

## Exhortation I: Christ's Bloody Sweat in the Garden

Charles Herle (1598-1659)

Luke 22:44

### I. The Text Opened

#### A. Luke 22:44

1. "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).
2. Sweat and blood are direct representations of labor and passion, of doing and suffering.
  - a) These are two of the best embodiments, or journals, of our Savior's life and death.
  - b) Both evidence the travails of his soul, (Isa. 53:11), as the first he wrote in sweat, the other in blood.
  - c) His life could be described as a continual labor, or sweat, of passive action, for he was ever and always going about doing good (Matt. 4:23).
  - d) And his death is rightly seen as a complete bleeding out of active passion, for he, "poured out his soul unto death," (Isa. 53:12).
3. Scripture is replete with symbolism, and there may be no two more appropriate images in nature that serve for the indices, or seals, of God's two testaments than that of sweat and blood.
  - a) By his sinless, blameless life, Christ fulfilled every jot and tittle of the Law and in his death, he fulfilled every aspect and requirement of the Gospel, by purchasing redemption with his own blood.
  - b) Therefore, in the perfect execution of his labor and his passion, Christ fulfilled every requirement inherent in both Testaments.

### II. The Doctrine from the Text

#### A. Doctrine: Christ fulfilled the Father's will in blood.

1. Consistent with the beauty and mystery of God's grand plan, the sweat and blood essential for the second Adam (Christ) to fulfill his Father's will were also integral to the sentence God passed on the first Adam when he fell.
  - a) Adam's curse consisted of a life characterized by labor and toil, contending with thorny ground just to survive – in contrast to the abundant and peaceful life he formerly enjoyed in the lush gardens of Eden's Paradise.
    - (1) *As Genesis 3:17-19 states, "... cursed is the ground for your sake ... thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth; and you shall eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of your face shall you eat bread, till you return to the ground."*
    - (2) *The curse of the fall included a life of labor by the sweat of man's brow and a realization of the mortality of his life blood that will eventually end in physical death.*
2. A further parallel between man's ruin and Christ's ransom is how they both occur in a garden.
  - a) In the Garden of Eden man played the role of the malevolent one with God's bounty, and in the Garden of Gethsemane our Savior, the God-man, fulfilled the role of Champion with God's fury.

- b) In the first garden, God sought man who had sold his rights through creation to the devil for an apple.
- c) Could you imagine what Adam was thinking about this when God spoke, “Adam where are you?” (Gen. 3:9).
- d) And in the second garden, an army of men sought Christ who was betrayed by a devil, (John 6:70), for 30 pieces of silver. “Whom do you seek?” the Lord asks them, to which they replied, “Jesus of Nazareth,” (John 18:4-5).
3. After the fall, at the gateway to the Garden of Eden a flaming sword was wielded in all directions by the cherubim, (Gen. 3:24), to prevent entrance to the garden.
- a) And in the Garden of Gethsemane a sword was drawn by Peter, (Luke 22:50), in a feeble attempt to defend his Christ against those soldiers who had come to arrest him.
- b) And yet, knowing this was all part of God’s plan, the Lord rebukes him.
- (1) *“Peter put up your sword. The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?” (John 18:11).*
4. In the Garden of Eden, man was doomed by God to earn his earthly life-sustaining bread by the sweat of his brow.
- a) In the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ earns for man the eternal Bread of Life by the sweat of his brow.
- b) And not only the sweat of his brow, but of his whole body and even more so that of his soul.
- c) His agony of soul was so tortuous that both blood and sweat, i.e., great drops of sweat mixed with blood ran down through his clothes and fell on the ground (Luke 22:44).
5. What is the significance of these two divinely intertwined events?
- a) First of all, we are all born under the curse of that flaming sword of death, the curse of the fall, (John 3:18, Psa. 51:5).
- (1) *And yet, coursing through the garden of redemption is the river of life by which we may gain free and safe passage to a better paradise where no sword threatens and no angel prevents entrance.*
- b) Rather, here the Angel of the Covenant (Rev. 3:7), the only begotten Son of God, is both the door to salvation and the keeper of the door.
- (1) *And in Isaiah 55:1, we find him calling out, “Ho, every one that thirsts, come to the waters, and he that has no money; come, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price,” as if he should say, For I personally paid the price for all believers, with my own sweat and with my own blood.*
6. “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).
- a) The grievous agony our Lord experienced under that dark blanket of night just prior to his arrest in Gethsemane’s Garden caused the physical phenomenon explained here in Luke 22.
- b) Why such an intense level of grief in the heart of God’s Son to sweat blood?
- c) Christ’s blood is set in Scripture as prophesy concerning all nations, his blood flowing to them, (Isa. 53); by flowing to all nations in the garden by blood and sweat.
- d) Alas, all of us have sinned, (Romans 5), and all of us are against the whole of Christ’s Law, in the whole man.

e) And therefore, his agony will be so full, that he who is all in all and for all his people, (Col. 3:11), will answerably bleed throughout all of his whole body.  
 f) He will not think that his self-sacrifice once offered for all, is complete enough, unless he first drenches it in a flood and shower of his own sweat and blood, (Heb 9:28).

g) This dreaded apprehension was, without a doubt, exacerbated by the fact that he was perfect man, for the soundest body is the one most sensitive to pain.

