



An Isolated Easter

By Thomas Eglinton

During this isolated Easter, consider this verse, which is possibly one of the most remarkable verses in the Bible. It shows us a glimpse into a mystery at the very heart of the gospel, but a mystery it is – who can comprehend it?

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34)

Jesus is on the cross suffering an excruciating death on behalf of his people. For three hours (from midday until 3 pm) there is utter darkness. Something more than a routine execution was happening.

On the cross, Jesus, God the Son, was treated by God the Father as if he was guilty of all the sins that all of Christ’s people ever had and ever will commit. On the cross, Jesus was forsaken by the Father.

CHRIST’S COMMUNION WITH THE FATHER

To understand the horror this verse speaks about, we have to understand the contrast. The Father forsook Jesus after being in perfect fellowship for all of his life and for all of eternity.

We know very little about Jesus’ childhood but we do know that even as early as 12-years of age he knew his Father and loved to be in his Father’s house. Throughout Jesus’ ministry we see a close and loving relationship between Christ and his Father. We see Jesus praying intimately to his Father before the watching crowds. We see Jesus withdrawing from the crowds to spend whole nights in prayer to his Father. And we see Christ in the garden of Gethsemane crying to his Abba Father.

Consider this from an eternal perspective. Before time began, God existed in perfect, loving community: one God in three persons. The Trinity share a mysterious love and fellowship

which is infinitely close.

The Son delighted in the Father, the Father rejoiced in the Son and the Spirit shared in their joy. Each person in the Trinity loved the other and they glory in each other eternally. This is dynamic love in perfect unity.

The best friendship in the world does not compare. The closest marriage filled with sweet intimacy is a dull and dirty reflection. Identical twins who can finish each other’s sentences are not the same.

The Son, from all eternity, experienced nothing but the love of the Father and intimate relationship with the Spirit. It is this Son who cried out these words:

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

SIN DESERVES SEPARATION

Sin is unbearable to God. Psalm 5 tells us that “evil may not dwell” with God. God is so holy, so pure, so righteous that He cannot allow sin to be near him without judgement and wrath.

Sin is the breaking of God’s law. It is putting our own law above God’s. It is dethroning God. Sin is, as one Puritan puts it, the evil of evils.

But we don’t understand the sinfulness of sin. By nature, we think sin is fun and enjoyable. We think it isn’t that bad. It doesn’t hurt to play with a little sin here and there. We like to cloak sin in less nefarious language – mistakes, lapses in judgement, personality issues, weaknesses.

If you want to see the wickedness of sin, look at what it required:

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

The word 'forsake' means to abandon or to desert. To deal with your 'mistakes', God the Father abandoned the Son. To clear away the guilt caused by your 'weaknesses', Jesus had to suffer in total isolation. It was one thing to have the crowds of Jews turn on him – they were known to be fickle and changeable. It was another to have his disciples all flee and one of his closest friends deny him publicly. It was yet another thing all together to have his Father turn His face away.

Jesus became so filthy when he took on our sin that his Father could not bear the sight of him. As Christ hung there, naked on the cross, he was covered with the guilt of all of your sinful thoughts, all of those angry words, every lust-filled action, every jealous bit of gossip, and he became unbearable to God. And the Father forsook him, abandoned him.

No longer did Jesus experience the love of the Father who was "well-pleased" with him. Instead he was now hated by God (Ps 5).

For one incredible moment in history, the Godhead – who had and will live forever in joyful, perfect, loving communion – was somehow torn apart.

CHRIST'S DEATH PURCHASES COMMUNION

Why would the Son, who loved the Father's fellowship, willingly become defiled with the guilt of sin when this would lead to being forsaken by the Father?

The reason is you, Christian!

If Jesus wasn't forsaken by the Father, you would be. If light didn't run away from Christ, you would face everlasting darkness. If the Son of God wasn't abandoned on the cross, you would suffer in isolation forever.

But, because Jesus did suffer in isolation, you now have perfect communion with God.

Jesus didn't just take your sin on the cross, he also lived a perfect life of obedience. Whenever sinners rest in Christ, they receive all of his righteousness as well as having their guilt carried away.

As a result, when God looks at a Christian, he does not see wickedness that he hates. Instead, God sees his Son with whom he is well-pleased, he sees a son whom he loves.

And in Christ, the Christian has communion with God. God now lives close to his people, in their very hearts. The Spirit of Christ dwells in you, making his home with you. You have access to the throne of God which you can approach with confidence.

Even the most isolated Christian who has no human friends around them is never alone. No, even in our isolation we have communion with the Triune God.

He speaks to us through his Word, he ministers to our heart by his Spirit, he looks upon us with love and hears our prayers. He is our fortress, our refuge, our very present help in times of trouble. He is our comforter, our brother (our friend – see John 15:13-14). He is our husband (Eph. 5), our shepherd who knows his sheep, our great high priest interceding for us.

Christ went through isolation so that you, dear Christian, will never be alone. Now you can say:

"My God, my God, why have you *loved* me?"

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