



Christ's
Sufferings
for Man's Sin

Richard Sibbes

The book cover features a dark purple background with a white border. In the upper right, there is a white circle representing a moon, partially obscured by a dark, jagged shape. Below the title, three crosses of varying heights are silhouetted against a landscape of rolling hills. The sky is dark purple with a few small white stars. The author's name is printed in white at the bottom.

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Christ's Sufferings for Man's Sins

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About the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?—Matthew 27:46.

THE dying speeches of men of worth, are most remarkable. At that time they stir up all their spirits and abilities which remain, that they may speak with greatest advantage to the hearts of others, and leave the deeper impression behind them.

These be some of the last words of our blessed Saviour's, uttered from the greatest affection, with the greatest faith, and to the greatest purpose, that ever any words were spoken, and therefore deserve your best attention.

In this portion of Scripture you have Christ's compellation, My God; and his complaint, Why hast thou forsaken me? 1. A compellation with an ingemination or reduplication of the words, My God, my God, to shew the strength of his affection and desire of help at this time.

2. A complaint by way of expostulation, Why hast thou forsaken me? I will draw all that I have to say into these four propositions:

1. Christ being in extremity was forsaken.
2. Being forsaken, he was very sensible of it; and from sensibleness complains, pouring out his soul into the bosom of his Father.
3. And not only complains, but believes certainly that his Father will help him.
4. And to strengthen his faith the more, he puts it forth in prayer. The fire of faith in his heart kindled into a flame of prayer (and that

not in an ordinary manner, but in strong supplications), he cried out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' To come to the particulars.

Obs. 1. Christ was forsaken.

I will briefly touch upon some circumstances, and then fall upon the point itself, as,

1. The time wherein he was forsaken—a time of darkness (the sixth hour), in which there was a darkness over the whole earth, and in the land of Judea especially. Neither had he darkness without only, but within likewise. His soul was troubled from a sense of his Father's displeasure, Mat. 26:38. Two eclipses seized upon him together,—the one of the glorious light of the sun, the other of the light of his Father's countenance. He must needs be in a disconsolate estate, and doubly miserable, that is encompassed with such darkness. Whatsoever was done to Christ our surety, shall be done to all that are out of him. Blackness of darkness is reserved for them. As Christ wanted the comfort of light from heaven, so those that are out of Christ shall have no comfort from any creature at the last: the sun shall not shine upon them, the earth shall not bear them, they shall not have a drop of water to cool their tongues. They were formerly rebels against God, and now every creature is ready to serve the Lord against them. When the king is displeased with a man, which of his servants dare to countenance him?

This darkness being in Judea, did likewise portend the miserable condition of the Jews here, and that eternal darkness in the world to come, which should be their portion if they repented not.

2. Another circumstance may be this, God was a great while ere he removed his heavy displeasure from Christ. He was three hours in torment; and though God delayed him long, yet he said nothing till now by way of complaint. We should beware of darkness of spirit in trouble. God may delay help to his dearest children, as here he did to his only Son, to perfect the work of sanctification in them. Therefore, submit to his will, rest contented with whatever he sends, look to thy Head and Saviour, &c. But of this more anon.

3. His greatest grief and conflicts were towards his latter end, towards the shutting up and close of his life. Though a little after he saith, 'All is finished,' yet now he cries out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Afflictions are sharpest toward our ends. I speak this for prevention of discomfort in those that find extremities upon them. When miseries are extreme, help is nearest. They will either mend or end then. The darkness is thickest a little before the morning appears; and Satan raged most a little before his casting down.

As also to prevent security from seizing upon people. Take heed of deferring repentance till thy last hours; there may be a confluence of many extremities then upon thee, pains of body, terrors of conscience, Satan's temptations, God's wrath, &c. When all these meet together, and the poor soul, in its best strength, finds enough to do to conflict with any one of them, what an unhappy condition will that be! Oh, put not off your repentance to this time. But I pass these circumstances, and come to the point of forsaking itself.

In the unfolding whereof I will shew,

1. In what sense Christ was forsaken.
2. In what parts he was forsaken.
3. Upon what ground. And,
4. To what end all this forsaking of Christ was.

For the first, forsaking is nothing else but when God leaves the creature to itself, either in regard of comfort or of grace and assistance. I will shew you how Christ was left of his Father, and how he was not left.

(1.) How Christ was not forsaken. He was not forsaken in regard of God's love, for 'My Father loveth me,' saith he, John 3:35, 'because I give my life for my sheep,' John 10:11. God never loved Christ more than now, because he was never more obedient than at this present.

(2.) Nor in regard of union, for there was no separation of his divine nature from the human. There was a suspension of vision, indeed; he saw

no comfort for the present from God, but there was no dissolution of union; for the divine nature did many things in this seeming forsaking. That was it which supported his human nature to sustain the burden of our sin and the wrath of God, as also that gave merit and worth of satisfaction to his sufferings.

(3.) Neither was this forsaking in regard of grace, as if faith, or love, or any other grace, were taken from Christ. Oh, no; for he believed, before he said, 'My God, my God.' Would he have committed his dearest jewel into the hands of God if he had not believed in him?

Quest. How, then, was Christ forsaken?

Ans. 1. In regard of his present comfort and joy. He could not else have been a sacrifice; for as we cannot suffer by way of conformity to Christ, unless there be some desertion, that we may know the bitterness of sin, no more could Christ have suffered for our iniquities had there not been a suspension of light and comfort from his gracious soul.

2. He was not only privatively deprived of all joy and happiness, but positively he felt the wrath and fury of the Almighty, whose just displeasure seized upon his soul for sin, as our surety. All outward comforts likewise forsook him. The sun withdrew his light from above, and everything below was irksome to him. He suffered in all the good things he had, body, soul, good name, in his eyes, ears, hands, &c. He was reproached, and forsaken of all comforts about him. He had not the common comfort of a man in misery, pity; none took compassion upon him; he was the very object of scorn.

Quest. But in what part was Christ forsaken?

