

Matt. 27:46: 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?"

Intro: Commentator: All the wailings & howlings of the damned to all eternity, will fall infinitely short of expressing the evil & bitterness of sin with such emphasis as these few words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so! [**Pastor:** We see hell on earth here! But we are saved!] "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?": Jesus asked this question so that someday, there will be no more questions! This is the question of questions! And, in a sense, this is the last question! Jesus was treated like a disowned son on that cross, so that you might be adopted as God's sons & daughters forever!

Jesus was truly & objectively forsaken by God on that cross so that you will never be forsaken by God for all eternity!

1. Jesus Cries Out And Asks God Why Is He Forsaking Him

- a. Jesus cried out & died at the hour of the evening sacrifice (3pm)
- b. Jesus is quoting Ps. 22:1 but He's not quoting Ps. 22:1
- c. Ps. 22 points us to the cross & the resurrection
- d. Why does Jesus ask God a question?: Does Jesus not know what's going on? Yes! He does!
1) He's quoting Ps. 22 & fulfilling Ps. 22!; 2) He's utterly traumatized!; 3) Remember Gethsemane: Why can't there be another way?!; 4) In trauma, we remember what we love most (Lord's prayer); 5) Jesus is trusting & praying! The Psalms are full of questions to God!; 6) Jesus asked this question so that someday, there will be no more questions! This is the last question!
- e. Why does Jesus call God, God & not Father? (Ps. 22 & the consciousness of His son-ship was weakening)
- f. Why was Jesus forsaken by God? (He was made sin)
- g. What does Jesus being forsaken by God not mean? (The Trinity is not broken apart)
- h. What does it mean for Jesus to be forsaken by God? (God deserted/abandoned His Son: cursed, crushed, etc.)

2. Some Wrongly Argue That Jesus Merely Felt Forsaken

Nick Batzig: 18 years ago, I heard a sermon on Matthew 27:46 – Jesus' cry of dereliction on the cross, "My God, My God, Why have You forsaken Me?" At one point, the minister who was preaching this message said, "Jesus wasn't really forsaken; he just felt forsaken by his Father in his soul." I remember sensing anger welling up within me at those words. I thought to myself, "That's a denial of the Gospel. If Jesus wasn't really forsaken, then I have no grounds to believe that I will never be forsaken." Sadly, I have subsequently come to discover that there are quite a number of Protestant theologians who have shied away from asserting that Jesus was really and truly forsaken by his Father when he hung on the cross.

I've written about this concerning Kevin DeYoung's Daily Doctrine book: Pastor Kevin seems to communicate that Jesus only felt forsaken on the cross and that He was not actually forsaken. He writes: "In his human consciousness, Christ experienced a true feeling of God-forsakenness . . . according to à Brakel, Christ was not forsaken by the Father . . ."

But this is not what à **Brakel** actually wrote. He nowhere wrote that "Christ was not forsaken by the Father." But he did write:

He [Jesus] was not forsaken by His divine nature, for the hypostatic union could not be dissolved. He was also not forsaken by the love of His Father, which remained immutable.

On the contrary, à **Brakel** actually does affirm that Christ was forsaken by God:

Additional Objection: Christ's human nature, in which He suffered, was finite and thus was not capable of bearing infinite wrath. Consequently His suffering was not sufficient to atone for sin which merits eternal punishment. Answer: We cannot determine to what degree Christ's human nature was fortified, but it

always remained finite. In this nature Christ endured a total being forsaken by, and the full wrath of, the infinite God against whom the elect had sinned. One should note, however, that it was not the human nature which suffered, but the Person according to this nature, and since the Person is infinite, all that He suffered was of infinite efficacy and value.

à **Brakel** also wrote:

Christ did indeed suffer eternal damnation, for eternal damnation, death, & pain consist in total separation from God, in the total manifestation of divine wrath, & all of this for such a duration until the punishment upon sin was perfectly & satisfactorily born.

The reason faithful pastors like Pastor Kevin write/preach this way about the cross is that they want to get the doctrine of the Trinity right. But we must get the doctrine of the Trinity right, AND we must get the doctrine of the Cross right! We must have both!

