand of the Lord is a cup full of foaming wine mixed with spices. He pours it out. And all the wicked of the earth drink it down to its very dregs.

[24:28] All the wicked of the earth drink it down to its very dregs. The glory is that Jesus has taken that cup and He's drunk it to the dregs so that we don't have to face that wrath.

But should you neglect so great a salvation, should you reject this Savior, you will one day take that cup of God's wrath and you will drink it and you will suffer for eternity. You will be abandoned by God, forsaken by Him.

What a tragedy it would be. Jesus has done it all. You don't have to face this certain punishment if you would but run to Christ and trust in Him and take your refuge and your hope and your confidence in Him.

And so do it. Run to Christ tonight. Flee from the wrath to come. Because it is coming, it will come just as surely as it came on Jesus at the cross.

And then having come and trusted in Christ, come and join us in drinking a very different cup, the one we partake of tonight. Not the cup of God's wrath but it reminds us of that, doesn't it?

[25 : 45] We're reminded of the blood of Christ when we take the cup and drink it which reminds us of the bitterness of the death that Christ experienced. The bitterness of the wrath He bore in our place.

But we remember it as a cup of joy tonight because we are in Christ and we will never drink the cup of God's wrath. So come, come to Christ tonight and find a sure refuge from your punishment that is certainly coming.

[illegible]

[illegible]