

The Atonement - Adult SS - Lesson 7: The Cup of the Atonement

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[0:00] There you go. We have broken our relationship with God. So we are made for God. We are made. Man and God are made for each other. We're made to live together, to have communion. But in sin, we have fractured that relationship.

We are now guilty before God. We carry a sin debt before him. And in turn, God is now angry with us. There is wrath on God's part. There is a demand for death on us. That's God's punishment, his wrath. That's the consequence of our debt.

And so we are not at one with God anymore. And from that not at oneness comes this whole world, comes all the brokenness of this world. You break the relationship with God, you break everything. And the atonement is all about Christ taking that wrath for us, making that payment with his life for us, and therefore reconciling us back to God.

So the debt goes on to him. The wrath falls on to him. He bears our sin and guilt, and therefore there is reconciliation. So there are three kind of ingredients to atonement. There's redemption, paying the debt. There's propitiation, appeasing God's wrath.

[1:24] And there's repairing the relationship, reconciliation. And all these three together, you can say these are the ingredients that make up the atonement. That's what we mean by atonement. That's what Christ did on the cross.

And last time we saw when Jesus took God's wrath and cried out, he was forsaken. That does not mean that the Trinity broke.

So last time we looked at what this doesn't mean. So it doesn't mean that the Trinity broke. God in himself, in eternity, does not change. Rather, the Son, the person of the Son, according to his human nature in time, experienced all that wrath, all that suffering on the cross.

So the divine Son took on a human nature, and that person, according to his human nature, in his human body, in his human soul, he experienced all that suffering on the cross.

And so the cross was not the Son separating from the Father within the Trinity, or the Trinity breaking in some way.

[2:33] There's no kind of snapping off here between Father and Son. No. It was the Son in his humanity taking on the wrath of God.

But last time, we left on a bit of a cliffhanger. Okay, that's what didn't happen. But what did happen? What does it actually mean for Christ to say, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

And so I want us to zoom in. Zoom in on the cross to answer that question. I want to zoom in on this part here.

This part here. The wrath falling on Christ. And I want us to think, what is going on here on the cross as he takes God's wrath and pays for our sins?

What exactly did Jesus experience in that moment? What does it mean for Jesus to say, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

[3:43] And so that's going to be the central question we're going to look at. That's the particular bit of the cross I want us to think about today. And before we do, I just want to say we need to be very careful here.

This experience, this is something only Jesus truly knows for himself. And thankfully, only Jesus knows this. And so in all that we do today, there will be mystery to this.

And we need to tread very carefully. This is holy ground we're going to be covering here. But at the same time, the Bible does give us an insight into what Jesus experienced on the cross.

And so as we look at that, I hope we can just get a better appreciation of what Jesus went through for us. And I hope we can just see the glory of the cross even better today.

And so as we set off now, let's just tread lightly. But let's see what it means for Jesus to be forsaken on the cross. And the first thing I want us to do, I want us just to see generally what was Jesus doing on the cross?

[4:56] What was happening? And I want us to look at the wrath of God on the cross. And this is the first point. I want us just to look at the experience of wrath on the cross.

So first of all, I want us to see what we are just told about Jesus' experience on the cross. What was happening on there?

What does Jesus say was happening on there? And I want us to see what the Bible says about it. And so I want you to break into groups. I want you to look up these verses and answer the questions about Jesus' experience on the cross.

So we are not yet looking at the words, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? We are just going to look at the general context of what Jesus was doing. And then we will look at that specific phrase that Jesus says.

So break out into groups. I will give you five minutes for this. Go for it. Go for it. Go for it.

[6:04] Go for it. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[9:34] Thank you. Thank you.

Give you one more minute.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Okay, let's bring it together. So, question A, Mark 14. What does Jesus know is going to happen on the cross?

[11:47] What was he about to do? You don't need to read too much into it. Just what does it say? Chinua. What? He's going to drink the cup, right?

He's going to drink a cup. So, this is the night before his death in Gethsemane. And he prays about drinking a cup the next day. And Chinua has already answered it for us.

Isaiah 51. What is this cup? Do you know what? What's in it? God's wrath. Exactly. Yeah. God's wrath. This is the cup of God's wrath. His anger. This cup is, it's not a literal cup, that this is a figurative picture of God's anger and punishment towards sin.

And so, what does Jesus say he's going to experience on the cross? I guess. What's he going to experience on the cross?

