



In Isaiah 53 we see the beautiful prophetic picture of the Messiah who would redeem us with much suffering. From it we hear the foreshadowing of his passion; *"Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried...He was pierced through for our transgressions...by His scourging we are healed...He was oppressed and he was afflicted...as a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied."*

The drops of blood that Jesus sweat in the Garden of Gethsemane surely fulfills "the anguish of His soul" that Isaiah spoke of. We are told of this incident only in the gospel of Luke. That seems appropriate because Luke was a physician and he would have been very interested in medical details.

"And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground." (Luke 22:44) Jesus had gone to the garden with his disciples after the Last Supper. He knew that this was it! His mission was getting ready to be fulfilled. He would be betrayed and arrested in the garden. His disciples would run off and desert him. This was the countdown to his excruciating death on the cross.

Sweating drops of blood is not unknown in medicine but it is a rare occurrence. The clinical word for it is "hematohidrosis". It can happen when the blood vessels around the sweat glands constrict (due to extreme stress) and then dilate to the point of rupture as anxiety levels increase. The blood is released from the body through the sweat glands.

Moreover the condition of hematohidrosis causes the skin to be extremely tender and fragile, so that any pressure or damage to the skin would be more painful than normal.

The fact that Jesus sweat drops of blood is an indication to us of how severe his suffering was. It points to the fact that besides being fully God, he was fully man. He did not use his Godhood to evade or sidestep any of the pain he was about to undergo. He FELT it all in his physical body and knowing what was coming was extreme anguish in his mind and emotions.

The Garden of Gethsemane was the prelude to the arrest, trial, scourging and crucifixion. It was in the garden that Jesus fully decided to embrace the cross. It was not a done deal until he said; **"...yet not My will, but Thine be done."** (Luke 22:42) If not for the garden, the victory over sin could not have been secured because there would have been no cross.

Now think of another garden: the Garden of Eden. In that first garden, sin won out. It was in that first garden that Adam and Eve chose to disobey God and commit the original sin.

Did Jesus have that in mind when he chose the Garden of Gethsemane for prayer before the onset of his passion? He was reversing the curse that had been launched those thousands of years before by the first man and woman.

The sweating of drops of blood gives us a hint about what the decision in the garden cost. It reminds us of the cost of God's love. The Father was willing to give his Son and the Son was willing to pay the complete price for our redemption. The question for each of us is: are we willing to receive this great gift?