

Did God Forsake His Son?

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Today we're going to look into a subject that has been mentioned by several of the elders of the Pacific Church of God in sermons and messages over the last year. We'll look at it in depth, and with that in mind, let's turn to Matthew 27:46—a very familiar scripture that all of us know well. This is Jesus Christ speaking shortly before His death, about three o'clock in the afternoon.

Matthew 27:46 *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?* (KJV)

We know that is a direct quote from Psalm 22, verse 1. The church has historically taught that at that moment, or before that moment, God the Father turned His back on His Son and forsook Him. The reasoning for coming to that conclusion is as follows: Christ, in bearing all the sins of mankind on the cross, became sin. Since God cannot look on sin or be in the presence of sin, therefore He had to turn His back on Christ and forsake Him, and thus not be with His Son during His Son's most difficult time in His life, on the cross.

This has been a tradition in the church of God for decades. I asked myself, when did this come into the church? Over a period of years, actually; I started looking into it and the earliest reference to this teaching, this doctrine, that I could find is in a booklet titled, The Real Jesus, by Garner Ted Armstrong. It was copyrighted in 1971, and on pages 241–243 addressed this issue. Maybe you can find an earlier reference but this was the earliest one I found. Garner Ted Armstrong wrote,

It seemed that even the Father had now forsaken Him.

Once that booklet came out, as is typical, it was embellished by overzealous ministers, and over time that teaching became embedded as church tradition, and was repeated over and over again, emphasizing that God forsook His Son during His time of greatest need. The question is, was this tradition ever thought through? Seriously thought through and looked at from different angles? Because this teaching begs some very important questions that we'll talk about today.

The fact is, would God turn His back on His Son at His Son's most critical juncture in life, on the cross? Similarly, could God, would God, turn His back on us? Would He possibly do that when we're caught up in sin or we're in a critical situation like Christ was? Those are questions that need to be answered and we should all want to know the answers. So the title of the sermon is:

Did God Forsake His Son?

We're going to look at that today in depth.

1. First, let's look at four problems with this teaching—the belief that God forsook His Son—four issues that are apparent that need to be addressed.

The first one, if you like to outline, would be point A.

A. The plan for Christ's death was known by both God and His Son from the very beginning.

The plan was known. Let's go to Revelation 13:8. We're breaking into a prophecy about the Beast but it has something very important relative to this subject. Unless otherwise noted, I'll be reading out of the King James.

Revelation 13:8 *And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him [referring to the Beast, and prior to that we're told that Satan is behind the Beast], whose names are not written in the book of life [notice this last phrase] of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (KJV)*

We're told here that the knowledge, the plan, that Christ had to die, occurred long before human beings ever existed, long before Satan ever rebelled. Now look at John 12:27. Christ is speaking shortly before His last Passover. Notice what He says, that this issue of dying for mankind and the manner of death was known long before it actually happened. Not long before Christ's last Passover, He says,

John 12:27 *Now is my soul [the King James says it means "life"] troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. (KJV)*

We know Christ said, let this cup pass from Me if it's Your will, but They both knew it wasn't God's will or Christ's will because this plan had been working for a very long time. Clarke's Commentary translates this verse as, "I have come to this place so you could ultimately save me."

This plan was known from the very beginning, and both God and Christ knew the details of this plan of salvation, including the manner of Christ's death. As we will read today, and as you know, prophecies show that. If this plan was known from the beginning, why would Christ need to ask the question in the first place? My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?—why would He need to ask that question, if the whole plan was known and what was going to happen was known? That's a question that needs to be answered.

The second problem with this teaching is:

B. God has been in the presence of sin since Satan rebelled.

It's been historically taught in the church that Christ literally became sin on the cross, and since God the Father can't be in the presence of sin or be near sin, therefore He had to turn His back on His Son and forsake Him, and walk away and leave Christ alone. If you do some research into this concept, it is not a biblical concept, it is a Gnostic concept. We know that Satan the devil is not only the originator of sin, but he is the most sinful being that has ever existed—absolutely, without question—and yet there are several examples in the scriptures of Satan coming into the presence of God and the scriptures even indicate that it's a regular occurrence. This is not some one-off event, it occurs regularly. With that in mind let's go to Job 1:6 and see an encounter between God the Father and Satan.

