

Lent Vespers 2  
27 March 2011  
Concordia Lutheran Mission  
Terrebonne, Oregon

## “God Forsakes No Man because Christ is the Only Man Ever Forsaken of God.”

“Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.”

Psalm 22:4

### Introduction

Is any man ever forsaken of God? The answer is no. But how can one say that? Many men have felt forsaken down through the ages.<sup>1</sup> So how can someone say that? We can say

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<sup>1</sup>“Because Christ felt this agony, thinking of nothing else than that He was forsaken by God, behold, from this we may be certain that God will nevermore forsake us. And because God the Lord regarded Christ as black on account of our sin, so is it accomplished for us that He permits His gracious countenance to shine upon us, Num. 6. 3. In like manner, Christ here laments being forsaken by God; thus does God the Lord also often allow the members of Christ to experience such anguish, so that they think nothing other than that God has forsaken them and will no longer look upon them in grace. We find such examples of temptations especially in David and Job. And with such temptations God more often assails, not the ordinary Christian, but rather the greatest saints, who have increased more than others in the knowledge of God. Just as Christ then no less remains God’s Son, even though He was thrust into such great temptation (tribulation), so also such tempted hearts should no less consider that they still are and remain God’s children, even though He puts them under such temptations (tribulations) for a long time. Even as Christ in [the] midst of such agony also cried out: **My God, My God,** thereby confessing that in His heart HE no less still regards God as His own God and gracious Father, so also such troubled hearts should not cast aside their trust. Instead, they should steadfastly cling to God’s promises, for He says in Isa. 49: **Zion says, the Lord has forsaken me; the Lord has forgotten me. Can a mother also forget her child? And even if she does forget it, yet I will never forget you. See I have stamped [branded] you [your name] into My hands.**” *An Explanation of the History of the Suffering and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the four evangelists, presented so that we may be awakened in the knowledge of the love of Christ and may blessedly grow according to the inner man.* tr. the Rev. Elmer M. Hohle, ed. the Rev. Dr. David O. Berger, Malone, TX: Repristination Press, pp. 275, 276.

“Johann Gerhard (1582-1637) has rightly been classified the ‘third preeminent theologian after Luther and Chemnitz.’ ... However, while Gerhard is best remembered for his great dogmatics, the *Loci Theologici*, Gerhard produced a number of devotional volumes and preach

with complete confidence no man has been forsaken of God because Christ was the only man forsaken of God.

God refused to hear Christ and forsook Him because Christ was truly bearing the guilt of our sins. This fact we learned in verse one when Christ cried out, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” And Christ was bearing the one thing that God finds loathsome and made Him forsake Him: sin.

And Christ was bearing not His sin – He is God and so had none – but rather the sins of all men. Christ, then, is the only man God has ever forsaken because He is the only man ever condemned for the sins of men.

Consequently, God hears the prayers of all men for Christ’s sake. Hence, Jesus says in today’s **Psalm** that the fathers of Israel cried out to God and He delivered them. Why? Again, because God forsook no one except Christ. For Christ’s sake, therefore, God hears and answers the prayers of all men.

No man, then, is forsaken of God because God forsook Christ, His Only-Begotten Son, for us so no man would be forsaken. God forsakes no man and hears the pleas of all men for Christ’s sake and delivers them out of every last trouble<sup>2</sup>.

## **I. Jesus’ was Forsaken on the Cross on Account of the Sins of Men.**

### **A. The suffering of men comes about because of their sin.**

Men often think God has forsaken them when trouble enters their lives. But nothing could be further from the truth. Suffering enters into the lives of men because of sin.<sup>3</sup> For those in Christ, God uses these calamities brought about by sin to strengthen them in the Gospel<sup>4</sup>; nevertheless, our woes in this life come about because of our sins or the sins of others.

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many sermons to the ‘common man.’ The sermons in this volume were apparently preached when Gerhard was 31 years old and already superintendent at Heldburg and a Doctor of Divinity.” **Foreword** from *Seven Christmas Sermons*.

