

A SERMON

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 2, 1890,

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

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

“THERE was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour”; this cry came out of that darkness! Expect not to see through its every word, as though it came from on high as a beam from the unclouded Sun of Righteousness. There is light in it, bright, flashing light; but there is a centre of impenetrable gloom where the soul is ready to faint because of the terrible darkness.

Our Lord was then in the darkest part of His way. He had trodden the winepress now for hours, and the work was almost finished. He had reached the culminating point of His anguish. This is His dolorous lament from the lowest pit of misery—“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” I do not think that the records of time, or even of eternity, contain a sentence fuller of anguish. Here the wormwood, the gall, and all the other bitterness are outdone. Here you may look as into a vast abyss; and though you strain your eyes, and gaze till sight fails you, yet you perceive no bottom; it is measureless, unfathomable, and inconceivable. This anguish of the Saviour on your behalf and mine is no more to be measured and weighed than the sin which needed it, or the love which endured it. We will adore where we cannot comprehend.

I have chosen this subject that it may help the children of God to understand a little of their infinite obligations to their redeeming Lord. You shall measure the height of His love, if it can be measured, by the depth of His grief, if that can ever be known. See with what a price He has redeemed us from the curse of the law! As you see this, say to yourselves: What manner of people ought we to be? What measure of love ought we to return to one who bore the utmost penalty that we might be delivered from the wrath to come? I do not profess that I can dive *into* this deep: I will only venture to the edge of the precipice, and bid you look down, and pray the Spirit of God to concentrate your mind upon this lamentation of our dying Lord as it rises up through the thick darkness—“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

Our first subject of thought will be *the fact*; or what He suffered—God had forsaken Him. Secondly, we will note *the inquiry*; or why He suffered—this

word, “why,” is the edge of the text. “Why hast thou forsaken me?” Then, thirdly, we will consider *the answer*; or what came of His suffering. The answer flowed softly into the soul of the Lord Jesus without the need of words, for He ceased from His anguish with the triumphant shout of, “It is finished.” His work was finished, and His bearing of desertion was a chief part of the work He had undertaken for our sake.

I. By the help of the Holy Spirit let us first dwell upon THE FACT; or what our Lord suffered. God had forsaken Him. Grief of mind is harder to bear than pain of body. You can pluck up courage, and endure the pang of sickness and pain so long as the spirit is hale and brave. But if the soul itself is touched, and the mind becomes diseased with anguish, then every pain is increased in severity, and there is nothing with which to sustain it. Spiritual sorrows are the worst of mental miseries. A man may bear great depression of spirit about worldly matters if he feels that he has his God to go to. He is cast down, but not in despair. Like David he dialogues with himself, and he inquires, “Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted in me? Hope you in God: for I shall yet praise Him.” But if the Lord is once withdrawn, if the comfortable light of His presence is shadowed even for an *hour*, there is a torment within the breast which I can only liken to the prelude of hell. This is the greatest of all weights that can press upon the heart. This made the Psalmist plead, “Hide not your face from me; put not your servant away in anger.” We can bear a bleeding body, and even a wounded spirit; but a soul conscious of desertion by God is beyond conception unendurable! When He holds back the face of His throne, and spreads His cloud upon it, who can endure the darkness?

This voice out of “the belly of hell” marks the lowest depth of the Saviour’s grief. *The desertion was real*. Though under some aspects our Lord could say, “The Father is with me,” yet was it solemnly true that God did forsake Him. It was not a failure of faith on His part which led Him to imagine what was not actual fact. Our faith fails us, and then we think that God has forsaken us; but our Lord’s faith did not, for a moment, falter, for He says twice, “*My God, my God.*” Oh, the mighty double grip of His unhesitating faith! He seems to say, “Even if You have forsaken Me, I have not forsaken You.” Faith triumphs, and there is no sign of any faintness of heart towards the living God. Yet, strong as is His faith, He feels that God has withdrawn His comfortable fellowship, and He shivers under the terrible deprivation.

