

The Soul Suffering of Christ

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[0:00] Pastor John quoted Isaiah 53. Jesus was a man of sorrow. A man of sorrow.

A man of sorrow. A man of sorrow. Of mental pain. Isaiah 53 says, after the suffering of his soul he will see the light of life and be satisfied.

There were soul sufferings and be satisfied. In our Savior's. In our Savior's. and our Lord's death.

And tonight as we prepare to take the Lord's Supper, I want us to meditate on our Lord's, our lover's, mental and emotional agony, the suffering of his soul, especially as he approached the hour of the cross and that time preceding it.

And as we sound and as we measure the depths of his agony, we also see the depths of his love for us.

Love is not measured by the words that it says. It's not measured by the promises that it makes.

Love's true measure is in the pain that it's willing to undergo.

[1:21] And so as we meditate on the greatness of his agony, we also see the greatness of his love for us because every inch into that agony is an inch further into his love for us.

And in his love individually, brothers, brothers, sisters for you. He did this for you. These things are written for you.

So tonight is going to be more of a meditation, a brooding on God's words, on God's word. We're going to be looking at several of the words that the gospel writers use to describe Christ's emotional agony, what he was experiencing in those last hours before Friday, before the cross.

The gospel writers use different Greek words to describe his soul sufferings. And the first is found in John chapter 12. And I invite you to turn there. John chapter 12 and verse 27.

We are in the last week. And Jesus has just said, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified, by which he means it's time for the Son of Man to die.

[2:38] And then in verse 27, he says, now my heart is troubled. And what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour?

No. It was for this very reason that I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name. My heart is troubled. The word is *terroso*.

It means agitated. To strike with fear or dread. Jesus sees what's coming at the week's end, and it sends shock waves through his soul.

It strikes him with fear and dread. The same word is used in the Greek Old Testament too. When Pharaoh dreams, you remember when he dreams those dreams of the approaching famine.

Remember he dreamed of skinny cows eating the sleek, the fat cows, and then sickly wheat devouring healthy wheat. And you know how dreams can be.

[3:47] When you're in them, they can be much more nightmarish than when you actually describe them in the light of day. And so for Pharaoh, these were just not odd dreams.

They were nightmarish dreams. And he woke up, and it says his heart was agitated. It was troubled. He couldn't shake off the fear. Those dreams haunted him.

They never left his mind. The word is used again in the book of Esther. Esther heard the plot, Haman's plot to murder all the Jews, and she was troubled because her people, her family, her, she, herself, are all on the edge of destruction, on the edge of genocide.

Slaughter was coming. And so she's not mildly worried. She's not just a little concerned. Her inner world is shaken to the core, and it's everywhere around her, pressing in upon her.

Do you think that as she talked, and as she carried out her duties, that that thought was never far away from her mind? It was always pressing in on her. And so her soul is reeling under the approaching doom of her people.

[5:02] It's hanging over her head. And so Jesus says, now my heart is troubled. That's what he was talking about. There's no quiet place. There's no hiding place.

His days are turning into one long nightmare. The cross is coming. The wrath of God is coming. And he isn't stoically resigned, saying, Lord, your will be done.

Lord, glorify your name. He doesn't say those words flippantly or easily. He says them through the darkness of a life that is becoming a living nightmare.

So he says, my heart is troubled. We find the next three words in Matthew. Please turn over to Matthew 26. 26. And we've moved forward a day maybe or two.

And Jesus has now celebrated the last supper, the Lord's last supper. They have sung a hymn.

[6:10] They've left the upper room where they were. And John says that it was night. And let me begin reading at verse 36.

So Matthew 26, 36. Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to them, sit here while I go over there and pray.

He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him. And he began to be sorrowful and troubled. And then he said to them, my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.

Stay here and keep watch with me. Whatever he had felt before, whatever things were before, things are now worse.

They're getting worse. The darkness outside is filling up his soul. It says he began to be sorrowful.

[7:16] The word is *lipeo*. It means to have deep, inconsolable grief. The Old Testament uses it more than one time to describe a parent grieving over the death of a child, or the death of their children.

Perhaps you remember Absalom, the son of David, who rebelled against King David. There was a civil war.

And in the end, Absalom was killed. And when King David heard of Absalom's death, it says the king was shaken.

He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. And as he went, he said, Oh, my son, Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom, if I had only died instead of you, Oh, Absalom, my son, my son.

Now to put, to understand it, to really feel it, put your son's name in David's lament. That's what I did this afternoon.