Job 1:6 *Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD [all caps—YHVH; notice the last part of verse 6], and Satan came also among them.*

Before God Almighty. Think about that. Verse 7.

7) And the LORD said unto Satan ...

Then toward the end of the verse ...

7 continued) Then Satan answered the LORD ...

8) And the LORD said unto Satan ...

9) Then Satan answered the LORD, and said ...

12) And the LORD said unto Satan ...

Then at the end of verse 12,

So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD. (KJV)

This is an account of YHVH (God Almighty) and Satan, engaged in a discussion about Job, face to face. For sake of time, it's repeated in chapter 2, when Satan comes back into God's presence for a second discussion. So we see that the notion that God can't be in the presence of sin certainly didn't apply here.

Now let's go to Revelation 12:9 and see that the Bible clearly indicates that Satan can be in the presence of God, and it is not a one-time event. It happens regularly. Here we have the definition of the great dragon, the serpent.

Revelation 12:9 *And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world [we know who we're talking about]: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels [his demons] were cast out with him.*

10) *And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. (KJV)*

The Greek word for *before* can mean, “in the face of” or “in the presence of”. We’re told plainly that Satan accuses the brethren before God, day and night, all the time, regularly (Job being one of them, of course, and all of us as well). We see that this notion that God can’t be in the presence of sin is just not true, at least according to what we’ve read. This happened day and night, and Satan is accusing us—as he did Job, the apostles, the prophets—before God, day and night.

What about the concept of God and Christ living inside us? I don’t know if that was ever thought through. Look at John 14:23. This was Christ’s last night on earth and He was trying to help His disciples understand this concept. They didn’t understand but they would later.

John 14:23 [This was the night Christ was taken] *Jesus answered and said unto him [this was Judas, not Judas Iscariot], If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him [the Greek word for “unto” can be translated “in”], and make our abode with him. (KJV)*

That Greek word can be translated “in”. We know when we receive the Holy Spirit, God and Christ come to live within us, inside us, through that Holy Spirit. We all sin. Romans 3:23—all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. God’s Spirit resides in our sinful bodies, our human nature, which is sinful. It’s confounding to say that God can’t be in the presence of sin and yet He and Christ reside in us; how does that work if God can’t be in the presence of sin? We see that God is in the presence of sin continually by dwelling in us. God is in the presence of sin by Satan coming before His throne continually, abusing us and accusing us before God.

If you put these scriptures together, they seem to tell us very clearly that God is regularly in the presence of sin. Then the question is, if that’s the case, why would God forsake His Son? That is a question that I don’t think was ever thought through.

The third problem with this teaching, if we search the scriptures and look at the gospels very closely, was that

C. God was with His Son, very closely, in the last hours of His life.

Let’s go to John 8:29, and we’re breaking into an account: Christ is speaking to the Jews in the Temple. He’s teaching and He explains something relevant to this subject. Notice what Jesus says:

John 8:29 *And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him. (KJV)*

Now jump to chapter 16 and we'll read verse 32. Christ is speaking the night He was betrayed, so this is less than twenty-four hours before His death.

John 16:32 *Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone [notice what He says]: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. (KJV)*

Christ said this, knowing soon He would die, but He says, *the Father is with Me*. We have strong indications that the Father was with His Son right up to the very end of His life. We'll see some more evidence a little later.

Then the fourth problem with this is something instinctive to fathers and mothers, to those of us who have had children:

D. It's hard to believe that a loving Father would turn away from His Son at the very moment His Son needed Him most.

We, as human fathers and human mothers, couldn't do that—we would cringe at that. Similarly, when we need our Father the most, we wouldn't want our Father to turn away from us, if we were in some tremendous trial, some life-threatening, maybe life-ending trial—we would want our Father to be side by side with us the whole time. Then put yourself in the loving Father's position—a loving father or a loving mother would want to be with their son, right by their son's side during the most difficult time of their son's life. So in applying this concept to Jesus Christ, God would similarly want to be with His Son, would want to be with His children when His children are in times of crisis. A loving Father would want to do that.