Ans. In all, both in body and soul too, as may plainly appear.

(1.) First, because he was our surety, and we had stained our souls, and bodies too, offending God in both (but in soul especially, because that is the contriver of all sin, the body being but the instrument). Some sins we call spiritual sins, as pride, malice, infidelity, and the like; these touch not the body, yet are the greatest sins of all other.

(2.) Secondly, if he had not suffered in his soul the sense of God's displeasure why should he thus cry out, whenas the poor thieves that suffered by him made no such exclamation? If he had suffered in body only, the sufferings of Paul and Moses had been more, for they wished to be separated from the joys of heaven out of a desire to promote God's glory on earth. Therefore it was, he saith in the garden, 'My soul is heavy unto death,' Mat. 26:38.

Obj. Some will grant that Christ suffered in soul, but, say they, it was by way of sympathy, for there are sufferings of soul immediately from God, and sufferings by way of sympathy and agreement with the body, whenas the soul hath a fellow-feeling of the torments thereof; and so Christ suffered in soul indeed.

Ans. That is not all, beloved, but there were immediate sufferings, even of his soul also, which he groaned under. God the Father laid a heavy stroke upon that. He was smitten of the Lord, Isa. 53:4; and when God deals immediately with the soul himself, and fills it with his wrath, no creature in the world is able to undergo the same. None can inflict punishment upon the soul but God only. Satan may urge and press arguments of discouragement, and affright us with God's displeasure; but the inflicting of anger upon the soul issues immediately from the hand of the Almighty. We must here, therefore, consider God as a righteous Judge, sitting in heaven in his judgment-seat, taking the punishment of the sins of all his people upon Christ. There was a meeting together of all the sins of the faithful, from Adam to the last man that shall be in the world, as it were, in one point upon him, and the punishment of all these was laid on his blessed shoulders, who suffered for them in both body and soul.

3. Conclusion. But how could Christ be forsaken of God, especially so forsaken as to suffer the anger of his father, being an innocent person?

Ans. 1. I answer, first, the Paschal lamb was an innocent creature, yet if the Paschal lamb be once made a sacrifice, it must be killed. Though Christ were never so unblameable, yet, if he will stoop to the office of a surety, he must pay our debt, and do that which we should have done. If a prince's son become a surety, though his father love him and pity him never so much, yet he will say, Now you have taken this upon you, you

must discharge it.

2. Secondly, as in natural things the head is punished for the fault of the body, so Christ, by communicating his blessed nature with ours, made up one mystical body, and suffered for us.

Quest. But upon what ground should Christ become our surety?

Ans. 1. Because he was able to discharge our debt to the uttermost. He was more eminent than all mankind, having two natures in one, the manhood knit to the Godhead.

2. Christ most willingly gave himself a sacrifice for us.

3. He was designed and predestinated to this office, yea, he was anointed, set out, and sealed for this business by God himself; and is not this sufficient ground why he should become our surety? especially if we consider,

4. That Christ took the communion of our nature upon him for this very end, that he might be a full surety, that his righteousness being derived to us, and our guilt to him, God's wrath might be satisfied in the self-same nature that offended. You see in societies and cities, if some people offend, the whole city is oftentimes punished. Though perhaps many are guiltless in it, yet by reason of the communion, all are punished. So likewise a traitor's son, that never had any hand in his father's sin, but behaved himself as an honest subject should do, yet, having communion with the person of his father, being indeed a piece of him, is thereupon justly disinherited by all law.

Obj. But how could Christ take our sins upon him and not be defiled therewith?

Quest. He took not the stain of our sins, but the guilt of them. Now in guilt there is two things.

1. A worthiness and desert of punishment.

2. An obligation and binding over thereunto.

Christ took not the desert of punishment upon him, from any fault in himself; he took whatsoever was penal upon him, but not culpable. As he was our surety, so he every way discharged our debt, being bound over to all judgments and punishments for us.

Now we owe unto God a double debt.

1. A debt of obedience; and if that fail,
2. A debt of punishment.

And both these hath Christ freed us from: first, by obeying the will of his Father in everything; and, secondly, by suffering whatsoever was due to us for our transgressions.

Some heretics that would shake the foundation of our faith, will grant Christ to be a Mediator to intercede for us, and a Redeemer to set us at liberty from slavery, &c., but not to be a surety to pay our debt, by way of satisfaction to God for us.

Let such remember, that God's pleasure to redeem lost mankind, is not so much by way of power and strength, as by way of justice, and therefore it is said, Heb. 7:22, 'Christ is become our surety;' and Paul, when he became a mediator to Philemon for Onesimus, a fugitive servant, did it by way of surety, 'If he owe thee anything I will discharge it,' Philem. 18; and Christ Jesus our Mediator blessed for ever, so intercedeth unto God for us, as that he fully satisfies his justice for our offences.

Quest. But why was Christ thus forsaken of his Father?

Ans. 1. To satisfy God for our forsaking of him. Christ's forsaking was satisfactory for all our forsakings of God. Beloved, we all forsook God in Adam, and indeed what do we else in every sin we commit, but forsake the Lord, and turn to the creature? what are all our sins of pleasure, profit, ambition, and the like, but a leaving of the fountain of living waters, to fetch contentment from 'broken cisterns,' Jer. 2:13.

2. But Christ was chiefly forsaken, that he might bring us home again to God, that there might be no more a separation betwixt his blessed

Majesty and us.

Some shallow heretics there are, that would have Christ to be an example of patience and holiness in his life and death, and do us good that way only.

