

# Jesus the Sufferer Matthew 26

by John Nelson Darby

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*The sermon emphasizes the depth of Christ's suffering and perfect obedience, urging believers to contemplate His character and the significance of the cross in their lives.*

**Scripture:** Philippians 2:5

**Topics:** "Suffering Of Christ", "Humility and Obedience"

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## Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the profound suffering of Jesus as depicted in Matthew 26, illustrating Christ's perfect submission and obedience even in the face of immense agony. He highlights how Jesus, though divine, experienced human trials and loneliness, particularly in Gethsemane, where He sought companionship but found none. Darby reflects on the duality of Christ's nature--His divine power and human vulnerability--showing how His suffering was essential for the reconciliation of humanity with God. The sermon calls believers to contemplate the cross, recognizing it as the foundation of their faith and the source of their peace. Ultimately, Darby encourages the congregation to emulate Christ's humility and love in their own lives.

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## Transcript

I feel some difficulty in speaking of the subject before us here, not as to the doctrine itself but simply for the excellency of it; for where Christ is presented in His own perfectness all our thoughts are so inadequate. The excellency of the Lord so surpasses all our thoughts. He is sufficient to be the Father's delight: surely He ought to be ours. But it is of importance that our hearts should be occupied with Him, and this in His low estate. He is at the right hand of God now: we should look at Him in glory that we may be changed into the same image; but when we look to be the same mind as Christ, we must look at Him down here. Thus in Philippians 2, "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" - when was that? When He who being in the form of God in all the glory up there thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men; then when He was a man, found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. There are the two steps as it were as He is descending: first, when being in the form of God He came down to be a man; and then when He who so humbled Himself became obedient unto the death of the cross.

This is the way in which He came from the actual glory of God - came down: nothing stopped Him even then. But here He is before men. Putting away sin He was alone with God. It was all darkness: man had

done his worst, and Satan. It was what the twenty-second Psalm brings before us when He speaks of the bulls of Bashan (v. 11-18). "But be not thou far from me" - it was an appeal to God in what I may call human trials; He was cast into that - all this wickedness; His rejection in His perfectness cast Him upon God; and then to find He was forsaken of God! There we get the efficacy of the sacrifice in putting away sin. But it is the traits of Christ's character in the path I desire to speak of.

If we come to the cross, we must come by our wants and sins; no one comes truly, unless he comes as a sinner whose sins brought him there. But when we pass through the rent veil into the presence of God in perfect peace through the efficacy of the work He accomplished, and look back at the cross by which we came, in contemplating it in a divine way we find that the cross then has in it a glory and excellency all its own, of which everything in God's ways is the result - even the new heavens and the new earth. God was perfectly glorified in it. It was the climax of good and evil: all was met there. We must come to the cross as sinners to find the good of it; but if we have found peace by it, coming into God's presence reconciled, it is everything we shall see for ever. We never shall forget the Lamb that was slain. But still we can contemplate it in a divine way.

69 I get in the cross the perfectness of man's sin, positive enmity against God present in goodness. Nothing would do for man but to get rid of Him - "Him ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." "If I had not come and done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin," then they would have been justified in rejecting Him, "but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." There I get the extreme of man's wickedness: when God was presented in goodness, it only drew out his hatred. The power was present in Christ to meet all the effects of sin by His word: the manifestation of it drew out the enmity of man's heart against Him, and they crucified Him. There you get all that man is brought out in the presence of God. He had broken the law before; and now God had come in in perfect goodness and power (power that could remove all their distresses), but it was God's power; and they would not have it, they crucified Him. On the other hand we see there all the power of Satan: therefore it says, "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out": they were all led by him against Christ: "this is your hour and the power of darkness." He had overcome him in the temptation in the wilderness; it is said in Luke he departed from Him for a season. Now He says, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me": he who had power over the earth (for Satan was really the prince of this world) had come back and succeeded in moving up the hatred of man's heart against Him.

But now see the absolute perfectness of the second Man - "But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, so I do." I get in man (more than man) perfect love to the Father and perfect obedience, and when He had the dreadful cup to drink (mark the absolute need there was of it!) that perfect obedience and love to the Father made good in the very place where He stood as sin. On the other hand in the cross I find God's infinite love and grace abounding over sin: perfect love, giving His Son for us; and then at the same time perfect righteousness judging against sin, and God's majesty vindicated. "It became him for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." I see thus perfect evil in man and Satan, perfect good in man (but He was God), and perfect love in God, and righteousness in God against sin when it was met as such, all brought out in the cross; evil and good meeting there. And it is what has laid the immutable foundation in righteousness for all that will come in in goodness and blessing in the new heavens and new earth, resting not upon responsibility but upon the accomplishment of the work the value of which never can be known.

