

The Son Becomes Sin

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[0 : 00] Matthew chapter 27, we're going to read verses 45 to 56.

Matthew chapter 27, verses 45 to 56. So just last week and this week we've been doing a series of Christ's sayings from the cross.

There's a summary of the sayings at the door if you've not got them. And this week we want to look at my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

So let's read verses 45 to 56 of Matthew 27. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani, that is, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

[1 : 12] And some of the bystanders hearing it said, this man is calling Elijah. 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.

But the other said, wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him. And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

And the earth shook and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised.

And coming out of the tombs after his resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many. When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, Jesus saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, Truly, this was the Son of God. There were also many women there looking on from a distance who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him. Among them were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

[2 : 36] So we're continuing our study this morning on Christ's sayings from the cross. It's slightly less than a mini-series, it's a micro-series. We just did two sayings last week and we'll do this one this morning.

And we'll complete the series this evening by the words, It is finished. We saw last week that Jesus was scourged in the early hours of Good Friday.

You'll remember that he was taken in the Garden of Gethsemane. Garden of Gethsemane. In the evening, he went through various trials.

He was put in prison. And he was scourged. And we've seen throughout our series all the way along, Prophecy is being fulfilled at every step of Christ's journey to the cross.

Isaiah 50 verse 6 says, I gave my back to those who beat me, And my cheeks to those who tore out my beard. I did not hide my face from scorn and spitting.

[3 : 44] Every single step of the journey to the cross was the fulfilment of prophecies from Psalm 22 and Isaiah 50, Isaiah 53, Daniel 9.

All these different messianic Psalms were being fulfilled. And one of the things we notice, of course, is that Christ was remarkably silent about his own sufferings.

He hardly said a word about his own sufferings. The only word he said was the third last saying, which was, I thirst. And of course, he said that as the scriptures say, just to fulfil scripture.

It was the last thing in scripture from Psalm 69 that he had to fulfil. So we know that Christ was crucified about nine o'clock in the morning.

We know that there was three hours of daylight when he hung on the cross before darkness came over the whole land. And we saw last week that his first words from the cross were perhaps, even as he was being nailed to the cross, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.

[4 : 54] That word of forgiveness in Luke 23, verse 34. And we saw last week, we gathered our thoughts around Golgotha.

We said that Golgotha was a place of despair and judgment, a place of death and justice, but also a place of deliverance and mercy. The second saying from the cross was the word to the feast, the dying feast.

Christ's right hand. I tell you the truth, today you'll be with me in paradise in Luke 23, a word of salvation.

And isn't it wonderful to think that even in these dying moments, Christ was still drawing sinners to himself. The thief didn't have to go to confession. He didn't have to go to communion.

He didn't have to be baptized. He just needed to have faith in Christ. And that teaches us that all we need for salvation is faith in Christ.

[6 : 01] And of course, the thief on the cross is a great example of sovereign electing love of Christ. There was two thieves beside Christ.

One was saved and one wasn't saved. Presumably, they were both within touching distance of the Saviour. And of course, that's what we see.

We see in families, two brothers, one is saved and one isn't. They hear the same gospel. They're brought up in the same way. But yet, one is saved and one isn't saved.

And of course, that's what we see. We see the electing love of God in the gospel. Later on in the morning, Christ spoke to his mother.

He said, mother, here, woman, here is your son. And he said to the beloved disciple, John, he said, here is your mother in John 19, a word of affection.

[7 : 02] And of course, that reminds us that even in his dying moments, love and affection was flowing to Christ towards his family members. And then at noon, as we saw last week, darkness descends on the whole land.

And we saw that, of course, darkness is a sign of God's judgment, a sign of God's wrath. Darkness is often associated with sin. And we saw how even the creation came out in sympathy with its creator.

We saw how the sun was darkened. We saw how there was an earthquake. The rock split. And remarkably, people were raised from the dead.

