THE AGONY IN GETHSEMANE

NO. 1199

A SERMON
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"And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly:
and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."
Luke 22:44

OUR Lord, after having eaten the passover and celebrated the supper with His disciples, went with them to the Mount of Olives and entered the garden of Gethsemane. What induced Him to select that place to be the scene of His terrible agony? Why there in preference to anywhere else would He be arrested by His enemies? May we not conceive that as in a garden Adam's self-indulgence ruined us, so in another garden the agonies of the second Adam should restore us.

Gethsemane supplies the medicine for the ills which followed upon the forbidden fruit of Eden. No flowers which bloomed upon the banks of the four-fold river were ever so precious to our race as the bitter herbs which grew hard by the black and sullen stream of Kidron.

May not our Lord also have thought of David, when on that memorable occasion he fled out of the city from his rebellions son, and it is written, "The king also himself passed over the brook Kidron," and he and his people went up barefoot and bareheaded, weeping as they went? Behold, the greater David leaves the temple to become desolate, and forsakes the city which had rejected His admonitions and with a sorrowful heart crosses the foul brook to find in solitude a solace for His woes.

Our Lord Jesus, moreover, meant us to see that our sin changed everything about Him into sorrow, it turned His riches into poverty, His peace into travail, His glory into shame, and so the place of His peaceful retirement, where in hallowed devotion He had been nearest heaven in communion with God, our sin transformed into the focus of His sorrow, the center of His woe. Where He had enjoyed most, there He must be called to suffer most.

Our Lord may, also, have chosen the garden because needing every remembrance that could sustain Him in the conflict, He felt refreshed by the memory of former hours there which had passed away so quietly. He had there prayed, and gained strength and comfort. Those gnarled and twisted olives knew Him well, there was scarce a blade of grass in the garden which He had not knelt upon. He had consecrated the spot to fellowship with God.

What wonder then that He preferred this favored soil? Just as a man would choose in sickness to lie in his own bed, so Jesus chose to endure His agony in His own oratory, where the recollections of former communings with His Father would come vividly before Him.

But probably, the chief reason for His resort to Gethsemane was that it was His well-known haunt, and John tells us, "Judas also knew the place." Our Lord did not wish to conceal Himself. He did not need to be hunted down like a thief, or searched out by spies. He went boldly to the place where His enemies knew that He was accustomed to pray, for He was willing to be taken to suffering and to death. They did not drag Him off to Pilate's hall against His will, but He went with them voluntarily.

When the hour was come for Him to be betrayed there was He in a place where the traitor could readily find Him, and when Judas would betray Him with a kiss His cheek was ready to receive the traitorous salutation. The blessed Savior delighted to do the will of the Lord though it involved obedience unto death.

We have thus come to the gate of the garden of Gethsemane, let us now enter, but first let us put off our shoe from our foot, as Moses did, when he also saw the bush which burned with fire and was not consumed. Surely we may say with Jacob, "How dreadful is this place!"

I tremble at the task which lies before me, for how shall my feeble speech describe those agonies, for which strong crying and tears were scarcely an adequate expression? I desire with you to survey the sufferings of our Redeemer, but oh, may the Spirit of God prevent our mind from thinking aught amiss, or our tongue from speaking even one word which would be derogatory to Him either in His immaculate manhood or His glorious Godhead.

It is not easy when you are speaking of one who is both God and man to observe the exact line of correct speech. It is so easy to describe the divine side in such a manner as to trench upon the human, or to depict the human at the cost of the divine. Make me not an offender for a word if I should err.

A man had need himself to be inspired, or to confine himself to the very words of inspiration, to fitly speak at all times upon the great "mystery of godliness," God manifest in the flesh, and especially when he has to dwell most upon God so manifest in suffering flesh that the weakest traits in manhood become the most conspicuous. O Lord, open Thou my lips that my tongue may utter right words.