Oh no, beloved, the main comfort we receive from Christ is by way of satisfaction. There must be first grace, and then peace in our agreement with God. Sweetly, saith Bernard, I desire indeed to follow Christ as an example of humility, patience, self-denial, &c., and to love him with the same affection that he hath loved me; but I must eat of the Passover-Lamb, that is, I must chiefly feed on Christ dying for my sins. So every true Christian soul desires to follow Christ's obedience, humility, patience, &c., and to be transformed into the likeness of his blessed Saviour. Whom should I desire to be like more than him, that hath done so much for me? But yet the main comfort I receive from Christ, is by eating his body and drinking his blood; my soul feeds and feasts itself most of all upon the death of Christ, as satisfying for my sins. And what a comfort is it that Christ being our surety, hath made full satisfaction for all our sins. Surely* we shall never be finally and wholly forsaken, because Christ was forsaken for us. Now we may think of God without discomfort, and of sin without despair. Now we may think of the law of death, the curse and all, and never be terrified—why? Christ our surety hath given full content of divine justice for wrath and law, sin and curse, &c. They are all links of one chain, and Christ hath dissolved them all. Now sin ceaseth, wrath ceaseth, the law hath nothing to lay to our charge; death's sting is pulled out. How comfortably, therefore, may we appear before God's tribunal! Oh, beloved, when the soul is brought as low as hell almost, then this consideration will be sweet, that Christ was forsaken as a surety for me; Christ overcame sin, death, God's wrath, and all for me; in him I triumph over all these. What welcome news is this to a distressed sinner! Whenever thy soul is truly humbled in the sense of sin, look not at sin in thy conscience (thy conscience is a bed for another to lodge in), but at Christ. If thou be a broken-hearted sinner, see thy sins in Christ thy Saviour taken away; see what he hath endured and suffered for them; see not the law in thy conscience, but see it discharged by Christ; see death disarmed through him, and made an entrance into a better life

for thee. Whatsoever is ill, see it in Christ before thou seest it in thyself; and when thou beholdest it there, see not only the hurt thereof taken away, but all good made over to thee; for 'all things work together for the best to them that love God,' Rom. 8:28. The devil himself, death, sin, and wrath, all help the main; the poison and mischief of all is taken away by Christ, and all good conveyed to us in him. We have grace answerable to his grace. He is the first seat of God's love, and it sweetens whatever mercy we enjoy, that it comes from the fountain, God the father, through Christ unto us. I beseech you embrace the comfort that the Holy Ghost affords us from these sweet considerations.

Again, in that Christ was forsaken; and not only so, but endured the displeasure and immediate wrath of God, seizing upon his soul, and filling his heart with anguish at this time, we may learn hence.

How to discern the ugliness of sin. 1. In what glass to look upon the ugly thing, sin, to make it more ugly unto us. Beloved, if we would conceive aright of sin, let us see it in the angels tumbled out of heaven, and reserved in chains of darkness for offending God, Jude 6; see it in the casting of Adam out of paradise, Gen. 3:23, 24, and all us in him; see it in the destruction of the old world, and the Jews carried to captivity, in the general destruction of Jerusalem, &c. But if you would indeed see the most ugly colours of sin, then see it in Christ upon the cross, see how many sighs and groans it cost him, how bitter a thing it was to his righteous soul, forcing him to weep tears of blood, and send forth strong cries to his Father, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' If sin but imputed to Christ our surety, so affected him that was God-man, and lay so heavy upon his soul, what will it do to those that are not in Christ? Certainly, the wrath of God must needs burn to hell; he will be a 'consuming fire,' Heb. 12:29, to all such. See sin therefore chiefly in the death of Christ. How odious it is to God, that it could be no otherwise purged away than by the death of his beloved Son. All the angels in heaven, and all the creatures in the world could not satisfy divine justice for the least sin. If all the agonies of all creatures were put into one, it were nothing to Christ's agony; if all their sufferings were put into one, they could not make satisfaction to divine justice for the least sin. Sin is another manner of matter than we take it to be. See the attributes of God,

his anger against it, his justice and holiness, &c. Beloved, men forget this. They think God is angry against sin indeed, but yet his justice is soon satisfied in Christ. Oh, we must think of the Almighty as a holy God, separated from all stain and pollution of sin whatsoever, and so holy that he enforced a separation of his favour from Christ, for becoming our surety, and Christ underwent a separation from his Father, because he undertook for us. So odious is sin to the holy nature of God, that he left his Son while he struggled with his wrath for it; and so odious was sin to the holy nature of Christ, that he became thus a sacrifice for the same. And so odious are the remainders of sin in the hearts of the saints, that all that belong to God have the Spirit of Christ, which is as fire to consume and waste the old Adam by little and little out of them. 'No unclean thing must enter into heaven,' Rev. 21:27. Those that are not in Christ by faith, that have not a shelter in him, must suffer for their transgressions eternally, 'Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire,' Mat. 25:41; so holy is God that he can have no society and fellowship with sinners.

Do you wonder why God so much hates sin, that men so little regard, not only the lewd sort of the world, but common dead-hearted persons, that set so little by it, that they regard not spiritual sins at all, especially hatred, malice, pride, &c., clothing themselves with these things as a comely garment? Certainly you would not wonder that God hates sin, if you did but consider how sin hates God? What is sin but a setting of itself in God's room, a setting the devil in God's place? for when we sin we leave God, and set up the creature, and by consequence Satan, that brings the temptation to us; setting him in our hearts before God. Beloved, God is very jealous, and cannot endure that filthy thing sin, to be in his room. Sin is such a thing as desires to take away God himself. Ask a sinner when he is about to sin, Could you not wish that there were no God at all, that there were no eye of heaven to take vengeance on you? Oh aye, with all my heart. And can you then wonder that God hates sin so, when it hates him so, as to wish the not being of God? Oh marvel not at it, but have such conceits of sin as God had when he gave his Son to die for it, and such as Christ had, when in the sense of his Father's anger he cried thus, 'My God, my God,' &c.

The deeper our thoughts are of the odiousness of sin, the deeper our

comfort and joy in Christ will be after; therefore I beseech you work your hearts to a serious consideration what that sin is that we cherish so much, and will not be reprov'd for, and which we leave God and heaven, and all to embrace; conceive of it as God doth, that must be a Judge, and will one day call us to a strict account for the same.

If Christ cried out thus, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' as being our surety for our sins, we may see what to conceive of sin, and of God the better.