[8:29] My son, Cademan, my son, my son, Cademan, if I had only died instead of you, O Cademan, my son, my son. David grieved for his son.

It's the word that's used of Jesus. And you feel the force of it. Grief rocked his heart. He felt like a father weeping over the, over his dead son.

He began to be sorrowful and troubled. Where trouble is our next word. It's Adam and Neo. It overlaps with our first word. But if anything, it has a harsher meaning, harsher reality to it.

Lightfoot, the commentator, says the idea of this word is loathing and discontent. it describes the confused, restless, half-distracted state produced by mental distress or grief.

Thomas Goodwin said, Christ's soul was sick and fainted. His heart failed him. Psalm 22 says, my heart is turned to wax and it melts within me.

[9:45] He's sick with sorrow, restless, half-distracted. As he looks forward into the next day, he can't find any comfort. There's no thought that he can rest in. There's no place in his mind or his heart where he can rest and get relief from this pain that's pressing in on him.

His mind is just racing from nightmare to nightmare. The word also carries the idea of being weighed down. depressed, pressed down.

And so the world was crashing in upon him. The weight of God's wrath, the weight was already starting to be felt, pushing him down, pushing him down still further and he felt like he was sinking into the grave itself.

And so, he says, finally, my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. It's a different word, sorrow.

Paralupus, it means to be downcast, to be filled with bitter sadness. When God rejected Cain's offering, Cain was filled with this bitter sadness, to be downcast.

[10:56] The psalmist in Psalm 42 three times says, why are you so downcast, my soul? That's the word. And as you read that psalm, you see why he's so downcast.

All your waves, your breakers, have swept over me. I say to God, my rock, why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?

My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me all day, saying to me all day long, where is your God? Why have you forgotten me? My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Brothers and sisters, we have felt that in some small way. We have felt that in some small way where it seems that God is gone, that darkness is my only friend, but what we have tasted in part, what we have experienced in part, Jesus tasted and experienced completely.

For us, the clouds cover the sun every now and then. For Jesus, the sun went out. The depression, the darkness, felt like it would take his life away.

[12:18] that's why he says, I'm overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Felt like it would take his very life away. Why do people commit suicide?

It's because the agony of living is so great. Every day feels like death. Every moment is a living death and it doesn't feel like it's going to get any better.

It's that darkness that will never leave. Well, it's that sorrow. That darkness that feels like you are dying that Jesus felt that filled your lover's heart.

We're going to look at one other word found in Mark and you don't have to turn there, I'll just read it for you. It says, he began to be deeply distressed and troubled.

The word translated deeply distressed is different than the one found in Matthew. It means to be appalled, to be astonished, to be horror struck.

[13:36] This is a sadness that short circuits the human ability to understand it, to comprehend it, to deal with it. It leaves us speechless at the pain, at the horror of what you are seeing and what you are experiencing.

Last week, I read some accounts of the first soldiers who walked into the concentration camps in Germany near the end of World War II.

They were advancing like normal. They're taking territory like normal. Then they walked into a nightmare.

They weren't expecting it. No one told them. No one knew. They see corpses walking. They see bodies stacked like wood on a wood pile.

There were bones sticking out of the ground and ash falling on the buildings. When you read the accounts, they just kept on saying, I was speechless.

[14:55] I was stunned. I couldn't believe it. I read of one sergeant who looked over the heads of his men and he said, go in and see.

Stay as long as you can and then go take a walk in the woods. And then he stumbled off. It was appalling, shocking, distress.

That's the sorrow that wracked Jesus' soul as he comes to the cross. The horror of dying under God's wrath.

The pains of death attacking him. And did he say, let it come? I don't feel this. Did he say, this is nothing to me? No, he says to Peter, James, and John, please stay with me.

Watch with me. I'm overwhelmed with sorrow. But his disciples were no help, were they? they were tired, they were blind to what was going on, they couldn't stay awake, and so God had to send an angel to help him, to get him through just to the cross.

[16:10] Does that show you the depth of his agony as he approaches it? That an angel from heaven has to comfort him. And then in Luke it says this, and being in anguish, being in agony, he prayed more earnestly and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

He was in agony and no one had touched him yet. No one had beaten him. No one had plucked out his beard or punched him in the face. No one had nailed him to a cross, but yet he's in agony.

And how great was our Lord's agony, mental anguish as he just thought about what he was going to suffer for me.

Well, as he prayed, he began to sweat bloody sweat. It's a condition called hematidrosis. It's rare, but it's not totally unheard of.

It means where your capillaries and your sweat pores actually break under the stress, sweat, and you don't bleed sweat, but the sweat enters into your blood and it makes your sweat look like blood.