It was no fancy, or delirium of mind caused by His weakness of body, the heat of the fever, the depression of His spirit, or the near approach of death. He was clear of mind even to this last. He bore up under pain, loss of blood, scorn, thirst and desolation; making no complaint of the cross, the nails or the scoffing. We read not in the gospels of anything more than the natural cry of weakness, “I thirst.” All the tortures of His body He endured in silence. But when it came to being forsaken of God, *then* His great heart burst out into its “Lama

sabachthani?” His one moan is concerning His God! It is not, “Why has Peter forsaken Me? Why has Judas betrayed Me?” These were sharp griefs, but this is the sharpest. This stroke has cut Him to the quick: “My God, my God, why have *thou* forsaken Me?” It was no phantom of the gloom; it was a real absence which He mourned.

This was *a very remarkable desertion*. It is not the way of God to leave either His sons or His servants. His saints, when they come to die in their great weakness and pain, find Him near. They are made to sing because of the presence of God: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me.” Dying saints have clear visions of the living God! Our observation has taught us that if the Lord is away at other times, He is *never* absent from His people in the article of death, or in the furnace of affliction. Concerning the three holy children, we do not read that the Lord was ever visibly with them till they walked the fires of Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace; but then and there the Lord met with them. Yes, beloved, it is God’s way and habit to keep company with His afflicted people. And yet He forsook His Son in the hour of His tribulation! How usual it is to see the Lord with His faithful witnesses when resisting even unto blood! Read the *Book of Martyrs*, and I care not whether you study the former or the later persecutions, you will find them all lit up with the evident presence of the Lord with His witnesses. Did the Lord ever fail to support a martyr at the stake? Did He ever forsake one of His testifiers upon the scaffold? The testimony of the church has always been that while the Lord has permitted His saints to suffer in body, He has so divinely sustained their spirits that they have been more than conquerors, and have treated their sufferings as light afflictions! The fire has not been a “bed of roses,” but it has been a chariot of victory! The sword is sharp, and death is bitter; but the love of Christ is sweet, and to die for Him has been turned into glory! No, it is not God’s way to forsake His champions, or to leave even the least of His children in their hour of trial.

As to our Lord, this forsaking was *singular*. Did His Father ever leave Him before? Will you read the four Evangelists through, and find any previous instance in which He complains of His Father for having forsaken Him? No. He said, “I know that you hear me always.” He lived in constant touch with God. His fellowship with the Father was always near, and dear, and clear; but now, for the first time, He cries, “Why hast thou forsaken me?” It was very remarkable! It was a riddle only to be solved by the fact that He loved us, and gave Himself for us, and in the execution of His loving purpose came even unto this sorrow of mourning the absence of His God.

This forsaking was *very terrible*. Who can fully tell what it is to be forsaken of God? We can only form a guess by what we have ourselves felt under temporary and partial desertion. God has never left us altogether, for He has expressly said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” Yet we have

sometimes felt as if He had cast us off. We have cried, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" The clear shining rays of His love have been withdrawn. Thus we are able to form some little idea of how the Saviour felt when His God had forsaken Him. The mind of Jesus was left to dwell upon one dark subject, and no cheering theme consoled Him. It was the hour in which He was made to stand before God as consciously the sin-bearer according to that ancient prophecy, "He shall bear their iniquities." Then was it true, "He has made Him to be sin for us." Peter puts it, "He His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." Sin, sin—sin was everywhere around and about Christ. He had no sin of His own, but the Lord had "laid on Him the iniquity of us all." He had no strength given Him from on high, no secret oil and wine poured into His wounds; He was made to appear in the lone character of the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world; and therefore He must feel the weight of sin, and the turning away of that sacred face which cannot look thereon.

His Father, at that time, gave Him no open acknowledgment. On certain other occasions a voice had been heard, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." But now, when such a testimony seemed most of all required, the oracle was not there! He was hung up as an accursed thing upon the cross, for He was "made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree." And the Lord His God did not acknowledge Him before men. If it had pleased the Father, He might have sent Him twelve legions of angels; but not an angel came after Christ had left Gethsemane. His despisers might spit in His face, but no swift seraph came to avenge the indignity. They might bind Him and scourge Him, but none of the entire heavenly host would interpose to screen His shoulders from the lash. They might fasten him to the tree with nails, and lift Him up, and scoff at Him; but no cohort of ministering spirits hastened to drive back the rabble, and release the Prince of life. No, He appeared to be forsaken, "smitten of God and afflicted," delivered into the hands of cruel men whose wicked hands worked Him misery without stint. Well might He ask, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