II. Meditating upon the agonizing scene in Gethsemane we are compelled to observe that our Savior there endured a grief unknown to any previous period of His life, and therefore we will commence our discourse by raising the question, WHAT WAS THE CAUSE OF THE PECULIAR GRIEF OF GETHSEMANE?

Our Lord was the "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" throughout His whole life, and yet, though it may sound paradoxical, I scarcely think there existed on the face of the earth a happier man than Jesus of Nazareth, for the griefs which He endured were counterbalanced by the peace of purity, the calm of fellowship with God and the joy of benevolence. This last every good man knows to be very sweet, and all the sweeter in proportion to the pain which is voluntarily endured for the carrying out of its kind designs. It is always joy to do good, cost what it may.

Moreover, Jesus dwelt at perfect peace with God at all times. We know that He did so, for He regarded that peace as a choice legacy which He could bequeath to His disciples, and ere He died, He said to them, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." He was meek and lowly of heart, and therefore His soul had rest. He was one of the meek who inherit the earth. He was one of the peacemakers who are and must be blessed.

I think I mistake not when I say that our Lord was far from being an unhappy man. But in Gethsemane all seems changed, His peace is gone, His calm is turned to tempest. After supper our Lord had sung a hymn, but there was no singing in Gethsemane.

Adown the steep bank which led from Jerusalem to the Kidron He talked very cheerfully, saying, "I am the vine and ye are the branches." And that wondrous prayer which He prayed with His disciples after that discourse is full of majesty, "Father, I will that they also whom thou has given me be with me where I am," is a very different prayer from that inside Gethsemane's walls, where He cries, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me."

Notice that all His life long you scarcely find Him uttering an expression of grief, and yet here He says, not only by His sighs and by His bloody sweat, but in so many words, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." In the garden the sufferer could not conceal His grief, and does not appear to have wished to do so. Backward and forward thrice he ran to His disciples. He let them see His sorrow and appealed to them for sympathy. His exclamations were very piteous, and His sighs and groans were, I doubt not, very terrible to hear.

Chiefly did that sorrow reveal itself in bloody sweat, which is a very unusual phenomenon, although I suppose we must believe those writers who record instances somewhat similar. The old physician, Galen gives an instance in which, through extremity of horror, an individual poured forth a discolored sweat, so nearly crimson as at any rate to appear to have been blood. Other cases are given by medical authorities.

We do not, however, on any previous occasion observe anything like this in our Lord's life. It was only in the last grim struggle among the olive trees that our Champion resisted unto blood, agonizing against sin. What ailed Thee, O Lord, that Thou shouldst be so sorely troubled just then?

We are clear that His deep sorrow and distress were not occasioned by any bodily pain. Our Savior had doubtless been familiar with weakness and pain, for He took our sicknesses, but He never in any previous instance complained of physical suffering. Neither at the time when He entered Gethsemane had He been grieved by any bereavement. We know why it is written "Jesus wept," it was because His friend Lazarus was dead. But here there was no funeral, nor sick bed, nor particular cause of grief in that direction.

Nor was it the revived remembrance of any past reproaches which had lain dormant in His mind. Long before this "reproach had broken His heart," He had known to the full the vexations of contumely and scorn. They had called Him a "drunken man and a winebibber." They had charged Him with casting out devils by the prince of the devils. They could not say more and yet He had bravely faced it all, it could not be possible that He was now sorrowful unto death for such a cause.

There must have been a something sharper than pain, more cutting than reproach, more terrible than bereavement, which now, at this time, grappled with the Savior and made Him "exceeding sorrowful, and very heavy." Do you suppose it was the fear of coming scorn, or the dread of crucifixion? Was it terror at the thought of death? Is not such a supposition impossible? Every man dreads death, and as man Jesus could not but shrink from it.

When we were originally made we were created for immortality, and therefore to die is strange and uncongenial work to us. And the instincts of self-preservation cause us to start back from it. But surely in our Lord's case that natural cause could not have produced such specially painful results. It does not make even such poor cowards as we are sweat great drops of blood, why then should it work such terror in Him?

