

The Suffering of Being Alone
Matthew 27:45-46; Psalm 23:4
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To be abandoned and left all alone is one of the most dreadful experiences for any of us. Prisoners of war have testified that even worse than the torture they received by the enemy was the solitary confinement of being cut off from all human communication and society.

Much of the fear we experience in life comes from the sense that we are all alone—no one cares and no one is standing with us. We are facing a terrifying situation and doing so all alone. We have all experienced that. However, we have also likely experienced great trials and overwhelming situations that could have put us into a panic, but we were delivered from that fear because others were near us, stood with us, and prayed for us and because we sensed the presence of the Lord Jesus with us.

From our text today, we see that the Lord Jesus suffered that sense of being forsaken and all alone in a way none of us has ever experienced as He hung upon the cross in bearing the sins of His people out of love and mercy for them. In the passage that is before us this Lord's Day, let us explore the mystery of Christ being forsaken by His Father. The main points from our text are these: (1) The Desperate Cry of Being Forsaken (Matthew 27:45-46); (2) The Confident Cry of Hope (Matthew 27:46).

I. The Desperate Cry of Being Forsaken (Matthew 27:45-46).

A. As we now turn to our text in Matthew 27:45, Jesus has been falsely accused, condemned, tortured, and crucified. From the 6th hour to the 9th hour (from noon to 3 p.m.), there was a great darkness that supernaturally came over the land—judgment (Isaiah 13:10; 2 Peter 2:4).

1. This darkness pointed to God's judgment which the sinless Son of God was bearing upon the cross for sinners chosen in Christ Jesus before the world began.

2. It was a heavenly sign for all to see that the one who hung before them upon this cursed and shameful cross was suffering God's judgment not for His own sin, but for the sins of all those guilty sinners that were chosen in love from all eternity.

B. We come now to that cry of incomprehensible anguish from the cross—first given in Hebrew (Psalm 22:1) and then translated into English: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This is the fourth utterance of Christ from the cross (the first three utterances of the Lord Jesus from the cross are found in Luke 23:34; Luke 23:43; John 19:26-27). This desperate expression from the lips of Christ is filled with the utmost suffering on the part of our Savior. Let's answer the following questions concerning this loud cry of torment that fell from the lips of Jesus while hanging upon the cross.

1. **Did Jesus suffer as God or as man?**

a. First, Jesus was fully God and fully man (John 1:1,14). When Jesus became a man, He did not lay aside His divine nature or any of His divine attributes. For God cannot lay aside who He is, otherwise He would cease to be God. The Son of God supernaturally assumed to His divine person a human nature.

b. Second, it is impossible for God to suffer pain (for He is unchangeable and eternally blessed). The theological term used to refer to the impossibility of God suffering is the word "impassible". Thus, Christ did not suffer as God, but as man. That was why the Son of God became man—that He might identify Himself with guilty sinners and suffer His Father's wrath for them. But the fact that Jesus was fully God made His sufferings as a man of infinite value to redeem sinners.

2. **Did Jesus suffer in both body and soul as a man?**

a. Jesus suffered excruciating torments in His body. He was beaten with the fists of the temple guard. He was whipped with the Roman scourge which had pieces of metal or bone at the end of each piece of leather cord and literally opened the flesh (many died from the scourging itself). He was made to wear a crown of long Judean thorns that was beaten with a rod into His skull. He crumbled under the weight of the cross which He carried due to the loss of blood and strength. He had spikes pounded through His hands and His feet. He was suspended between heaven and earth upon the cross, suffocating in one of the most agonizing deaths invented by sinful man. Yes, Jesus suffered in His body.

b. But Jesus also suffered as no man has ever suffered in His human soul. He faced the terrors of God's wrath and was so disturbed in His soul at what He must suffer that He sweat great drops of blood (Luke 22:44). He was falsely accused of blasphemy and treason. He was mocked and ridiculed by the soldiers who bowed before Him in jest. He was publicly shamed by being stripped of His clothing as if He were an animal. He was publicly cursed by being hung upon a cross between two criminals. He beheld the suffering and sorrowing of His mother and the other women as they stood near the cross. And He who knew no sin sensed in His human soul the full weight of God's wrath as He suffered in the place of unworthy sinners chosen in love from before the foundation of the world. His suffering in body and soul was heightened to the maximum because He deserved none of it. His sinless perfection only intensified the suffering rather than minimizing it. What absolute anguish beyond description for the unspotted, untainted Son of God to suffer the infinite wrath of God as the chief of sinners—not infused with sin, but accounted to be a sinner for the sins of all who would trust in Him.