But above all things I desire you to see often in this glass, in this book of Christ crucified (it is an excellent book to study), the mercy of God and the love of Christ, the height, and depth, and breadth of God's love in Jesus Christ, which hath no dimensions. What set God on work to plot this excellent work of our salvation and redemption by such a surety,—was it not mercy? Did not that awaken wisdom to reconcile justice and mercy to* Christ? But what stirred up this wisdom of God? Oh, bowels of compassion to man! He would not have man perish, when the angels did, without remedy.

Therefore let us desire to be inflamed with the love of God, that hath loved us so much. All the favours of God in Christ tend, next after satisfaction to justice, to inflame our hearts to love him again. Wherefore else are the favours of creation and providence? How sweet is God in providing for our bodies, giving us not only for necessity, but abundance, withholding no comfort that is good for us, &c.

But chiefly in his masterpiece, God would have us apprehend the greatest love of all other, because there he hath set himself to glorify his mercy more than anything else! Therefore we may well cry with the apostle, 'Oh the height of his love,' &c., Ephes. 3:18. I beseech you fix your thoughts on this, think not now and then slightly of it, but dwell on the meditation of the infinite love of God in Christ, till your hearts be enlarged and warmed and inflamed with the consideration thereof; and then love will set you forward to all good works. What need we bid you be liberal to the poor, to be good subjects, just in your dealings, &c.? All this may be spared when there is a loving heart. And when shall we have loving hearts? When they are kindled and fired at God's fire; when they are

persuaded of God's love, then the apprehension of his love will breed love in our hearts again; and that is the reason why the apostles are not so punctual as heathen authors in particularities of duties. They force upon men especially the love of God, and the ground-points of religion, as knowing when the heart is seasoned with that once, it is ready prepared to every good duty. Think seriously of this, 'The love of Christ constraineth me,' 2 Cor. 5:14. There is a holy violence in love; there is a spiritual kind of tyranny and prevailing in this grace.

One thing further we may learn from this forsaking of Christ, viz., that,

It is no strange thing for God's dear children to be forsaken.

To have the apprehension of their sins, and the wrath of God, to be forsaken, in regard of sense of all comfort, do we not see it done in the natural Son? and shall we wonder that it is done in the adopted sons? We see this forsaking was in the natural branch, and shall we wonder that it is done in the grafted branches? It was done to the green tree, and shall we wonder if it be done in the dry? No, certainly.

The whole church complains, Ps. 69:21; of drinking gall and worm-wood, Ezek. 36:3; that God was hid in a cloud, Lam. 3:15, &c. Both the head complains, and the body too, as we see in David, Job, and other saints; so that there is a kind of desertion and forsaking that the child of God must undergo.

Quest. What is the ground and end of it?

Ans. 1. First, God's prerogative is such, that sometimes when there is no great sin to provoke him to withdraw comfort, yet will he leave holy men to themselves, to shew that he will do as pleaseth him.

2. Another ground is, our own estate and condition. We are here absent from the Lord, strangers on earth. Now we would take our pilgrimage for our country, if we had always comfort and new supplies of joy.

3. Again, our disposition is to live by sense more than by faith. We are as children in this. We would have God ever smile upon us, that we might

walk in abundance of comfort; and I cannot blame Christians for desiring it, if they desire the work of grace in the first place; if they desire the work of God in them, rather than the shining of comfort by the Spirit, for that is the best work. Now because Christians desire rather to live by sight than by faith, wherein they might honour God more, he leaves them oftentimes. Sight is reserved for another world, for the church triumphant. There we shall have sight enough; we shall see God face to face.

4. Sometimes God's children are negligent, and keep not a holy watch over their souls; they cleave to the creature too much, and then no wonder though God forsake them, since they will have stolen waters of their own, and fetch comfort elsewhere.

5. But one main ground is, conformity to Christ. He suffered for our sins, and God will conform the members in some measure to their head. Though Christ drank the cup of God's wrath to the bottom, yet we must sip and taste a little, that we may know how much we are beholden to Christ; and there are few that come to heaven, few that truly belong to God, but they know what sin is, and what the wrath of God is, first or last. The wrath of God is the best corrosive in the world to eat out sin. A little anger of God felt in the conscience will make a man hate pride and malice, and all sin whatsoever.

Quest. But for what end doth God leave his children, as he did here our blessed Saviour?

Ans. 1. In regard of himself.

2. In regard of his children.

1. In regard of himself, he leaves them that he may comfort them more afterwards; that he may bring more love with him; and that they may love him more than before. There will, after a little forsaking, be a mutual reflection of love between God and a Christian. God delights to shew himself more abundantly after a little forsaking, and the soul enlargeth itself after it hath wanted the love of God; for want enlargeth the capacity of the soul, and want makes it stretch itself to receive more comfort when it comes. God doth this for the increase of his love to us, and of our love

to him again. He both draws nigh to us, and goes away, in regard of feeling for our good.

2. That we may be more watchful over our hearts for the time to come; that there may be a more perfect divorce and separation wrought in us to the creatures. Our adulterous hearts have 'stolen delights' that God likes not; and, therefore, when we have smarted for it in the anger and displeasure of God, a divorce will be wrought. It is hard to work a separation from sin, sin and the soul being so nearly invested together; yet God therefore uses this way of spiritual desertion to effect the same.

3. Likewise to make a Christian soul ransack and search the ground of all the comforts that are left him by God. It will make him rifle and search all the Scriptures. Is there any comfort for me, poor wretch, that am troubled with sin? It will make him search the experience of other Christians. Have you any word of comfort for me? It will make him regard a gracious man as 'one of a thousand.' It will make him stretch his heart in all the degrees of grace. Have I any evidence that I am the child of God, and not a cast-away? It will make him search his heart in regard of corruption. Is there any sin that I am not willing to part with? &c. Beloved, God many times leaves us; and not only leaves us, but makes our naked conscience smart for sin. Oh! this is a quickening thing! A child of God that is of the right stamp will not endure to be under God's wrath long. Oh, it is bitter! He knows what it is to enjoy communion with God. He will not endure it. Therefore, it stirs him up to all manner of diligence whatsoever.