And the Bible tells us that people suddenly met friends that had been dead, perhaps for years. Such was the miracle. And such was the creation coming out in sympathy with its creator.

So at two o'clock, it all goes dark. And the worst sufferings of Christ are shrouded from human view.

[8 : 19] And of course, the sufferings that Christ suffered in the next three hours are in many ways a mystery. How God's wrath was poured upon Christ.

John Flavel says that the soul of his sufferings were the sufferings of his soul. People make great focus on the physical sufferings of Christ.

Films are made about the physical sufferings of Christ. As we said last week, people watch these films and they weep over the physical sufferings of Christ. But the real sufferings of Christ, the heart of his sufferings were his spiritual sufferings in the three hours of darkness.

The soul of his sufferings were the sufferings of his soul. And in those three hours of darkness, Christ was made a curse for our sin.

And it's almost as it were that Christ was descending into the pit of God's wrath. And as he reached the bottom, he cried out these awful words.

[9 : 27] My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? They're quoted in Matthew 27 and in Mark 15 verse 34.

A word of anguish. Christ was expressing the loss of filial love with his father. He was abandoned. He was rejected. And he was alone. And as we said last week, quoting from William Hendrickson,

God's wrath was burning itself out in the heart of Jesus in those three hours.

God's wrath was burning itself out in the heart of Jesus. And remarkably, Christ went on to say three other things. He said, I thirst in John 19 verse 28.

A word of suffering. He says, it is finished in John 19 30. A word of victory. And he said, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.

[10 : 28] In Luke 23, a word of contentment. Forgiveness, salvation, affection, anguish, suffering, victory and contentment.

The golden pearls of Christ's sayings from the cross. We have so much to learn from these words, don't we? They're like gifts that Christ has left the church.

Last week I recommended some books that have helped me in this study. You can't do any better than read Spurgeon's Seven Sayings from the Cross. They're absolutely wonderful. And A.W. Pink as well has a book on the sayings from Christ on the cross.

Study these sayings. Use them to encourage you and to bless you in your Christian life. But this morning we want to come to the apex of these sayings.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Spurgeon says on these words, on these sayings, he says, at the end of his chapter on these sayings, he says, I feel like a prattling child speaking about things that are above me and beyond me.

[11:49] So you can imagine what I feel like today as we delve into these words. They are a great mystery and we can only scratch the surface. As I said, these words are quoted in Matthew and Mark.

These are the only words that Matthew and Mark quote in terms of the sayings of Christ. And there is a slight difference in the way that Matthew and Mark quote them.

And when you're not a language expert, it's better to remain silent. So I'm not going to say very much. But there is a slight difference in the way that the two Gospels record the sayings. Where Mark quotes it more as Aramaic and Matthew appears to quote it more as a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic.

And if you look at the two verses, you'll see a slight difference. There's a slight, some people think that the way in which Christ cried out the words of God, Eli, Eli, or as it has in Mark, Eloi, Eloi, that perhaps people thought he was saying Elijah, which is why we have this thing about Elijah.

But what we do know about these words on the cross is that Christ was quoting from Psalm 22, which we read. He was quoting the first verse of Psalm 22.

[13:11] And he was talking about being forsaken. Now what does that word forsaken mean? Well it means to abandon, to leave behind, or even to loosen.

God was loosening the ties that he had with Christ. He was abandoning him. He was leaving him behind. So let's notice first of all this morning, the son forsaken.

We want to look at the son forsaken, the sin forsaken, and the sinner not forsaken. I don't know if you have ever experienced what it's like to be forsaken.

I walk into houses every day of my working life where people feel abandoned. Children feel abandoned by their parents.

Parents feel abandoned by their friends. Very often they feel abandoned by services, by social work, by housing. They feel all alone.

[14:16] They feel abandoned. Some even say they feel abandoned by God. And maybe this morning you have had that experience. You've felt what it's like to be abandoned and forsaken by God.