The more we think of the cross (we have come as sinners needing it, but as Christians, reconciled to God, we can sit down and contemplate it), we see it stands totally alone in the history of eternity. Divine glory, man's sin, Man's perfectness, Satan's evil, God's power and love and righteousness, all were brought out and met there. Accordingly it is the immutable foundation of man's blessing, and of everything that is good in heaven and earth. Then, when our souls are reconciled, we look at Him and learn of Him: "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest." He sees that the world had given Him up: there was no rest upon earth. He searched with wonderful patience for a place of rest, but there was no such thing to be found. He knew it, and had tried it; the Son of man had not where to lay (not merely outwardly) His head, but to rest His heart; no more than Noah's dove found rest for the sole of her feet. "I looked for some man to take compassion, but there was none." Yet feeling this, it is just there He says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest: take my yoke," etc., "and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

I desire then that, while we rest in the blessed efficacy of the sacrifice, our thoughts should be formed by the blessed One - that is the practical secret of going through this world; "He that eateth me shall live by me." No doubt the taste ought to grow continually in us. There are the two sides of Christian life; if it is to give courage, victory over the world, I look at His glory as in Philippians 3. There it is the energy that runs after to win Christ at the end, counting all else dross and dung. In the second chapter it is the other side, not the object, but His lowliness in coming down is set before us.

71 In Matthew He is specially the victim. All through in a wonderful way you get His entire submission, but along with that, what is most striking, the depths of His path of suffering, Thinking of the cup He says, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." In Luke we read of His sweating as it were great drops of blood; it is as a man there. But you find this extreme sense of what the terribleness of God's wrath was. In the measure in which He knew what it was to be holy, He felt what it was to be made sin before God. In the measure in which He knew the love of God, He felt what it was to be forsaken of God. His suffering was in that sense perfect, infinite, in that He was contemplating it with His Father. Looking at it with Him, He says, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." You find His soul going through this utter depth, so that He sweat as it were great drops of blood; but when He comes back to His disciples, there is not a trace of it. He speaks to them as graciously and tenderly, entering into their thoughts as if there was no cup at all to drink. "What! could ye not watch with me one hour?" It is wonderful to trace this, you will find it all through Christ's life, perfect sensibility to all that was around Him (except in the extreme case when He was forsaken of God), but always Himself - never governed by it though He felt it all perfectly. The instant He turns round to the disciples, He has nothing to do but manifest the greatest tenderness and kindness. You see it all through; even before Pontius Pilate He says nothing, He is as a lamb led to the slaughter; as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth; He was dumb unless kindness and good was to be done to another: then He is as if nothing was happening, perfect goodness, perfect sensibility to all. It is His perfect submission, His perfect sense of the dreadful thing He was just about to go through we see; yet, because He felt it entirely with His Father, He could turn round and be just as perfect as to it with His disciples.

72 Now they come to take Him. He looked for some to take pity, but there was none, and for comforters but found none. He is God over all, yet still and thoroughly a man. Yet, as another has said, He never asked them to pray for Him; but says, "Tarry ye here and watch with me." To me it is most precious to find thus, that He who was with God and was God made flesh, felt as a man in everything. When asking His disciples to watch with Him, He knew the world was against Him: He looked to those that He had been

most with, that they should be with Him. But He must have nothing. He was tested and tried to the last degree of human suffering and sorrow, standing alone in this, praying in an agony and alone. Where were the people that were going to prison and death with Him? They were asleep, deceived; asleep in the presence of the glory of the kingdom on the mount, asleep in the garden! That shews what poor things we are - not sin exactly; but it shews what Christ was to have as His portion in this world; none to sympathise with Him. Mary of Bethany was the only one, but for the rest never one had sympathy with Him; never one that wanted it that He had not sympathy with. Moved by Judas they say, "To what purpose is this waste?" What kind of hearts had they? It is just there God gives testimony to Him. In John (chap. 11) you have testimony borne to Him as Son of God in raising Lazarus. God would not allow Him to be rejected unless there was this testimony. Then Mary puts this ointment upon Him; and when all were against Him, the Greeks come up desiring to see Him; and the hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." There is that care in which God secures a testimony to Him; but I do not think you will ever find another instance of sympathy with the Lord's heart. How would you like that? It is dreadful! It was a dreadful world to Him. He was perfect and went through it. Here at the very moment that He asked them to watch with Him, they are asleep.