But this was not all. His Father now dried up that sacred stream of peaceful communion and loving fellowship which had flowed, up to now, throughout His whole earthly life. He said, Himself, as you remember, "You shall be scattered, every man to His own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me." Here was His constant comfort; but all comfort from this source was to be withdrawn. The divine Spirit did not minister to His human spirit. No communications with His Father's love poured into His heart. It was not possible that the Judge should smile upon one who represented the prisoner at the bar. Our Lord's *faith* did not fail Him, as I have already shown you, for He said, "My God, my God," yet no sensible supports were given to His heart, and no comforts were poured into His mind. One writer declares that Jesus did not taste of divine wrath, but only suffered a withdrawal of divine fellowship.

What is the difference? Whether God withdraws heat, or creates cold is all the same! He was not smiled upon, nor allowed to feel that He was near to God; and this, to His tender spirit, was grief of the keenest order! A certain saint once said that in his sorrow he had from God, “that which was meet, but not that which was sweet.” Our Lord suffered to the extreme point of deprivation. He had not the light which makes existence to be life, and life to be a blessing. You who know, in your degree, what it is to lose the conscious presence and love of God—you can faintly guess what the sorrow of the Saviour was now that He felt He had been forsaken of His God. “If the foundations are removed, what can the righteous do?” To our Lord, the Father’s love was the foundation of *everything*; and when that was gone, all was gone. Nothing remained, within, without, above, when His own God, the God of His entire confidence, turned from Him. Yes, God in very deed forsook our Saviour.

To be forsaken of God was *much more a source of anguish to Jesus than it would be to us*. “Oh,” you say, “how is that?” I answer because He was *perfectly* holy. A rupture between a perfectly holy being and the thrice holy God must be in the highest degree strange, abnormal, perplexing, and painful. If any man here who is not at peace with God could only know His true condition, he would swoon with fright! If you unforgiven ones only knew where you are, and what you are at this moment, in the sight of God, you would never smile again till you were reconciled to Him. Alas, we are insensible—hardened by the deceitfulness of sin; and therefore we do not feel our true condition! His perfect holiness made it to our Lord a dreadful calamity to be forsaken of the thrice holy God.

I remember, also, that our blessed Lord had lived in unbroken fellowship with God, and to be forsaken was a new grief to Him. He had never known what the dark was till then; His life had been lived in the light of God. Think, dear child of God, if you had always dwelt in full communion with God, your days would have been as the days of heaven upon earth; and how cold it would strike your heart to find yourself in the darkness of desertion! If you can conceive such a thing as happening to a *perfect* man, you can see why, to our Well-Beloved, it was a special trial. Remember, He had enjoyed fellowship with God more richly, as well as more constantly, than any of us. His fellowship with the Father was of the highest, deepest, fullest order; and what must the loss of it have been? We lose but drops when we lose our joyful experience of heavenly fellowship, and yet the loss is killing! But to our Lord Jesus Christ, the sea was dried up—I mean His sea of fellowship with the infinite God.

Do not forget that He was such a One that to Him to be without God must have been an overwhelming calamity. In every part He was perfect, and in every part fitted for communion with God to a supreme degree. A sinful man has an awful need of God, but he does not know it, and therefore he does not feel that hunger and thirst after God which would come upon a perfect man could he be

deprived of God. The very perfection of his nature renders it inevitable that the holy man must either be in communion with God or be desolate. Imagine a stray angel—a seraph who has lost His God! Conceive him to be perfect in holiness, and yet to have fallen into a condition in which he cannot find His God! I cannot picture him! Perhaps Milton might have done so. He is sinless and trustful, and yet he has an overpowering feeling that God is absent from him. He has drifted into the nowhere—the unimaginable region behind the back of God. I think I hear the wailing of the cherub, “My God, my God, my God, where are You?” What a sorrow for one of the sons of the morning! But here we have the lament of a Being far more capable of fellowship with the Godhead! In proportion as He is more fitted to receive the love of the great Father, in that proportion is His pining after it the more intense. As a Son, He is more able to commune with God than ever a servant angel could be; and now that He is forsaken of God, the void within is greater, and the anguish more bitter.

