

DESPISED AND FORSAKEN

Matthew 27:27-50

THE ATONEMENT

In a profound act of divine intervention, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was delivered over by Yahweh's predetermined plan and foreknowledge (Acts 2:23) as a substitute for sinners whom God had chosen before creation to save by His grace. Our sinful nature and acts of rebellion, deserving only of eternal condemnation in hell, were met with this unparalleled act of mercy.

Yahweh performed a profound exchange when His Son died on the cross. In a very brief moment of time, at most about three human hours, He took the eternal condemnation reserved for His elect and poured it out on His holy and beloved Son and took the eternal love and favor, undeserved and unearned, reserved for His holy and beloved Son and poured it out on the unworthy, undeserving, guilty elect.

Let's zoom in just a little bit more.

God's *eternal* wrath against elect sinners was poured out on Jesus on His cross. Jesus was truly a holy and righteous Man, but He was also Yahweh in human flesh. He was able to bear God's *eternal* condemnation without being destroyed. When Jesus declared, "It is finished!" He meant that His work of atonement had been perfectly and completely accomplished. God's *eternal* wrath against the elect had been satisfied.

God's wrath was never sporadic or intermittent. His wrath against sin and sinners was, is, and shall be *constant* and *unchanging*. It is truly *eternal*. Those condemned to hell will *eternally* suffer under God's wrath. His wrath against them will *never diminish*, ever. But the wrath against His elect He poured out on His Son. *Every* charge against His elect was laid upon Jesus. *Every* crime. *Every* sin. *Every* single last accusation that He could make against His elect was poured out upon Jesus on His cross. *Nothing* was left. If *each* of your sins were written in a book, line by line, then *each* of your sins was attributed to Jesus, line by line, and finally, *the book itself* – "All Of Greg's Sins" – was laid upon Jesus. Not only are your sins satisfied in Christ, but God destroyed the book that contained them.

Nothing was held back. Not one sin was reserved just in case Yahweh changed His mind about you in the future. If I may put it in human terms, when Jesus died for your sins, God gave up the right to condemn you ever again.

At the same time, God's *eternal* love and favor toward His Son were poured out on elect sinners. The fullness of God's *eternal* love and favor toward Jesus was granted to and expressed toward the sinners He had condemned. All the love and favor God the Father has for His Son He poured out upon you. The Father took all of the righteousness of His Son and poured it out upon you. Every blessed deed. Every godly prayer.

Every act of generosity. Every good thing. All of it was credited to you as though you had lived Jesus's life.

Yahweh's love for His Son was *never sporadic* or *intermittent*. It was, is, and will always be *constant* and *unchanging*. It is *eternal*. And when Jesus died on the cross, the Father turned and poured out that love and favor upon His people. He didn't decide to love them for a moment; His love is *eternal*. He didn't decide to favor them once in a while. His favor is *eternal*. If each of Jesus' righteous deeds were written in a book – “The Holy And Righteous Acts Of Jesus Christ The Son Of God” – then God the Father took that book, copied it exactly, and wrote your name on the cover: “The Holy And Righteous Acts Of Greg.”

We know that there is no escaping hell. Those condemned to eternal judgment will never escape; that's why it's called *eternal* judgment.

By the very same token, there is no escaping God's favor. To be granted eternal life means to be granted eternal favor and eternal love. It cannot be lost and will never diminish; that is why it is called *eternal* life. And this is why the elect are certain to be saved: Jesus bore their guilt on the cross, and God will not fail to save them by His Spirit.

This brings us to our lengthy passage today. What Yahweh has done for us in His Son did not happen in a vacuum but in history. It was not solely a judicial decision but an act carried out at a particular time and place. It was not a theoretical or hypothetical change in our standing before God but one carved into the very granite of time.

Isaiah 53:3 says that Jesus **was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their faces, He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.** We see this prophetic Word lived out in Matthew 27:27-50. Let's look.

DESPISED AND FORSAKEN BY THE ROMANS

Matthew 27:27-37

27 Then when the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium, they gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him.

28 And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him.

29 And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!”

30 And they spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head.

31 When they had mocked Him, they took the scarlet robe off Him and put His own garments back on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.

32 And as they were coming out, they found a man of Cyrene named Simon, whom they pressed into service to bear His cross.

33 And when they came to a place called Golgotha, which means Place of a Skull,

34 they gave Him wine to drink mixed with gall; and after tasting it, He did not want to drink.

35 And when they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments among themselves by casting lots.

36 And sitting down, they began to keep watch over Him there.

37 And above His head they put up the charge against Him which read, “THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

(Matthew 27:27–37, 2022 LSB)

Every last act of the Roman soldiers conveys contempt and mockery toward the Lord Jesus. They mocked His claim to be the King of Israel. They mocked His dignity. They treated Him as a nothing, as one who deserved nothing good but only the worst of everything. He didn't deserve the slightest consideration, as far as they were concerned.

