

Devotional



March 25, 2026

Scriptural Foundation

Matthew 27:45–46 – Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. [46] And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Isaiah 53:10 Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

Zechariah 13:7 - “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me, declares the LORD of hosts. “Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones.”

O Christ, What Burdens Bowed Thy Head



Christ our Substitute

Anthem Hymnal #213

The Hymn and Its Author

Author: Anne R. Cousins

Best-known hymn: “Emmanuel’s Land”

She titled this hymn: “Substitution” – Christ in the sinner’s place

Context: Jesus takes the burden of sin and the weight of divine justice on the cross

Theme: The judgment that should fall on us falls on Him instead

Result: No more curse, no more wrath, no threatening sword for those in Christ

How The Hymn Is Written - Structure

5 stanzas

Each stanza:

Lines 1–2: the danger/judgment image (burden, cup, rod, storm, sword)

Lines 3–4: Christ taking that danger

Lines 5–6: the benefit to the believer (“for me”)

5th stanza is unique

Structure continued

- Repetition of “for me”
 - Almost every stanza ends with “for me / for me / for me”
 - Drives home substitution: *He instead of me*
- Sound and rhyme
 - Regular rhyme shapes (head/stead/shed; me/me/me) make it memorable
 - Internal rhymes
- Effect
 - The hymn keeps circling the same truth from different angles
 - Each image (cup, rod, storm, sword) ends with the same assurance:
 - “Now there is no burden/curse/wrath/sword left for me.”

Symbols and Metaphors

- In Scripture, the cup, rod, and sword are symbols of God's judgment and discipline.
- They are concrete objects that stand for spiritual realities.
- When used figuratively, they become metaphors / word-pictures for what God is doing.
- The hymn references these three and shows Christ taking them in our place.

Stanza 1 (Modern Paraphrase)

O Christ, what burdens weighed
down *Your* head!

Our load was placed on *You*.

You stood in the place of sinners
And bore all that was against me.

You were led as a sacrifice; *Your*
blood was shed—

Now there is no burden left for me.

Substitution – Christ under the
weight that belonged to us

Outcome: “No burden left for me

Stanza 2 Modern Paraphrase - The Cup

Death and the curse were in our **cup**,
O Christ, it was given to *You* in full.
But *You* have drained the very last
drop—
Now it is empty for me.
That bitter **cup**—love drank it
completely;
Now the cup I receive is blessing.

The **cup** often represents what has been given
to someone to experience or endure.

Epecially: the cup of God's wrath or judgment
(Psalm 75:8; Isaiah 51; Jeremiah 25)

The hymn takes this biblical cup and puts it in
substitution language

Trade: My cup of wrath → His cup;
His cup of blessing → my cup

Stanza 3 Modern Paraphrase - The Rod

Jehovah lifted up His rod,
O Christ, it fell on *You*.
You were struck down by *Your* God;
Not one blow remains for me.
Your tears and *Your* blood flowed
under it;
Your wounds bring healing to me.

The rod is a symbol of discipline and
judgment

Picture: a just Judge lifting the rod to
strike the guilty

In love, that rod falls on Christ instead

Stanza 4 Modern Paraphrase - The Storm

The storm spoke with terrifying
power,
O Christ, it broke on *You*.
Your open heart was my protection;
It stood against the storm for me.
Your body was wounded, *Your* face
disfigured;
Now I have peace without clouds.

Storms in scripture are powerful, and
destructive, and cause fear

Image: the storm of God's wrath,
judgment and Christ's suffering

Christ's pierced heart standing
between me and the storm

Stanza 5 - Modern Paraphrase - The Sword

Jehovah commanded His sword to
awaken,

O Christ, it rose against *You*.

Your blood satisfied its burning edge;

Your heart became its resting place.

All of this was for my sake, to make
peace for me;

Now that sword rests and does not
threaten me.

The sword is a strong symbol of
divine justice and judgment

Zechariah 13:7: “Awake, O sword,
against My Shepherd”

Stanza 6 - Modern Paraphrase

For me, Lord Jesus, *You* have died,
and in *Your* death my old life has
died with *You*.

You have risen, and every chain that
held me is broken;
now *You* live in me.

Your Father's face, shining with
gracious favor,
now beams its light on me.

Jesus died in our place - penal
substitutionary atonement

Instead of a frown of judgment, we
now live under the smile of God's
grace; the Father looks on us with
favor because of Christ's finished
work.

Conclusion

The three dark hours: not random suffering, but planned substitution

God Himself calls the sword, raises the rod, and hands over the cup – to His own Son, for us

Response:

- Humble worship – Renewed appreciation for Christ and His sacrifice.
- Deep assurance – No cup/ rod/ sword left for me.
- Informed worship? A deeper appreciation for this hymn?