Quest. But is there no difference between Christ's sufferings and smart, for sin and ours?

Ans. Yes (1), the sufferings of Christ came from the vindictive* and revenging† hand of God, as a just Judge; but ours proceed from him as a loving Father; for God, when we are in Christ, is changed. He layeth aside the person of a Judge. Having received full satisfaction in Christ, he is now in the relation of a sweet Father to us.

(2.) Again, there is difference in the measure. We take but a taste of the cup, sweetened with some comfort and moderated; but Christ drank deep of the same.

(3.) In the end and use. The sufferings and forsaking of Christ were satisfactory to divine justice; but ours are not so, but only medicinal. The nature of them is quite changed. They are not for satisfaction; for then we should die eternally; disable the satisfaction of Christ. They are crosses indeed, but not curses. Whatsoever we suffer in soul or body is a cross, but not a curse unto us; because the sting is pulled out. They are all medicinal cures to fit us for heaven. Whatsoever we suffer in our inward or outward man, prepares us for glory, by mortifying the remainders of corruptions, and fitting us for that blessed estate.

(4.) All other men's deaths are for themselves. As Leo saith, *Singula in singulis* (a); they are single deaths for single men. But it is otherwise here; for all the children of God were forsaken in their head, crucified in their head, and died in Christ their head. Christ's death was a public satisfaction. No man dieth for another, let the papists say what they will; only Christ died for all, and suffered for his whole body. And thus much of the first general, that Christ was forsaken.

2. The second is this, Christ was very sensible of it, even to complaint and expostulation, *My God, My God, &c.* Why should it be thus between the Father and the Son? between such a Father and such a Son, a kind, loving Father to his natural, obedient, and only Son? The word is strong, beloved, he was not only forsaken, but exposed to danger, and left in it, being very sensible of the same. Every word here expresseth some bowels. He doth not say, the Jews have forsaken me; or my beloved disciples and apostles that I made much of have forsaken me, or Pilate would not do the duty of a true judge; my feet are pierced, my head is wounded, my body is racked, hanging on the cross, &c.; he complains of none of these, though they were things to be complained of, and would have sunk any creature to have felt that in his body that he did, but that which went nearest to him, was this, 'Oh, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' I stand not upon others forsaking, but why hast thou forsaken me? I stand more upon thy forsaking than the forsaking of all others. Christ was very sensible of this; it went to his very heart.

But what special reason was there that Christ should take this so deeply?

1. First of all, because the lovingkindness of the Lord is better than life

itself, as David the type of Christ well said, Ps. 13:3; the forsaking of God being indeed worse than death. The lovingkindness of the Lord is that that sweeteneth all discomforts in the world; the want of that embitters all comforts to us. If we be condemned traitors, what will all comforts do to a condemned man? The want of God's love embitters all good, and the presence thereof sweeteneth all ill; death, imprisonment, and all crosses whatsoever. Therefore Christ having a sanctified judgment, in the highest degree, judgeth the loss of this to be the worst thing.

2. The sweeter the communion is with God the fountain of good, the more intolerable and unsufferable is the separation from him; but none had ever so near and sweet a communion with God as Christ our Mediator had, for he was both God and man in one person, the beloved Son of his Father. Now the communion before being so near and so sweet unto him, a little want of the same must needs be unsufferable. Things the nearer they are, the more difficult the separation will be; as when the skin is severed from the flesh, and the flesh from the bones, oh, it is irksome to nature; much more was Christ's separation from the sense of his Father's love. Those that love, live more in the party loved, than in themselves. Christ was in love with the person of his Father, and lived in him. Now to want the sense of his love, considering that love desires nothing but the return of love again, it must needs be death unto him.

3. Another ground that Christ was thus sensible, was, because he was best able to apprehend the worth of communion with God, and best able to apprehend what the anger of God was. He had a large judgment, and a more capacious soul than any other; therefore being filled with the wrath of God, he was able to hold more wrath than any man else. He could deepest apprehend wrath, that had so deep a taste of love before.

4. Again, in regard of his body: the grief of Christ, both in body and soul, was the greatest that ever was, for he was in the strength of his years; he had not dulled his spirits with intemperancy; he was quick and able to apprehend pain, being of an excellent temperature.

Use. Was Christ so exceeding sensible of the want of his Father's love, though it were but a while? I beseech you then, let us have merciful considerations of those that suffer in conscience, and are troubled in

mind. Oh, it is another manner of matter than the world takes it for! It is no easy thing to conflict with God's anger, though but a little. It was the fault of Job's friends; they should have judged charitably of him, but they did not. Take heed, therefore, of making desperate conclusions against ourselves or other, when the arrows of the Almighty stick in us, when we smart and shew our distemper in the apprehension of the terrors of the Lord seizing upon our souls. God is about a gracious work all this while; the more sensible men are of the anger of God, the more sensible they will be of the return of his favour again.

There are some insensible, stupid creatures, that are neither sensible of the afflictions they suffer in body, nor of the manifestation of God's anger on their soul. Notwithstanding, he follows them with his corrections, yet they are as dead flesh, unmoveable; therefore, 'Why should I smite them any longer,' &c., Isa. 1:5, saith God.

This comes from three grounds:

(1.) From pride, when men think it a shame for such Roman spirits as they are to stoop.

(2.) Or from hypocrisy, when they will not discover their grief, though their conscience be out of tune.

(3.) Or else out of stupid blockishness, which is worst of all, when they are not affected with the signs of God's wrath. It is a good thing to be affected with the least token of God's displeasure, when we can gather by good evidence that God hath a quarrel against us. You see how sensible Christ was, and so will it be with us if we get not into him betimes; we shall be sensible of sin one day whether we will or no; conscience is not put in us for nought. You may stupify and stifle the mouth of conscience with this or that trick now, but it will not be so for ever; it will discharge its office, and lay bitter things to our charge, and stare in our faces, and drive us to despair one day. Sin is another matter when it is revealed to conscience than we take it, howsoever we go blockishly and stupidly on now. It is sweet in the temptation and allurements, but it hath an ill farewell and sting. If we could judge of sin as we shall do when it is past, especially when we come to our reckoning at the hour of death, and at the

day of judgment, then we would be of another mind; then we would say that all sinners, as the Scripture terms them, 'are fools,' Ps. 94:8. But to go on.