Our Lord’s heart and all His nature were, morally and spiritually, so delicately formed, so sensitive, so tender, that to be without God was to Him a grief which could not be weighed. I see Him in the text bearing desertion, and yet I perceive that He cannot bear it. I know not how to express my meaning except by such a paradox. He cannot endure to be without God. He had surrendered Himself to be left of God, as the representative of sinners must be, but His pure and holy nature, after three hours of silence, finds the position unendurable to love and purity! And breaking forth from it, now that the hour was over, He exclaims, “Why have You forsaken Me?” He quarrels not with the suffering, but He cannot abide in the position which caused it. He seems as if He must end the ordeal, not because of the pain; but because of the moral shock! We have here the repetition after His passion of that loathing which He felt before it, when He cried, “If it is possible let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as You will.” “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” is the holiness of Christ amazed at the position of substitute for guilty men!

There, friends. I have done my best, but I seem to myself to have been prattling like a little child talking about something infinitely above me. So I leave the solemn fact that our Lord Jesus was on the cross forsaken of His God.

II. This brings us to consider THE INQUIRY, or *why* He suffered.

Note carefully this cry—“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” It is pure anguish, undiluted agony, which cries like this; but it is the agony of a godly soul; for only a man of that order would have used such an expression. Let us learn from it useful lessons. This cry is taken from “the Book.” Does it not show our Lord’s love of the sacred volume, that when He felt His sharpest grief, He turned to the Scripture to find a fit utterance for it? Here we have the opening sentence of the 22nd Psalm. Oh that we may so love the inspired Word

that we may not only sing to its score, but even weep to its music!

Note, again, that our Lord's lament is an address to *God*. The godly, in their anguish, turn to the hand which smites them. The Saviour's outcry is not *against* God, but *to* God. "My God, my God"—He makes a double effort to draw near. True Sonship is here! The child in the dark is crying after His Father—"My God, my God." Both the Bible and prayer were dear to Jesus in His agony.

Still, observe it is a faith-cry, for though it asks, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" it first says, twice, "My God, my God." The grip of appropriation is in the word "My"; but the reverence of humility is in the word, "God." It is, "My *God*, my *God*, You are ever God to Me, and I a poor creature. I do not quarrel with You. Your rights are unquestioned, for You are My God. You can do as You will, and I yield to Your sacred sovereignty. I kiss the hand that smites Me, and with all My heart I cry, 'My God, my God.'" When you are delirious with pain, think of your Bible; when your mind wonders, let it roam towards the mercy seat; and when your heart and your flesh fail, still live by faith, and still cry, "My God, my God."

Let us come close to the inquiry. It looked to me, at first sight, like a question as of one distraught, driven from the balance of His mind—not unreasonable, but too much reasoning, and therefore tossed about. "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Did not Jesus know? Did He not know why He was forsaken? He knew it most distinctly, and yet His *manhood*, while it was being crushed, pounded and dissolved, seemed as though it could not understand the reason for so great a grief. He must be forsaken; but could there be a sufficient cause for so sickening a sorrow? The cup must be bitter; but why this most nauseous of ingredients? I tremble lest I say what I ought not to say. I have said it, and I think there is truth—the Man of Sorrows was overborne with horror! At that moment the finite soul of the man Christ Jesus came into awful contact with the infinite Justice of God! The one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, beheld the holiness of God in arms against the sin of man whose nature He had espoused. God was for Him, and with Him in a certain unquestionable sense; but for the time, so far as His feelings went—God was against Him, and necessarily withdrawn from Him. It is not surprising that the holy soul of Christ should shudder at finding itself brought into painful contact with the infinite Justice of God, even though its design was only to vindicate that justice, and glorify the Law-Giver. Our Lord could now say, "All Your waves, and Your billows are gone over Me," and therefore He uses language which is all too hot with anguish to be dissected by the cold hand of a logical criticism. Grief has small regard for the laws of the grammarian! Even the holiest, when in extreme agony, though they cannot speak otherwise than according to purity and truth, yet use a language of their own which only the ear of sympathy can fully receive. I see not all that is here, but what I can see I am not able to put in words for you.