<sup>2</sup>“**THE SECOND COMMANDMENT.** Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain. *What does this mean?* We should fear and love God that we may not curse, swear, use witchcraft, lie, or deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.” *The Small Catechism*, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup>“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” **Romans 5:12.**

<sup>4</sup>“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.” **Romans 8:28.**

When we consider the magnitude of our sin, we really suffer very little.

But how can one say we really suffer very little? Well, let's consider the punishment we deserve. We have sinned against God. God is infinite and eternal. One sin, therefore, is an infinite and eternal offense.

But how can one say that one sin is an infinite and eternal offense? Well, the magnitude of the offense depends upon the majesty of the person one offends. We have offended God. God's Majesty is infinite and eternal. One offense times infinity and eternity is infinity and eternity. One sin, therefore, against God is infinite and eternal because of the Majesty of the Person we have offended is infinite and eternal – because God is limitless and because God goes on forever.<sup>5</sup>

How long would it take to pay for one such offense? It would take forever. In short, no man could ever pay it. He would go on for eternity paying the penalty.

As an aside, we can see that the doctrine of hell arises out of the doctrine of God. Because God is that big, there are eternal consequences for offending Him.

Also, as an aside, we can also now see why in modern times men seek to deny the existence of God. Men desire to deny the existence of God because they simply do not want to deal with someone that big or consequences that dreadful for offending Someone that Big. So, the disappearance of the doctrine of hell in modern times has disappeared with the doctrine of God.

But, of course, that is the avenue of fools. For the Lord says, “The fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God.*”<sup>6</sup> And, of course, folly never solved any problem. Just because men pretend there is no God does not make God go away – just as pretending any reality is not there doesn't make it go away.

And the reality of our sin piles up endlessly. For we have not offended God once, but many times throughout our lives, in thought, word, and deed, waking and sleeping.

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<sup>5</sup>Dr. Gerhard, therefore, writes: “Miserable man had angered the infinite God with his sin; therefore, he fell into an infinite evil. Such an infinite evil could be paid for and removed in no other way than with the infinite Good. Now then, apart from God nothing is infinitely good. That's why God became man, so that man be enabled to pay on the strength of the infinite divinity, so that this divine payment avail for the benefit of man on account of the personal union, and so that divine righteousness adequately accomplish this.” *Seven Christmas Sermons (1613)*, tr. the Rev. Elmer M. Hohle, ed. Dr. David O. Berger, Decatur, IL: The Johann Gerhard Institute, first edition, November 1996, p. 37.

<sup>6</sup>**Psalm 14:1.**

Consequently, we see that our infinities of eternities of punishment go on forever and ever because the Majesty of God's Person goes on infinitely forever.<sup>7</sup> The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard writes of Christ's agony in order to impress upon us a bit of an understanding of the magnitude of our sin and its consequences:

Now then ponder what sin is, and what kind of anguish will result for those who do not seek forgiveness for sin in Christ and protection from the wrath of God. Here stands God's Son, who carries (upholds) everything by the power of His Word, Heb. 1, who is of the same essence with His heavenly Father. One might think that He will readily overcome and easily bear the burden of sins and divine wrath, and it will be for Him a light, little blade of straw. But look here, how this holy Soul agonizes; indeed, the more you reflect on Him, the better you will comprehend what a huge burden sin is. With the unrepentant, sin is regarded as an insignificant thing. Some intended to atone for it with their own deeds. However, this sad spectacle knocks down all these thoughts. For, if [sins] were such an insignificant matter why was Christ Himself thus permitted to grieve [over them]? If they could be atoned for with one's own works, why was He allowed to be so fearful? One also sees here what the judgment of God and the anguish of hell are. Had God the Lord held the entire world accountable in His wrathful judgment, then all of mankind in one lump would not have been able to bear the burden of this divine wrath and judgment. Therefore, the damned, who did not seek and receive forgiveness of their sins through Christ, will constantly and unceasingly be in such agony; and, their ongoing existence will be nothing other than a continuous anguish and despairing. Truly, this Person, who stands here before divine judgment, has strong legs because He is of one essence with His heavenly Father; at the same time, He falls down to the ground in dread.

