

# How Did God Die for Me?

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## I. Introduction

Did Jesus die spiritually? That is, did it take more than His physical death to pay for the penalty of my sin? And how should this fact—that He died for me—affect my daily existence? Is there anything concrete to it that I can hold onto as I face this difficult world?

## II. How Did God Die for Me.....Did He Die Spiritually or just Physically?

**Did Jesus die spiritually as well as physically?** It's possible to argue this both ways, i.e., how can Jesus save us from spiritual death—which is part of the penalty of sin—if He never died spiritually? Didn't He take the whole penalty? On the other hand, what does it even mean for the Son of God, who ***is, was, and always will be eternal life***, to die spiritually? How is it even possible to kill eternal life?

“Did Jesus die spiritually?” It's hard to answer this question with certainty because it appears that Scripture did not bother to answer it. Here are some arguments for Jesus dying spiritually:

*The Greek word for death*, some argue that the Greek word for death, Thanatos, almost without exception refers to spiritual death. But in looking at perhaps the most respected Lexicon of the New Testament Greek—BDAG (Bauer, Danker, Arndt and Gingrich)—we notice that Thanatos refers to spiritual death 13 times and to physical death over 80 times. So Thanatos doesn't always refer to spiritual death, in fact, most times it refers to physical death.

*Jesus cries out “It is finished!”* another argument is that since Jesus was still alive when he uttered this, it means that His physical death could not have paid the penalty for sin. They take His words “It is finished” as “This very second I'm done paying for the penalty of sin.” If He's done and He's still alive, then it's not His physical death that paid it. And since it's not His physical death, it must be His spiritual death that paid for our sin. However, there's another way to interpret Jesus' words: He's been hanging on the Cross for three hours and at the last second before He breathes His last, He says, “It is finished.” What's He saying? He's saying, “I'm done giving up my life for the sin of the world.” And the next second He dies. “It is finished” is Jesus' proclamation that He's done giving up His life to save the world, which is exactly what He says over and over in the Gospels, Matthew 17:23; 20:28; Mark 9:31; 10:34, 45; Luke 18:33; John 3:16-17; 6:51; 10:11-18; 15:13.

*“My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?”* some think that these words from Jesus as He's dying on the Cross prove that He died spiritually. That is, God the Father could have nothing to do with Jesus as He's dying on the Cross because Jesus was separated from God by sin. This is why God forsook Him and refused to answer His screams. When the Father forsook him, that's when He died spiritually, Matthew 27:46-50; Mark 15:34; Psalm 22:1. However, though Jesus may've meant every word of it, there's a context to this phrase. The phrase comes from Psalm 22. This psalm is about Jesus, Messiah, dying for the sins of His people and the world. In the first half of the psalm God does forsake Him as He judges Him for the sin of the world, but in the second half of the psalm we see that God does answer His cries, Psalm 22:19-21. When Jesus utters these words, they're not simply the last words of a dying man who's been forsaken by God. He's quoting the entire psalm which ends with God resurrecting Him and Him ruling the world. Thus, it's hard to prove that when Jesus says, “why have you forsaken Me?” it means that He died spiritually.

The punishment for sin is spiritual death not physical death, some define “spiritual death” as the inability to have a relationship with God. This dates back to Adam. After he sinned, he couldn’t have a relationship with God. Also if physical death was the penalty for sin, then Adam would have died immediately, but he didn’t, Genesis 2:17; 3:1-19. This means that the penalty for sin is spiritual death and physical death must then be the result of spiritual death, as Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death.” This is perhaps the strongest argument in favor of the idea that spiritual death is the penalty for sin. That is, although we’re born physically alive, in some sense we’re born dead, Ephesians 2:1, 5. And this dead state keeps us from having an intimate relationship with God until He gives us life through His Son, John 17:2-3. However, we see that God continued having a relationship with Adam after he sinned; it was God who ran after them and restored them, Genesis 3. And the fact that Adam didn’t die until 930 years later, Genesis 5:5, doesn’t mean that physical death is not part of the penalty. The penalty may be both physical and spiritual. In fact, Jesus’ death seems to indicate that physical death is part of the penalty, since Scripture is clear that it was Jesus’ physical death that paid for our sin.

