

# Why Christ was Truly Forsaken

*Good Friday*

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**Bible Text:** Matthew 27:27-56; Matthew 27:46

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## **Bethel Netherlands Reformed Congregation**

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Congregation, the text for this morning is from Matthew 27:46.

46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

So far.

"Why Christ was Truly Forsaken." Why Christ was truly forsaken. Three thoughts: truly forsaken; secondly, why; and in the third place, not forsaken. So why Christ was truly forsaken: truly forsaken, he tried to understand a little about the Lord Jesus Christ saying, "why hast thou forsaken me?"; secondly, why, "why hast thou forsaken me?"; and in the third place, application, this means that some will not be forsaken, right?

Congregation, it's 9 o'clock in the morning on Good Friday. That's early yet. The third hour it says in the Bible but the third hour means 9 o'clock. They started counting at 6 in the morning so at 9 o'clock in the morning the Lord Jesus is crucified. What a pain in his hands and in his feet and his whole body and the burning sun begins to shine. He is suffering from what people are doing to him and one of the first things he says, "Father, forgive them because they don't know what they're doing." And then in those hours between 9 and 12 in the morning, one of the thieves repents and hears that beautiful sentence and promise, "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise." Then at 12 o'clock, noon, something different comes. The suffering of the Lord Jesus changes at 12 o'clock. Any idea why? Because he has been experiencing pain and suffering what people are doing to him. You know, at 12 o'clock it becomes dark. The light goes out and no people are doing that to him, that's God the Father doing it. So God the Father also makes it even deeper so not only people turning against him but now his own Father hiding himself, hiding his love, not letting him feel anything of it and showing darkness for three hours. From 12 o'clock unto 3 o'clock in the afternoon so dark, nature is quiet. Oh we sing, "In deepest darkness cover me, the darkness hideth not from thee." Oh, darkness is in the Bible, that feeling of God is absent. He is not there. Isaiah 8, "they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness," trouble and darkness, "dimness of anguish; and

they shall be driven to darkness." Darkness means death. Darkness means lowly. You don't see anything. You're alone by yourself. Darkness means no life. No joy.

And that's the experience of the Lord Jesus Christ in those three hours from 12 to 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and then at 3 when he has experienced for three hours that terrible darkness and that hiding of God's face, he says, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani." Oh, from his heart he just cries out, "Oh my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" People have forsaken him. Judas had betrayed him. Peter had denied him, will deny him. But that God the Father was hiding. We have a few questions about that. That being forsaken, was Christ truly forsaken by his Father? And how deep was that suffering? And was he forsaken before already or was this the first time? And how did that state of being forsaken, how was it worded in the Bible in other places just to flesh it out? And has anyone ever been forsaken like him?

Of course, this being forsaken was real. Although God the Father could not hate his Son, could not hate him, he had done no sin, it was his beloved Son, he did not hate him, but he did not show anything of his love. He was hiding it. So the Lord Jesus had no access to that love. He didn't see it at all in his human nature and it was so real to him, oh that darkness, that hiding of God's face, it was real and difficult. He repeated it even, "My God, my God," and the more you love someone, the harder it is if that person turns his face away from you. If you really love someone and want to be loved by a person and then that person shows no interest, that's hard, and so the Lord Jesus, he experienced to the fullest that he was alone, without God in the world. And he was so fit to commune with his Father, he was the Son of God, so he could love and he could be loved and yet there was nothing he could experience about that.

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" How deep that suffering was, can we measure it? Do we have any idea how bad it was? He felt cast off before but never like this. Sin was around him, not his own sin but the weight of the sin of mankind was on him and he was not given any hope. He was not given any encouragement. He was made a curse. In the garden of Gethsemane, there was an angel kind of comforting and supporting him. Not anymore. It was over.

He was smitten of God and afflicted, and that suffering was infinite. An infinite suffering. It could not be more. It was so profound we see already something of what sin is as well better, right? I hope to come back to that later. And we see also here already that he deserves eternal thanksgiving and celebration of that sacrifice. Was he forsaken before? Not like this. The Lord Jesus before communed with his Father, prayed to his Father, went outside in the night and had fellowship with his Father, he sometimes thanked his Father for hearing him. But there was nothing left of that. It was absolutely horrible what the Lord Jesus experienced here, the infinite, undivided wrath of God.