It is dishonoring to our Lord to imagine Him less brave than His own disciples, yet we have seen some of the very feeblest of His saints triumphant in the prospect of departing. Read the stories of the martyrs and you will frequently find them exultant in the near approach of the most cruel sufferings. The joy of the Lord has given such strength to them that no coward thought has alarmed them for a single moment, but they have gone to the stake, or to the block, with psalms of victory upon their lips.

Our Master must not be thought of as inferior to His boldest servants, it cannot be that He should tremble where they were brave. Oh, no. The noblest spirit among yon martyr-band is the Leader Himself, who in suffering and heroism surpassed them all. None could so defy the pangs of death as the Lord Jesus, who, for the joy which was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame.

I cannot conceive that the pangs of Gethsemane were occasioned by any extraordinary attack from Satan. It is possible that Satan was there, and that his presence may have darkened the shade, but he was not the most prominent cause of that hour of darkness. Thus much is quite clear, that our Lord at the commencement of His ministry engaged in a very severe duel with the prince of darkness, and yet we do not read concerning that temptation in the wilderness a single syllable as to His soul's being exceeding sorrowful. Neither do we find that He "was sore amazed and was very heavy." Nor is there a solitary hint at anything approaching to bloody sweat.

When the Lord of angels condescended to stand foot to foot with the prince of the power of the air, He had no such dread of him as to utter strong cries and tears and fall prostrate on the ground with threefold appeals to the Great Father. Comparatively speaking, to put His foot on the old serpent was an easy task for Christ, and did but cost Him a bruised heel, but this Gethsemane agony wounded His very soul even unto death.

What is it then, think you, that so peculiarly marks Gethsemane and the griefs thereof? We believe that now the Father put Him to grief for us.

It was now that our Lord had to take a certain cup *from the Father's hand*. Not from the Jews, not from the traitor Judas, not from the sleeping disciples, not from the devil came the trial now, but it was a

cup filled by one whom He knew to be His Father, but who, nevertheless He understood to have appointed Him a very bitter potion, a cup not to be drunk by His body and to spend its gall upon His flesh, but a cup which specially amazed His soul and troubled His inmost heart.

He shrunk from it, and therefore be ye sure that it was a draught more dreadful than physical pain, since from that He did not shrink. It was a potion more dreadful than reproach, from that He had not turned aside. More dreadful than Satanic temptation—*that* He had overcome, it was a something inconceivably terrible, amazingly full of dread, which came from the Father's hand.

This removes all doubt as to what it was, for we read, "It pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin." "The LORD hath made to meet on him the iniquity of us all." "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." This, then, is that which caused the Savior such extraordinary depression. He was now about to "taste death for every man," to bear the curse which was due to sinners because He stood in the sinner's place and must suffer in the sinner's stead. Here is the secret of those agonies which it is not possible for me to set forth before you, so true is it that—

"'Tis to God, and God alone,
That His griefs are fully known."

Yet would I exhort you to consider these griefs awhile, that you may love the sufferer. He now realized, perhaps for the first time, what it was to be a sin bearer. As God He was perfectly holy and incapable of sin, and as man He was without original taint and was spotlessly pure. Yet He had to bear sin, to be led forth as the scapegoat bearing the iniquity of Israel upon His head, to be taken and made a sin offering, and as a loathsome thing (for nothing was more loathsome than the sin offering), to be taken without the camp and utterly consumed with the fire of divine wrath.

Do you wonder that His infinite purity started back from that? Would He have been what He was if it had not been a very solemn thing for Him to stand before God in the position of a sinner? yea, and as Luther would have said it, to be looked upon by God as if He were all the sinners in the world, and as if He had committed all the sin that ever had been committed by His people, for it was all laid on Him and on Him must the vengeance due for it all be poured. He must be the center of all the vengeance and bear away upon Himself what ought to have fallen upon the guilty sons of men. To stand in such a position when once it was realized must have been very terrible to the Redeemer's holy soul.

