

# The Gospel Unashamed

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

*A Controversial Newsletter "The Printed Voice of Summit Theological Seminary"*

~ All articles written by Terry Carter unless otherwise stated ~

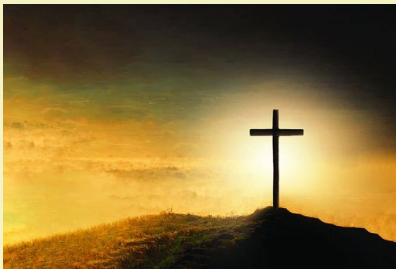
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## Did God Forsake Christ?

**Matthew 27:46**



"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?**'" **Matthew 27:46 (NKJV)**

Most of us have been taught that God forsook Jesus on the cross. We are told that that is why Jesus said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" I do not believe that God forsook Christ on the cross. I have always had a problem with this idea. It is the purpose of this article to show that God did not forsake Christ on the cross.

If God forsook Jesus in His death, how can I be assured that He will not forsake me in mine? Furthermore, it is the very death and resurrection that is supposed

to assure me of salvation. What assurance is there if Christ was actually forsaken during the very death that is to give me assurance?

Jesus had stated that God, even while referring to the cross, would not forsake Him. Jesus said that the Father was with Him and had not left Him alone.

"28 Then Jesus said to them, '**When you lift up the Son of Man**, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. 29 **And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone**, for I always do those things that please Him.'" **John 8:28-29 (NKJV)**

This is in reference to when He would be lifted up, clearly a reference to the cross. He also stated that His disciples would scatter and leave Him, but the Father would still be with Him.

"31 Jesus answered them, 'Do you now believe? 32 Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that **you will be scattered**, each to his own, **and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone,**

**because the Father is with Me.'**" **John 16:31-32 (NKJV)**

Again, this is a clear reference to the cross. Not only did Jesus believe that God would be with Him, but He believed that God would be with Him at the cross. If God did forsake Him, then Jesus was either mistaken or He lied. If either is the case, He could not be the Christ. Isaiah prophesied that God would see the crucifixion.

"10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. 11 **He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied.** By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities." **Isaiah 53:10-11 (NKJV)**

Notice that it is God who bruised Him. Notice also that He shall see the labor of His soul. There is no doubt that Isaiah is saying that God would see Christ's death on the cross. If He saw it, He did not turn His back on it and forsake Christ. Also, Jesus committed His spirit to the Father.

“And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, ‘**Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.**’ Having said this, He breathed His last.” **Luke 23:46 (NKJV)**

Why would Jesus say this if He had just been forsaken? The fact is that He knew that He had not been forsaken. If Jesus was forsaken by God, wouldn't He have known the reason for it?

On the cross He said, "...why have You forsaken Me?" Why would the Christ not know why He was being forsaken? The fact is that He was not forsaken at all. He was quoting an Old Testament Scripture.

**“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning?” Psalms 22:1 (NKJV)**

A look at the passage that Jesus was quoting shows that He was not forsaken. At the beginning of **Psalms 22**, the Psalmist feels as though he has been forsaken by God. As you continue to read, however, you see that he was not actually forsaken at all.

**“For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; Nor has He hidden His face from Him; But when He cried to Him, He heard.” Psalms 22:24 (NKJV)**

This psalm is prophetic of the crucifixion. Jesus, like the Psalmist, may have felt forsaken. But the fact is neither the Psalmist nor Christ was actually forsaken by God. Do not forget that Christ had a human side. It may be that His human side felt forsaken just as the Psalmist had.

Remember that the Psalms were put to music. Starting the first line of a song would certainly bring to remembrance the rest of it. Those who were familiar with **Psalms 22** would immediately recognize the statement. They would also certainly remember the rest of the song. They would certainly remember how it ends in victory, not defeat.

The song, “Love Lifted Me”, begins with the words, “I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore.” But we remember how the song ends with such a shout of victory. If a man spoke the first line on his deathbed, who would say that he had despaired of salvation?

Consider this quote concerning **Psalms 22** from *The Broadman Bible Commentary*:

“The psalm found recurrent use, both in private worship and in open worship of the community for which it was originally composed. Whenever the psalm was used, however, reference to one part of it would inevitably call forth the memory of the rest of it. (Note: We might quote only “The Lord is my shepherd,” for example, but the rest of Psalms 23 would immediately come to our minds.)...It is against such a tradition that our Lord’s use of the psalm from the cross must be viewed...Our Lord was therefore speaking of the terror of His suffering, and also, since the disciples and His mother would certainly have known the full psalm, of the victory which was to follow.”

