

# THE PASSION OF CHRIST

by Thomas Adams (1583-1653)

*“He hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.”*

—Ephesians 5:2

**T**HIS latter part of the verse is a fair and lively crucifix, cut by the hand of a most exquisite carver—not to amaze our corporal lights<sup>1</sup> with a piece of wood, brass, or stone, curiously engraved to the increase of a carnal devotion; but to present to the eye of the conscience the grievous passion<sup>2</sup> and gracious compassion of our Savior Jesus Christ, Who “hath given himself for us.”

## 1. Who

The person that gives is *Christ*. The quality of His person doth highly commend His exceeding love to us.

We will consider him a *man*: “Behold the man” (Joh 19:5), saith Pilate. We may tarry and wonder that a man should give himself for man. “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die” (Rom 5:7). But this Man gave Himself for unrighteous men, to die not an ordinary but a grievous death, exposing Himself to the wrath of God, to the tyranny of men and devils.

Consider Him, Almighty God, *taking upon Him man’s nature*. This is the first step downwards: “The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (Joh 1:14). And this was done by putting on our nature, not by putting off His own. He is both God and man, yet but one Christ; one, not by confusion of substance but by unity of person. Now, in that this eternal God became man, He suffered more than man can suffer, either living or dead. That man should be turned into a beast, into a worm, into dust, into nothing, is not so great a disparagement<sup>3</sup> as that the glorious God should become man. He that is “more excellent” than the angels, became lower than the angels (Heb 1:4).

This is not low enough yet. He is called the King of glory (Psa 24:7); but Isaiah says, “He is despised and rejected of men: we hid as it were our faces from him: he was despised, and we esteemed him not” (Isa 53:3). The loftier the majesty, the lovelier the humility. He that requires all honor as properly due to Him, makes Himself not of little, but of *no* reputation (Phi 2:7). Here was dejection; yea, here was rejection. Let Him be laid in His poor cradle, the Bethlehemites reject Him: the manger must serve, [there is] no room for Him in the inn (Luk 2:7). Yea, “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (Joh 1:11).

But we must go yet lower. “*The Lord hath afflicted me* in the day of his fierce anger” (Lam 1:12). “It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief” (Isa 53:10). But now, to the rejection of all the former, the Lord turns His back upon Him as a stranger; the Lord wounds Him as an enemy. He cries out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mar 15:34). In His feeling He is forsaken of the Highest.

## 2. What

We come to the action. “*I lay down my life*...No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (Joh 10:17-18). He that gives life to us, gave up *His own life* for us. He was offered because He would be offered. No hand could cut that Stone from the quarry of heaven, no violence pull Him from the bosom of His Father, but His own mercy: He *gave*. He gives them leave to take Him, yea, power to kill Him; from Himself is that power which apprehends Himself. Even while He stands before Pilate scorned, yet He tells him, “Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above” (Joh 19:11). His own strength leads Him, not His adversaries. The loss of His life was necessary, yet was it also voluntary; therefore He gave up the ghost.

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<sup>1</sup> **corporal lights** – physical eyes.

<sup>2</sup> **passion** – intense suffering of Christ on the cross.

<sup>3</sup> **disparagement** – a reduction in esteem or rank.

He saw that which none saw: the anger of an infinite God. He perfectly apprehended the cause of fear: our sin and torment. He saw the bottom of the cup: how bitter and dreggish every drop of that vial was. He truly understood the burden that we make light of. This insupportable load He saw: that the sponge of vengeance must be wrung out to Him, and He must suck it up to the last and least drop. Every talent<sup>4</sup> of our iniquities must be laid upon Him, till, as “a cart, he be laden with sheaves” (Amo 2:13). And with all this pressure, He must mount His chariot of death, the cross, and there bear it till the appeased God gave way to a completion: “It is finished” (Joh 19:30).

No marvel then if He might justly take David’s words out of his mouth: “Thy terrors have I suffered with a troubled mind” (Psa 88:15). This thought drew from Him those tears of blood (Luk 22:44). If He suffered not, He saw our everlasting destruction. He saw the horrors that He must suffer to ransom us, hence those groans, tears, cries, and sweat—yet His love conquered all. By nature He could willingly have avoided this cup; for love’s sake to us, He took it in a willing hand.