Maybe you've felt abandoned and rejected and despised by your friends and family. You've experienced what it feels to be utterly alone in the world.

But our rejection and our abandonment in our lives can never be as extreme or as complete as Christ experienced.

If God truly abandoned us in this life we would be in hell because that's what hell is. It is to be completely God forsaken. The rejection of Christ on the cross was the most extreme example of abandonment in history.

Now I'm sure you've all experienced physical pain at one time or another. Perhaps we've had a problem with our back or our leg or our ankle or perhaps we've had a break.

[15:24] We know what extreme suffering is. But normally when we have suffering of a physical nature we're able to keep our spirits up.

We've got family around us. We've got friends around us. But sometimes in extreme situations we also have mental suffering. We have physical suffering and we have mental suffering and we become downcast.

And of course that can be horrendous when we have physical and mental suffering. But as a Christian we've always got the encouragement that we've got God. Even if we're suffering physically and mentally we've always got God, haven't we?

And we can always cling on to the promises of God. We can say with David, Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

We can go through experiences when sometimes we feel like we're just clinging on and holding on. Hoping that God will come back to us and will take away the problem.

[16:37] But what if we have physical suffering and mental suffering and God abandons us? Well that is what Christ is experiencing on the cross.

He has extreme physical pain. He has extreme mental torture. And he is forsaken by God.

Spurgeon says, We can bear a bleeding body and even a wounded spirit. But a soul conscious of desertion by God is beyond conception.

Unendurable. Christ had it all on the cross. And of course, our relationship with God is marred by sin, isn't it?

But Christ's relationship with the Father was never marred by sin. It was perfect. It was intimate.

They had enjoyed each other's fellowship from eternity past.

[17:48] And now it was broken. He was abandoned. Well in what way was Christ deserted? And in what way was his suffering unique?

Let's just think of a few things very briefly. First of all, what we have to say is that his desertion was real. Some people think that, some people argue that somehow Christ was having some crisis of faith on the cross.

But that is not biblical. Christ's desertion by God the Father was real. It was very real. We've seen that Christ experienced pain.

He experienced loss of blood. He experienced scorn. He experienced his disciples deserting him.

He experienced extreme thirst.

He experienced desolation. And he never complained. As Isaiah 53 says, He opened not his mouth.

He was like a sheep before its shearers is silent.

[18:57] So he opened not his mouth. Christ could have said many things from the cross. He could have said, Judas, why did you betray me? He could have said, Peter, why did you deny me?

But he doesn't. It was God's desertion that he questions. He had reached the dregs of God's wrath and he cries out, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

This was no imagined desertion. This was no crisis of faith. This was a real desertion by God. God forsakes his only son.

But then secondly, we could say under this heading, and I say this with reverence, this desertion was out of character for God. It was out of character for God.

As we read the Bible, every single book, every single page, God is faithful to his people.

[20:00] God never leaves us nor forsakes us. The Bible is full of promises for the downcast and the distressed and the dying. Our most well-known psalm, Psalm 23, For if I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, yet I will fear no evil, for your rod and your staff comforts me.

How many promises could we pick out of the Bible like that? We go back to Daniel. Well, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are cast into the fiery furnace.

What do they see? They see one like the Son of God walking in their midst in Daniel chapter 6. God is with the dying. He is with the distressed.

He is with the downcast. Yet God forsakes his only begotten Son on the cross. But then we also notice that Christ's desertion was unprecedented.

We don't need a single example of anywhere else that Christ is deserted by his Father. He lived in perfect unity with his Father from an eternity past.

[21:22] His fellowship, as we said, isn't like our fellowship with God. It wasn't marred by sin.

Somebody has said his fellowship with the Father was always near, dear and clear.

If a husband loses a wife after 30 or 40 or 50 years of marriage, they're bereft, aren't they? Because they have been so close, they have been so intimate for so many years.