3. **How was Jesus forsaken by God the Father?**

a. The Lord Jesus was not forsaken by God the Father as to His deity. As we noted above, God cannot suffer, nor can the Father forsake the Son as to deity because the divine nature cannot be divided so as to be forsaken. Christ was forsaken by God the Father as to His humanity. In some mysterious, yet very real sense beyond our finite comprehension, the light of God's countenance was diminished and the sense of God's presence was obscured, so that Christ experienced being forsaken by His Father as He became the sacrifice for the sin of those given to the Son to save. The Father turned His back upon Jesus at that time of darkness as He suffered God's wrath for His beloved ones, and He cried out, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me."

b. This was the agony above all agony which the Lord Jesus suffered for sinners chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. Jesus was silent as He suffered the pain of the scourge, as He suffered the crown of thorns being beaten into His skull, as He felt the spikes being driven into His hands and feet, but when forsaken by His Father, He cried out with a loud voice in anguish beyond comprehension.

c. He suffered being forsaken by God in order that we who receive Him as Savior and Lord might never suffer that forsakenness. Was there ever such a demonstration of love? That which was most precious to Christ (the sense and experience of His Father's presence with Him) was willingly sacrificed in order to secure the salvation of us who deserved to be forsaken in hell forever. That which was most painful to Jesus was most willingly endured by Him for His beloved bride—not a perfect bride, but a sinful bride that He will perfect in heavenly glory.

II. **The Confident Cry of Hope (Matthew 27:46).**

A. Jesus was not cast into total despair or hopelessness even in the midst of His incomprehensible misery of being forsaken by His Father; for He cried out, "MY GOD, MY GOD, why hast thou forsaken me?" He was confident that He would pass through this anguish and torment. For the Father was not just God in a general sense to Christ as the Son of Man, but was HIS GOD in a very personal sense (the possessive pronoun is the pronoun of trust and relationship). His confidence was in God who would sustain and bring Him out of the valley of the shadow of death.

B. I remember well the fear of darkness I experienced as a child. I was petrified at times as I lay in bed surrounded by that darkness or as I walked in it. But it wasn't really the darkness itself that petrified me. It was the sense of being all alone in that darkness that frightened me; for I could rest/walk anywhere in that darkness if I knew my father was near.

1. I dare say that it was facing the guilt and condemnation for man's sin and the attacks of the satanic forces ALL ALONE (being forsaken by His Father) that was the greatest torment that Jesus experienced.

2. Dear ones, the same is true of us in our lives every day. What is it that makes various situations so frightening to us?

a. It is not the darkness, the person, or the situation you face. But is rather that sense that you are all alone that is so terrifying. However, when you by faith lay hold of the almighty Lord Jesus who calmed the raging waves of the sea and hushed the mighty billows of the howling wind, who powerfully chased the powers of hell from those who were tormented by demons, and who even endured (for our sake) being alone and forsaken by God and man, you can by God's grace face any situation in life knowing you walk hand in hand with the almighty God who created this universe and who has loved you from all eternity.

b. Since fear results so often from thinking you are all alone, and not from the darkness, or the person, or the situation you face, the answer to overcoming these fears is to grow in your knowledge of Christ and His power to save you. As Christians we must grow in our faith in Christ and in His promises that we are never alone. Our Elder Brother walks with us hand in hand even into the fiery furnace heated seven times hotter than normal as He did with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Psalm 23:4; Psalm 27:10; Isaiah 41:10; Hebrews 13:5-6).

3. As the children of God through faith in Christ, we all go through times in our life where it seems as though we cannot feel the hand of Christ walking with us into dark foreboding rooms of life. Why?

a. This may be due to obstinate sin in our lives.

b. This may be due to the weakness of our faith.

c. This may be due to the wisdom of God who drives us to find in Christ an all-sufficient Savior for all of our needs.

4. Beloved, because Jesus Christ was brought victoriously through His period of being forsaken under the mighty hand of God, we have a certain hope that no matter what we face in life, we too shall be brought victoriously through periods of feeling abandoned and all alone. He suffered that aloneness that you might come to Him (as a sympathetic High Priest) and know He understands your aloneness (Hebrews 4:15).

5. Jesus was forsaken on the cross for us, who deserved to be forsaken for all eternity in hell, in order that we might never be forsaken (in life, death, or after death). The enemy would seek to bring panic into our hearts in telling us that we are all alone—but it is a lie from the father of lies. Faith does not rest in what we feel or see, but rests in the promise and faithfulness of God (Romans 3:4).

6. It is this knowledge and faith in life that gives us such confidence in death that we are not alone. Now is the time to learn through the experiences we face (even rejection by others) that we are never forsaken by our Savior and Lord.

7. Let this truth (that the Lord Jesus will not forsake you) likewise teach lead you to come along side of those who are suffering or going through difficult trials and take their hand that that they might know in the midst of their suffering they are not alone. In so doing, you become the countenance, the mouth, and hands of Christ in comforting the brethren and assuring them that they are not alone.

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