So before that he had never experienced this. It was the first time. The first time, even worse than in the garden. God the Father did not show any love. And how is it verbalized, how is this worded in the Bible that being forsaken? Could we fill that in a little bit more and flesh it out and give a little understanding of what that forsaking means, that God is

forsaking his own Son? Well, a few texts in the Bible, you may know them but let's meditate on them, put them on your tongue, so to speak, and try to taste them, ask the Lord to give you the impression of it. "

"All we like sheep have gone astray," right? All, "we have turned every one to his own way." So what do we deserve? That the Lord puts all the iniquities on us. "We have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." That's Good Friday. All the sins, the complete wrath stacked on him, him being burdened with it. The iniquities are laid on him. God the Father laid it all on his head, all on his soul, nothing left. Has laid on him who had no sin, has laid on him all the iniquities and he was experiencing that and he said, "Oh, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He experienced that unbearable, you would say, load of sin. And if he would not have been the Son of God and not have been divine, he would have succumbed and he would not have been able to bear it.

"Yet it pleased the LORD," it pleased the LORD, "to bruise him." His own Father bruising him, chastising him, turning against him. How can that be? God the Father loved him but yet punished his own Son with all that. It pleased the Lord to bruise him. It was not something the Lord took pleasure in, in the sense that he is pleased with pain and darkness, but it was his sovereign will and his eternal good pleasure to do so.

"He shall see of the travail of his soul," he shall see the travail of his soul. Having a child is travailing as well but that's not a travailing of the soul. So the Lord Jesus, he had that inexpressible anguish, that inexpressible travail of his soul, "and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." Bearing it. What a beloved Savior. He was willing to do so, willing to take those iniquities on himself although those sheep that have gone astray should deserve it, that the iniquities are laid on them. He says, "No, lay them on me." And the Father did here on the cross. I would say that's the best part of the whole Bible, laid on him.

"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." On the Lord Jesus, cursed on the tree. Cursed on the cross. He had done no sin at all ever. Why? It is all to curse him and lay the curse on him, all his indignation, all his fierce anger, all unloading it on him. So he had to take it in and absorb it, being a curse. Anyone here in church, at home, who says, "I deserve that curse. I deserve to be cursed to death. I deserve to be forsaken forever." Right? Don't you think that is just? And look at this, cursed, to also free from the curse.

"For he hath made him," for he, God the Father, "has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." So he, God the Father, makes him sin, a sin offering, and all the sins are laid on him like the high priest laid the sins of the people upon the head of the scapegoat, right? Remember the scapegoat being held by someone and the high priest coming with both of his hands and just leaning heavily on that goat and transferring all the sin of the people, so to speak in an example,

to that animal, and then sending that animal away with all the sins? That's what's happening here.

Has anyone else ever been forsaken like him? No, absolutely not. You know, you think of the martyrs, maybe you have read about them in the history books, the martyrs. They were on the scaffold. They were burned. They were punished and they did not recant but they experienced in the flames and when they were hurt, they felt the presence of God. There are many stories about that, that the martyrs in those times, there was so much pain that they cried from pain, did not curse God but experienced some sweetness. Not the Lord Jesus. He had no sweetness in his soul. It was so bitter, so bitter to experience this.

Or we read in Psalm 38, "Forsake me not, O LORD: O my God, be not far from me." Yes, God's children have also darkness. At first in the beginning but also later, they experience darkness and feel sometimes abandoned and feel sometimes that the Lord is hiding his face, right? It's not the same because although the Lord sometimes is hiding his face from his people, he never forsakes them. That's what he has promised. He still loves them and not only loves them, he still is close to them, and God the Father is so far away from the Lord Jesus here. So child of the Lord, when this darkness is so, realize here the Lord Jesus' darkness was so much more intense. You have no idea. So when there is darkness in the soul, that's not nice, that's not pleasant at all, but think of him, think of him absorbing that complete wrath of God and being forsaken by his Father in that sense.

"O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee." So when David says something like that in Psalm 63, for example, when he is seeking God, he is saying, "O God, early will I see thee," it's not the same.

And how did the Lord Jesus respond to that when God the Father laid the curse on him, loaded him with all the iniquities? It pleased him to bruise him. How did the Lord Jesus experience that? How did he respond to that? Did he say, "O my God, I don't agree with this. O my God, why is this happening to me? I don't deserve it." No, he did not say those things. He said, "My God." One of the commentaries says this is the highest form of faith ever. The Lord Jesus, there is such a darkness, such an infinite darkness with infinite pain and suffering, yet could say, "My God." How is that possible? What a faith of the Savior Jesus Christ and in that sense he also paid for the unbelief of his people, and the unbelief of his elect. He paid for that.