As we can see there are some problems with our previous teaching on this subject. The question comes, could there be an alternative explanation that avoids these problems or answers these problems? When you look at it there are two questions: (1) Did God really forsake Christ, and, (2) Why did Christ ask the question, while on the cross, "My God, My God why have you forsaken Me?"

Those are the two basic questions, because if Christ asked God, why have You forsaken Me, hadn't they planned this from the beginning? Didn't Christ know how He was going to die? Why would this be a surprise? If the Father had to turn away and they both understood the nature of sin—and they both know that their relationship has no beginning and has no end—wouldn't Christ have known in advance that this would occur?

Why ask the question in the first place? There are major problems with this teaching, so what we need to do now is look at some facts that we need to consider, each one of us individually.

That leads to the second point.

2. Scripture shows that Christ did not become sin, rather, He carried our sins.

It's one thing for Christ to carry our sins, it is something totally different to say that He actually became sin. The question is, how could the perfect, sin-free Christ become sin, and therefore be sinful? If He becomes sin, He's going to be sinful. With that in mind, let's look at a blanket statement from the Apostle John. Let's go to 1 John 3 and we'll read verse 5. John is talking about Christ, the Messiah, and as we know, he was the last apostle to write during the early New Testament church period. He is looking back and writing things that are very important for us today.

1 John 3:5 *And ye know that he [referring to Christ, the Messiah] was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. (KJV)*

In Christ there is no sin. There was no sin in Him before He became a human being, when He was at God's right hand. There was no sin in Him while He was a human being and there is no sin in Him now, when He sits at the right hand of His Father—no sin in Jesus Christ, at all. Okay, then we must be missing something here. The Apostle Peter reveals a key to understanding this dilemma; let's go to 1 Peter 2:24. Peter, when we understand this, just opens our eyes to see what really was there all along. I'll read this out of the New King James.

1 Peter 2:24 [Peter is speaking about Christ] *... who Himself [referring to Jesus Christ] bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. (KJV)*

This is a very familiar scripture, but the key is, Peter says Christ *bore our sins*. The definition of the word *bore* is Strong's #399 in the Greek, and it means to take up—literally or figuratively—to take up, to bring up, or, to carry up. Certainly on the cross, He carried up our sins. He bore them, they were on His shoulders, He lifted them. We see here that Peter says, Christ bore our sins. He does not say Christ became sin—that's not here.

With that in mind, let's look at a prophecy about this same event. Let's go back to Isaiah 53:4. I'll read it out of the King James. As we read through this, notice the similarity between this and the verse we just read in 1 Peter 2:24—notice how close they are. They say the same thing. A prophecy about the coming Messiah.

Isaiah 53:4 *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.*

5) *But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*

6) *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way [referring, obviously, to our spiritual sense when we turn to our own way and turn away from God]; and the LORD hath laid on him [Christ], the iniquity of us all.*

10) *Yet it pleased the LORD [YHVH] to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul [His life, notice this] an offering for sin [now we see something—His life is an offering for sin], he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days [through eternal life], and the pleasure of the LORD [YHVH] shall prosper in his hand.*

11) *He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant [God calls Christ His righteous servant] justify many; [here it is again] for he shall bear their iniquities.*

12) *Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul [life] unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; [here again, it says] and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (KJV)*

This would be a perfect time for God to reveal that Christ became sin. But it doesn't say that, it says He carried our sins—yes—and the understanding that He was a sin offering on our behalf. Now let's go to Galatians 3:13 and see that Paul confirms this concept of Christ taking on our sins—bearing our sins, carrying our sins. Paul is speaking to us today, through these ancient writings.

Galatians 3:13 *But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law [we know that as Romans 6:23—the wages of sin is death]. When he was hung on the cross, [notice this] he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing. For it is written in the Scriptures, "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." (NLT)*

He's quoting Deuteronomy 21:23. We see that Christ took on the curse which is the penalty for sin. It does not say He became sin. Here's the point: When Christ takes on our sins, whose sins are they? They're ours, they're not His. When He carries our sins, they are our sins, they are not His sins. He committed no sin. Therefore He carried, on the cross, our sins, He lifted up our sins and bore them on His back, so to speak, if you want to put it physically, but the fact is, the sins were ours, not His.