3. The Cross & The Trinity

Faithful, orthodox Bible teachers have a right desire when explaining what Jesus suffered on the cross to also rightly explain the character of the Triune God and how the Persons of the Trinity are relating to one another in the midst of this great suffering of Jesus on the cross. My concern about the way Pastor Kevin has written about the cross has to do with this desire to get both the Trinity and the Cross right.

I realize Pastor Kevin is seeking to protect the truth that the Godhead did not disassemble on the cross. I agree with him that there was no intratrinitarian disruption, conflict, or separation - yes, the Trinity was not broken apart in that sense. But we must also be very clear that in history as the Mediator, there is a mysterious sense in which Jesus Christ, according to His human nature, was truly and objectively forsaken by God His Father on that cross: there's no hope without it! We must be careful to get the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the Cross right.

Pastor Kevin's very clear explanation of the Communicatio Idiomatum (Pages 177-178 of Daily Doctrine) helps explain this mystery. **(Read the chapter, 177-178).** **Pastor Kevin writes:** . . . we can say, "God died on the cross," if we are using that as a title for the God-man Jesus Christ. (Daily Doctrine, 178)

In a similar way, speaking of the God-man Jesus Christ, we must say He was forsaken by God, that God was angry with Him, and God damned Him on that cross, according to His human nature. **Derek Rishmawy** has written a very helpful article affirming the classic doctrine of God and Biblical trinitarian theology as it relates to Christ's sufferings on the cross on this very point. He writes:

This grounds the doctrine of the communicatio operationem whereby we might truly confess according to Scripture that in the death of the Son "God purchased the church with his blood" (Acts 20:28). Because of this the Son acting in and through his human nature it is still the Son acting. When looking to the cross, then, we must be able to say the divine Son suffered these things because Jesus is the divine Son. But we also have to say the Son suffered according to, or by virtue of, his human nature. For according to our prior affirmations, by his divine nature he is impassible. In sum, if we speak of the Son suffering death, the consequences of sin or judgment, or God's abandonment, or even hate, we speak truly of the suffering of the Son, but we inevitably are speaking according to his human nature.

Pastor Kevin writes this about Christ's session:

Considered as the divine Logos, Christ has always been at the right hand of God, working in accordance with the Father's omnipotent power. When considered as the incarnate mediator, however, Christ came at a moment in time to sit at the right hand of God. According to his divine nature, nothing new was bestowed upon Christ, but as the God-man, a new manifestation of power and a new installation of government was granted by virtue of his mediatorial work. (Daily Doctrine, 208)

In a similar way, Pastor Kevin should make this clear: considered as the divine Logos (the divine Son) in the

eternal intratrinitarian relationship with His Father, the Son was not forsaken or damned by God nor was God angry with Him on the cross. But when considered as the incarnate mediator (the God-Man), however, Christ was at that moment in time on that cross, forsaken and damned, and God was angry with Christ on the cross so that sinners might be saved. Christ, according to His divine nature, was not forsaken, but as the God-man, according to His human nature, He most certainly was. We must affirm that, or we lose the Gospel. Consider this comparison:

(Rom. 1:3: concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh)

- The Person of Jesus was created and born according to His human nature. But the Person of Jesus was not created and born according to His divine nature because God cannot be created or born but exists eternally.

-The Person of Jesus got tired, hungry, and slept according to His human nature. But the Person of Jesus did not get tired, hungry, or sleep according to His divine nature because God cannot get tired, be hungry, or sleep.

-The Person of Jesus died on the cross according to His human nature. But the Person of Jesus did not die on the cross according to His divine nature because God cannot die.