And he did not only say, "My God," he also quoted the Bible, right? He quoted the Bible. So in those hellish agonies when he was on the cross, he fell back on the Bible. He was quoting Psalm 22, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" So let us think about that. The Lord Jesus quoting the Bible in those special moments, would we also quote the Bible in those circumstances? Would you have a few texts handy on your mind? What would you say on your deathbed? Remarkable. He had no sin.

"My God, my God," and there was no other God and he desired that God yet. He still loved that God. He did not hate that God. He did not say, "I don't like to have anything to do with you anymore." No, he said, "My." I see willingness. I see love of his Father, for

his Father. I see that he was submissive. What a response. There is still fellowship. Quite something.

He was in every part perfect. He was more longing than any child of God ever was, right? That longing for his Father, that thirst for God was just perfect as well, and he did not get any help. The Father did not satiate him, did not satisfy him, did not give him anything. He was alone in spite of his hunger, his dear, sweet hunger for God. The Father did not listen to him. He was fitted to receive that love. He didn't get it. He was more able to commune with his Father than anyone else but he did not receive anything. He could not endure to be without God with the holiness. He could not be without his Father. What piousness, in the positive sense, what a godly fear, and yet although with such an intense desire for his Father, the Father did not take this burden away.

So he did not quarrel with his Father. He said kind of the same as he said before, "Not my will but thy will be done." Real suffering. More real than we can imagine. One more time, think about it, and he laid on him the iniquity of us all, and the Lord Jesus felt it in his soul, the travail of his soul. Second thought: why? "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Why? So some say that "why" is actually not a real question. He did not expect an answer either. It was just an expression of anguish, kind of, "Oh, how serious this is." And I think that's true. It's not so the Lord Jesus was expecting an answer. He knew the answer. He knew the answer. It was an expression of his deepest agonies.

And I suppose you remember, younger ones, older ones, what's behind this, right? Because love and anger are related. Love and anger are brother and sister. Love, real love means angry, and real anger means love. If someone, that's the sinful side, if someone is really a proud person, that person loves himself, right, a real love for yourself, narcissistic, love for yourself, oh, then if something happens and people do something to you, you get so angry because you love yourself so much. Or a mother gets really upset with you when you do something do that child, to her child, to her baby that she loves so much, don't do that because you will get to deal with her because she loves that child. Right? You know also the example of people loving fetuses, loving babies in the womb. If you don't love them, abortion is fine. You don't feel upset about it. But if you feel upset about those unprotected little humans in the womb, and if you truly care for them, you get really angry about abortion. Correct? Do you see how love and anger are close to each other? The more you love, the angrier you get.

And that's also true for God because God really really really loves himself. He's God. If you love yourself over others, that's bad. You see that you're not worthy of that. Who do you think you are? But God loves himself, rightly so. He deserves to be loved by himself. He knows himself. He is perfect. He's Almighty. He is everything that he should have as God. And so God, of course, he must love himself and if someone sins against him, oh there is that holy indignation that God cannot stand the sinner and must punish the sinner. "Oh, why hast thou forsaken me?" He knew, the Lord Jesus knew that God the Father was provoked to anger, that God the Father had to punish sin, that he had to take himself seriously. There was no other way than this way, that he absorbed the wrath of his Father. So by the way, that's why there is a hell. There is a hell because God is love. There is a

hell because God is love. He loves himself too much to just let things go and just turn a blind eye on things. He can't do that. He loves himself rightly too much for that.

So the Almighty God wanted to save a people for himself but justice had to be done. He had to do that and that's why the Lord Jesus is kissing the hand smiting him. So the Lord Jesus was dedicated to go on. He knew this was necessary to save. He knew this was not in vain. He had to continue. So why did the Lord Jesus suffer? Why dying? You know, make a life study of this question. Make a life study of the question why, why forsake him. If you know the answer to that, why the Lord Jesus had to suffer so deeply, then you really know something.

So he bore the sins as if he was a sinner, and he did so not for himself but for his people. Think of the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 15, beautifully said there on page 43, I believe. I'll read it to you.

Q. 37. What dost thou understand by the words, "He suffered"?

A. That He, all the time that He lived on earth [his whole life], but especially at the end of His life [more intensely at the end], sustained in body and soul the wrath of God against the sins of all mankind."