Christ we see expresseth his sensibleness by complaint; 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

Caution. Here some cautions must be rendered that we do not mistake.

Christ complains not of God but to God.

Obj. Was Christ ignorant of the cause of God's forsaking him?

Ans. No, he knew the cause, for his sufferings were intolerable; but taking our nature upon him, he takes our speech also, and expresseth himself like to a miserable man; having the greatest affliction that ever was upon a creature. The divine nature of Christ stopped the excess of any passion; he was turbated but not perturbed; he was moved with the sins of men, but not removed; he was as water in a clear glass. There is nothing but water though you stir it never so much: if there were mud in it, it would soon be unclean. We cannot stir our affections and complain but with a tincture of sin. It was not so with Christ. He knew when to raise and when to allay his affections; and though there were much nature in these affections, a natural shunning of grief, and a natural desire of God's presence; yet here was grace to direct and sanctify the same; for nature sometimes carries grace with a stronger wind, more fully when they go both in one current, as here. It was grace to have the love of God, yea, it was death to be without it, and it was sinless nature to desire ease; for without sin nature may desire ease, so it be with submission of itself to God. For the soul may have divers desires as there are divers objects presented to it. When the soul apprehends release and ease, it rejoices and is glad; but when upon higher considerations and better ends there is pain presented to the soul to do it good, the soul may desire that, and upon deliberation choose that it refused before. A man may have his hand cut off, and cast his wares into the sea, that he would not willingly do, yet when upon deliberation he considers, I shall save my life by it, he will do it. So Christ by a natural desire, without sin, might desire release of pain, but when it was presented to him, what shall become of the salvation of

men and obedience to God then? Upon these considerations, that respected higher ends, there might be another choice; so in things subordinate one to another, one thing may cross another, and yet all be good too.

But you must know this likewise, that forsaking and to be sensible of forsaking, is no sin, especially when it is not contracted by any sin of ours. It is a suffering, but not a sin; and to be sensible of it is no sin. It is rather a sin to be otherwise affected. God allows those affections that he hath planted in us: he hath planted fear and sorrow in presenting dolorous objects. If a man do not sorrow in objects of sorrow, he is not a man after God's making. God allows grief and fear in afflictions and trouble, always remembering it be with submission to him, 'Not as I will, but as thou wilt,' Matt. 26:30.

Again, consider Christ was now in a conflicting condition between doubting and despair, the powers of hell being round about him. Satan as he was busy about him at the entrance into his office, Mat. 4:1–11, so he was now vexing his righteous soul with temptations, 'God hath forsaken thee,' and this and that. We know not the malice of Satan at such a time; but certainly the powers of hell were all let loose then upon him. The truth is, God had a purpose to finish his sufferings presently upon his complaint, and because he will have us all receive what we receive, even Christ himself, by prayer and opening our desires to him, God suffers Christ to complain, and pour out his supplication into his bosom, that presently after, he might be released of all, seeing he had now fully satisfied for the sins of man.

Use. The use of it in a word is this, That God having stooped so low to poor creatures, to be a father and a friend to them, will suffer them familiarly (as there is a great deal of familiarity in the spirit of adoption), yet reverently, to lay open their griefs into his bosom, and reason the case with his Majesty, without sin, Why, Lord, am I thus forsaken? what is the matter? where are the sounding of thy bowels? where are thy former mercies? &c. There is another kind of familiarity between God and his children than the world takes notice of; yet withal remember, they are not murmuring complaints, but seasoned with faith and love, as here, my God, my God still. Whence you see that,

Christ in his greatest extremities had a spirit of faith.

3. There is a question between the papists and us about Christ's faith; they will have him to be a comprehender and a traveller, &c. Indeed, he needed no justifying faith to apply anything from without him, because he had righteousness enough of his own; but yet to depend upon God as his Father, so he had faith; neither was he always in the state of happiness, for that distinction is a confusion of the abasement of Christ and his exaltation. Howsoever, there was the happiness of union (the human nature being always united to the Godhead), yet there was not always the happiness of vision; he did not see the face of God, for then why did he cry out, 'My God, my God,' &c.? Sight was due to him from his incarnation in himself considered, not as our surety. Now that which made a stop of the influence of comfort to his soul was, that he might fully suffer for our sins, that he might be humbled and tempted, and suffer even death itself. Therefore, in regard of the state of humiliation, there was faith in him, faith of dependence; there was hope in him, and he made great use thereof to support himself.

Quest. But what supported the faith of Christ in this woeful, rueful estate he was in, being forsaken of God as our surety?

Ans. Christ presented to his faith these things.

1. The unchangeable nature of God, my God, &c. 'Whom he once loves, he loves to the end,' John 13:1; therefore he lays claim to him; thou hast been my God heretofore, and so thou art still.

2. Again, faith presented to the soul of Christ, God's manner of dealing. He knew well enough that God by contraries brings contraries to pass. He brings to heaven by the gates of hell, he brings to glory by shame, to life by death, and therefore resolves, notwithstanding this desertion, I will depend upon my God.

3. Again, Christ knew well enough that God is nearest in support when he is furthest off in feeling. So it is oft, where he is nearest the inward man, to strengthen it with his love, he is furthest off in comfort to outward

sense. To whom was God nearer than Christ in support and sanctifying grace? and yet to whom was he further off in present feeling? Christ knew that there was a secret sense of God's love, and a sensible sense of God's love; he had a secret sense of God that he was his Father, because he knew himself to be his Son, but he had it not sensibly. Faith must be suitable to the thing believed. Now Christ, in saying My God, suits his faith to the truth that was offered to him; he knew God in the greatest extremity to be nearest at hand. 'Be not far off, for trouble is near,' &c., Ps. 22:11.