God's wrath. Sorry. I know we're kind of, these might seem obvious questions. We're just going to build it up little by little. So, Jesus is saying here, he is going to experience God's wrath.

[12:55] So, Jesus knows his death is not just going to be an ordinary death. It's not just a matter of stopping living, right? There is something particularly intense about his death.

He's going to experience the wrath of God itself. He's going to drink this cup. And so, what part of the atonement does all this relate to?

Ethan. Which part of the atonement? Propitiation. Propitiation. Exactly. That's exactly right. Sorry. It might seem obvious, right? Propitiation.

Jesus is talking about this aspect of the atonement. On the cross, Jesus is taking God's wrath and appeasing his anger toward us and toward our sin.

He's taking it off us. And so, have a look again at Mark 14, the next question. How does Jesus feel about the prospect of drinking this?

[14:01] Toby? He's apprehensive. He's apprehensive. But he accepts God's will.

Exactly. Yeah. There's a lot going on here. How does he kind of generally feel? What's the impression in Mark 14? He's terrified, isn't he? Look at some of the language. He's greatly distressed and troubled.

He says, my soul is very sorrowful, even to death. He's saying he's so sorrowful at the idea of drinking this. So sorrowful he could die.

It's almost a breaking point. And why? Why do you think he feels this way? Well, it's a terrifying thing to face the wrath of God. It's like someone on death row waiting for the electric chair.

Except it's even worse. The electric chair. That is just death. Whereas this is far worse. In fact, do you see, it's so terrifying. He asked his father that if it is possible, the cup might pass from him.

[15:09] Now, this isn't Jesus chickening out here. This isn't Jesus disobeying God's plan. No, this is Jesus rightly flinching at the idea of God's wrath.

So it's kind of like us flinching when we lean on a hot stove. It's the right natural reaction. It's not wrong. This is the right reaction from Jesus.

In fact, it would be wrong if he wasn't troubled by it. If he wasn't terrified at the thought of God's wrath. But as Toby said, he knows he must face it.

And so what does he say? Not my will, not my flinching, but your will, Father. I will obey you. I will go and die for my people. And so Jesus, he's actually being sinlessly obedient here.

But this brings us to our next question. If Jesus is sinless, why is this contents, is the contents of this cup directed at him on the cross?

[16:15] Peter, do you want to have a go? He's a sacrifice, right.

But what, exactly. And what is it about a sacrifice? Why is the wrath being directed on him? Say again. So it doesn't go to us. So it doesn't go to us.

So what is Jesus carrying on the cross? 1 Peter 2, 2 Corinthians 5. He's carrying our sin. Jesus faces God's wrath and drinks this cup because he's bearing our sins.

Not because he is sinful. No, it's because he's taking our guilt on him. And this is what sin deserves. Jesus is drinking the cup for us on the cross.

So that cup is there, not because of his sin, but because of mine and yours. So this cup, this is the cup that we all should be drinking.

[17:20] But Jesus says, no, I will drink it for you. And so for all of us in Christ, on the cross, all of God's wrath, every single drop of anger because of our sin, it all fell on Christ.

Every single drop of that cup, it all was drunk by Christ. And so with that in mind, what is left for us to drink for all those in Christ?

What is left in that cup for us to drink? Nothing. When we die, we will never, ever face God's wrath. What is in the cup right now over our heads?

Nothing. Because the cup is empty. This is why Jesus says it is finished on the cross. He is saying the cup is finished.

It's all drunk. And so this should set the background of all that Jesus says on the cross. This is what is going on.

[18:33] When Jesus, as we think about the words, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? This is the background of how we need to see those words.

We must realise it in this context. Jesus is experiencing the wrath of God in that moment. And that gives meaning to kind of all his sayings on the cross, including my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

And that's what I want us to look at now. So we've seen that those words don't mean the breaking of the Trinity. But now I want us to understand, well, what does Jesus actually mean by it, positively mean by this?

And so I want us to look at these words. I want us to look at Jesus being forsaken, his experience of being forsaken on the cross. Before we move to the next point, are there any questions just for all the stuff we've covered so far?

Great. Let's keep going.

[19:40] Let's read Mark 15. This is the moment Jesus says these words, but let's read this whole section. And when the sixth hour had come,

there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

And at the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani, which means my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

And some of the bystanders hearing it said, behold, he's calling Elijah. And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.