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<sup>7</sup>“Scripture teaches plainly that the very punishment which we should have suffered on account of our sins was meted out to Christ. The very curse which was denounced against sinful man (‘Cursed is everyone that continueth not, etc., ‘ Gal. 3:10), fell in its full weight upon Christ: ‘Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, *being made a curse for us*’ (Gal. 3:13). Yes, the suffering of Christ was of comparatively short duration. But observe God's method of computation. When Scripture measures the value of Christ's Passion, it does so by the exalted dignity of the Sufferer. It was the suffering of the Son of God. 1 John 1:7: ‘The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin.’ Acts 20:28: ‘His [God's] own blood.’ The teaching of the ‘orthodox theologians’ that the brief suffering of Christ, as that of the Son of God, is equivalent to the eternal suffering of mankind is not a ‘dogmatic construction,’ but it is the doctrine of Scripture. [Dorscheus ... ‘The eternity of human suffering is compensated for by the majesty and excellence of the Person (Christ).’] Christ ‘fully balanced our account,’ the settlement is ‘mathematically’ correct as God views the matter.” The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. II, p. 354, footnote 48 included in the text in brackets. Dr. Pieper was President of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod from 1899-1911.

Also, He did not know to stay away from sadness, and the world becomes too cramped for Him. How, then will it go for those who are not reconciled with God, and instead go forth in steadfast certain [cocky confidence] and godlessness?<sup>8</sup>

For this reason, we begin to understand that no matter what reversals in life we suffer, we really have not suffered very much compared to the eternity of suffering we have earned that should come crashing down on us.

### **B. Christ was forsaken of God because of our sins.**

OK, so what is it that keeps these eternal calamities at bay? *Well, it's not a what, but a Who.* Jesus is the One who keeps these eternal calamities at bay for us. For Christ truly bore God's wrath over sin because He truly bore the guilt of our sin. In **Psalm 69** Jesus says:

O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee.<sup>9</sup>

How can Jesus, who is the Holy One of Israel<sup>10</sup>, claim He has sins? Jesus says He has sins not because of any sins He committed but rather because our sins were reckoned to Him in order to save us from our sins.<sup>11</sup> He, therefore, claims them as His own and expiates them for us. St. Paul the Apostle writes:

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<sup>8</sup>*An Explanation of the History of the Suffering and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the four evangelists, presented so that we may be awakened in the knowledge of the love of Christ and may blessedly grow according to the inner man.* tr. the Rev. Elmer M. Hohle, ed. the Rev. Dr. David O. Berger, Malone, TX: Repristination Press, pp. 65, 66.

<sup>9</sup>**Psalm 69:5.**

<sup>10</sup>“For David speaketh concerning him, ... Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” **Acts 2:25, 27.**

<sup>11</sup>**V. 5. O God, Thou knowest My foolishness,** the folly of the trespasses which He here ascribes to Himself; and **My sins are not hid from Thee;** for so fully did He enter into His role as the Substitute of mankind that He stood before God in the nakedness of the guilt imputed to Him, as though it were really His own.” The Rev. Dr. P. E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible, The Old Testament Volume II, The Poetical and the Prophetical Books*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1924, pp. 128, 129.

For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.<sup>12</sup>

The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard writes:

The garden in which Christ endured these agonies is located in the valley of Jehoshaphat, which became a valley of judgment for Christ, because in it God the Lord summoned Christ before His wrathful judgment for the simple reason that He had loaded on Himself the sin of mankind. In that place the sun, moon and stars kept back their light; that is, Christ found no comfort with His heavenly Father or with His disciples. In sum, He had no star to guide Him; instead, the thick cloud of sorrow encompassed Him, for at this time God the Lord roared out of Zion and let His voice be heard from Jerusalem. Jerusalem had been the city where God the Lord had His hearth and fire, as the Scriptures states in Isa. 31 [v. 9]. There God had viewed His Son in wrath and let His voice issue forth in fury, as if to say: Are you the One who wants to bear all sin of mankind? As a result, shall I summon you before the judgment for everything people have committed against My Law? Do you want to pay for everything of which My honor was robbed by sin? Well then, I, as a righteous Judge, must allow My wrath and punishment to be pronounced over You; I must pour out My fury and ire over You; and I lay upon You such agony as would otherwise have pressed down on the entire world.<sup>13</sup>

Precisely because God reckoned our sins to Christ and because God hates sin, God, therefore, truly forsook Christ.