- In a similar way, because our sins were imputed to the Person of Jesus, God the Father forsook, was angry with, and damned the Person of Jesus on the cross according to His human nature. But God the Father did not forsake, get angry with, or damn the Person of Jesus according to His divine nature because it is impossible for conflict (forsakenness, anger, damnation) to exist in the intratrinitarian relationship between the Father and the Son. But it was really God the Son (the Person of Jesus Christ) Who, according to His human nature, experienced the true relational reality of God-forsakenness, the anger of God, and damnation so that we will never face those judgments. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

- **Pastor:** I'd also want to insist on the surprising, paradoxical truth that it was really God the Son who, in his human nature, experienced the relational reality of damnation and God-forsakenness. It's important to say both that Jesus suffered as man, not as God, and to say that the one who suffered truly is the Son of God, therefore it is truly God the Son who suffered all these things.

- **Pastor:** the Person fully partook of what was appropriate to each nature. Therefore, the Person suffered, bore wrath, & died.

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4. What Does Forsaken By God Mean According To The Bible?

a. God hides His face from the one He forsakes: Right before Moses died, God warned Moses that Israel would forsake Him & serve other gods. As a result of this rebellion, God told Moses that He would forsake His people and hide His face from them: **Deut. 31:17:** my anger will be kindled against them in that day, & I will forsake them & hide my face from them.

The Psalmist also connects the hiding of God's face with being forsaken: **Ps. 27:9:** Hide not your face from me. Turn not your servant away in anger, O you who have been my help. Cast me not off; forsake me not, O God of my salvation!

Martyn Lloyd-Jones: [God] has made His Son the sacrifice; it is a substitutionary offering for your sins and mine. That was why He was there in the Garden sweating drops of blood, because He knew what it involved – it involved a separation from the face of the father. & that is why He cried out on the Cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

b. God turns the one He forsakes over to His enemies: **Jer. 12:7-8:** I have forsaken my house; I have abandoned my heritage; I have given the beloved of my soul into the hands of her enemies. My heritage has become to me like a lion in the forest; she has lifted up her voice against me; therefore I hate her.

- **2 Kings 21:14:** I will forsake the remnant of my heritage & give them into the hand of their enemies, & they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies

This actually happened to Jesus on the cross. He didn't merely feel like He had been turned over to His enemies:

Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles, the Jews, the Roman soldiers, etc. He was literally, fully, objectively turned over to them, & they killed Him. & this was all orchestrated by God's sovereign hand (Acts 4:27-28). Though this was not the primary sense in which Jesus was forsaken on the cross, it was certainly a part of His utter forsakenness in that God did not deliver Him from His enemies.

Thomas Goodwin wrote that, though it's true that men were Christ's executioners, only God could punish His soul: "See the love of God, who gave not his Son up only to the hands of men to be executioners of his body, but himself laid on upon his soul; & that because justice called for the soul, the very soul, ere it would be satisfied. Which no creature being able to reach, rather than we should not be redeemed, he will be the executioner himself; ties him to the cross, & with his own hand whips him, because no creature could strike strokes hard enough."

c. God is angry with the one He forsakes: God's anger burns toward the one He forsakes. In Lamentations, God's anger is clearly included in what it means to be forsaken by God: **Lam. 5:20-22:** Why do you forget us forever, why do you forsake us for so many days? Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may be restored! Renew our days as of old – unless you have utterly rejected us, & you remain exceedingly angry with us.

Though God always loved His Son, even while He suffered on the cross, God was angry with Him because of our sins imputed to Him & forsook Him because He Who knew no sin was made sin (2 Cor. 5:21).

Thomas Goodwin has masterfully written on this point: "this offering up himself was so sweet a smelling sacrifice to God (as Eph. V. 2), that although God expressed never so much anger against Christ as when he hung upon the cross, yet he was never so well pleased by him as then."

- "Why, say they, can God love his Son and be angry with him at the same time? And he that is God blessed for ever, can he be made a curse in his soul? Yes, take him as a surety. They take part with one truth of the gospel to exclude the other, whereas the gospel is a reconciliation of both these, and therein lies the depth of it."

The Old Testament is clear that when God forsakes, He hides His face from the one He forsakes, turns him over to his enemies, & burns in anger toward him. All of this happened to Jesus while He suffered for sinners on the cross. It was a real, objective forsakenness. & the salvation He won for us is a real, objective salvation. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Jesus was truly & objectively forsaken by God on that cross so that you will never be forsaken by God for all eternity!