Note that this is a victory psalm in the midst of other victory psalms. Halley summarizes it as follows:

- **Psalms 20** – A song of

trust

- **Psalms 21** – Thanks for victory
- **Psalms 22** – A Psalm of the Crucifixion
- **Psalms 23** – The Shepherd Psalm
- **Psalm 24** – The King’s Arrival in Zion

Morgan summarizes it somewhat differently, but still recognizes the victorious nature of these psalms:

- **Psalms 20** – Jehovah appealed to for help on behalf of the king.
- **Psalms 21** – Jehovah praised as the Strength of the King.
- **Psalms 22** – Jehovah as the Succorer of the afflicted one.
- **Psalms 23** – Jehovah the Shepherd of His own.
- **Psalms 24** – Jehovah conquering through His king.

There is the possibility that Christ was telling the crowd that they were fulfilling the prophecy of Psalms 22. Immediately prior to Christ making the statement in question, many of the prophecies of this psalm had been fulfilled.

For example:

- They cast lots for His garments.
- They had pierced His hands and feet.
- They mocked Him and shook their heads at Him.
- They encircled Him and stared at Him.
- They said, "He trusts in the Lord, let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him."
- He thirsted.

Jesus may have quoted the first verse of this psalm to tell the

people that they were fulfilling the prophecy right then and there. It is only recorded in Mark and Matthew. Matthew is the Gospel to the Jews. They would be familiar with **Psalms 22**. Read **Psalms 22** and **Matthew 27** together sometime and see if this is not plausible.

Notice that Jesus spoke these words in Aramaic. Why? Because He was quoting from the Old Testament. It is like when we quote in Latin, "*et to Brute*". We are saying that someone is doing to us what Brutus did to Julius Caesar. They were doing to Jesus what the Psalmist prophesied.

God has promised many times not to forsake His people. The writer of Hebrews quotes from **Deuteronomy 31:6** and **Psalms 118:6-7** to assure us that God will never forsake us.

"5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. **For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'** 6 **So we may boldly say: 'The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?'**" **Hebrews 13:5-6 (NKJV)**

Isaiah gives us God's promises to always be with His people.

**"Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God.** I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." **Isaiah 41:10 (NKJV)**

**"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;** And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be

burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you." **Isaiah 43:2 (NKJV)**

Before He ascended, Christ promised to be with us always, until the end of the world.

"teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; **and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'** Amen." **Matthew 28:20 (NKJV)**

Notice that the psalmist's enemies said that God had forsaken him, but he will always have hope.

"10 **For my enemies speak against me;** And those who lie in wait for my life take counsel together, 11 **Saying, 'God has forsaken him;** Pursue and take him, for there is none to deliver him.' 12 O God, do not be far from me; O my God, make haste to help me! 13 Let them be confounded and consumed Who are adversaries of my life; Let them be covered with reproach and dishonor Who seek my hurt. 14 **But I will hope continually,** And will praise You yet more and more. 15 My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness And Your salvation all the day, For I do not know their limits. 16 I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD; I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only. 17 O God, You have taught me from my youth; And to this day I declare Your wondrous works. 18 Now also when I am old and grayheaded, **O God, do not forsake me,** Until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come." **Psalms 71:10-18 (NKJV)**

Despite the fact that others thought God had forsaken him, the

Psalmist did not believe it.

### ANSWERS TO OBJECTIONS:

Some may object that Jesus was bearing the sins of the world and that God cannot look on iniquity.

They cite "**You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness.** Why do You look on those who deal treacherously, And hold Your tongue when the wicked devours A person more righteous than he?" **Habakkuk 1:13 (NKJV)**

But the end of the verse says that He does look on those that deal treacherously. Keep in mind that Habakkuk is complaining to God here. He cannot understand why God has looked on those who deal treacherously. He is saying, "I thought that you could not do that, why have you done so?" God later answers that the end for the wicked will come.

"For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry." **Habakkuk 2:3 (NKJV)**

The point of the passage is that God cannot look on iniquity and not do something about it. Furthermore, we know from other passages that God does look on iniquity and acts because of it. The Lord went down to Sodom specifically to see the sin of it.