### 3. Of Whom

The gift: *Himself*. Not an *angel*, for an angel cannot sufficiently mediate between an immortal nature offended and a mortal nature corrupted.

Not *saints*, for they have no more oil than will serve their own lamps; they have enough for themselves—not of themselves, all of Christ—but none to spare (Mat 25:1-13). They could not propitiate<sup>5</sup> for sin who were themselves guilty of sin and by nature liable to condemnation. Wretched idolaters, that thrust this honor on the saints against their wills; how would they abhor such sacrilegious glory!

Not the *riches of the world*. Were the riches of the old world brought together to the riches of the new world; were all the mineral veins of the earth emptied of their purest metals, this pay would not be current<sup>6</sup> with God—it will cost more to redeem souls. “They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him” (Psa 49:6-7).

Not the *blood of bulls or goats* (Heb 9:12-14). None of these would serve.

Whom gave He then? Himself, Who was both God and man; that so participating of both natures, our mortality and God’s immortality, He might be a perfect mediator.<sup>7</sup> He came between mortal men and immortal God, mortal with men and just with God. As man He suffered, as God He satisfied; as God and man He saved. He gave Himself.

*All Himself, His whole person*, soul and body, godhead and man-hood. Though the Deity could not suffer, yet in regard of the personal union of these two natures in one Christ, His very passion is attributed in some sort to the Godhead. So it is called the “blood of God” (Act 20:28), and “the Lord of glory” is said to “be crucified” (1Co 2:8). He gave all Christ, though not all of Christ; as God alone He would not, as man alone he could not, make this satisfaction for us. The Deity is impassible;<sup>8</sup> yet was it impossible, without this Deity, for the great work of our salvation to be wrought.

He gave Himself only, and that without a partner or a comforter. *Without a partner* that might share either His glory or our thanks, of both which He is justly jealous. The sufferings of our Savior need no help; [it is] His blood, and His only. How is Christ a perfect Savior if any act of our redemption be left to the performance of saint or angel? No, our souls must die if the blood of Jesus cannot save them.

*Without a comforter*. He was so far from having a sharer in His passion, that He had none in compassion that (at least) might anyways ease His sorrows. “Have pity upon me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me” (Job 19:21). Christ might make that request, but in vain; there was none to comfort Him, none to pity Him. The martyrs have fought valiantly under the banner of Christ, because He was with them to comfort them. But when He Himself suffers, no relief is permitted. In His agony in the garden, an angel was sent to comfort Him. But when He came to the main act of our redemption, not an angel must be seen.

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<sup>4</sup> **talent** – large measure of weight.

<sup>5</sup> **propitiate** – to make an appeasement; to make a sacrifice that turns away wrath.

<sup>6</sup> **current** – that which is accepted and used in monetary exchange; circulating; effective.

<sup>7</sup> **mediator** – go-between; one who intervenes between two hostile parties for the purpose of restoring them to a relationship of harmony and unity.

<sup>8</sup> **impassible** – not subject to suffering or pain.

Of whom then shall He expect comfort? There is no other refuge but His Father. No, even His Father is angry; and He Who once said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mat 3:17), is now incensed. He hides His face from Him, but lays His hand heavy upon Him and buffets Him with anguish. Thus, He gave Himself, and only Himself, for our redemption.

#### 4. To Whom

*To God!* To whom should He offer this sacrifice of expiation<sup>9</sup> but to Him that was offended?—and that is God! All sins are committed against Him; His justice is displeased and must be satisfied. To God, for God is angry. With what, and whom?—with sin and us, and us for sin.

In His just anger He must smite, but whom? We must fetch the answer from Daniel’s prophecy, “The Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself” (Dan 9:26). Not for himself? For whom, then?

#### 5. For Whom

*For us.* He took upon Him our person. He became surety<sup>10</sup> for us; and, lo! now the course of justice may proceed against Him! He that will become a surety, and take on him the debt, must be content to pay it. Hence that innocent Lamb must be made a sacrifice. “He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2Co 5:21). So monstrous were our sins, that the hand of the everlasting Justice was ready to strike us with a fatal and final blow. Christ in His own person steps between the stroke and us. We are they for whose cause our blessed Savior was crucified. For us He endured those grievous pangs—for us, that we might never taste them. Therefore say we with that [Church] Father,<sup>11</sup> let Him be fixed wholly in our hearts, Who was wholly for us fastened to the cross.