I think I see in the expression, submission and resolve. Our Lord does not

draw back. There is a forward movement in the question; they who quit a business ask no more questions about it. He does not ask that the forsaking may end prematurely; He would only understand anew its meaning. He does not shrink, but dedicates Himself anew to God by the words, "My God, my God," and by seeking to review the ground and reason of that anguish which He is resolute to bear even to the bitter end. He would gladly feel anew the motive which has sustained Him, and must sustain Him to the end. The cry sounds to me like deep submission, and strong resolve, pleading with God.

Do you not think that *the amazement of our Lord, when He was "made sin for us"* (2 Cor v. 21), led Him thus to cry out? For such a sacred and pure being to be made a sin-offering was an amazing experience! Sin was laid on Him, and He was treated as if He had been guilty, though He had personally *never sinned*. And now the infinite horror of rebellion against the most holy God fills His holy soul, the unrighteousness of sin breaks His heart and He starts back from it, crying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken *Me*?" Why must I bear the dread result of conduct I so much abhor?

Do you not see, moreover, *there was here a glance at His eternal purpose, and at His secret source of joy?* That "why" is the silver lining of the dark cloud, and our Lord looked wishfully at it. He knew that the desertion was necessary in order that He might save the guilty, and He had an eye to that salvation as His comfort. He is not forsaken needlessly, or without a worthy design. The design is in itself so dear to His heart that He yields to the passing evil, even though that evil is like death to Him. He looks at that "why," and through that narrow window the light of heaven comes streaming into His darkened life!

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Surely our Lord dwelt on that, "why," *that we might also turn our eyes that way*. He would have us see the why, and the why of His grief. He would have us mark the gracious motive for its endurance. Think much of all the Lord suffered, but do not overlook the *reason* for it. If you cannot always understand how this or that grief worked toward the great end of the whole passion, yet believe that it has its share in the grand, "why." Make a life-study of that bitter but blessed question, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Thus the Saviour raises an inquiry not so much for Himself as for *us*, and not so much because of any despair within *His* heart as because of a hope and a joy set before Him which were wells of comfort to Him in His wilderness of woe.

Think, for a moment, that the Lord God, in the broadest and most unreserved sense, could never, in very deed, have forsaken His most obedient Son. He was ever with Him in the grand design of salvation. Towards the Lord Jesus, personally, God Himself, personally, must ever have stood on terms of infinite love. Truly the Only-Begotten was never lovelier to the Father than when He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross! But we must look upon God here as the Judge of all the earth, and we must look upon the Lord Jesus in

His official capacity as the Surety of the covenant and the Sacrifice for sin. The great Judge of all cannot smile upon Him who has become the substitute for the guilty. Sin is loathed of God, and if, in order to its removal, His own Son is made to bear it, yet, as sin, it is still loathsome, and He who bears it cannot be in happy communion with God! This was the dread necessity of expiation; but in the *essence* of things the love of the great Father to His Son never ceased, nor ever knew a diminution. Restrained in its flow it must be, but lessened at its fountainhead it could not be. Therefore, wonder not at the question, “Why have You forsaken Me?”

III. Hoping to be guided by the Holy Spirit, I am coming to THE ANSWER concerning which I can only use the few minutes which remain to me. “My God, my God, why have thou forsaken me?” What is the outcome of this suffering? What was the reason for it? Our Saviour could answer His own question. If for a moment His manhood was perplexed, yet His mind soon came to clear apprehension, for He said, “It is finished.” And as I have already said, He then referred to the work which in His lonely agony He had been performing. Why, then, did God forsake His Son? I cannot conceive any other answer than this— *He stood in our place*. There was no reason in Christ why the Father should forsake Him; He was *perfect*, and His life was without spot. God never acts without reason, and since there were no reasons in the character and person of the Lord Jesus why His Father should forsake Him, we must look elsewhere. I do not know how others answer the question. I can only answer it in this one way—

“All the griefs He felt were ours,
Ours were the woes He bore;
Pang, not His own, His spotless soul
With bitter anguish bore.

We held Him as condemned of heaven
An outcast from His God;
While for our sins He groaned, He bled,
Beneath His Father’s rod.”