Well, think how much more the trauma was for Christ. They had been together for eternity. They were the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

And Christ, in the flesh, was abandoned by his Father. He was left alone to wrestle with an absent Father.

On the cross, Christ suffered both dereliction and malediction. Dereliction is the act of abandonment. And malediction is he became a curse.

[22 : 38] He became an anathema to the Father because he bore the sins of his people. And of course, Christ never knew sin before, did he?

And on the cross, suddenly, not suddenly, sorry, he was surrounded by sin. He was covered in sin. He had to wear sin for his people.

I think it's Pink or Spurgeon that says, imagine a woman who was brought up in a Christian home. Imagine her purity and she is placed into a brothel.

Imagine the things that she would see and the things she would hear. Imagine how soiled she would feel. Well, imagine the pure, sinless Son of God bearing the sins not just of you and not just of me and not just of us.

But all the sins of thousands of years. That great bucket of God's wrath that was poured out upon him.

[23 : 58] How heavy must those sins have been on such a sinless and spotless lamb. So we see that the Son was forsaken. Imagine going through the worst trauma of your life without the comfort of friends or family.

We all hope when it comes to our time to go that we will be surrounded by loved ones, don't we? That we'll be surrounded by family and friends and that those last days or years or moments will be years of love and affection.

But imagine if we had death without friends, without family. Imagine if our deathbed, our loved one, our dearest and nearest rejected us and turned away from us.

Jesus was rejected by heaven. He was rejected by even his followers. He was rejected by nature. The sun wouldn't even shine on him in those hours of darkness.

He was experiencing what we sang about in Psalm 69. Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in deep mire where there is no foothold.

[25 : 20] I have come into deep waters and the floods sweep over me. I am weary of my crying out. My throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for God.

That was the experience of Christ on the cross. Joel Beeky said, Christ stands under the Niagara of the wrath of God so that you and I can stand under the endless showers of his mercy and grace. He stood under the Niagara of God's wrath for you and me so that we can stand under the endless showers of his mercy and grace.

And if Christ was willing to do that for you and for me, why do we so often doubt his love and his commitment to us?

As we look on Christ on Calvary, how can we doubt his love and his commitment to us? Why do we question his providence?

[26 : 27] Why do we question his dealings with us? When he has shown such extravagant grace on the cross of Calvary? Is any sacrifice too much for us when we see the sacrifice of the bleeding and abandoned Saviour?

And if Christ was willing to suffer all this for us, is he not able to take us through our sufferings and our pain? Hebrews says, we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

When we feel abandoned, when we feel hopeless, let's look at Calvary. Let's see Christ who experienced the extreme abandonment for us and he is able to take us through our sufferings and pain.

So we see the son forsaken but then secondly, we see the sin forsaken. Jesus did not just feel forsaken on the cross, he was forsaken.

This experience on the cross was an actual objective experience. why have you forsaken me? Why did the father forsake the son at Calvary?

[28 : 01] Apparently Martin Luther spent three hours on his knees one day and as he got up he said God forsaken by God who can understand it? And if Martin Luther can't understand it, who am I to try and explain it this morning?

Let's just try and take two or three thoughts as to why God was forsaken on Calvary. There is no answer from heaven when Christ asks, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

But the scripture teaches us why God was forsaken and the first thing we can say is that he was forsaken to bear the sins of many.

Jesus didn't cry, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me because he had forgotten his mission? It wasn't forgetfulness that he asked the question. Christ's cry from the cross was to show

us the enormity of our sins and to show us what our sins deserve.

Christ was forsaken so that we could be forgiven. Christ on the cross was paying the penalty for our sins.

[29 : 23] For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of Christ through him. If you want a summary of the cross, that's your summary.

2 Corinthians 5.21 He made him to be sin for us who knew no sin. The sinless one was surrounded by sin on every side.

God gave him no comfort, no strength, no succor. The lamb hung all alone. That sacred face which he had gazed upon with such love was turned away from Jesus.