And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathes his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn into from top to bottom. And when the centurion who stood facing him saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, truly, this man was the son of God.

Let's have a look at verse 34 there. These are the words I want us to focus on. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And what we need to realize here is that Jesus, he's quoting something here.

[20:53] This isn't Jesus kind of just freestyling, saying these words. No, Jesus, he's actually quoting Psalm 22. And so as he says this, this is meant to be a bit like a hyperlink to Psalm 22.

So, you know, on a website or an email, you get a hyperlink and it's bold and blue and underlined. And it says, you know, click here for more info. You click it and it takes you to another page. Right. Well, this when Jesus says this, my God, why have you forsaken me? You can kind of think of it. It's like a hyperlink to Psalm 22.

Right. And so I want us to do that. I want us to click on this hyperlink and then open up Psalm 22.

And we can get a sense of what Jesus went through on the cross.

And so open up Psalm 22 in your Bibles. Break out into groups. And I want you to just answer some of these questions. Get a feel of what is going on in Psalm 22 as we open up this hyperlink.

[21:54] So, again, break into groups. I'll give you five minutes for this. And for the second question, look at verses 6 to 8 and 14 to 16.

So just a little bit more than I gave you there. 6 to 8, 14 to 16 for the second question. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

[24:55] Thank you.

Thank you. One more minute.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[27:10] Thank you. Okay, let's see what we have.

I'll pick on some more people. Rory, Rory, you're talking there. Go for it. First question, how does David feel about God?

He feels like God is far. He feels forsaken and abandoned by God.

So he feels God is far, no answer from God. You could say he's not experiencing God's grace. That there's no, you see, no rest, no safety and comfort from God that he's feeling.

So it's like David in his soul, all the light of God's presence and comfort and grace has just been removed.

[28:17] And now it's only kind of this dark cloud in his life. And so he's now only experiencing the feeling of God forsaking him, kind of as if God has just left him in his agony.

And so what kind of situation is he going through? Ben. It's an awful situation.

It's an awful situation. Exactly. Yeah. So he's being despised by people, treated as a worm, or he sees himself as a worm, almost subhuman. He's being mocked and rejected, laughed at.

And there's pain. Pain in his body talks of his joints, his strength, his hands, his feet are in agony. And pain in his soul, do you see, his heart is melting.

So this is real suffering in body and soul and socially and spiritually. And so this is just the lowest of lows.

[29:33] This is the bottom of the pit, the darkest of the valleys. But who is he crying to? Noah.

Right. So what does this say about his feelings about God? He does believe, like he thinks, he doesn't actually think that God should save him. Interesting.
He's still calling to God. Right. He isn't crying into thin air here, is he? He's crying all of this to God. Because he knows God is actually listening and he isn't actually far.
And God is the one who can save him. And so he feels God isn't there. But he also knows at the same time who God is. And he is there. He is listening.
And he's there to save him. And so are his thoughts entirely despair? Well, no. What hope does he have? Verse 22, 24. There is hope.

[30:36] He knows he is going to be delivered. And he's going to one day praise God with the people. He's going to be leading the congregation in worship. So he knows God never despises the affliction of his people.

And he knows he is one of God's people. And so has God actually left him? No. David felt truly forsaken.

He experienced the darkest darkness of his life. As if God had completely removed his goodness. But at the same time, it's a funny dynamic. At the same time, he knows God is still his God. And he's there to save him. And so God hasn't actually left him.

And so as we come back out of the hyperlink now, and we come back to the cross, Jesus saying this, this now gives us an insight into what Jesus was experiencing on the cross.

[31:40] This is what drinking the cup of wrath feels like. So not only was the cross physical agony for his joints and his strength was drained, and not only was it social suffering and abandonment as he was mocked and his friends left him, and not only was it all of that to a horrific degree, but on top of that, the father removed all the sense of God's goodness and grace and comfort in Christ's soul.

And instead, the father laid on Christ an overwhelming sense of God's anger, the same anger our sins should face.

And so Christ, deep in his soul, felt and experienced the true weight of God removing comfort and unleashing anger.

Which, if you think about it, that is the experience of hell. As Christ let out this cry and suffered on the cross, he was experiencing the torments of hell.

And so it's no wonder he quotes Psalm 22. It was a feeling of truly being forsaken by God. The lowest of pits, the darkest of valleys, down into his very soul.

[33:09] That is what becoming sin and drinking this cup feels like. It is something terrifying to think about. But we also need to be careful here.