*(1) But he was not grieving only because of the physical pain he would soon suffer.*

*(2) Nor was it only because of the unspeakable truth that his spotless soul would soon be violated with the vilest filth.*

h) Rather, his deepest grief grew out of his knowledge that in the process he would suffer the avenging wrath and abandonment of his Father whom he loved with everything in him.

*(1) Augustine gives the distinction best, that he was in this way to bleed for us, it was on our side, necessary, on his but voluntary; on ours a miserable necessity, on his but a consoling mercy.*

7. It was determined in the mind of God, even before creation, that his only begotten Son would become the Son of Man because he must suffer the full extent of God's wrath for sin – he alone must be the God-man.

a) Christ must bleed and die because a guiltless blood sacrifice was the only remedy for our sin-wrecked nature and sin-dominated existence.

b) If we had any chance of avoiding the just wrath of God ourselves, his sinless Son had to suffer in our stead.

c) And it was here in the garden that Christ truly began tasting the bitter dregs of that cup of God's wrath.

8. And yet, despite the extreme duress Christ was suffering that fateful night, (Lam 1:12), he sought no means of escape, (Matt. 26:53-54, Isa. 53:7).

a) Rather, he cries out in brokenness to his Father, "If it is possible, let this cup pass," (Matt. 26:39).

b) Isaiah refers to this experience of Christ's in the Garden as, "the travail of his soul," (Isa. 53:11) – a travail that reached to the depths of what mattered most to him, and that was to please his Father.

*(1) For in John 4:34, he said, "My food is to do the will of him that sent me."*

c) He knew full well that this was the only way.

*(1) It is not a thin faint sweat which he had, but one of great drops. And those so many, so violent, as they pierce not only Christ's skin, but clothes too, (Luke 22:44), and that in full streams to the ground.*

*(2) So, though utterly tormented, (as the prophecy in Psalm 22:14 shows, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels"), Christ proceeds willingly from the Garden with the soldiers in order that he might fully carry out the terms of his contract of redemption with the Father, (1 Peter 1:18-20).*

*(3) Might he not well then complain of his sweat, as of his sorrow, (Lam. 1:12), for was there ever sweat like this of his?*

*(4) But, he does not complain.*

*(5) Such hot irons of God's Law had entered into his soul, (Psalm 105:18).*

*(6) How truly does it appear here in his blood? How justly too might he complain, that his soul was poured out, (Psalm 22:14), both like wax and like water.*

*(7) And, yet, in fulfilment of his work, he becomes our Balm in Gilead, (Jer. 8:22), the only cure for our wretched, otherwise hopeless state.*

*(a) Even as his bloody, balmy sweat falls to the ground, the barest wilderness of sin blossoms into a fruitful, fragrant garden of grace.*

### III. The Text Applied

#### A. Consider...

1. The blessed Lord and Savior began his passion in a sweat.
  - a) His was a bloody garden; let us not pray only from our lips outwardly, or weep only from our eyes outwardly.
  - b) Rather let our eyes, wait ever on him (Psalm 123:2) in a true sweat of sorrow and contrition.
  - c) Let us consider what he suffered for blood can soften the adamant heart; and if our hearts do not soften, melt, and bleed under such a plenteous shower of his so precious blood, what should be left to melt such a heart but the fire of hell?
    - (1) The Lord, would he not, "drink of the cup, which thy Father gives thee?" (Matt. 26:39, John 18:11.)*
    - (2) It is not possible for this cup to pass from him unless it passes to us.*
    - (3) What would it be but fire and brimstone that is our portion to drink?*
    - (4) We confess that we are not able to drink of his cup.*
    - (5) If he left even one drop for us, it would cast us into that place of eternal despair with the rich man who longed for a single drop of water to cool the fire of God's righteous wrath (Luke 16).*
  - d) Rather, here, the Lord gives, with David (Psalm 42:3) plenty of tears to drink, and so may our cup overflow.
  - e) That he would allow this fruitful shower of his blessed bloody sweat as it fell in a garden to plentifully fall on the garden of our church.
    - (1) That this gracious rain would fall on our inheritance, (Psa. 68:9), to refresh us when we are weary.*
    - (2) That God would allow this abundant, everlasting shower fall on his people so that our dry and barren wildernesses may become fruitful, fragrant gardens for him.*
  - f) It is said that the Romans found no such manure for their vines and gardens as the blood of Jews.
    - (1) How much better will his blood be for this vine, this garden of our soul?*