This should teach us in any extremity or trouble, to set faith on work, and feed faith with the consideration of God's unchangeable nature, and the unchangeableness of his promises, which endure for ever. We change, but the promise changeth not, and God changeth not; my God still: 'The word of the Lord endureth for ever,' 1 Pet. 1:25. God deals with his people in a hidden manner; he supports with secret, though not with sensible comfort, and will be nearest when he seems to be furthest off his children. I beseech you, acquaint yourselves with these things, and think it not strange that God comes near you in desertions, considering that it was so with Christ. Present to thy soul the nature of God, his custom and manner of dealing, so shalt thou apprehend favour in the midst of wrath, and glory in the midst of shame. We shall see life in death; we shall see through the thickest clouds that are between God and us. For as God shines in the heart in his love secretly through all temptations and troubles, so there is a spirit of faith goes back to him again: my God, my God. For faith hath a quick eye, and seeth through contraries. There is no cloud of grief but faith will pierce through it, and see a father's heart, under the carriage of an enemy. Christ had a great burden upon him, the sins of the whole world; yet he breaks through all. I am now sin, I bear the guilt of the whole world, yet under this person that I sustain, I am a son, and God is my God still, notwithstanding all this weight of sin upon me. And shall not we, beloved, say, My God, in any affliction or trouble that befalls us? Oh yes. In the sense of sin, which is the bitterest of all, and in the sense of God's anger, in losses and crosses, in our families &c., let us break through those clouds, and say, My God, still.

Obj. But you will say, I may apprehend a lie; perhaps God is not my God,

and then it is presumption to say so.

Ans. Whosoever casts himself upon God, out of the sense of sin, to be ruled by God for the time to come, shall obtain mercy. Now, dost thou so? doth thy conscience tell thee, I cast myself upon God for better direction; I would be ruled as God and the ministry of the Word would have me hereafter. If so, thou hast put this question out of question: thou doubtest whether God be thy God; I tell thee God is the God of all that seek him, and obey him in truth. But thy conscience tells thee thou dost this, certainly then, whatsoever thou wert before, God is now beforehand with thee. He offers himself to be thy God, if thou trust in him, and wilt be ruled by him; and not only so, but he entreats us (we should beseech him, but he entreats us, such is his love), nay, he commands us to believe in his Son Jesus Christ. Now, when I join with God's entreaty, Oh Lord, thou offerest thyself, thou invitest me, thou commandest me, I yield obedience and submit to thy good word; then the match is stricken and made up in doing so. God is thy God, and Christ is thy Christ, and thou must improve this claim and interest here, in all the passages of thy life long. Lord, thou art my God, therefore teach me; thou art my God, I have given myself to thee, I have set up thee in my heart above all things, thou art in my soul above all sin, above all profits and pleasures whatsoever, therefore save me, and deliver me, have pity upon me, &c. The claim is good when we have truly given ourselves up to him, else God may say, 'Go to the gods you have served,' Jud. 10:14; men were your gods, for whom you cracked your consciences, riches and pleasure were your gods, go to them for succour.

Oh, beloved, it is a harder matter to say, My God, in the midst of trouble, than the world takes it. There was a great conflict in Christ when he said, My God, when he brake through all molestations and temptations of Satan, together with the sense of wrath, and could say notwithstanding, My God. There was a mighty strong spirit in him. But no wonder; faith is an almighty grace, wrought by the power of God, and laying hold upon that power, it lays hold upon omnipotency, and therefore it can do wonder, it overcomes the invincible God. He hath made a promise, and cannot deny his promise; he cannot deny himself and his truth. Put case his dealing be as an enemy. His promise is to be as a friend to those that

trust in him: he is merciful, forgiving sins; his nature now is such. Satisfaction to his justice makes him shew mercy.

I speak this that you might beg of God the gift of faith, which will carry you through all temptations and afflictions, yea, even through the shadow of death; as David saith, 'Though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, yet will I fear no ill,' Ps. 23:4. Why? Because thou art with me, my God and my shepherd. Though we be in the valley of the shadow of death, yet notwithstanding, if God be with us, if we be in covenant with him, and can lay just claim to his promise, by giving up ourselves to him, we shall not fear. One beam of God's countenance, when we are in covenant with him, will scatter all clouds whatsoever. I beseech you, therefore, labour more and more for this precious grace of faith, and increase it by all sanctified means, hearing the word, reading the Scriptures, and treasuring up promises, considering what special use we have of this above all other graces. But to proceed.

Christ here doth not only believe, but

4. He vents his faith by prayer.

Good works are but faith incarnate, faith working. They differ not much from it. So prayer is but faith flaming, the breath of faith, as it were. For when troubles possess the soul, it sends out its ambassador presently, it speeds prayer forth, and prayer stays not till it come to heaven, and there takes hold upon God, and gets a message and answer from him back, to comfort the soul. Faith and prayer are all one in a manner. When the soul hath any great desire of grace, or is in grief, apprehending the displeasure of God, faith would, if it could, work to heaven; but we are on earth, and cannot till we die. Therefore when it cannot go to heaven, it sends prayer, and that mounts the soul aloft, and wrestles with God, and will give him no rest till the petition be granted, and it can say, My God.

Therefore, if you have any faith at all, exercise it, and make it bright by often prayer: 'The prayer of faith prevails much,' James 5:15. How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? Indeed it is no prayer at all without faith; great faith, great prayer; weak faith, weak prayer; no faith, no prayer: they both go on in an even strength. Christ here prays to

God under this complaint, Why hast thou forsaken me? There is a hidden prayer in it, Oh do not forsake me, deliver me out, &c.

I beseech you, even as you would have comfort from the fountain of comfort, that usually conveys all grace and comfort to us by a spirit of prayer, labour to be much in communion with God in this blessed exercise, especially in troubles: 'Call upon me in the day of trouble,' Ps. 50:15. The evil day is a day of prayer; of all days, in the day of trouble especially, 'make your request known to God,' Phil. 4:6.