Now also the Savior's mind was intently fixed upon the dreadful nature of sin. Sin had always been abhorrent to Him, but now His thoughts were engrossed with it, He saw its worse than deadly nature, its heinous character, and horrible aim. Probably at this time beyond any former period He had, as man, a view of the wide range and all-pervading evil of sin, and a sense of the blackness of its darkness, and the desperateness of its guilt as being a direct attack upon the throne, yea, and upon the very being of God.

He saw in His own person, to what lengths sinners would go, how they would sell their Lord like Judas and seek to destroy Him as did the Jews. The cruel and ungenerous treatment He had Himself received displayed man's hate of God, and as He saw it horror took hold upon Him, and His soul was heavy to think that He must bear such an evil and be numbered with such transgressors, to be wounded for their transgressions and bruised for their iniquities. Not the wounding nor the bruising distressed Him so much as the sin itself, and that utterly overwhelmed His soul.

Then, too, no doubt the penalty of sin began to be realized by Him in the garden—first the sin which had put Him in the position of a suffering substitute, and then the penalty which must be borne because He was in that position.

I dread to the last degree that kind of theology which is so common nowadays, which seeks to depreciate and diminish our estimate of the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ. Brethren, that was no trifling suffering which made recompense to the justice of God for the sins of men. I am never afraid of exaggeration, when I speak of what my Lord endured. All hell was distilled into that cup of which our

God and Savior Jesus Christ was made to drink. It was not eternal suffering, but since He was divine He could in a short time offer unto God a vindication of His justice which sinners in hell could not have offered had they been left to suffer in their own persons forever.

The woe that broke over the Savior's spirit, the great and fathomless ocean of inexpressible anguish which dashed over the Savior's soul when He died, is so inconceivable that I must not venture far lest I be accused of a vain attempt to express the unutterable. But this I will say, the very spray from that great tempestuous deep, as it fell on Christ, baptized Him in a bloody sweat. He had not yet come to the raging billows of the penalty itself, but even standing on the shore, as He heard the awful surf breaking at His feet, His soul was sore amazed and very heavy.

It was the shadow of the coming tempest, it was the prelude of the dread desertion which He had to endure, when He stood where we ought to have stood and paid to His Father's justice the debt which was due from us. It was this which laid Him low. To be treated as a sinner, to be smitten as a sinner, though in Him was no sin—this it was which caused Him the agony of which our text speaks.

Having thus spoken of the cause of His peculiar grief, I think we shall be able to support our view of the matter while we lead you to consider WHAT WAS THE CHARACTER OF THE GRIEF ITSELF?

I shall trouble you as little as possible with the Greek words used by the Evangelists. I have studied each of them, to try and find out the shades of their meaning, but it will suffice if I give you the results of my careful investigation.

What was the grief itself? How was it described? This great sorrow assailed our Lord some four days before He suffered. If you turn to John 12:27, you find that remarkable utterance, "Now is my soul troubled." We never knew Him say that before. This was a foretaste of the great depression of spirit which was so soon to lay Him prostrate in Gethsemane.

"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." After that we read of Him in Matthew 26:37, that "he began to be sorrowful and very heavy." The depression had come over Him again. It was not pain, it was not a palpitation of the heart, or an aching of the brow, it was worse than these.

Trouble of spirit is worse than pain of body. Pain may bring trouble and be the incidental cause of sorrow, but if the mind is perfectly at peace, how well a man can bear pain, and when the soul is exhilarated and lifted up with inward joy, pain of the body is almost forgotten, the soul conquering the body.

On the other hand the soul's sorrow will create bodily pain, the lower nature sympathizing with the higher. Our Lord's main suffering lay in His soul—His soul-sufferings were the soul of His suffering. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" Pain of spirit is the worst of pain, sorrow of heart is the climax of griefs. Let those who have ever known sinking spirits, despondency, and mental gloom, attest the truth of what I say!