They didn't force Simon of Cyrene to carry Jesus' cross out of kindness but out of necessity. Jesus had been awake for twenty-four hours or more. He had been severely wounded by the scourging. He had been further injured by the beatings He had received from the Jews earlier and the Roman soldiers now. The Romans weren't about to carry His cross, so they grabbed Simon, a Jewish pilgrim from North Africa, to carry it for Him.

Before they crucified Jesus, they tried to give Him wine mixed with gall, which would be a sedative, but He refused to drink it. Think about this for a moment. There is no record that Jesus had eaten or drunk anything since the evening before, more than twelve hours earlier. He had to be greatly thirsty by this point. The wine mixed with gall would have not only satisfied His thirst, but offered a bit of relief from His suffering. But Jesus refused even the tiniest escape from His suffering for your sake. There will be no relief in hell, and Jesus accepted none in His sacrifice.

They stripped Him naked and crucified Him and had so little respect for Him that they divided up His clothing to sell for a few pennies. They sat down for the vigil, not to protect Jesus from abuse but to ensure that no one tried to rescue Him.

As a last indignity, they put a sign above His head that read, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.” They found amusement in the idea that “the King of the Jews” was a pathetic man dying the most shameful death they could imagine.

DESPISED AND FORSAKEN BY THE JEWS

38 At that time two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left.

39 And those passing by were blaspheming Him, shaking their heads **40** and saying, “You who are going to destroy the sanctuary and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”

41 In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying,

42 “He saved others; He cannot save Himself.

He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him.

43 “He trusts in God; let God rescue Him now, if He delights in Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”

44 And the robbers who had been crucified with Him were also insulting Him with the same words. **(Matthew 27:38–44, 2022 LSB)**

The contempt continues. Jesus was crucified between two robbers, two violent men like Barabbas, men who were probably partners with Barabbas in his crimes. He didn’t die a respectful distance away, in a place of honor, but next to a busy road where His suffering, nakedness, and notorious companions would be seen by all.

Those passing by blasphemed Him, people who just came by to see for themselves what was happening to Him. They call His attention back to the start of His ministry. He had cleared the Temple of those defiling it. When the Jews asked by what authority He acted, He said,

19 Jesus answered them, “Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up.”

20 The Jews then said, “It took forty-six years to build this sanctuary, and will You raise it up in three days?”

21 But He was speaking about the sanctuary of His body.

(John 2:19–21, 2022 LSB)

This actually happened. The Jews did bring about Jesus’ death on the cross. Jesus did rise from the dead on the third day. But the passersby don’t care about that. They are simply mocking Him as He suffers.

The chief priests, scribes, and elders weren’t passing by. They were there for the duration. They treated Jesus as a mortal enemy and took a sick, depraved delight in His suffering and death.

“He saved others—He cannot save Himself!” But Jesus never wanted to save himself. He *saved* others by *giving Himself* for them.

“He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him!” No, they

wouldn't have believed in Him. If He had suddenly stepped down from the cross in power and victory, they would have howled with rage and demanded that the Romans kill Him. And while Jesus could have come down from the cross at any moment, there would have been nothing to believe if He had. He had to die in the place of sinners at that time. It was the predetermined plan of God that Jesus would die on the cross at that place at that time at the order of these chief priests, scribes, and elders.

“He trusts in God; let God rescue Him now if He delights in Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” Oh, but Jesus did trust in God, and that is why He was suffering on the cross. God the Father did delight in His Son, partly because He was dying on the cross: **For this reason the Father loves Me because I lay down My life so that I may take it again** (John 10:17).

And, astoundingly, even **the robbers who had been crucified with Him were also insulting Him with the same words**. They were themselves dying in the most agonizing way imaginable. They were suffering the very same physical torments that Jesus was suffering. They were fighting for every breath, groaning with every moment, blinded with pain, yet found the strength to hurl insults at Jesus. Matthew doesn't tell the whole story of these two men. Later on, one of them was granted grace by the Father:

39 And one of the criminals hanging there was blaspheming Him, saying,

“Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!”

40 But the other answered, and rebuking him said,

“Do you not even fear God,

since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?

41 And we indeed are suffering justly,

for we are receiving what we deserve for what we have done;

but this man has done nothing wrong.”

42 And he was saying, “Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!”

43 And He said to him, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.”

(Luke 23:39–43, 2022 LSB)

This man's plea was not a single statement; he *was saying*, over and over again, “Jesus, remember me when You come in Your Kingdom.” There was a time as mom was dying that she prayed over and over again, calling on Jesus for help, to come to her, to take her, to relieve her suffering. And just as with the thief on the cross, that very day, she was with the Lord.