## **II. All Men are Embraced by God because Jesus of Nazareth, God's Son, is the Only Man Forsaken of God.**

### **A. The fathers of Israel were heard for Christ's sake and delivered.**

Now we can begin to see the basis for answered prayer: It is the forsaking of Jesus by God. For God forsook Jesus and refused to hear His prayers because He bore the sins of all.

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<sup>12</sup>**II Corinthians 5:21.** "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all." **Isaiah 53:6.**

<sup>13</sup>*An Explanation of the History of the Suffering and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the four evangelists, presented so that we may be awakened in the knowledge of the love of Christ and may blessedly grow according to the inner man.* tr. the Rev. Elmer M. Hohle, ed. the Rev. Dr. David O. Berger, Malone, TX: Repristination Press, p. 64.

Now that Christ has expiated that sin, there is nothing to hinder the prayers of men. In Christ God hears and answers the prayers of all men. Jesus, therefore, says in today's **Psalm**:

Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.<sup>14</sup>

So, for example, when the people of Israel fled Egypt, their pleas for help against the Egyptian Empire were heard<sup>15</sup> for Christ's sake. St. Paul the Apostle writes:

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>**Psalm 22:4-5.**

<sup>15</sup>“For what nation *is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for?*” **Deuteronomy 4:7.**

<sup>16</sup>**I Corinthians 10:1-4.** “Jesus appears as God on the pages of the Old Testament. He reveals Himself under such titles as ‘the Angel of the Lord,’ ‘Jehovah,’ ‘Lord,’ etc. Whenever in the Old Testament the name ‘Lord’ occurs, it is pre-eminently not the Father, nor the Holy Spirit, but the Son of God. Ex. 13:21 Moses writes of the writes of the Israelites in the wilderness: ‘And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light.’ Who is this ‘Lord’? Ch. 14:19 He is called ‘the Angel of God,’ which is a well-known appellation of Jesus in the Old Testament. Here the Angel of God is directly termed ‘Lord.’ All doubt is removed by Paul (I Cor. 10:3-4): ‘Our fathers did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; *and that Rock was Christ.*’ ... Which person of the Godhead summoned Moses to the summit of Mount Sinai and gave him the two tables of the Law? Again it was the Son of God. The evidence is presented in the Ascension Psalm 68; vv. 7-8, and 17-18. And all doubt is excluded by Heb. 12:18-26, especially v. 24. ... Luther writes: ‘The God who led Israel out of Egypt and through the Red Sea; who went before them in a pillar of a cloud and of fire; who nourished them with bread from heaven and did all the miracles which Moses relates in his books; again, who brought them into the land of Canaan and gave them kings and the priesthood and everything, is this God and none other than Jesus of Nazareth, Mary’s, the Virgin’s, Son, whom we Christians call our God and Lord ... . Again, He it is who on Mountain Sinai gives Moses the Ten Commandments ... Yes, Jesus of Nazareth, who died for us on the cross is the God who says in the First Commandment: “I, the Lord, am thy God.” ... .’ So then, the same God on Sinai and Calvary. What comfort for the believers! Now the flames of Sinai can no longer fill us with terror. Indeed, we daily transgress the holy Law of Sinai, but we break

God, then, answered all the prayers of the people of Israel for Christ's sake.