This sorrow of heart appears to have led to a very deep depression of our Lord's spirit. In the 26th of Matthew, 37th verse, you find it recorded that He was "*very heavy*," and that expression is full of meaning—of more meaning, indeed, than it would be easy to explain. The word, in the original is a very difficult one to translate. It may signify the abstraction of the mind, and its complete occupation, by sorrow, to the exclusion of every thought which might have alleviated the distress. One burning thought consumed His whole soul and burned up all that might have yielded comfort.

For awhile His mind refused to dwell upon the result of His death, the consequent joy which was set before Him. His position as a sin-bearer and the desertion by His Father which was necessitated thereby, engrossed His contemplation and hurried His soul away from all else.

Some have seen in the word a measure of distraction, and though I will not go far in that direction, yet it does seem as if our Savior's mind underwent perturbations and convulsions widely different from His usual calm, collected spirit. He was tossed to and fro as upon a mighty sea of trouble, which was wrought to tempest, and carried Him away in its fury. "We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and

afflicted." As the psalmist said, innumerable evils compassed Him about so that His heart failed Him. His heart was melted like wax in the midst of His bowels with sheer dismay.

He was "very heavy." Some consider the word to signify at its root, "separated from the people," as if He had become unlike other men, even as one whose mind is staggered by a sudden blow, or pressed with some astounding calamity, is no more as ordinary men are. Mere onlookers would have thought our Lord to be a man distraught, burdened beyond the wont of men, and borne down by a sorrow unparalleled among men.

The learned Thomas Goodwin says, "The word denotes a failing, deficiency, and sinking of spirit, such as happens to men in sickness and wounding." Epaphroditus' sickness, whereby he was brought near to death, is called by the same word, so that we see that Christ's soul was sick and fainted. Was not His sweat produced by exhaustion? The cold, clammy sweat of dying men comes through faintness of body, but the bloody sweat of Jesus came from an utter faintness and prostration of soul. He was in an awful soul-swoon and suffered an inward death, whose accompaniment was not watery tears from the eyes, but a weeping of blood from the entire man.

Many of you, however, know in your measure what it is to be very heavy without my multiplying words in explanation, and if you do not know by personal experience all explanations must be vain. When deep despondency comes on, when you forget everything that would sustain you, and your spirit sinks down, down, down, then can you sympathize with your Lord.

Others think you foolish, call you nervous, and bid you rally yourself, but they know not your case. Did they understood it they would not mock you with such admonitions, impossible to those who are sinking beneath inward woe. Our Lord was "very heavy," very sinking, very despondent, overwhelmed with grief.

Mark tells us next, in his fourteenth chapter and thirty-third verse, that our Lord was "*sore amazed*." The Greek word does not merely import that He was astonished and surprised, but that His amazement went to an extremity of horror, such as men fall into when their hair stands on end and their flesh trembles. As the delivery of the law made Moses exceedingly fear and quake, and as David said, "My flesh trembleth because of thy judgments," so our Lord was stricken with horror at the sight of the sin which was laid upon Him and the vengeance which was due on account of it.

The Savior was first " sorrowful," then depressed, and "heavy," and lastly, sore amazed and filled with amazement, for even He as a man, could scarce have known what it was that He had undertaken to bear.

He had looked at it calmly and quietly, and felt that whatever it was He would bear it for our sake. But when it actually came to the bearing of sin He was utterly astonished and taken aback at the dreadful position of standing in the sinner's place before God, of having His holy Father look upon Him as the sinner's representative, and of being forsaken by that Father with whom He had lived on terms of amity and delight from old eternity. It staggered His holy, tender, loving nature, and He was "sore amazed" and was "very heavy."

