

# How Jesus Paid it All

## by John H. Gerstner (1914-1996)

Isaiah 53:3:

### I. The Text Opened

#### A. Isaiah 53:3

1. "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." (Isa. 53:3).

#### 2. Christ's Agony

a) Gethsemane was the place of Christ's exquisite torment.

b) Here we see the Man of Sorrows acquainted with grief.

c) Matthew tells us that after the last supper with His apostles He began to be sorrowful.

(1) *At the supper He had been full of joy.*

(2) *Though the supper represented vividly to Him the death He was to accomplish on the morrow, He was still very happy because He was with His own.*

(3) *His sorrow then was sublimated in a sense of the joy that should follow.*

(4) *Here feasting with Him were the very ones for whom He was to die so that they should be able to feast with him forever.*

(5) *Though the cup was the new testament in His blood, as He told them, He was comforted in the anticipation of eating and drinking again with them in the kingdom of Heaven.*

(a) *"With desire," He had said, "have I desired to eat this passover with you." His desire was fulfilled.*

d) The sorrow of Christ was like that of a soldier about to go into battle — a battle which he knows means suffering and death — who is spending his last night with his family.

e) There is his dear wife and beloved children for whom he would go out to fight and die.

(1) *So on that last evening the divine Soldier was happy because He was in the presence of those for whom He was soon to die, and surrounded by their love.*

*Christ was not sorrowful then; His own grief was swallowed up in the joy of being with His disciples.*

f) But when the supper was over and they all went out after singing the Hallel, the divine Warrior was left with His thoughts about the dread battle soon to be waged in order that He might save those with whom He had so happily dined.

(1) *As a soldier will say farewell to his little children first and then draw apart for a final farewell with that one who understands and loves him most, his wife, so Christ separated himself from his family of apostles and called to him the three who loved and understood Him best of all: Peter, James and John.*

(2) *Then it was that "he began to be sorrowful, and sore troubled. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: abide ye here, and watch with me." (Matt. 26:37, ASV)*

### II. The Doctrine from the Text

#### A. The Cause of His Agony

1. What was the cause of this amazement, sorrow, and great trouble even unto death which our Lord endured in Gethsemane?
  - a) It was a taste of the cup He was about to drink.
  - b) He always knew that He was to die; He had predicted it many times; He had set His face as flint to go to Jerusalem where He was to be delivered up.
  - c) He had discussed with Moses and Elijah His decease at Jerusalem.
  - d) It was not a disclosure that He was to drink a cup of woe that so amazed and burdened Him that He sweat great drops of blood.
  - e) It must have been a divinely given realization of what that cup of suffering was — not just that it was to be, but what it was to be.
  - f) He had always known that He was to die and be separated from God on the cross; now He was made to feel what it was.
    - (1) *In the words of Jonathan Edwards: “The sorrow and distress which his soul then suffered, arose from that lively, and full, and immediate view which he had then given him of that cup of wrath; by which God the Father did as it were set the cup down before him, for him to take it and drink it. Some have inquired, what was the occasion of that distress and agony, and many speculations there have been about it, but the account which the Scripture itself gives us is sufficiently full in this matter and does not leave room for speculation or doubt. The thing that Christ’s mind was so full of at that time was, without doubt, the same as that which his mouth was so full of: it was the dread which his feeble nature had of that dreadful cup, which was vastly more terrible than Nebuchadnezzar’s fiery furnace. He had then a near view of that furnace of wrath, into which he was to be cast; he was brought to the mouth of the furnace that he might look into it, and stand and view its raging flames, and see the glowings of its heat, that he might know where he was going and what he was about to suffer. This was the thing that filled his soul with sorrow and darkness, this terrible sight as it were overwhelmed him. For what was that human nature of Christ to such mighty wrath as this? It was in itself, without the supports of God, but a feeble worm of the dust, a thing that was crushed before the moth. None of God’s children ever had such a cup set before them, as this first being of every creature had.”*
2. The second Adam was undergoing a much greater temptation than the first one.
  - a) The probation was the same, however, testing obedience to God.
  - b) There is, however, no indication that Adam faced anything comparable to the ordeal of Christ in His obedience.
  - c) Adam was to obey God by not eating of the tree.
  - d) We may assume that there was something very tempting — even without the solicitation of Satan — in that tree’s fruit.
  - e) But certainly that trial could not approach the ordeal of Christ. He had to be obedient unto death; Adam had to be obedient unto life. Adam’s obedience would save him from death; Christ’s obedience would deliver Him to death.
  - f) Furthermore, Christ could see in advance all the horror of that death which obedience would cost.
  - g) Never had there been or could there be a temptation like that.
3. The preview of impending doom was so terrifying that the mighty Jesus Himself asked, if it were possible, to escape it.
  - a) Normally His obedience was instant and without question.
  - b) Only the extreme severity of the ordeal can explain the plea: “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.”