Let's look at two proof texts that are used by those who believe that Christ became sin. Let's go to Isaiah 59:2—or why Christ said, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me. A very familiar scripture; we know this by heart but let's look at it relative to the issue that we are talking about, about Christ asking the question, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me. And did God forsake Him?

Isaiah 59:2 *But your iniquities [understand these are our iniquities] have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. (KJV)*

We understand this, that when we sin, we put distance between ourselves and God. God doesn't move, God doesn't change, neither does Christ. The fact is, God is immovable, unchangeable, so when we sin, we move farther away from God. This scripture has been used to say that God distanced Himself from His Son, but remember, His Son was sinless. Christ had no sin. It is true, our sins separate us from our Father

because we're heading now in a wrong direction—we're going away from our Father, and because of that sinning, we put distance between God and ourselves. We know that—when we get in a pattern of sin, we're not as close to God as we used to be. This is not because God forsakes us, not because He forsook Christ, but because we move. Again, they are our sins and Christ had no sin—we have to keep that in mind.

The question is, does God forsake us every time we sin? Of course not. God is with us, He is there with us. In fact, if we look at our lives, we can be in a pattern of sin for years, sometimes decades, and God is still with us. By our own experience, we know there are times—and I look back on certain times of my life since I was baptized, there were years that I was just not as close to God as I should have been, and I drifted off course—we've all experienced that, but does that mean God turned His back on us at that time or that He rejected us at that time? God is very patient with us, isn't He? He patiently waits for us—sometimes years—to come to ourselves.

Remember the parable of the prodigal son? He went and wasted the inheritance his father gave him; he lived a debauched life and was finally feeding pigs in a trough, and woke up and said, my father's servants have it better than I do—what am I doing? The lightbulb went on and he came to himself. He went rushing back to his father and his father was there waiting for him. His father didn't go chasing after him but when he went back to God, figuratively speaking, God was there with open arms, waiting to receive him back, leaving the ninety-nine and going after the one [Matthew 18:12].

We see by scripture that we can be in a pattern of sin for a long time and God does not forsake us. He is very patient, very kind, and very gentle with us. The question then becomes, why would His Son be separated from His Father when He bore our sins, yet had no sins in and of Himself? How can that be? Why would God turn His back on His Son during His time of greatest need? Those are questions that need to be answered. We've just read one proof text in Isaiah that says, yes, sin distances us from God, but those are our sins—Christ was sinless.

Now let's go to the prime scripture, 2 Corinthians 5:21, the one that is used as the ultimate proof text. In our past, we sometimes have taken one scripture that's maybe a little fuzzy and established a whole doctrine on it, and meanwhile there is a mountain of scriptures over here that is very plain and but is ignored.

2 Corinthians 5:21 [Paul is saying] *For he [referring to God the Father] hath made him [referring to Jesus Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* (KJV)

It was taught that this verse meant that Christ was actually transformed into sin, thereby becoming evil and polluted and sinful, and therefore the Father had to reject Him and turn His back on Him. But is that what 2 Corinthians 5:21 really says and really means? It says, for He [God] has *made* Him. It's interesting, the Greek word *made*; if you want to check it out, it is Strong's #4160, and yes, it means "to make or do" in a very wide application. Notice that the second meaning is "to bear". If you notice in your

Bible, the words *to be* are in italics, they are not in the original Greek. With that in mind, I went to an Interlinear Bible, in this case one on Biblehub.com—it's easy to get to on your computer, online—and as you recall, an Interlinear takes the English words in their exact order and puts underneath them the Hebrew or Greek words. Or rather, the Greek or the Hebrew words are in order and then the English translations are shown underneath them. This is what the Greek words say, as translated into English:

The One, not having known sin, for us, sin He made [that's Strong's #4160 —“made”] so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Let's use the word *bore* which is another meaning for this very word:

