

Anticipative Sufferings of Christ

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Christ's Anticipative Sufferings are what Christ passed through as He looked forward to the cross, and to the work of atonement which would be accomplished there. These sufferings intensified as the cross loomed nearer, but we see them concentrated in the garden of Gethsemane. Anticipative suffering is not merely *worry*. It is to deeply feel what is approaching. These sufferings are important for a number of reasons. First, they reveal the perfection of Christ in His humanity. He had a choice about the cross, and He submitted Himself to His Father's will. Second, they give us a sense of what the atoning sufferings meant to our Lord's holy soul. God clothed the scene of atonement with darkness that no mortal eye might see. But we are permitted to "watch" the anticipative sufferings.

The Abandonment of Calvary Looming Ahead. When the Lord entered Jerusalem five days before the Passover, we read that He was anticipating a dreadful "hour", which refers to the hour of His atoning sufferings. The thought of being "made sin" caused His soul to be deeply troubled. And yet the Lord's purpose up until that moment was to glorify the Father's name; and so He would not officially make request for an exemption from the cross.

"Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. There came therefore a voice out of heaven, I both have glorified and will glorify it again." (John 12:27-28)

Four days later, in the Garden of Gethsemane, we find that His anticipative sufferings have intensified. The cross and the atoning sufferings were closing in quickly, and the picture is much darker still. The Lord then requests exemption, and yet He adds "*if it be possible*" and "*nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done*". Also, in John 12 He gets an audible answer, "*a voice out of heaven*" which looked on to the Lord's resurrection. But at Gethsemane the Lord could only pronounce that it was "*your hour, and the power of darkness*".

"And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; And saith unto them, My soul is **exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch. And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, **if it were possible**, the hour might pass from him. And he said, **Abba, Father**, all things are possible unto thee; **take away this cup from me**: nevertheless **not what I will**, but what thou wilt. And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour?"** Mark

14:33-37

The English expression "*exceeding sorrowful*" is one Greek word, *peri-lupos*, which literally means, 'surrounded with sorrow.'

Not my will. Except on this occasion in the garden of Gethsemane, the Lord never expressed His will as different from His Father's will. Here, and nowhere else, we find that the Son's will was different. Why? Because He could not find His "meat" or satisfaction in the wrath of God. And yet, the Lord could say;

- "[My meat is to do the will of him that sent me](#)" (John 4:34)
- "[I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me](#)" (John 5:30)
- "[I came down... not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me](#)" (John 6:38).

He would have shrunk back from the cup *if He could have done so consistently with His Father's will*. But His love and devotion to His Father was stronger than every other motivation. The perfect obedience of the Son rose to new heights in His submission to the Father's will in the matter of atonement.

The Son Appealing to His Father. In the extremity of His anticipative sufferings, Jesus cried out "*Abba Father*". This is the only recorded place where Jesus used the word "Abba", which is the old Aramaic word for 'father' in the intimate sense, similar to the English word 'daddy'. It speaks of the closeness of the relationship a child has with his father. How striking that this is the word the Lord used in crying to His Father in anticipation of the atoning sufferings! He called on His Father in that most intimate way, pleading for exemption, if that were possible. He acknowledged "*all things are possible unto thee*". The Lord appealed to the power of God, as well as His love. All the power of God would not avail to take away one sin; a sacrifice was necessary!

His Sweat. In our Lord's anticipative sufferings we see His perfection as a man. The more He felt the depths of the dreadful cup, the "*more earnestly*" He prayed. Both the prayers and sufferings rose in intensity, to a point where Luke says that Jesus was "*in an agony*" and "*his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground*" (Luke 22:44). This fact demonstrates the reality of His sufferings. So intense were the sufferings in His soul and mind that blood vessels began to burst. It isn't that His sweat fell merely *in the same way* great drops of blood fall, but that His sweat was so *mingled with blood* that it might have seemed to be pure blood falling to the ground.

His Tears. We have mentioned our Lord's having a troubled soul, His being sore amazed, His soul being exceeding sorrowful unto death, His agony, and His sweat mingled with blood. But He also shed tears. If His sweat portrays the *agony* of His soul, then His tears portray the *sorrow* of His heart.

“Who in the days of his flesh, when he had **offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears** unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.” (Heb. 5:7-9)

Watch with me one hour. Jesus had taken three disciples with Him to pray. He desired their company, if not their sympathy in His sufferings. But coming to them, He found that they were asleep. “*Couldst thou not watch one hour?*” He doesn't ask us to 'understand' the cost to Him; but simply to 'watch with Him'. I would like to make an application of this to us today. If we are going through life carelessly sinning, it is because we are asleep. We are not watching with Him; for, if we were, we would be “sore amazed” as we consider what our sins cost the blessed Savior. In 1804 Thomas Kelly included this thought in the following verses of his beloved hymn:

“Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted”

by *Thomas Kelly, 1804*

Ye who think of sin but lightly,
Nor suppose the evil great,
Here may view its nature rightly,
Here its guilt may estimate.

Mark the Sacrifice appointed!
See Who bears the awful load!
'Tis the Word, the Lord's Anointed,
Son of Man, and Son of God.