- c) The Son appealed directly to His loving Father to save Him from this hour if it were by any means possible.
- d) Mark tells us that He even first reminded God of His ability to do all things as He said: “Abba [a term of utmost filial intimacy], Father, all things are possible unto thee; . . .”
- e) To the same effect, Luke mentions that He said: “Father, if thou be willing, . . .”
- f) In John, on an occasion which appears to be identical with the one we are considering, Jesus said, “Father, save me from this hour.”
- g) The fact that this appeal appears in all accounts and the poignancy with which it is recorded show clearly how fervently Christ must have asked about the possibility of escaping the dread hour.
- h) It is not said that God answered His Son’s plea on this occasion.
  - (1) *There were other occasions when God did speak audibly from Heaven so that His Son and those about could hear Him.*
- i) On this occasion God seems to have been silent, but the Son knew the answer.
- j) Indeed, I think it was a rhetorical question — a question to which the answer was already known.
  - (1) *It was a cry of desperation, and not an inquiry at all.*
  - (2) *Jesus knew that if there had been any conceivable way whereby God could have redeemed the world other than by the horrible death of His Son, God would never have resorted to such an expedient.*
  - (3) *He knew that there never could be any other name given under Heaven whereby men must be saved.*
  - (4) *He knew there was none other good enough to pay the price of sin; none other could open the door and let us in. Jesus knew that if those dear ones whom He had left were to drink of the vine again with Him in the kingdom of God, there was but one way — He must drink of the cup of God’s wrath.*

## B. Christ’s Self-Surrender to Agony

1. So, looking directly into the furnace of the coming divine fury into which His own willing obedience alone could cause Him to be cast, Christ said: “Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.” He made God’s will His will, even though He knew fully and terribly what such submission meant. God’s will was His will.
  - a) The Father and the Son were one in their redemptive love for the elect.
  - b) This is made even more explicit in John’s account, where Christ says: “Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name.”
  - c) “And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?”
  - d) The Saviour was surrendering Himself to the wrath of God for His people.
  - e) He had asked His chief disciples just to stand by — to understand and to appreciate and to comfort.
  - f) He did not ask them to do anything else.
  - g) There was nothing they could do. It was because they could do nothing that Christ had to do everything for their redemption.
    - (1) *But could they not even stand by?*
    - (2) *Could they not sorrow that He had to suffer so for them?*
    - (3) *Could they not even stay awake for one hour?*

(4) *What a heart-breaking ordeal to find those for whom He was about to die unable to stay awake for an hour to comfort Him in His great and terrible vicarious death for them! Yet our Lord, overwhelmed with the vision He has just had of the fiery torment before Him, to which He would submit Himself for the elect's sake, very gently chides His sleeping disciples.*

(5) *Immediately He turns from His own concerns to their needs.*

(a) *"Love seeketh not her own," and so Love Incarnate quickly forgets His anguish and turns to the disciples' needs.*

(b) *Affectionately He warns them, not for His sake but for their own, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

(c) *In that remark, grief-stricken as He was, bitterly disappointed as He must have been, Christ does not fail to notice and even praise the drowsy disciples for having the right spirit and meaning well, even though they were so very weak.*

### c. Christ's Source of Strength in Agony

1. Then the Savior departs from the apostles a second time and prays again. "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done."

a) The agony of the first prayer is not over, but a new note is detectable. Realizing that it was not possible for the cup to pass from Him, and still agonizing at the thought of its horror, our Lord is now more definitely praying for the strength to drink the cup of God's wrath.

b) As man He had shrunk from the cup; as man He will drink it; as man He looks to the Father for strength.

c) In John's account He prays: "Father, glorify thy name."

d) Luke tells us that an angel came and ministered unto Him. Having submitted Himself to His sacrifice, He knows that He needs great strength to endure the cross.

e) As a man, He was not equal to it. He looks to his heavenly Father, who has willed His death, to enable Him to perform what has become His own will also.

f) John tells us that on this occasion God does speak, saying: "I both have glorified it, and will glorify it."

g) Possibly in connection with that promise, God sent an angel to minister to His Son.

2. The Redeemer was following the same pattern of prayer which He had taught to His disciples.

a) First He had asked that God's will be done.

b) Then He asked for his daily bread, that is, His strength for the day.

c) God's will was difficult to perform, and only God could enable even the Son of man Himself to perform it.

(1) *"Command what thou wilt, and give what thou commandest."*

d) That He needed superhuman strength desperately is shown in His asking God for the third time to do His will through Him.

e) All the while the apostles, who needed strength so much more than the mighty Son, instead of maintaining their vigil during His, slept. In the sequel, the One who watched and prayed walked quietly to His horrible death while those who slept were scattered by mere danger.

3. When Christ gave His cheek to the betrayer's kiss, He knew that He was putting the cup of wrath to His lips, the full dregs of which He would not taste until the morrow when He would cry out, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? . . . My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

### III. The Text Applied

#### A. Those For Whom Christ Endured His Agony

1. This, then, is how Jesus made atonement — how He paid it all.
  - a) The punishment which was due to us He voluntarily received.
  - b) The death which was the wages of our sin He underwent.
  - c) The stripes with which we deserved to be beaten fell upon His willing back.
  - d) The chastisement which was owing us was borne by Him.
  - e) The price we would have paid by endless suffering He paid by an infinite sacrifice.
  - f) It should have been I who cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"
  - g) It should have been He who said: "I am persuaded that nothing shall separate me from the love of God."
  - h) Because Jesus paid it all, it was He who was forsaken and we who never shall be.
  - i) Because He drank the full cup of divine wrath, we shall never taste it.
    - (1) *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."*