Then He goes all alone with His Father, going through it in spirit with Him. Now, that the answer to that cup might be fully drawn out, He cries, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not as I will but as thou wilt." It was not possible. "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." Now having been in this agony He comes back to His disciples and says to them in the gentlest way, "What! could ye not watch with me one hour?" What gentleness of grace - "watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation." Now He is thinking only of them. Where is the cup? He had gone through it all with the Father, and therefore His heart is ready in service; even at that very moment He is ready for any service. If we in our little measure carried all our exercises, our little troubles, to God, to go fully through all with Him, our hearts would be all free and happy to turn round and care for others.

73 The depth of His misery He went through perfectly in His spirit with God; it was fully out with God: and for that reason being thus fully out, He could turn with perfect peace to say to others, "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation." It is the only place you get His sense of where He was - His saying, "Watch and pray." Everything that meets us is either a temptation or an occasion of obedience. It was to Him an occasion of perfect obedience: "The cup which my Father hath given me shall I not drink it?" Everything you meet with is a case in which you serve Christ or do your own will, and this is entering into temptation. See how He speaks in grace to Peter: "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Oh I know you love Me; your hearts are all right, but it is this poor weakness. What perfect grace! Counting on their hearts in one sense when the temptation was coming; and when they had totally failed, He thought of the danger to them and says as to it, "Watch and pray . . . the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak"; when the instant before His sweat was as it were great drops of blood. What perfect submission! What lowliness of heart! And therefore what perfection of service, of love to God and to others! Just what we should do. "He went away again the second time and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy. And he left them and went away again, and prayed the third time saying the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples and saith unto them, Sleep on now and take your rest, behold the hour is at hand." You have no need to watch now; the time for it is over.

74 All through this is the character of Christ - He had gone through it with His Father. On the cross it is - as in all the rest - entire complete submission. He is a victim here, led as a lamb to the slaughter. Even with Judas - "he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss that same is he: hold him fast." It is terrible to think of Judas urging them to hold Him fast! In Judas you get lust of money; you see a progress of sin. He was a thief and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then Satan tempts him to betray Him, I do not doubt with the idea that He would get free. Then after supper Satan enters into him, and he was hardened against all natural feeling, for many a bad man would not betray his friend by a kiss. "And forthwith he came to Jesus and said, Hail, Master, and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they and laid hands on Jesus and took him."

Then we get simple submission on the part of Jesus, meek and lowly in heart. He might have had more than twelve legions of angels; "but how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?" Mark what is most striking here: at this last wonderful moment when He was going to drink that cup of wrath, when the Word, the blessed Son of God as a man, was going into that which none of us can fathom, that there is nothing like in heaven or earth - to endure that which was due to sin - the Scriptures, the word that God had spoken, must be fulfilled. What a testimony of their being the expression of divine thoughts - of His Father's mind, even to the Lord Himself! And so they ought to be to us. When Satan came, he gets a text - "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." When Satan comes again, "It is written." Now at this last moment the Scriptures must be fulfilled. Scripture to Him sufficed as the expression of God's mind. He was in perfect infinite communion with the Father. Look at the gentle patience with which He speaks to the multitudes - "I sat daily with you teaching in the temple and ye laid no hold on me."

In John we look at the divine side of it, "No man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come." The time was come, "All this was done that the scriptures might be fulfilled." What a scene of obedience, of perfect submission to God's mind! The moment it comes to this point, "all the disciples forsook him and fled." He was to have no comforter. When He is brought to the chief priest, He answers nothing until the high priest adjures Him. If a soul sin and hear the voice of swearing, etc., is a witness whether he hath seen or known of it, if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity. So He utters it then: "Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, From henceforth shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven." On His own testimony they condemn Him. He was the truth, and was put to death for being the truth. It was the same way before Pilate, who asks, "Art thou a king?" Jesus answers, "Thou hast said." We have seen the perfectness of Christ with His Father in all the depths of that which He had to suffer; also His way - the same blessed way - before men. "It was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it; neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me, then I would have hid myself from him." In every circumstance He went through all that was most absolutely painful to man's heart, and at the same time was there the expression of divine goodness.

75 I will now just look at the same scenes as they are presented in John and Luke. In John it is the other side of these truths; it is all through the divine side. When they come out to meet Him, He asks, "Whom seek ye?" and they went backward and fell to the ground. Looking at it as a Man, He had only to walk away. It is the divine side of power, while we see His absolute submission as man: "therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down and power to take it again." He says the second time, "Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he; if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way." He puts Himself freely forward, the divine Person giving Himself, and lets

the disciples escape. There is no attachment to Himself manifest on their part; but He fills the gap, and they are safe. It is the same on the cross: there is no cry of "my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" there; it is His divine perfectness above it all. "After this [having committed His mother to the disciple] Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst." Then He said, "It is finished, and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost." When all that the Spirit of God had said would come was fulfilled and finished, He gave up His own spirit to His Father - it is the divine side of it all you see in John.