The One not having known sin, for us sin He bore [rather than He made]. Which rendering makes the most sense? That He bore or that He made? Notice how other translations translate this verse. The New Living Translation says:

For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. (NLT)

The Jewish New Testament says:

God made this sinless man be a sin offering on our behalf ... (CJB)

These two translations are consistent with Isaiah 53:10, where we're told in the prophecy about Christ, that He was made an offering for our sins. The Bible is indeed consistent. All the scriptures that we've read up to this point reveal to us that Christ bears our sins but these scriptures say nothing about Him actually becoming sin. Rather, these scriptures imply, and tell us directly, in some cases, that Christ was an offering for our sins. Isn't that what we celebrate at Passover and Atonement every year? That Christ is the sinless, perfect offering on our behalf?

He is a substitute for us, by dying Himself, so that we could be dead to sin, as the Bible says, that sin would have no more control over us. That's a long way from saying that He was transformed—Christ was transformed—into sin. Conceptually, it's hard for me to see how a perfect, sinless, human being in the form of Jesus Christ could become sin, and therefore, sinful. To me that's a concept that blows my mind. He carried our sins—yes, absolutely. He became a substitute for our sins—yes. Did He become a sinner, as a result of doing that?

You see, we have to answer that, each one, for ourselves. So the question is, would God forsake His Son—who was a pure, sinless, sacrifice, a pure, sinless, sin offering, bearing our sins on the cross—would God forsake His Son when He did that? We all have to answer these questions.

The third point:

3. Let's look now at an alternative explanation that hopefully answers these problems, or sheds light on them.

We won't turn there but in Matthew 27:46, Christ was simply stating and quoting what David said in Psalm 22: *My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?* We have to realize that almost the entire nation of Judah, in Christ's day, knew the scriptures. Psalm 22 was known by heart because that was a prophecy of the Messiah, and the Jews knew it by heart. It would be similar today to us knowing a popular song and the words of a popular song. It's a sad commentary on how far we've come from God in the last 2,000 years but 2,000 years ago, they knew the scriptures, they knew the psalms. Let's go back to the beginning, Psalm 22, and you're going to want to place a marker here, in verse 1. Remember who is speaking, this is a fallible human being—David. It says this is a Psalm of David.

Psalms 22:1 *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?*

2) *O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.* (KJV)

When David asked, My God, My God, why have you forsaken me, he could well be wondering where God was as he was being pursued by Saul and his life was in danger, or when his son Absalom tried to take the throne away and his life was in danger, or when he was in the desert running for his life and nothing was changing, and he was being pursued and his life was threatened, and he just humanly would wonder, my God, where are you?—why have you forsaken me? David did so because of human weakness—an imperfect human vision. We see through soda straws, we don't see what God is doing necessarily, every moment in our lives.

David had imperfect faith like we all do. Humanly, we lose faith when God does not meet our expectations. We expect to be rescued immediately. We expect God to wave the magic wand and everything's going to be okay and when that doesn't happen, then we say, God, where are you? Why aren't you doing what I want you to do? When we're going through a severe trial, have we not all asked that question, if we're honest with ourselves? God, you're not doing what I want you to do, where are you? Have you left me, have you deserted me, have you turned your back on me? That's what is happening here in verse 1 and 2 with David. But notice in verse 3, David's tone starts to change. David is thinking differently here.

3) *But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.*

4) *Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.*

5) *They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.* (KJV)

David is pointing out that the fathers trusted in God and God delivered them; He came to their rescue; He did not forsake the fathers, and finally you see David is starting to get his head on straight as opposed to verse 1. But now, at the end of verse 5, the

narrative switches and the coming Messiah begins to speak, as subsequent scriptures will prove. Ask yourself in verse 6, who on earth could be speaking from this point on?

- 6) *But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.*
- 7) *All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,*
- 8) *He trusted on the LORD [YHVH] that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. (KJV)*

Keep your marker here and turn to Matthew 27:39. We're going to see that this is the fulfillment and the proof of who is speaking. This couldn't be more plain. Psalm 22 was written centuries before what we're going to read in Matthew 27.