**B. All believers are heard of God for Christ's sake and delivered.**

And just as the people of Israel were heard and delivered from every trouble for Christ's sake, so are all who believe in Jesus. St. Paul writes:

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into his grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only *so*, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.<sup>17</sup>

When troubles come, we now know that the Lord uses every bit of that trouble not to harm us but to help us. St Paul the Apostle writes:

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.<sup>18</sup>

The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard writes:

Here also this powerful comfort against sin is offered to the believers, that they might not doubt the satisfaction and payment for sin, because Christ anguished under the burden of sin and God the Lord on account of sin brought Christ before His judgment. Thus from this time forth, He will not enter into judgment with the believers who are in Christ, Psa. 143. Since Christ sweated bloody sweat under the burden of sins, thus will God the Lord remove this burden from the believers as they cling to Christ. And thereby we understand what it means when we petition in the Litany: **By your struggle-unto-death and Your bloody sweat, help us dear Lord God.** Accordingly, when the cold agony and death sweat overtakes you, thus remind yourself of this bloody sweat of Christ with which He paid for our sin [and] took from death its power so that it could not

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through its condemnation and flee to the Redeemer on Calvary, who Himself fulfilled the Law for us and paid its penalty.” The Rev. Louis E. Roehm, *The Abiding Word*, Vol. 1, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1946, pp. 20, 21

<sup>17</sup>**Romans 5:1-5.**

<sup>18</sup>**Romans 8:28.**



hold us accountable to the second and eternal death. Instead, death now must be merely a door for us to enter into eternal life. If it also ever happens that God gives us a little drink from this chalice of inner (spiritual) suffering and agony of heart, we are to be patient and are to remember how insignificantly this is to be regarded compared to the great flood which overcame Christ. Sink all your pains in this agony of Christ. Thus they will easily vanish like a tiny particle of dust in the sunshine. And that is precisely the reason that God the Lord at times portrays Himself as if He has hidden His countenance, allowing us to experience a bit of heart-anguish so that we may see what Christ endured for us and thank Him for it.<sup>19</sup>

Because Christ was forsaken for our sins and removed all obstacles and hindrances to our prayers, every one of us knows that we may and can, as we learned in Catechism, call upon Him in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain. *What does this mean?* We should fear and love God that we may not curse, swear, use witchcraft, lie, or, deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.<sup>20</sup>

Likewise, in the Lord's Prayer we learned:

Our Father who art in heaven. *What does this mean?* God would by these words tenderly invite us to believe that He is our true Father, and that we are His true children, so that we may with all boldness and confidence ask Him as dear children ask their dear father.<sup>21</sup>

The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard writes:

Because Christ felt this agony, thinking of nothing else than that He was forsaken by God, behold, from this we may be certain that God will nevermore forsake us. ... Finally, since Christ was tempted in everything just like we are, Heb. 5, He will thus always be able to have sympathy for our weaknesses. Therefore we may

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<sup>19</sup>*An Explanation of the History of the Suffering and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the four evangelists, presented so that we may be awakened in the knowledge of the love of Christ and may blessedly grow according to the inner man.* tr. the Rev. Elmer M. Hohle, ed. the Rev. Dr. David O. Berger, Malone, TX: Repristination Press, pp. 66, 67.

<sup>20</sup>*The Small Catechism*, p. 5.

<sup>21</sup>*The Small Catechism*, p. 12.

joyfully step before the throne of grace, since inasmuch as He has suffered and was tempted, He can help those who are tempted, Heb. 2. As St. Peter in his First Epistle, chapter 5, admonishes the believers, they should in their tribulations be comforted, in that precisely the same sufferings are visited upon their brothers in the world. Thus this should rather be our greatest comfort in our tribulations: that such sufferings were also experienced by our Lord and head, Christ. He will acknowledge us in our need and help us. May He grant us this by grace. Amen.<sup>22</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Because God forsook Christ for the sins of all men and because Christ fully paid for the sins of all men, then no man is forsaken of God.

And because no man is forsaken of God for Christ's sake, then God is for us in all circumstances, good or bad, using everything for our eternal good.

And because God forsakes no man for Christ's sake, then God hears and answers all our prayers and delivers us from every trouble and peril into life everlasting in His glorious Kingdom.

*Amen.*

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