There was no voice from heaven saying, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. There was silence. We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted as Isaiah 53 says.

The sweet fellowship of father and son was smashed on the cross of Calvary. All comfort was withdrawn. As somebody has said, it was not possible that the judge should smile upon one who represented the prisoner at the bar.

[30 : 43] So Christ died to bear the sins of many. But Christ also died to satisfy the justice of God.

God. We said last week that in every generation people try and change what the cross is about.

And I was saying there are people, there are movements in our generation which are trying to say that the cross was somehow some ultimate example of sacrificial love and nothing else.

and of course there is an element in which it is that. But the cross is about the justice of God against sin. Sin needs to be punished.

And as we saw last week we discussed the issue of propitiation. How Christ turned away the wrath of God. He covered his people from the wrath of God.

[31 : 48] God's justice against sin. And as Christ hangs on the cross bearing, carrying, wearing the sins of his people God pours on him all the wrath and iniquity that you and I deserve.

We see that in Psalm 22 don't we? He says my God, my God, oh why have you forsaken and abandoned me?

Why are you far from giving help, from listening to my anguished plea? My God, I cry to you by day. You do not hear when I complain. I call to you throughout the night in silence I cannot remain.

And what does verse 3 say? Yet you are holy. On the praise of Israel you are enthroned. God. The cross was about satisfying the justice of a holy God.

Christ satisfied the justice of God on the cross. He drank the cup of God's justice to the bitterest dregs for you and me.

[33 : 10] Spurgeon says the great cannonade of God's justice has exhausted all its ammunition. There is nothing left to be hurled against the child of God.

And then a third thing we might just say under this heading is that Christ died to destroy the power of sin, the devil and death. Christ defeated the power of sin at Calvary.

Now, sin remains in us as sinners but if you are in Christ this morning, sin is not on you.

It is in you but it is not on you. It is not on you in the sense of punishment if you are in Christ this morning. Your sins have been transferred to Christ.

Let me go back to Leviticus 19. We read that Aaron on the day of atonement he brought two goats for sacrifice didn't he?

[34 : 19] The first goat was killed and the blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat. But what happened to the other goat? We are told that Aaron came out and he laid his hands on the second goat and all the sins of Israel were transferred onto the second goat.

And where was that goat sent? It was sent into the wilderness. It was sent into the place where it would never be seen again.

As Pink says, the cross of Christ then is the grave of our sins. The cross of Christ is the grave of our sins. that goat was never seen again.

It took the sins of the people. And of course, the cross also vanquished Satan.

Satan's head was finally crushed at Calvary. Christ was attacked from every side by Satan, wasn't he? All the forces of darkness against Christ at the cross.

[35 : 33] They shot their hellish darts into his heart, Spurgeon says. They poured their boiling cauldrons on his brain. They emptied their venom into his veins. They spat their insinuations into his face.

They hissed their devilish fear into his ear. Satan must have thought this was his moment. This was his great day of victory. But of course, it was the day of his defeat.

Christ was winning the greatest victory in the history of humankind. Satan is now a defeated foe.

He's wounded, he's chained, and he's waiting for his final defeat.

And of course, the cross also defeated death. Christ took the sting out of death. I think it's pink that says, it's as if the sting of death is fired into the heart of Christ on the cross, and when it is pulled out, the sting has gone from it.

Yes, death is difficult, but in Christ there is no sting for those who are in Christ. God, sorry, Christ, has overcome sin, Satan, and death.

[36 : 51] So if the son was forsaken and sin was forsaken on Calvary, the wonderful thing this morning is that the sinner is not forsaken.

The son was forsaken and sin was forsaken on Christ. So this morning, the sinner is not forsaken. We've seen over these last two weeks, Christ's words from the cross.

We've seen the awfulness of them. We've seen his sufferings and how they culminate in these awful words from the cross. My God, my God, why have you forsaken?