5. Faithful Teachers Affirm That Jesus Was Truly, Objectively Forsaken By God

- **Martin Luther:** So then, gaze at the heavenly picture of Christ, who descended into hell for your sake & was forsaken by God as one eternally damned when he spoke the words on the cross, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani!" - "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In that picture your hell is defeated & your uncertain election is made sure . . . He [Christ] is the heavenly image, the one who was forsaken by God as damned, yet he conquered hell through his omnipotent love, thereby proving that he is the dearest Son, who gives this to us all if we but believe

- **Herman Bavinck:** In the cry of Jesus we are dealing not with a subjective but with an objective God-forsakenness: He did not feel alone but had in fact been forsaken by God. His feeling was not an illusion, not based on a false view of his situation, but corresponded with reality.

- **John Owen:** It pleased God to bruise him, to put him to grief, to make his soul an offering for sin, & to pour out his life unto death. He hid himself from him, was far from the voice of his cry, until he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" . . . It was from the penal desertion of God. That he was under a penal desertion from God, is plain; "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" & when I say so, I know little of what I say, I mean, what it is to be under such penal desertion. For the great punishment of hell, is an everlasting penal desertion from God.

- **Robert Letham:** To fathom the depths of what Christ endured we would need to spend eternity in hell. He was rejected by humankind, abandoned by God, subject to the full curse of the law and more besides . . . He endured the holy judgment of God against the unrighteous. He was made sin. He experienced the fearsome fate of falling into the hands of the living God, who is a consuming fire. He took our place as the guilty, the accursed, the

covenant breaker. He was abandoned. He cried, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

- **R. C. Sproul:** His cry was not, as Albert Schweitzer opined, the cry of a disillusioned prophet who had believed that God was going to rescue him at the eleventh hour & then felt forsaken. He didn't just feel forsaken; he was forsaken. For Jesus to become the curse, he had to be completely forsaken by the Father.

6. Why Does All This Matter?

If Jesus merely felt forsaken on the cross, then I can only merely feel forgiven. If Jesus only felt forsaken by God, then I can only feel regenerated, I can only feel justified, and I can only feel adopted by God. Mere feelings don't cut it when it comes to eternal redemption from hell and everlasting glory and joy in heaven. Feelings don't really matter. Real, objective punishment for my sins matters. It is true that Jesus felt forsaken on the cross. But He felt forsaken because He was forsaken. As a sinner, that is my only hope to be saved. To assert that Jesus only felt forsaken on the cross is a grave error that strikes at the heart of the Gospel. And it's a serious sin to ever diminish the sufferings of Christ in any way.

Nick Batzig: If Jesus wasn't truly forsaken – if he didn't really endure the equivalent of eternal punishment on the cross – then substitutionary atonement is a legal fiction. If Jesus didn't really suffer the pains of hell on the cross then the infinite & eternal wrath of God is not truly propitiated. If Jesus didn't become the object of the righteous indignation of God in our place then we are still the objects of the eternal wrath of God. If Jesus wasn't truly condemned on the cross then we are not truly justified before God. If Jesus did not objectively suffer the equivalent of hell in his body & soul then there will be hell for us to pay. Praise God that there was hell to pay for Jesus when "in my place, condemned he stood. Hallelujah! What a Savior!"

Christ Jesus Died, God Did Forsake
Rejected, Lost – Make No Mistake
He Didn't Only Feel The Break
For All Our Sins God Did Him Make
God's Anger On His Head He'd Take
And Die In Wrath – God's Fury Lake
With Deepest Anguish – Hellish Ache
But Then Christ Rose Alive Awake
Caused The Earth To Move And Quake
It's Here That Jesus Crushed The Snake
By Faith Alone We're Just And Make
Progress In Holiness Partake
All For The Praise Of God's Name Sake
We Boast And Shout And Dance And Shake
For God, Will Us, Never Forsake!

Jesus was truly & objectively forsaken by God on that cross so that you will never be forsaken by God for all eternity!