This isn't to say the father was angry at the person of Jesus in that moment. Because Jesus was sinless, he's still the son.

And those sins he's carrying weren't his own. And in fact, do you remember Christ's obedience? When was the peak of Christ's obedience?

Remember? It's on the cross. So his obedience started all his life. Say that's obedience. That's the manger.

That's the cross. The obedience, the atoning word is there all his life. And then at the cross, that reaches its peak. He was obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

[34:14] And so it was on the cross. Actually, we must say the father was actually most pleased with his son.

When he was suffering on the cross and drinking that cup. Because that is when he was most obedient. And so there's even more reason to think the Trinity doesn't break in this moment. It's actually in a moment of wrath. That is when the father is most pleased with his son, you could say. So there is definitely, definitely no breaking of the Trinity. Yet at the same time. Just keep following with me here. Yet at the same time. Christ didn't feel that pleasure. And this, this is a part of the mystery of what Christ went through.

He was always loved by the father. But at the same time, in this moment, God still poured out his anger. In that Christ stopped experiencing God's comfort in his soul and in his body.

[35:21] And he only had this sense of wrath and torment and forsakenness. But, like David, Jesus also knew God would answer.

This isn't a hopeless cry of despair by Jesus. This isn't the cry of an unbeliever. Or the cry of the Trinity breaking.

No, like David, this is the cry of God's beloved king. And so Jesus knew God would save him. He knew he would rise again. And he knew that he would lead his church in praise to God.

And so again, there's this mystery. It is both the cry of true forsakenness. But also at the same time, it is the cry of hope.

It's the cry of a son to his father. And so you can kind of think of it like this. It's like a cloud covering the sun. So when a dark storm fills the sky.

[36:26] And everything goes dark and it blocks the sun. Everything just seems dark and gloomy, doesn't it? And you don't experience the sun's warmth or light in that moment, do you?

But even when you're under that storm. Even during that storm. That doesn't mean the sun isn't there. And it doesn't mean it's not shining on you.

No, it's just being blocked by this horrific storm. Well, that is what Christ went through. The father is always shining on his son, you could say.

But for Christ, on that cross, the son was blocked by this terrifying storm. And instead, he really felt the horrors of hell. But as I said, it is hard to know exactly what this felt like.

Thankfully, we don't need to know what it will feel like. But we know it was horrific enough that the sun of God's sweat drops like blood at the thought of it.

[37:31] And so you can kind of think of it like this. So throughout his life, from God, the sun always felt the comfort of God.

He's always, as man, he's always feeling, he's always felt the comfort and communion with his father.

And always the grace of God has been on him. But on the cross, it's like the clouds come over and that gets locked.

And instead, it's just the wrath of God falling upon him in that moment.

Say on the cross. And so we need for us, the love is always there.

[38:31] The father is always loving the son. But this isn't a break in the Trinity or kind of a cutting off of his human nature. The son doesn't stop being the son in this moment. The Trinity remains the Trinity.

But in time, in his human nature, in his body and soul, just like David, the person of the son feels the full force of God's wrath on sin.

And this is when we need to remember why Jesus went through all of this. It was for us. This was all because he was carrying our sins and bearing our guilt.

All the guilt of all the things that we've said and done and thought and watched and desired. All of that wrath for all those things that should be on us for our sins.

Christ took it all in that moment. And drank all that cup. And all of that wrath, all of that cup, went on him.

[39:39] So that we will never, ever have to drink it. Which is why we sing, Oh, to see the pain, Written on your face, Bearing the awesome weight of sin.

Every bitter thought, every evil deed, Crowning your bloodstained brow. But that now means something wonderful for us, doesn't it?

For everyone in Christ, what is left in the cup for you and me to drink, it's nothing. It's empty. There's no condemnation, no guilt, no anger against us anymore.

But Christ really is our propitiation. It is finished. And so I want us to leave with that thought today.

Christ went to the cross to drink a cup.

The cup meant for us and now it's empty. And so you, in Christ, you can face death without any sorrow in your heart.

[40:37] We don't need to sweat at the idea of facing God on that final day. Because Christ has suffered for us. And he rose.

And just like Psalm 22, he rose to lead his congregation in praise. And what kind of praise does Christ lead us in? What a love. What a cost. We stand forgiven at the cross.

I might need to head in one minute, but we can do one minute questions. Let's go.