Obj. But perhaps God will not hear me.

Ans. Yes, this fruit follows: 'The peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds,' Philip. 4:7. When you have eased your souls into the bosom of God by prayer, you may go securely, and know that he will let you reap the fruit of your prayers in the best time.

Obj. Yea, but I have prayed long, and have had no answer.

Ans. Wait in prayer; God's time is the best time. The physician keeps his own time; he turns the glass,* and though the patient cry out that he torments him, it is no matter, he knows his time. The goldsmith will not take the metal out of the fire till it be refined. So God knows what to do; wait his good leisure. In the mean time, because we must have all from God by prayer, I beseech you, derive all from him this way; pray for everything, and then we shall have it as a blessing indeed.

Obj. But put the case I cannot pray, as sometimes we are in such a case that we cannot make a large prayer to God.

Ans. Then do as Christ did, cry; if thou canst not pray, groan and sigh, for they are the groans and the sighs of God's Spirit in thee. There is a great deal of oratory in these words. What is the use of eloquence but to persuade? and what could persuade God more than when Christ shewed how he esteemed his love, and how he was now, in the absence of it, environed with grief before him? Here was rhetoric. If Christ had not spoken, his wounds had said enough, and his pitiful case spake

sufficiently. Everything hath a voice to cry for mercy. But he adds his voice to all, and cries vocally aloud, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

Beloved, if you acquaint yourselves with God in prayer, then you may go readily to him in any extremity. Therefore, in time of health and prosperity, cherish communion with his blessed Majesty, make him your friend; and upon every good occasion improve this plea, O my God. If we have riches, if we have a friend in the court, we will improve them; if we have anything, we will make use of it. Have we a God, and will we not improve him? Have we a God that is our God, and do we want grace? Do we want comfort, and strength, and assistance, and have we a God, the fountain of all, to go to? Shall we have such a prerogative as this, to have Jesus Christ to be our great peacemaker, that we may go boldly to the throne of grace through him, and shall we not improve the same? We may go boldly to God, and welcome, because God is infinite, and the more we go and beg, the more he gives. We cannot exhaust that fountain. O let us improve this blessed prerogative; then we shall live the life of heaven upon earth. Especially when the conscience is troubled with sin, as Christ was now with the displeasure of his Father, then let us go to God, and plead with his Majesty, and we may plead lawfully with him—Lord, thy justice is better satisfied in Christ, than if thou shouldst send me to hell; if thou wilt, thou mayest destroy me (for conscience must come to a great resignation; it cannot desire mercy, but it must see its own misery); Lord, thou mayest justly call me to hell, but it would not be so much for thy glory; thou art more glorious in satisfying thy justice in Christ, than if thou shouldst damn me to hell. Why? Because God's justice is better satisfied in Christ. Man sinned, but God-man satisfied for sin; man would be like God in pride, God becomes man in humility. The expiation of God is greater than the sin of man. He prayed for his persecutors, and gave his life for them. Doth not this proportion more the justice of God than the sin of man? The law doth but require a nocent person, a guilty person to suffer. Christ was innocent. The law requires that man should suffer. Christ was God. Therefore Christ hath done more than satisfied the law. The satisfaction of Christ is more than if we had suffered. We are poor men,—creatures. That was the satisfaction of God-man. Our sins are the sins of finite persons, but he is infinite. Therefore,

the soul may plead, Lord, I am a wretched sinner, but I should take away thee, and take away Christ, if I should despair; I should make thee no God, and make Christ no Christ, if I should not accept of mercy; for Christ is given to me, and I labour to make him mine own, by laying hold of him. Faith hath a power to make everything its own that it toucheth; particular faith (which is the only true comfortable faith) makes general things mine. When the soul can lay a particular claim to God as his God, by giving himself to him only, then we may plead in Christ better satisfaction to God's justice, than if he should cast us into hell. What a stay is this for a distressed soul to make use of!

Beloved, the church of God, the mystical body of Christ, is thus forsaken in other countries, besides many particular humble, broken-hearted Christians at home, who find no beams of God's love and mercy. What shall we do? Let the body imitate the head, even go to God in their behalf, and pour out your complaints before him: Lord, where are thy mercies of old? where are thy ancient bowels to thy church? why should the enemy triumph, &c. God delights when we lay open the miseries of his people, and our own particular grievances before him. If there be a spirit of faith in it, oh! it works upon his bowels. If a child can but say, O father, O mother! though he can say not a word more, the bowels are touched, there is eloquence enough; so when we can lay open the pitiful state of God's poor church, what a blessing may we obtain for them? It is thy church, Lord, thine own people, thy name is called upon them, and they call upon thy name; though they have sinned, yet thou deservest to be like thyself, and Christ hath deserved mercy for them. Thus, if we contend with God, and keep not silence, and give God no rest, faith would work wonders. The state of the church would not be long as it is, if we would all improve our interest in heaven in their behalf. Beloved, Christ struggled with the powers of darkness and the wrath of his Father a while, but presently after, all was finished; so let us contend boldly, 'Fight the good fight of faith,' 2 Tim. 4:7, and not yield to desperate suggestions. Let faith stir up prayer, and prayer go to God; and ere long it shall be said of the church, and of all particular troubles, All is finished. Then we shall enjoy the sweet presence of God, 'where is fulness of joy,' Ps. 16:11, and that for evermore. The presence of God is that the child of God desires above all things in the world; it quickens and strengthens him; it puts zeal and fire

into him; it doth all. What will not the presence of God do when a man enjoys his face? Therefore, let us be content to conflict here, to be exercised a while in faith and prayer. We shall surely say ere long, 'I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,' 2 Tim. 4:8.

I beseech you learn these lessons and instructions from our blessed Saviour. We cannot have a better pattern than to be like him, by whom we all hope to be saved another day. So much for this time.

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