#### 6. Uses

We shall consider the uses we are to make of this by the end for which Christ performed this: to *save us*.

Everyone is a rebel, guilty and convicted by the supreme Law; death waits to arrest us and damnation to receive us. This was His purpose and performance; all He did, all He suffered, was to redeem us. “By his stripes, we are healed” (Isa 53:5). This should *move us*. Was all this done for us, and shall we not be stirred? Let His passion move us to compassion—not of His sufferings (alas! our pity can do Him no good), but of our sins, which *caused* them. “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children” (Luk 23:28). For ourselves: not for His pains that are past, but for our own that should have been, and shall be except our faith sets Him in our stead. Shall He weep to us, for us, and shall we not mourn? We, wretched men that we are, were the principals in this murder of Christ. Sin, our sins, were the murderers. Of us He suffered, and for us He suffered; unite these in your thoughts and tell me if His passion hath not cause to move us.

He suffered at all times, in all places, in all senses, in all members; in body and soul also. All for us.

*At all times.* In His childhood by poverty and by Herod. In the strength of His days by the powers of earth and by the powers of hell—yea, even by the powers of heaven. In the day He lacks meat, in the night a pillow.

*In all places.* In the cradle by that fox (Luk 13:32), in the streets by revilers, in the mountain by those that would have thrown Him down headlong, in the Temple by them that “took up stones to cast at him” (Joh 8:59). In the high priest’s hall by buffeters, in the garden by betrayers; by the way, laden with His cross. Lastly, in Calvary, a vile and stinking place, among the bones of malefactors crucified.

*In all senses.* The nails driven into His hands and feet, places most sensible of pain. His ears are full of the blasphemous insults. His eyes, whither can He turn them without spectacles of sorrow? That taste is fed with vinegar. That smell is filled with the stench of iniquities. Those hands are fain<sup>12</sup> to carry the reed of reproach and endure the nails of death. Those eyes must behold the afflicting objects of shame and tyranny. Those ears must be wearied with the taunts and scoffs of blasphemy.

*In all members.* Look on that blessed body; it is all over scourged, martyred, tortured, mangled—what places can you find free? That face must be odiously spit on. His hands, which made the heavens, are extended and fastened to a cross. The mouth must be buffeted that “spake as never man spake” (Joh 7:46).

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<sup>9</sup> **expiation** – removal of or covering for the guilt of sin.

<sup>10</sup> **surety** – one who undertakes the debt of another.

<sup>11</sup> **Church Father** – one of the church leaders from the early centuries after Christ whose writings served to establish sound doctrine in the churches.

<sup>12</sup> **fain** – rather.

Not one drop of this blood was shed for Himself, all for us: for His enemies, persecutors, crucifiers, ourselves. The Lord Jesus, to recover us that were dead in our sins and trespasses, spreads and applies His whole passion to us—lays His mouth of blessing upon our mouth of blasphemy; His eyes of holiness upon our eyes of lust; His hands of mercy upon our hands of cruelty—and stretcheth His gracious self upon our wretched selves till we begin to wax warm, to get life (*see* 2Ki 4:34).

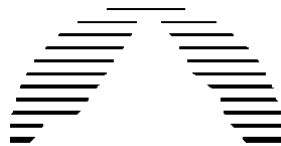
*In His soul.* “Now is my soul troubled” (Joh 12:27). All the outward afflictions were but gentle prickings in regard of that His soul suffered. He had a heart within that suffered unseen, unknown anguish. He had wept the tears of pity, the tears of love, but never before the tears of anguish. When the Son of God thus cries, thus weeps, here is more than the body distressed: the soul is agonized.

Here is the fruit and efficacy of all. Never was the Lord pleased with sinful man till now. We are all of ourselves dead and stinking carcasses. The pure nostrils of the Most Holy cannot endure us. Behold the perfume that sweetens us: the redeeming blood of the Lord Jesus. We should die, and [Christ] payest it; we have offended, and [He is] punished. [This is] a mercy without example, a favor without merit, a love without measure. ❧

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