- Matthew 27:39** *And they that passed by [Christ is on the cross] reviled him, wagging their heads,*
- 40) *And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.*
- 41) *Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said,*
- 42) *He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.*
- 43) *He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.*
- 44) *The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth. (KJV)*

It is very clear—let's go back to Psalm 22—that the narrative changes, and Christ is beginning to speak. Look at verse 9 of Psalm 22; Christ continues,

- Psalm 22:9** *But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. (KJV)*

I'll read verse 10 out of the Holman Christian Standard Bible.

- 10) *I was given over to you, Jehovah, at birth. You have been my God from my mother's womb ... (HCSB)*

Back to the King James.

- 10) *... thou art my God from my mother's belly.*
- 11) *Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.*
- 12) *Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.*
- 13) *They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.*
- 14) *I am poured out like water ... (KJV)*

... the beginning of verse 14 says. We won't turn there for sake of time but you can read this later, John 19:34. Remember what happened? One of the soldiers came up to Jesus Christ and put a spear in His side, and out came blood and water, fulfilling this: *I am poured out like water.* Going on in verse 14,

14 continued) ... *and all my bones are out of joint* [that's one of the purposes of crucifixion—you hang by the nails, and your hands and your shoulders come out of joint, and your hips come out of joint]: *my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.*

15) *My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws;* (KJV)

What happens when our tongue cleaves to our mouth? When you get really thirsty, you get the dry mouth and that's exactly what's happening. We won't turn there, but in John 19:28, we're told (I'll read this): *After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished [it was over with], that the scripture might be fulfilled, said "I thirst!"* Here we're told, His tongue cleaved unto his jaws. Going on in verse 15.

15 continued) ... *and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.*

16) *For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.*

17) *I may tell all my bones* [that's a result of the scourging, a horrible thing]: *they look and stare upon me.*

18) *They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.* (KJV)

We know that is fulfilled; you can read as a reference, Matthew 27:35. I'll read it for you: *And they crucified Him, and parted His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet* [that's referring to this very scripture in Psalm 22—David], *They parted My garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.*

Notice how many prophecies about Christ, prophecies of Psalm 22 about Christ, were fulfilled. Notice Christ's conclusion here in verse 19 of Psalm 22.

19) *But be not thou far from me, O LORD [O YHVH]: O my strength, haste thee to help me.* (KJV)

How could He say this, how could this be, if God had forsaken Him? How could it be? Verse 20, I'll read this out of the New King James.

20) *Deliver Me from the sword, My precious life from the power of the dog.*

21) *Save Me from the lion's mouth and from the horns of the wild oxen!* [Notice this last sentence:] *You have answered Me.* (KJV)

How could Christ say this if God were not there? How could Christ say this if God turned His back on Him? Contrast verse 1 of Psalm 22—*My God, My God why have*

you forsaken Me—with verses 19, 20 and 21: *O My strength ... You have answered Me.* Did God forsake David? Of course not. Did God forsake His Son? It sure doesn't sound like it, when you read the scriptures. One reason Christ came the first time was to fulfill a prophecy, we understand that. In quoting Psalm 22:1, He fulfilled that prophecy, same as when He told the disciples to bring swords the night He was betrayed, and He said, do this to fulfill the prophets. This was a similar fulfillment, and every Jew knew Psalm 22 referred to the Messiah. All knew that He was confirming that He was indeed the Messiah. Notice this: a little over half way through Psalm 22, the tone changes again. We'll read verse 21 again just to get the flow:

21) *Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns [the wild oxen].*

22) *I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.*

23) *Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel. (KJV)*

Notice verse 24, we have an answer.

24) *For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;*

Who is being afflicted?—Jesus Christ, we just read it.

24 continued) *... neither hath he [referring to the Father] hid his face from him [His Son]; but when he [His Son] cried unto him [His Father], he heard. (KJV)*

How can this be if the Father forsook His Son? How can that be? In the beginning of Psalm 22:1, David had his doubts: My God, why have you forsaken me? He's running for his life probably. But in the end, David knew God was with him and Christ certainly did not have David's human weaknesses—lack of faith, improper vision, not seeing the big picture. Christ didn't have those limitations. He knew the big picture and He did not have David's weaknesses. He knew His Father would be with Him, scripture seems to clearly indicate, right until He died.