That's what the Heidelberg Catechism says, that he sustained in body and soul the wrath of God against the sin of some, against the sin of the elect. No, it says the sins of mankind. So take it all together, the undivided wrath of God, he had to undergo that. He had to live that. He had to finish the work for that reason.

A. ...that so by His passion, as the only propitiatory sacrifice [there is no other one to be found], He might redeem our body [yes, our body] and soul from everlasting damnation, and obtain for us the favor of God, righteousness and eternal life.

So that's why the Lord Jesus experienced those hellish agonies and was forsaken by his Father, to give the favor of God. What else comes with God's favor? God's smile. God's love. God's protection. God being there for you, you being a child of God, having the favor of God. That's why the Lord Jesus had to experience this, to give the favor of God, righteousness and eternal life. That's why he took upon himself a human nature with a human body and a human soul and a divine nature. He had a divine nature already but he took upon himself a human body and a human soul to suffer it all, to take it all in to obtain the favor of God.

So the Lord had said to Adam already, "The day that thou eats thereof thou shalt surely die." And that's what you see here, the Lord Jesus dying, made to be sin to make righteousness of God in him. There was no other way. There was no other way. You know, you might say that forgiveness should be easy to God but it is not easy. Something tremendous had to happen and he has given his only Son. Sin is so horrible that the death

of the cross was needed. He was made that sacrifice for sin, an offering, a sacrifice to God.

"Walk in love as Christ also has loved us and has given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor." So he gave that sweet smelling savor to his Father in dying.

So congregation, there is a remedy, there is forgiveness, there is the possibility of receiving that solace, that true help, that forgiveness of all your sins. It's only in him and that brings us to the third thought. The first one was truly forsaken; the second was why forsaken; and the third one is more about not forsaken.

Congregation, if we would see the seriousness of the cross and of sin, we would never smile until we were reconciled to God. So we need to kind of know what that sin is and how serious it is. So the Lord Jesus, he took that cross for a reason, to take away the sins of his people, and I think it is in such an excellent way explained in the form of the Lord's Supper. So on page 137, the second column, I read at the very end something like this: that we might never be confounded. He suffered innumerable reproaches that we might never be confounded. That's the purpose, never be confounded, no condemnation. That he was innocently condemned to death that we might be acquitted at the judgment seat of God. Yea, that he suffered he suffered his blessed body to be nailed on the cross that he might fix thereof the handwriting of our sins, and has also taken upon himself the curse due to us that he might fill us with his blessings, and has humbled himself unto the deepest reproach and pains of hell, the deepest both in body and soul on the tree of the cross when he cried out with a loud voice, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," that we might be accepted and never be forsaken of him.

So the Lord Jesus was forsaken to accept people, to accept them. Children, to take that condemnation away. Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Now no condemnation for that people that finds life in Jesus, that feels also something, a little of that condemnation that they deserve and he takes that condemnation away. There is therefore now no condemnation. Do you like that? Are you hungry for that? It's available. There's a Savior who bore the complete undivided wrath of God against the sin of all mankind and I have the privilege of inviting you to him. There is forgiveness with him.

"Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Oh, what a blessing that he received all the sins that were imputed on him. But blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin because it was laid on him. "He that believeth on him is not condemned but he that believeth not is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Oh, the Lord Jesus, he came with that great purpose, to take that condemnation away. So there will be no condemnation, not forsaken, "for Christ also has suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Bring us to God. He's the only one who can bring you to God. It's only through him. He's the way, the truth and the life. Do

you want to be brought to God? This is the address. Lean hard on him. We deserve the deepest hell but he will never forsake them that believe in him, that lean upon him because there's a full atonement in him.

We cannot say Father, you can say Father, he said, "My God." Maybe you cannot also not say "My Father" but then say "My God." He's the only one, the only gate of heaven and that gate is never closed. It's always open.

Now let me in a word of application show you a few more windows, a few ways of looking at this. When you see the Lord Jesus on the cross in that darkness at the end of the three hours of darkness, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Do you see it? You see what? There you see what sin is. Do you know what sin is? You don't know what sin is? Look at the cross. "Forsaken me," forsaken me, now you see what sin is. You see what sin is in the law, right, but you see it more clearly on the cross. That is sin. That's the consequence of it and the consequence of it tells you something about what sin is, so ugly, so worthy of hell. That's what sin is.