"20 And the LORD said, 'Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, 21 **I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it** that has

come to Me; and if not, I will know.” **Genesis 18:20-21 (NKJV)**

God saw the affliction of His people in Egypt.

“7 And the LORD said: ‘I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. 8 So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites.’” **Exodus 3:7-8 (NKJV)**

Notice in both cases that God did something about the iniquity that He beheld. Some argue that Isaiah prophesied that He would be forsaken of God.

They cite, “1 Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? 2 For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him. 3 **He is despised and rejected** by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.” **Isaiah 53:1-3 (NKJV)**

But this text says nothing about Him being forsaken by God. It says He would be despised and rejected “of men”, “we hid...our faces from Him”, and “we did not esteem Him.” The prophecy here is about man’s rejection of Him, not God’s.

We have already seen that Jesus predicted the same in **John 16:31-32**. Yet, in the same text, He said He was not alone, for the Father was with Him. Also, we have already shown that Isaiah himself said in verse 11 of this very chapter that God would see the labor of His soul.

Some argue that if God did not forsake Jesus, He did not pay the penalty for our sin and hence, we have no salvation.

One man said, “To be totally cut off from the Giver of Life; to be abandoned to the darkness of death; to have the Father turn away from you, leaving you to suffer and die...this is the penalty for one’s sin!”

I would first point out that he offers no Scripture to support this assertion. This is his conclusion about what the Scriptures say, not what they actually do say. The basic assumption here, among others, is that Jesus had to suffer the exact same penalty as the unrepentant will for their sin in order to be a valid substitute for those who do repent. I simply do not see this in Scripture. This equates the penalty for sin and the consequences of it. This concept leads some to deny the existence of an eternal hell. Others argue that Jesus had to spend time in hell in order to pay our penalty.

Both ideas are extreme and have their problems. If we assume that their basic premise is correct, we

still have problems. How can three hours of separation pay the penalty for an eternity of separation? If Jesus must suffer what the unrepentant sinner suffers, three hours is not sufficient.

But I think the root problem is

equating the penalty for sin with the consequences. Jesus did not have to suffer the liver disease of the alcoholic. He did not suffer from the venereal disease of the immoral. He did not suffer the withdrawal of the drug addict. The list could go on and on. These are the consequences of sin, not the penalty for sin. It is my contention that separation from God is the ultimate consequence of sin, not the penalty. Moses and David both suffered the consequences of their sin even after they were forgiven. Why stop at the consequence of separation? Why not insist on all consequences of sin?

The same man, who made the statement quoted above, goes on to say the following. “The *only* [emphasis his] difference, and it is significant, is that Jesus was also previously given a promise: Because He was sinless, and because, out of love, He took our place, He would not be *abandoned* [emphasis his] to the grave. He would be raised to LIFE [emphasis his]. No such promise is given to the wicked.”

What needs to be noted here is that he admits Jesus was exempt from eternal separation from the Father. If He is exempt from permanent separation, why suppose He is subject to temporary separation. Also note that the promise he refers to contain a promise that Jesus would not be abandoned in the grave.

The actual Greek word used in Acts 2:27 is “*hades*” meaning “the abode of the dead.” My question is this, “since Jesus was promised that He would not be abandoned in death, why would we assume He was abandoned in life?”

Suppose I embezzled \$20,000

from my employer. I may be prosecuted and go to jail. But what if I have a rich uncle who agrees to pay back the money I stole on the condition that I am not prosecuted. Who would argue that he could not pay the penalty without going to jail in my stead? It is common for a fine to be paid in lieu of jail. If the fine is paid by one other than the defendant, the penalty is still paid, and nobody goes to jail.

It is up to the offended party to determine what penalty is sufficient for forgiveness. In our case, the offended party is God. I find nowhere in Scripture where He requires separation as a condition for our forgiveness. What He requires is death. The constant claim of Scripture is not that Jesus was separated from God for our sins. It is that Jesus died for our sins. He was our sacrifice. To require something that God doesn't simply leads to difficulties.

Thanks be to God that He will not leave or forsake us. The fact is that man often forsakes God, but God will never forsake His people. If He had forsaken His own sinless Son, how could we trust Him to not forsake us?

**Note:** The previous article is an excerpt from *The Abused Texts* by George Faull and Terry Carter.