There's something additional happening here that I didn't think of until recently. Let's compare the end of Psalm 22 with John 19. We're in Psalm 22 so don't turn to John 19 yet, let's just look at the last verse of Psalm 22, in wrapping this up—verse 31.

31) *They shall come, and shall declare his [referring to the Messiah's] righteousness unto a people that shall be born [not yet born], that he hath done this. (KJV)*

Carefully look, the word *this* is in italics—it's not in the Bible. Therefore it's not present in the original. In addition, the phrase, "that He has done" is only one Hebrew word—just one. That's Strong's #6213 if you want to check it out, and it means "to do" or "to accomplish" or "to fulfill". Therefore we could translate verse 31 as, He has

accomplished this. Or, the phrase could be just as easily translated, it is fulfilled, it is accomplished, it is finished. With that in mind, let's go to John 19:30. Look at Christ's last words before He died. Everybody knows what's coming next.

John 19:30 *When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the [spirit] ghost. (KJV)*

He gave up His life. The Greek word for *finished* is Strong's #5055 and it means "to accomplish", "to make an end". Thayer's Lexicon says this:

To perform the last act which completes a process. To accomplish or fulfill.

That is virtually the same definition as the Hebrew word in Psalm 22:31. Therefore, both verses—Psalm 22:31, John 19:30—could be translated, it is accomplished, it is completed, it is finished. So rather than saying, God forsook Christ, it seems to me a more biblically accurate explanation of Matthew 27:46 that Christ was simply quoting the beginning and the end of Psalm 22. He quoted the first verse, He quoted the last verse, and by quoting them in that manner, He was saying, don't you understand?—I'm the Messiah—you know this psalm, I'm quoting the first verse, and the last verse says, it's done, it's finished, it's over with; I've accomplished My purpose. Why did He do that? To show those present while He was on the cross that He was the Messiah, and that He was fulfilling the very psalm of which He spoke. And to show all of us, who have been called later, the very same thing. He was the Messiah, fulfilling the very psalm He was quoting.

Let's go to the fourth and last point.

4. If we look at the body of scripture, God promises never to forsake those who faithfully follow and serve Him.

He promises that. This could be a whole sermon but we're going to cover the patriarchs and Israel and the New Testament in three verses. ((laughs)) This could be a whole Bible study because the scriptures clearly show that God will never forsake those who seek Him, who serve Him, and who want to follow Him. Let's go to Genesis 28—first book of the Bible—we're going to begin in verse 12. This is about Jacob and this is about a dream that Jacob dreamed; we're familiar with this. The very first book of the Bible reiterates, starts the concept, that God is not going to leave us. God is not going to forsake us.

Genesis 28:12 *And he [referring to Jacob] dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.*

13) *And, behold, the LORD stood above it [this is YHVH, God Almighty], and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: (KJV)*

If you go to Acts 3:13, it will tell you very clearly who is speaking here.

13 again) *I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed;* (KJV)

Verse 15.

15) *And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.* (KJV)

That could apply to us today. God is not going to leave us until He is finished doing what He is doing. If God would not leave Jacob, would God leave His own Son? Think about that. Now let's go to Isaiah 41:10. This is about Israel. If you look at the context—we don't have time to go through the whole passage—God Almighty (YHVH) is speaking to Israel.

Isaiah 41:10 [He's saying to His children, Israel] *Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee;* (KJV)

Remember, Christ asked God to strengthen Him the night He was betrayed and then while on the cross.

10 continued) *... yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.* (KJV)

If God would do this for Israel, you have to ask the question, would He not do the same for His Son? Wouldn't He do the same for His Son?

Now that we've seen Israel, let's jump to the New Testament, Hebrews 13:5. I'll read this out of the New King James. Yes, Paul is writing to the Jews but the fact is these principles apply to all of us—to the New Testament church back then, and to us today.