He bore the sinner’s sin, and He had to be treated, therefore, as though He were a sinner, though sinner He could never be! With His own full consent, He suffered as though He had committed the transgressions which were laid on Him. Our sin, and His taking it upon Himself is the answer to the question, “Why have thou forsaken me?”

In this case we now see that *His obedience was perfect*. He came into the world to obey the Father, and He rendered that obedience to the very uttermost. The spirit of obedience could go no farther than for one who feels forsaken of

God still to cling to Him in solemn, avowed allegiance—still declaring before a mocking multitude His confidence in the afflicting God! It is noble to cry, “My God, my God,” when one is asking, “Why have thou forsaken me?” How much farther can obedience go? I see nothing beyond it. The soldier at the gate of Pompeii, remaining at his post as sentry when the shower of burning ashes was falling, was not more true to his trust than He who adheres to a forsaking God with loyalty of hope.

Lord’s suffering in this particular form was appropriate and necessary. It would not have sufficed for our Lord merely to have been pained in body, nor even to have been grieved in mind in other ways: He must suffer in this particular way. He must feel forsaken of God because *this* is the necessary consequence of sin; for a man to be forsaken of God is the penalty which naturally and inevitably follows upon his breaking his relationship with God. What is death? What was the death that was threatened to Adam? “In the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die.” Is death annihilation? Was Adam annihilated that day? Assuredly not! He lived many a year afterwards; but in the day in which he ate of the forbidden fruit he died by being *separated* from God. The separation of the soul from God is *spiritual* death, just as the separation of the soul from the body is *natural* death. The sacrifice for sin must be put in the place of separation, and must bow to the penalty of death. By this placing of the Great Sacrifice under forsaking and death, it would be seen by all creatures throughout the universe that God cannot have fellowship with sin. If even the Holy One, who stood the Just for the unjust, found God forsaking Him; what must the doom of the actual sinner be? Sin is evidently always, in every case, a dividing influence, putting even the Christ Himself, as a sin-bearer, in the place of distance.

This was necessary for another reason; there could have been no laying on of suffering for sin without the forsaking of the vicarious Sacrifice by the Lord God. So long as the smile of God rests on the man, the law is not afflicting him. The approving look of the great Judge cannot fall upon a man who is viewed as standing in the place of the guilty. Christ not only suffered *from* sin, but *for* sin. If God will cheer and sustain Him, He is not suffering for sin. The Judge is not inflicting suffering for sin if He is manifestly encouraging the smitten one. There could have been no vicarious suffering on the part of Christ for human guilt if He had continued, consciously, to enjoy the full sunshine of the Father’s presence. It was essential to being a victim in our place, that He should cry, “My God, my God, why have thou forsaken me?”

Beloved, see how marvellously, in the person of Christ, the Lord our God has vindicated His law? If to make His law glorious He had said, “These multitudes of men have broken My law, and therefore they shall perish,” the law would have been terribly magnified. But, instead, He says, “Here is My Only-Begotten Son, My other self; He takes on Himself the nature of these

rebellious creatures, and He consents that I should lay on Him the load of their iniquity, and visit in His person the offences which might have been punished in the persons of all these multitudes of men—and I will have it so.” When Jesus bows His head to the stroke of the law; when He submissively consents that His Father shall turn away His face from Him; then myriads of worlds are astonished at the perfect holiness, and stern justice of the lawgiver! There are, probably, worlds innumerable throughout the boundless creation of God, and all these will see, in the death of God’s dear Son, a declaration of His determination never to allow sin to be trifled with! If His own Son is brought before Him, bearing the sin of others upon Him, He will hide His face from Him as well as from the actually guilty. In God infinite love shines over all—but it does not eclipse His absolute justice any more than His justice is permitted to destroy His love. God has all perfections in perfection, and in Christ Jesus we see the reflection of them. Beloved, this is a wonderful theme! Oh, that I had a tongue worthy of this subject! But who could ever reach the height of this great argument?