We are further taught that there surrounded, encompassed, and overwhelmed Him an ocean of sorrow, for the thirty-eighth verse of the twenty-sixth of Matthew contains the word *perilupo*s, which signifies an encompassing around with sorrows.

In all ordinary miseries there is generally some loophole of escape, some breathing place for hope. We can generally remind our friends in trouble that their case might be worse, but in our Lord's griefs worse could not be imagined. For He could say with David, "The pains of hell gat hold upon me." All God's waves and billows went over Him. Above Him, beneath Him, around Him, without Him, and within, all, all was anguish, neither was there one alleviation or source of consolation.

His disciples could not help Him—they were all but one sleeping, and he who was awake was on the road to betray Him. His spirit cried out in the presence of the Almighty God beneath the crushing burden and unbearable load of His miseries. No griefs could have gone further than Christ's, and He Himself said, "My soul is *exceeding* sorrowful," or surrounded with sorrow "even unto death."

He did not die in the garden, but He suffered as much as if He had died. He endured death intensively, though not extensively. It did not extend to the making His body a corpse, but it went as far in pain as if it had been so. His pangs and anguish went up to the mortal agony, and only paused on the verge of death.

Luke, to crown all, tells us in our text, that our Lord was *in an agony*. The expression "agony" signifies a conflict, a contest, a wrestling. With whom was the agony? With whom did He wrestle? I believe it was with Himself. The contest here intended was not with His God. No, "not as I will but as thou wilt," does not look like wrestling with God. It was not a contest with Satan, for, as we have already seen, He would not have been so sorely amazed had that been the conflict, but it was a terrible combat within Himself, an agony within His own soul.

Remember that He could have escaped from all this grief with one resolve of His will, and naturally the manhood in Him said, "Do not bear it!" And the purity of His heart said, "Oh, do not bear it, do not stand in the place of the sinner." And the delicate sensitiveness of His mysterious nature shrunk altogether from any form of connection with sin. Yet infinite love said, "Bear it, stoop beneath the load." And so there was agony between the attributes of His nature, a battle on an awful scale in the arena of His soul.

The purity which cannot bear to come into contact with sin must have been very mighty in Christ, while the love which would not let His people perish was very mighty too. It was a struggle on a titanic scale, as if a Hercules had met another Hercules, two tremendous forces strove and fought and agonized within the bleeding heart of Jesus.

Nothing causes a man more torture than to be dragged hither and thither with contending emotions. As civil war is the worst and most cruel kind of war, so a war within a man's soul when two great passions in him struggle for the mastery, and both noble passions too, causes a trouble and distress which none but he that feels it can understand.

I marvel not that our Lord's sweat was as it were great drops of blood, when such an inward pressure made Him like a cluster trodden in the winepress. I hope I have not presumptuously looked into the ark, or gazed within the veiled holy of holies. God forbid that curiosity or pride should urge me to intrude where the Lord has set a barrier. I have brought you as far as I can, and must again drop the curtain with the words I used just now,

"'Tis to God, and God alone,
That His griefs are fully known."

III. Our third question shall be, WHAT WAS OUR LORD'S SOLACE IN ALL THIS?

He sought help in human companionship, and very natural it was that He should do so. God has created in our human nature a craving for sympathy. We do not amiss when we expect our brethren to watch with us in our hour of trial. But our Lord did not find that men were able to assist Him. However willing their spirit might be, their flesh was weak.

What, then, did He do? He resorted to prayer, and especially prayer to God under the character of Father. I have learned by experience that we never know the sweetness of the Fatherhood of God so much as when we are in very bitter anguish. I can understand why the Savior said "Abba, Father," it was anguish that brought Him down as a chastened child to appeal plaintively to a Father's love.

In the bitterness of my soul I have cried, "If, indeed, Thou be my Father, by the bowels of Thy Fatherhood have pity on Thy child." And here Jesus pleads with His Father as we have done, and finds comfort in that pleading.

