**FORSAKEN, BUT NOT SEPARATED**

“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning?” Those words were first written by David (Ps.22:1), then later quoted by Jesus as applicable to His own situation (Mt.27:46; Mk.15:34). Many have ***misused*** those words to say that Jesus was “separated from God” on the cross because He was bearing the guilt and punishment for our sins. Others have countered, saying that Jesus was not “really” forsaken, but only “felt like” He was forsaken. I believe both positions are wrong. Would you consider this with me?

If Jesus only “felt like” He was forsaken, how does that square with the fact that He is God, and knows all things? Did His omniscience leave Him at that moment? Did Satan deceive Jesus into thinking He had been forsaken? Or worse, did His heavenly Father deceive Him into thinking this? It does not seem tenable that Jesus only “felt like” He was forsaken by God. Either He was or He wasn’t forsaken; there is no room for “felt like.”

On the other hand, ***why*** would we ***assume*** that “forsaken” ***must*** mean that Jesus is spiritually “separated from God?” The very Psalm that is quoted by Jesus also says, “For He (God) has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; ***Nor has He hidden His face from Him; But when He cried to Him, He heard”*** (v.24). Does that sound like someone who is separated from God? And if He was separated from God, why did God hear His prayer (cf. Is.59:1-2)? The only fair conclusion one can reach is that Jesus was NOT separated from God! Further, Jesus most certainly did NOT bear our guilt or penalty on the cross (Hb.9:14; Mt.25:46). Finally, if our guilt and penalty were “transferred” to Jesus, as some allege, then they are no longer with us – and that means, “once saved, always saved,” is true after all! If not, why not?

So, what remains is the fact that Jesus most certainly **WAS** forsaken by God; but He was **NOT** separated from God – which is the title of this article! In the space that remains, I’ll examine “how” Jesus was forsaken.

First, consider the parallelism of original quote: “My God, My God, why have You ***forsaken Me?*** Why are You ***so far from helping Me,*** And from the words of My groaning?” The phrase, “Why have You forsaken Me,” is parallel with “Why are You so far from helping Me” – one thought explains the other. This is very common in Scripture, and it is true here. It should be clear that the sense in which both David and Jesus were “forsaken” is that God was “far from helping” them at this specific moment in their lives.

In the case of Jesus, God had “protected” Him until it was time to go to the cross. Notice how this is developed in the gospel of John: “Therefore they sought to take Him; ***but no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come”*** (Jn.7:30). “These words Jesus spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; ***and no one laid hands on Him, for His hour had not yet come”*** (Jn.8:20). Then we read, “But Jesus answered them, saying, ***“The hour has come*** that the Son of Man should be glorified” (Jn.12:23). And ***“Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour”*** (Jn.12:27). Finally, we read, “Now before the Feast of the Passover, ***when Jesus knew that His hour had come*** that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end” (Jn.13:1). “Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: ***“Father, the hour has come.*** Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You” (Jn.17:1). Bottom line: when “His hour” came, God removed all protection, thus “forsaking” Him to die upon a cruel cross for the sins of mankind.There is even a line in an old hymn which says, “Oh, why has thou forsaken Me, to die upon the cruel tree.”

Jesus was “forsaken” because it was necessary for the remission of sins (Mt.26:28; Hb.9:22). Jesus was “forsaken” to demonstrate God’s great love for us (Jn.3:16; Rm.5:8). And Jesus was “forsaken” because HE loved us (Jn.15:13). I’m glad He was forsaken; but I am so ashamed that it was necessary. How about you?

--Lanny Smith