But this morning there is incredibly good news. There is the best news that we will ever hear. That because the son was forsaken and because sin was forsaken, the sinner who trusts in Jesus will never be forsaken.

Everything Christ experienced on the cross, child of God, was for you. He was thirsty so that you and I will never again be spiritually thirsty.

[38 : 07] He was God forsaken so that you and I will never be God forsaken. God will never be God what's our response to the cross this morning?

Is it apathy? Have we heard this so often that we were not moved by it anymore? Perhaps those of us who have been brought up in Christian homes we get weary of the cross.

We wish the preacher would preach about something else. Why do we have to go over all these horrible sufferings again and again? So maybe it's familiarity.

Maybe that's your problem this morning. Over familiarity with the sayings from the cross. I want to say this to you this morning. The cross is the greatest warning in history.

Christ is the great atonement for these people. He is the great covering. He is the great redemption. But don't misunderstand the cross because at the cross what we see is the Niagara of God's wrath being poured out on Christ.

[39 : 24] And if you this morning are not in Christ, that wrath one day will be poured on your head when there is no more mercy.

will be and you will experience what Christ experienced in a very condensed way on the cross. You will experience that for eternity.

The cross is serious and the cross is urgent and it demands a serious and urgent response from us. the cross says this morning that your sins and my sins, they are no small thing. As we saw last week, they are not some minor moral defect.

What the cross is showing us is that your sins are so serious. You and I have offended a holy God but amazingly at the cross there is plenteous redemption for you and me.

[40 : 30] And because the son was forsaken and because sin was forsaken, today we as sinners will not be forsaken if we trust in Christ.

And I hear the Saviour say, thy strength indeed is small. Child of weakness, watch and pray, find in me thine all in all. Because Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe.

Sinners left a crimson stain, he washed it white as snow. If you haven't come to Christ this morning, please don't delay. God said, I spread out my hands all day to our rebellious people who walk in the path that is not good, following their own thoughts.

The God of all the universe spreads his hand out in salvation and welcome to sinners. What an encouragement to us in our evangelism. I spread out my hands all day long to our rebellious people.

All the hell that you deserve was poured on Christ in a concentrated way. The bitterest dregs of God's wrath, Christ drank for you to the bitterest dregs on the cross so that you and I never have to experience the hell of God's wrath.

[41 : 54] My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Christ forsaken so that you and I will never be forsaken. Let's pray.

we thank you oh lord that our savior stood under the niagara of your wrath we thank you oh god that he satisfied your justice we thank you that he bore the sins of many we thank you oh lord that he defeated sin and satan and death and we praise you oh god that because he drank the cup of your wrath to the bitterestregs that lord in christ we will never experience that hell that we deserve lord who can look into these things who can understand them lord we are like children but lord we thank you that you have revealed these things to us and we pray that oh lord we would understand something this morning of god forsakenness god forsaken god and that lord it would compel us to see again our sins at calvary the seriousness of them the filthiness of them how we are stained by them but lord we thank you that you're extending the arms of welcome and the arms of salvation to repentant sinners this morning lord we thank you for the words of christ we thank you for these precious jewels that we have for our encouragement and our blessing and we pray that each one of us lord would study them that we would live in them that we would take comfort from them as we go through our sufferings as we go through our abandonment we praise you oh god that you are the one who never leaves us nor forsakes us bless your word to us today seal it to our hearts for jesus sake amen so let's uh finish our service this morning with the words of psalm 130 in the scottish psalter these well-known words psalm 130 on page 421 to the tune martyrdom lord from the depths to thee i cried my voice lord do thou hear and to my supplications voice give unattentive ear lord who shall stand this thou o lord should mark iniquity but yet with thee forgivenesses that feared thou mayest be and plenteous redemption is ever found with him and from all his iniquities he israel shall read him psalm 130 to god's praise you