Prayer was the channel of the Redeemer's comfort, earnest, intense, reverent, repeated prayer, and after each time of prayer He seems to have grown quiet, and to have gone to His disciples with a measure of restored peace of mind. The sight of their sleeping helped to bring back His griefs, and therefore He returned to pray again, and each time He was comforted, so that when He had prayed for

the third time He was prepared to meet Judas and the soldiers and to go with silent patience to judgment and to death.

His great comfort was prayer and submission to the divine will, for when He had laid His own will down at His Father's feet the feebleness of His flesh spoke no more complainingly, but in sweet silence, like a sheep dumb before her shearers, He contained His soul in patience and rest.

Dear brothers and sisters, if any of you shall have your Gethsemane and your heavy griefs, imitate your Master by resorting to prayer, by crying to your Father, and by learning submission to His will.

I shall conclude by drawing two or three inferences from the whole subject. May the Holy Spirit instruct us.

The first is this—Learn, dear brethren, *the real humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Do not think of Him as God merely, though He is assuredly divine, but feel Him to be near of kin to you, bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh. How thoroughly can He sympathize with you! He has been burdened with all your burdens and grieved with all your griefs. Are the waters very deep through which you are passing? Yet they are not deep compared with the torrents with which He was buffeted. Never a pang penetrates your spirit to which your covenant Head was a stranger.

Jesus can sympathize with you in all your sorrows, for He has suffered far more than you have ever suffered, and is able therefore to succor you in your temptations. Lay hold on Jesus as your familiar friend, your brother born for adversity, and you will have obtained a consolation which will bear you through the uttermost deeps.

Next, *see here the intolerable evil of sin*. You are a sinner, which Jesus never was, yet even to stand in the sinner's place was so dreadful to Him that He was sorrowful even unto death, What will sin one day be to you if you should be found guilty at the last!

Oh, could we tell the horror of sin there is not one among us that would be satisfied to remain in sin for a single moment. I believe there would go up from this house of prayer this morning a weeping and a wailing such as might be heard in the very streets, if men and women here who are living in sin could really know what sin is, and what the wrath of God is that rests upon them, and what the judgments of God will be that will shortly surround them and destroy them.

Oh soul, sin must be an awful thing if it so crushed our Lord. If the very imputation of it fetched bloody sweat from the pure and holy Savior, what must sin itself be? Avoid it, pass not by it, turn away from the very appearance of it, walk humbly and carefully with your God that sin may not harm you, for it is an exceeding plague, an infinite pest.

Learn next, but oh how few minutes have I in which to speak of such a lesson, *the matchless love of Jesus*, that for your sakes and mine He would not merely suffer in body, but consented even to bear the horror of being accounted a sinner, and coming under the wrath of God because of our sins, though it cost Him suffering unto death and sore amazement, yet rather than that we shall perish, the Lord smarted as our surety.

Can we not cheerfully endure persecution for His sake? Can we not labor earnestly for Him? Are we so ungenerous that His cause shall suffer lack while we have the means of helping it? Are we so base that His work shall flag while we have strength to carry it on? I charge you by Gethsemane, my brethren, if you have a part and lot in the passion of your Savior, love Him much who loved you so immeasurably, and spend and be spent for Him.

Again looking at Jesus in the garden, we learn the *excellence and completeness of the atonement*. How black I am, how filthy, how loathsome in the sight of God—I feel myself only fit to be cast into the lowest hell, and I wonder that God has not long ago cast me there. But I go into Gethsemane, I peer under those gnarled olive trees, and I see my Savior. Yes, I see Him wallowing on the ground in anguish, and hear such groans come from Him as never came from human breast before.

I look upon the earth and see it red with His blood, while His face is smeared with gory sweat, and I say to myself, "My God, my Savior, what aileth Thee?" I hear Him reply, "I am suffering for thy sin."

And then I take comfort, for while I fain would have spared my Lord such an anguish, now that the anguish is over I can understand how JEHOVAH can spare me, because He smote His Son in my stead.