[17:32] John Gill in his commentary writes of a young man of Florence who was condemned to death and as he was being led away through the vehemence of his grief discharged blood instead of sweat all over his body.

He tells the story of a man from Paris, a man robust and in good health, hearing that a capital sentence was pronounced upon him was all at once all over in a bloody sweat.

What causes a man to sweat blood? It's the fearful expectation of a violent death.

And for Jesus it wasn't just death, it was the second death God was going to make him drink the cup of wrath. He was going to take all the sins of all of his people and put them on Jesus and punish him in our place.

He was going to own them. He was going to take them as his own and pay for them. And he was going to pay with his life. He was going to pay with his pain.

[18:47] He was going to pay with his blood. And the mere thought of it, made him sweat blood. Another author wrote about this bloody sweat.

A thorough search of the medical literature demonstrated that such a condition, while rare, can and has occurred. Under conditions of great emotional stress, tiny capillaries in the sweat glands can rupture, thus mixing blood with perspiration.

This condition has been reported in extreme instances of stress. Acute fear and intense mental contemplation were found to be the most frequent inciting causes.

While the extent of blood loss generally is minimal, hematridosis can also result in the skin becoming extremely tender and fragile, which would have made Christ's pending physical insults even more painful.

people. And from these factors it is evident that even before Jesus endured the torture of the cross, he suffered far beyond what most of us will ever suffer.

[19:58] His penetrating awareness of the heinous nature of sin, extreme measure necessary to deal with it, make the passion, the pain of Christ beyond comprehension.

so you're beginning to understand the depth of his agony. Brothers and sisters, he felt it for you.

Felt it for you. Why the agony? Why did Jesus go through this? Because this was the price for his people. This was the price for his people.

For the joy set before him, he endured the cross. The joy of having me, worthless me. The joy of having you. The joy of saving his people.

Brothers and sisters, the depth of his anguish, the depth of his trouble, and his fear is the measure of his love for you.

[21:05] And I don't want to dwell on the agony in some sort of, we don't want to dwell on it in some sort of morbid fascination. Some people do that, but that's not the point at all. His agony, his pain, is the measure of how much he loves you.

The agony is the yardstick, but look at the love. Look at the love that it is measuring. He endured it to have you, to save you. And if he had to do it again, if he had to do it, and he doesn't, but if he had to, he would do it all over again.

he would do it all over again for the very same reason that a mother would gladly go through childbirth again to have the baby. Why do women go through something so painful, so terrible, more than once?

Because the baby makes it worthwhile. the pain is forgotten and the joy of holding the baby in her arms. Now, her love does not make the pain less painful.

It doesn't make it less real, but it makes it something of little consequence in the big, in the final scheme. I've never ever seen a mother say, well, the pain for this child was too much.

[22:29] I've never seen her look at her baby and say, the pain for this one was too much. I regret what I had to go through. You would never, in a million years, ever think of looking at your eight or nine-year-old or your twelve-year-old and say, you know what, I would never go through childbirth to have him or her.

In the same way Jesus loved us, how he loved us. he was weighed down to the grave itself, but love upheld him.

Paul says, he loved me and he gave himself up for me. He loved me and he gave himself up for me. That was the price that had to be paid.

And he paid it willingly. The same love that upheld him through the midnight hours, through Gethsemane, through the humiliating trials that were going to be coming in the morning, through the beating and the mocking, and finally the crucifixion.

That same love that upheld him through that whole period is no less now than it was then. He loves you now with that same sort of passion, with that same sort of vehemence, with that same sort of

enthusiasm.

[23:48] If anything, you would think that it would even be more if such a thing could be. A mother loves her baby not less because of the pain of childbirth, but more.

The pain seals her heart to that baby. And in the same way, Jesus' heart is sealed to yours, brother or sister. He went through deep.

He went through the deepest waters for you. He went through the greatest agony. He went through the darkest day for you. He took hell. He took God's infinite anger for you.

He took it for you because He loved you. His agony is a measure of His love for you. And now He says, do this in remembrance of me.

Do this in remembrance of me. Remember me. Remember my agony.

[24:58] Remember my sorrow. Remember what your sin cost me. Remember my love for you.

Oh, the depths of my love for you.

Remember me. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, I pray that you would give us grace to do that just now. As we take the Lord's Supper, that we would remember Christ's great agony, what our sin cost Him, and His great love for us.

Spirit of God, open our eyes to see truth as it is portrayed and displayed before us. For Jesus' sake, amen.