DESPISED AND FORSAKEN BY YAHWEH

Matthew 27:45-49

Jesus was despised and forsaken by the Romans. He was despised and forsaken by the Jews. Most of all, He was despised and forsaken by Yahweh.

45 Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour.

46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying,

“Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

47 And some of those who were standing there, when they heard it, began saying,

“This man is calling for Elijah.”

48 And immediately one of them ran, and taking a sponge,

he filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink.

49 But the rest of them were saying, “Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him.”

(Matthew 27:45–49, 2022 LSB)

Just this past week, we experienced a solar eclipse. In the middle of the eclipse track, there was darkness for about 3-1/2 or 4 minutes. When Jesus was crucified, there was darkness on the land of Israel for three hours. It was no solar eclipse, no natural phenomena. No explanation was given when the darkness struck; the explanation was given after three hours. Jesus cried out with a loud voice, **My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?** Why did Jesus say this?

When Jesus died on the cross, He died in the place of sinners. Second Corinthians 5:21 says **God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.** Jesus didn't become *sinful*, mind you. His nature never changed. But He was *made to be sin* on our behalf. Every sin on Him was laid. The wrath of God against sinners was poured out on the sinless One. And during that time of suffering, the Father forsook the Son. The Father treated His Son as we deserved to be treated. He treated Him in three hours as the wicked will be treated for all eternity.

Don't think to yourself, “Well, it was only three hours.” Jesus suffered the eternal wrath of God against His people in a three-hour period of time. He had to be a Man to die in the place of human beings. He had to be God in order to endure that suffering.

THE ATONEMENT IS COMPLETE

Matthew 27:50

50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.

(Matthew 27:50, 2022 LSB)

Matthew doesn't record Jesus' words, but Luke and John do.

46 And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said,

“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.”

Having said this, He breathed His last.

(Luke 23:46, 2022 LSB)

30 Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!”
 And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.
(John 19:30, 2022 LSB)

These are not contradictions. The Gospel writers don't say that Jesus *only* said one thing. They simply recorded what they recorded. So, notice three things.

First, notice the change in how Jesus addresses God. Just moments before, it was, *My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?* But with His atoning work completed, Jesus calls out, *Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.* The imputation of our sin to Him required that the Father turn His face away, as we sing in *How Deep The Father's Love For Us*. Jesus was forsaken by the Father and calls upon Him as **My God**. Now that His atoning work is complete, He calls Him *Father* again.

Second, please pay close attention to the three words: it is finished. It's just one word in Greek: *tetelestai*. It is in the perfect tense, which means that Jesus' atoning work was finished forever. He didn't say, “I did all that I could, and boy, I sure hope it's enough.” He didn't say, “Well, I did My part, and now it's up to sinners to get the rest right.” He said that His atoning work was finished for all time and complete, never to be revisited again.

Finally, I want you to notice that Jesus gave up His spirit. He is God and Man. As a Man, He could die, and he did. As God, He could maintain His human life as long as He wished, and He did for as long as our atonement required. No power in the universe could end His life until He was ready. And no power in the universe could extend His life one second beyond what He willed.

BRINGING IT HOME

We've covered a lot of ground this morning. There are many points that could be made, but I'll just make one.

Second Corinthians 5:21 describes a tremendous exchange. **God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.** It's a double imputation. Our sin was imputed to Christ, and He suffered God's wrath as though He had lived our sinful lives. His righteousness was imputed to us, and we received God's favor as though we had lived Jesus' righteous life.

But I realized for the first time this week that just as the wrath of God was poured out fully on Jesus on His cross, the love and favor of God was poured out fully on us as Jesus died. As God's wrath against us was poured out on Jesus, God's love and favor toward Jesus were poured upon us. God's wrath was satisfied, and He will never be wrathful against us again. But His love and favor are eternal. With His wrath satisfied, He will never again view us with anything but love and favor.

I know what you're thinking: but I still sin! Yes, you do. So do I, and so does every Christian. You aren't special. Your sin is not so great that Jesus was not able to bear it on His cross or that the Father could not forgive it through Jesus.

There is only one thing that keeps any of us from delighting in the love of God, and that is that we give our own emotions and ideas a greater authority than the Word of God. I know that it's hard at times, and I find it very difficult at times, but we must learn that what we feel is always deceptive to one degree or another. Only what God says in His Word can be trusted without reservation.

Here's the final point. We were once despised and forsaken because of our sin, but Jesus was loved and favored. Jesus took our place, and the wrath of God fell on Him. He became despised and forsaken so that we could be loved and favored.