Now I have hope of justification, for I bring before the justice of God and my own conscience the remembrance of my bleeding Savior, and I say, Can You twice demand payment, first at the hand of Your agonizing Son and then again at mine? Sinner as I am, I stand before the burning throne of the severity of God, and am not afraid of it. Can You scorch me, O consuming fire, when You have not only scorched but utterly consumed my substitute? Nay, by faith my soul sees justice satisfied, the law honored, the moral government of God established, and yet my once guilty soul absolved and set free.

The fire of avenging justice has spent itself, and the law has exhausted its most rigorous demands upon the person of Him who was made a curse for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Oh the sweetness of the comfort which flows from the atoning blood! Obtain that comfort, my brethren, and never leave it. Cling to your Lord's bleeding heart and drink in abundant consolation.

Last of all, *what must be the terror of the punishment which will fall upon those men who reject the atoning blood*, and who will have to stand before God in their own proper persons to suffer for their sins.

I will tell you, sirs, with pain in my heart as I tell you it, what will happen to those of you who reject my Lord. Jesus Christ my Lord and Master, is a sign and prophecy to you of what will happen to you. Not in a garden, but on that bed of yours where you have so often been refreshed, you will be surprised and overtaken, and the pains of death will get hold upon you. With an exceeding sorrow and remorse for your misspent life and for a rejected Savior you will be made very heavy.

Then will your darling sin, your favorite lust, like another Judas, betray you with a kiss. While yet your soul lingers on your lip you will be seized and taken off by a body of evil ones and carried away to the bar of God, just as Jesus was taken to the judgment seat of Caiaphas. There shall be a speedy, personal, and somewhat private judgment by which you shall be committed to prison where, in darkness and weeping, and wailing, you shall spend the night before the great assize of the judgment morning.

Then shall the day break and the resurrection morning come, and as our Lord then appeared before Pilate, so will you appear before the highest tribunal, not that of Pilate, but the dread judgment seat of the Son of God whom you have despised and rejected.

Then will witnesses come against you, not false witnesses, but true, and you will stand speechless, even as Jesus said not a word before His accusers. Then will conscience and despair buffet you, until you will become such a monument of misery, such a spectacle of contempt, as to be fitly noted by another *Ecce Homo*, and men shall look at you and say, "Behold the man and the suffering which has come upon him, because he despised his God and found pleasure in sin."

Then you shall be condemned. "Depart, ye cursed," shall be your sentence, even as, "Let him be crucified" was the doom of Jesus. You shall be taken away by the officers of justice to your doom. Then, like the sinner's substitute, you will cry, "I thirst," but not a drop of water shall be given you. You shall taste nothing but the gall of bitterness.

You shall be executed publicly with your crimes written over your head that all may read and understand that you are justly condemned. And then will you be mocked as Jesus was, especially if you have been a professor of religion and a false one. All that pass by will say, "He saved others, he preached to others, but himself he cannot save." God Himself will mock you. Nay, think not that I dream, has He not said it, "I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh"?

Cry unto your gods that you once trusted in! Get comfort out of the lusts you once delighted in, O you that are cast away forever! To your shame and to the confusion of your nakedness, shall you that have despised the Savior be made a spectacle of the justice of God forever. It is right it should be so, justice rightly demands it. Sin made the Savior suffer an agony, shall it not make you suffer?

Moreover, in addition to your sin, you have rejected the Savior, you have said, "He shall not be my trust and confidence." Voluntarily, presumptuously, and against your own conscience you have refused eternal life. And if you die rejecting mercy what can come of it but that first your sin, and secondly your

unbelief, shall condemn you to misery without limit or end. Let Gethsemane warn you, let its groans, and tears, and bloody sweat admonish you. Repent of sin and believe in Jesus. May His Spirit enable you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
MARK 14:32-42 AND PSALM 40

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.