Once more, when inquiring, “Why did Jesus *allow* to be forsaken of the Father?” we see the fact that *the Captain of our salvation was thus made perfect through suffering*. Every part of the road has been traversed by our Lord’s own feet. Suppose, beloved, the Lord Jesus had never been thus forsaken? Then one of His disciples might have been called to that sharp endurance, and the Lord Jesus could not have sympathized with him in it. He would turn to His Leader and Captain and say to Him, “Did You, my Lord, ever feel this darkness?” Then the Lord Jesus would answer, “No. This is a descent such as I never made.” What a dreadful lack would the tried one have felt; for the servant to bear a grief his Master never knew would be sad, indeed. There would have been a wound for which there was no ointment—a pain for which there was no balm. But it is not so now. “In all their affliction He was afflicted.” “He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” Whereas we greatly rejoice at this time, and as often as we are cast down, underneath us is the deep experience of our forsaken Lord.

I have done when I have said three things. The first is, you and I that are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and are resting in Him alone for salvation, *let us lean hard*. Let us bear all our weight on our Lord. He will bear the full weight of all our sin and care. As to my sin, I hear its harsh accusations no more when I hear Jesus cry, “Why have thou forsaken me?” I know that I deserve the deepest hell at the hand of God’s vengeance, but I am not afraid! He will never forsake *me*, for He *forsook His Son on my behalf*. I shall not suffer for my sin, for Jesus has suffered to the full in my place—yes, suffered so far as to cry, “My God, my God, why have thou forsaken me?” Behind this brazen wall of substitution a sinner is safe! These “munitions of rock” guard all believers, and they may rest secure. The rock is cleft for me—I hide in its rifts, and no harm

can reach me. You have a full atonement, a great sacrifice, a glorious vindication of the law—you can rest at peace, all you that put your trust in Jesus!

Next, if ever, from now on, in our lives we should think that God has deserted us, *let us learn from our Lord's example how to behave ourselves*. If God has left you, do not shut up your Bible: no, open it as your Lord did, and find a text that will suit you. If God has left you, or you think so, do not give up prayer! No, pray as your Lord did, and be more earnest than ever. If you think God has forsaken you, do not give up your faith in Him, but, like your Lord, cry, "My God, my God," again and again! If you have had one anchor before, cast out two anchors now, and double the hold of your faith. If you cannot call Jehovah, "Father," as was Christ's habit, yet call Him your "God." Let the personal pronouns take their hold—"My God, my God." Let nothing drive you from your faith. Still hold on Jesus, sink or swim. As for me, if ever I am lost, it shall be at the foot of the cross! To this pass have I come, that if I never see the face of God with acceptance, yet I will believe that He will be faithful to His Son, and true to the covenant sealed by oaths and blood. He that believes in Jesus has everlasting life—there I cling, like the limpet to the rock. There is but one gate of heaven, and even if I may not enter it, I will cling to the posts of its door! What am I saying? I shall enter in for that gate was never shut against a soul that accepted Jesus! And Jesus says, "Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out."

The last of the three points is this; *let us abhor the sin which brought such agony upon our beloved Lord*. What an accursed thing is sin which crucified the Lord Jesus! Do you laugh at it? Will you go and spend an evening to see a mimic performance of it? Do you roll sin under your tongue as a sweet morsel, and then come to God's house on the Lord's-Day morning, and think to worship Him? Worship Him? Worship Him with sin indulged in your breast? Worship Him with sin loved and pampered in your life? O sirs, if I had a dear brother who had been murdered, what would you think of me if I valued the knife which had been crimsoned with his blood—if I made a friend of the murderer, and daily consorted with the assassin who drove the dagger into my brother's heart? Surely I, too, must be an accomplice in the crime! Sin murdered Christ—will you be a friend to it? Sin pierced the heart of the Incarnate God— can you love it? Oh that there was an abyss as deep as Christ's misery, that I might at once hurl this dagger of sin into its depths; where it might never be brought to light again! Begone, O sin! You are banished from the heart where Jesus reigns! Begone, for you have crucified my Lord, and made Him cry, "Why have thou forsaken me?"! O my hearers, if you did but know yourselves, and know the love of Christ, you would each one vow that you would harbour sin no longer! You would be indignant at sin and cry—

“The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol is, Lord,
I will tear it from its throne,
And worship only Thee. ”

May that be the issue of my morning’s discourse, and then I shall be well content. The Lord bless you! May the Christ who suffered for you bless you, and out of His darkness may your light arise! Amen.