Hebrews 13:5 *Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself [this is God Almighty] has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."* (NKJV)

Paul is quoting Deuteronomy 31, verses 6 and 8. The Jews knew this, they studied the scriptures and Paul said, this is what happened to Israel—God said, I will never leave you nor forsake you. Paul is quoting out of the Old Testament, he's applying it to the New Testament church. We see in three brief scriptures (again, you could have a mountain of scriptures) that YHVH—God Almighty—did not forsake Jacob, He did not forsake Israel, He did not forsake the New Testament church. Why would He forsake His Son? Why would He not do the same for His Son? If God deserted His Son, why did Christ say the following, let's go to Luke 23:34—we'll start there. Christ is on the cross, and ask yourself, if God forsook Christ then why did Christ utter these words?

Luke 23:34 *Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* (KJV)

If God had deserted Him, why ask this? But if He's in constant contact with God then this is very appropriate to ask. Verse 46.

46) And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost [spirit]. (KJV)

We have to ask, why would Christ ask these things if God had already left? He's right there, He is dying and yet what He did is He appealed to His Father, He asked His Father to forgive those who had tortured Him and who were murdering Him. He said, to You, Father, I commend my spirit—it's done, it's finished, it's over with. This seems to indicate to me that Christ was in contact with His Father right up until His last breath. If we look at Psalm 22, and we look at what Christ said in Matthew 27:46, does it not confirm what we, having been in the church for decades, already know? That God will never desert us, He will never forsake us, He will never turn His back on us. And He never deserted His Son, He never forsook His Son, He was right there beside His Son the entire time.

Let's close now. I gave this sermon fifteen years ago and when I did, the daggers and the swords came out. The sermon was taken down and I had to face an inquisition. Why? Because of the scriptures? No, because it violated church tradition. Plain and simple, no other reason. Yet, I believe—believed back then and believe today, even though expanded and modified here—that there is ample scriptural evidence to show that God did not forsake His Son. Especially during the time when His Son needed Him the most and relied on Him the most.

The fact is, all of us will stand individually before God at some point. We're going to stand before the throne of God as an individual. Nobody is going to be on our right or on our left, we're not riding anybody's coattails into the Kingdom of God; we're going to have to justify what we believe and give an account of our beliefs. So all I ask you to do is study and decide for yourself. Did God forsake Christ or did He not? Remember, Psalm 22 is a psalm of David that includes the Messiah speaking. While on the cross, Christ quotes the beginning and the end of Psalm 22, one more proof that He is the Messiah. Let me read a surprising commentary I stumbled across, from Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible; he says it very well, it surprised me.

That the words could not be used by our Lord in the sense in which they are generally understood, this is sufficiently evident; for He [referring to Christ] well knew why He was come unto that hour, nor could He be forsaken of God.

Interesting, and well said. Here is the huge issue. Something we need to think about. Satan is working overtime to diminish God in our eyes. He wants to diminish God—our vision of God, our image of God—he wants to diminish Him in our eyes. He wants to pervert our image of God. If he can do that, he can turn us away from God. He wants

to provoke us into believing that we worship a God who would turn His back on His own Son. Satan wants us to believe that—this is my feeling—that the God we worship would turn His back on His own Son, and by extension, Satan then wants to plant the seed of doubt in us that God would turn His back on us, too, in our time of greatest need. And thus diminish our faith and hurt our faith.

Therefore, it's of ultimate importance that we answer these questions posed in the introduction. Did God really forsake His Son at His Son's most crucial time on earth? And similarly, would God forsake us when we're at a horrible crossroads in our life? That was the first one—did God really forsake His Son? The second, why did Christ ask the question, My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?

What we've talked about today is ample scriptural evidence that solves the issues, the troublesome issues, that were never thought through when this doctrine took hold as a tradition in the church.

I think the scriptures amply prove that God never forsook His Son in His greatest time of need. He will never forsake us when we are at our greatest time of need, and Christ was simply quoting the beginning and the end of Psalm 22, confirming that He was indeed the Messiah. But it's an issue that we all have to prove for ourselves, don't we? We have to stand before God and answer for our beliefs.

It's an issue that we need to prove, and hopefully, growing in grace and knowledge, and the revelation of God and Christ here in the end days, we can have the sure confidence going forward that God will never forsake us as He never forsook His own Son.