So if you are fighting against a bosom sin, for example, a sin you sin against all the time, look at the cross. See the cross, what sin is, that the Lord Jesus had to be forsaken for it, and arm yourself with that and hate sin for that reason. Hate sin because it nailed him to the cross. When a sin is approaching you and you're tempted, say, "I want to consider the cross of the Lord Jesus."

So look at the cross and see what sin is, look at the cross and see what hell is. Do you see what hell is? There's nothing left. Eternal darkness. No God. And that's final and there's no hope anymore because you have despised the Savior as well. So there's no condemnation for them that are in Jesus Christ but he that believeth not is condemned already and it's irreversible. So are you unconverted and you are considering what the future is like or you don't want to think about it maybe? Look at the cross and you see what hell is and that eternal, and what the reprobates experience in hell forever he has absorbed on the cross.

Hell. You know, you don't have to go there because of the Savior. He's preached to you and the door is open. He's inviting you. You don't have to go to hell. And if you go to hell, it will be your own fault, no? Or will you be a victim and the Lord says, "You couldn't help it"?

So whatsoever happened to the Lord Jesus will happen to all them outside of him. All what happened to him will happen to you when you're outside of him. So you must come to him or you will not be saved without him. So see what sin is, see what hell is, see what love is. See what love is. "God so loved the world that he has given his only begotten Son that whomsoever believeth in him, they will not perish but have everlasting life." That's the love of the Father that has given his Son for that reason, and the love of the Lord Jesus Christ to take it all in to save his people from their sins. That's love, undeserved, unconditional, eternal love.



Do you want to miss that? Are you still under the wrath? And the love is preached and you still continue and you're not interested? That is so foolish. You're so blind and yet it's preached unto you this morning hour again, "that only name given among men by whom we must be saved." Oh, before he created the universe, he already loved his people, right? He has chosen his people and he was prepared to save them.

See what sin is. See what hell is. See what love is. See what faith is. Here you see what faith is, to have nothing and to say, "My God," so you don't have to qualify, you don't need to have anything, believing is not doing something and earning some points and presenting something to God, believing is having nothing and only relying on him and seek your salvation outside of him in another. You see what sin is, you see what hell is, you see what love is, you see what faith is.

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," the Lord Jesus said. Maybe you have said something different. Maybe, child of God, you have said, "My God, my God, why hast thou accepted me?" That's the highest form of joy. That's wonderment. That's amazing grace. Why? Why did he look at me? Why did he choose me? Why did he save me? Why did he give his Son to me? Why did he give his Holy Spirit to me? Why? Why hast thou accepted me? That will be heaven to always kind of, so to speak, pray that. Oh, my God, oh my God, why hast thou accepted me? There's no reason in me.

So think about it, the Lord Jesus experienced hell, right, in that constant suffering in the blackest darkness surrounded by the demons of hell, bearing the sins of mankind, bowing under the judgment of God, and being separated from his Father. You know, you hear it so often, it's such a common expression, "Oh my God." If you have a little bit of understanding of what that means, you don't get it over your lips anymore. That's blasphemous unless it is your prayer, "Oh my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Or your praise, "Oh my God, why hast thou accepted me?" But as a trivial word, as a filler, you can't do that.

Congregation, the Lord Jesus experienced for three hours such darkness. His Father was quiet and hiding his face and the Lord Jesus was holding onto his Father and then eventually he said, that's important as well, "It is finished!" It's finished. What is finished? All the work he did. All the obedience he had to obey. "I'm done." The Lord Jesus looked back at his life and he said, "Well done" about himself. And the Lord Jesus said, "I did it. I've finished. I've finished this suffering. I have suffered it all." So now there is no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus, that believe in him, that hide under him.

Congregation, it's Good Friday today, Good Friday, how can it be good? Why do we call it "good" when someone dies and is in such darkness and such agony, calling it Good Friday? So we are celebrating someone's condemnation? Yes, we celebrate the death of the Lord Jesus because his death is the life of his people.

Congregation, hell is unquenchable fire and being always and ever forsaken by God. You don't have to go there. The door is open. Oh, that unwillingness, oh, that unbelief, and yet

the Lord brings in a people for himself. He paid the price. He applies it. He draws them irresistibly and there will be one shepherd and one flock and the Lord Jesus will lead them to those quiet waters and they may experience it forever, no condemnation through him. Amen.