76 In Matthew we get the victim; He is the lamb going to the slaughter. But I must say a word on Luke.

In Luke we get the perfect blessedness of the Lord and His sufferings in Gethsemane more fully than anywhere else, but on the cross not one expression of sorrow; He is fulfilling Scripture. Just as in John we have seen the divine side, here I find Him still more distinctly brought out as a Man. "Being in an agony," in deep affliction of soul, He is cast as man on His Father - "he prayed more earnestly." So great was His confidence, perfect in His agony. It is there we find "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground," and an angel from heaven strengthening Him. So also in Luke you get Christ praying much more often than in the other Gospels, because the object is to present Him to us as Son of man. On the cross you do not get one expression of sorrow - He had gone through it perfectly (I speak of the cup). "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" is not in Luke. The sorrow was there, it is true, but it is not that side. We get then the perfectness of Jesus who had gone through it all with His Father in the garden. And so entirely is He above it that at the close occur the words, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said this he expired." We have the blessed Lord thus presented in these various characters.

John gives a divine Person: "as soon as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward and fell to the ground"; He could have gone away, but it was not for that He had come: "If ye seek me, let these go their way." You see divine power and the divine perfectness of love, not exercising the power, but putting Himself forward to stand in the gap that they might escape. And on the cross He gives up His own spirit. In Luke I find His own sorrow and suffering as man in Gethsemane, more than in the other Gospels: and on the cross above all the circumstances He commends His spirit to the Father. In Matthew He is the sheep going to the slaughter.

The more we look to follow the blessed Lord in His path here, the more our hearts are bound in right affections to Him. He stood alone, ever as a man down here perfectly alone; and there is nothing more trying. "All ye shall be offended because of me this night." Again He says, "Behold the hour cometh, yea is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own and shall leave me alone, and yet I am not alone because the Father is with me" - nobody else! He looked for compassion, and got none; for some to watch with Him, and they fell asleep: to stand by Him, and they all forsook Him and fled. He is betrayed with a kiss. He felt it all: it was not an enemy, but thou, a man, my companion; "yea mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted which did eat of my bread has lifted up his heel against me." Follow Him all through: it puts down the pride of the heart; it sets us men very low, but it sets Him as man in a wonderful perfectness; not man in the glory, but a man going through everything that could test the heart in the purest possible way; a man tested in every possible way, bowing His head as a victim, feeling it so that His sweat was as it were great drops of blood, going through it all as man so that our hearts might follow Him - going through every depth, and we poor creatures only standing by to look at Him. It is well if we are not asleep too! That is where it draws out the affections. It sifts the will. The will and affections never go together; will is self, affections rest necessarily in another. He is the perfect object - "therefore doth my

Father love me because I lay down my life that I might take it again." To see Him in the meekness of His path giving Himself for us, never turning Himself aside, perfect in going through all, just as quiet with Him as if nothing had happened. He suffered it so with God. We want our hearts to get right; we want our wills to be broken down; if we go and look at Christ as thus presented to us in Gethsemane, can we seek to satisfy the will now?

77 Thus I get what is outside myself as an object that sets my affections perfectly right, and that does not leave a possibility of my will working. Looking at One that is beyond me, I find One that does not leave the possibility of the working of my will, but that draws out the energy of the affections of my heart and sets my will aside. He could say, "Therefore doth my Father love me ": so blessed was it, so perfect was He in it, that it gave a cause to God to love Him. Only divine perfectness could give a cause for divine love. The heart knowing that He is now in glory gets filled. "I am the bread that came down from heaven," that we might abide in Him. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." We are to be like Him in this character - He humbled Himself, He went always down till God took Him up. Are we content to follow Him? Looking at Him and seeing His perfectness, are we content to have all our affections filled with Christ, and no will at all? We are going to be with Him for ever; and we can enjoy what He is in heaven, in which His perfect blessedness is before our hearts and has been tested by us. How far have our hearts tasted of that bread, and how far are we kept, our wills subdued and occupied with Christ? It is what God the Father delights in. There is the efficacy of His work as the foundation; but how far is Christ Himself the object of our souls' delight, dwelling on Him so that they are kept awake? There is nothing that forms the heart, breaking down the will in us, like the delight that we have in Christ in fellowship with the Father.

78 The Lord give us while resting in His precious blood to go and contemplate Him, feed upon Him and live by Him: "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me." See Him the lowly blessed patient One at God's right hand now, the One that God has given to keep our hearts right in the world of folly and pride. The Lord give us to live by Him.

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