**What paid the penalty of our sin, Jesus’ physical death or His spiritual death?** Though there may be a question as to whether or not Jesus’ spiritual death paid the penalty of our sin, Scripture is clear that His physical death was definitely involved in paying the penalty of our sin:

The Old Testament Sacrifices, in the Mosaic Law every time God demanded payment for the penalty of sin through animal sacrifice, it was always the blood, the physical death, of the animal that was required, Hebrews 13:11. This is epitomized by the Passover Lamb: it was the blood (physical death) of that lamb that saved the Israelites, Exodus 12. All those lambs that were used afterwards by Israel to commemorate the miracle of the Passover were a picture of what Jesus would later do. He was God’s Passover Lamb who took away the sin of the world through His blood, John 1:29; Hebrews 9.

Forgiveness of sins is through Jesus’ blood (physical death), over and over the Scriptures reveal that it is through Christ’s blood that our sins are forgiven. It is His physical death that paid the penalty of our sins, Matthew 26:28; Romans 5:9-10; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:22; 10:19; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 John 1:7; Revelation 1:5; 5:9; 7:14.

Jesus gave His physical life a ransom for many, throughout the Gospels Jesus kept telling His disciples that He was going to die physically in order to pay for the sin of the world, Matthew 17:23; 20:28; Mark 9:31; 10:34, 45; Luke 18:33; John 1:12; 3:16-17; 6:51; 10:11-18; 15:13.

The bread and the cup in the Communion service, what do the two elements used in the Communion service represent? Jesus’ body and blood, His physical life, which were given to pay for the sins of the world, Matthew 26:26-28; Luke 22:19-20.

**CONCLUSION:** did Jesus die spiritually for our sins? It's hard to answer this question definitively. The strongest argument seems to be that we're born spiritually dead, which is one of the penalties of sin. And if this is one of the penalties and Jesus died for us, then doesn't it mean that He died spiritually? But then again, Scripture is clear that Jesus' physical death paid the penalty for our sin. If we stick to what Scripture clearly states, we can say the following:

1. God did forsake Jesus as He bore the sin of the world on the Cross, Psalm 22:1-18.
2. But God also answered Jesus' cries from the Cross by resurrecting Him, Psalm 22:19-31.
3. Spiritual death is one penalty for sin, Genesis 2:17; Ephesians 2:1, 5.
4. Physical death is another penalty for sin, Exodus 21:12; Matthew 26:26-28; Romans 1:32.
5. Jesus' physical death was involved in paying the penalty of our sin, Matthew 26:26-28.
6. Jesus died in our place, so whatever the penalty, Jesus paid it, John 19:30; Romans 5:8.

If we make a commitment to pursue the truth that God clearly states, then we will arrive at the things we can and cannot say definitively. If we still have questions, then we can speculate, but we must realize that it's only speculation. If we follow this basic principle, it will keep us united and help avoid dividing over doctrine.

**Did God die for you?** It's interesting to speculate whether or not Jesus died spiritually, but the fact remains that He died...for you. This means that God died for you! This doesn't mean that you can actually kill God, you can't. But the fact remains that Jesus is the Son of God, which makes Him God; He's actually God in the flesh, Colossians 2:9. He, the One who is equal with God, chose to become human in order to die for you, Philippians 2:5-8!

This fact should shake us to our core. But it's impossible to really wrap our minds around this earth-shattering news and the consequence it should have on our daily lives. Think for a second about the most powerful person you know. How would it affect your life if the Mayor of your city gave you personal access? How would it affect you if the governor of your state gave you his private number? How would it affect you if the president of your country gave you complete access to the presidential residence and his entire administration? If you're a citizen of the USA, this would give you access to the Vice President and any of the Secretaries in the President's cabinet: Secretary of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, Labor, State, Transportation, Treasury, Veterans Affairs, or Attorney General. How would this affect your life?!

Now, what access has God given you? This is not the access of the leader of a country, but the access of the God of the entire universe! What help do you possess? God dying for you should mean the world to you...does it? Do you realize what you have at your disposal during your daily struggles? God promises you endless resources 24/7. First, He makes you His child and grants you the same access to Him as His Son Jesus Christ has, Galatians 4:4-7! Second, He promises to provide EVERYTHING you need, Matthew 6:33. Third, He promises that there will never be ANYTHING that will stand between you and Him, absolutely NOTHING! Romans 8:31-39!!

### III. Conclusion

*He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*