

July 15, 2001

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Suffering

Psalms 78:19 *Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?*

Let me say a few things this morning about suffering.

I am almost ashamed to even mention suffering among American Christians. Because what we go through cannot hold a candle to what Christians go through in many other nations, especially those in Moslem nations, and in nations controlled by the UN.

The 78th Psalm records God's goodness to His people though they were in the wilderness. In our text, we see that when they doubted God's goodness, they tempted God. They kindled God's wrath against themselves.

Suffering can be defined as physical or emotional pain or distress. Suffering includes putting up with unpleasant people or circumstances. Suffering includes having to endure afflictions of all kinds, including health problems.

Now, why does God allow suffering in our lives?

I had several reasons, but got stuck on this first one.

First, the number one reason for suffering that comes to my mind is found in **Hebrews 5:8**:

Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

The book of Hebrews explains to the Hebrews that the priesthood had passed from the line of Aaron to Christ. Because of man's sin, there needed to be a redeemer to deal with that sin problem. There needed to be a mediator; there needed to be a sacrifice. And there needed to be a high priest who could lay his hand on sinful man and on the Thrice Holy God in heaven.

Job pleaded for a daysman, someone to plead his cause or to reason with God. Job 9:33.

V. 8, does not imply that Christ was a disobedient son who **resisted** the law of God the Father. Rather, it tells us that through the things He suffered here on this earth as a man among men, He learned to be a faithful high priest. He suffered as a man as we suffer. Because Christ suffered as we suffer, He can identify with our every difficulty and need.

Hebrews 2:17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

What is **obedience**?

It is **subjection to the will** of another.

It is **recognizing the authority** of another.

It is **doing the pleasure** of another.

Christ is God. He was equal with God the Father in all points before He took on a body of flesh as a man. He sat on the throne of the universe from where He issued all commands, even the founding of the earth. From that throne, He enforced obedience to the Law of God.

V. 8, but now Christ took the place of a servant. Not as a servant of man, but He took the place of the servant of the heavenly Father. (Heb. 10:7, 9, Christ came to do the will of the Father.)

But more than coming to this earth as a man in order to be God's servant, He came to work out salvation for fallen man. In order to provide our salvation, Christ had to obey the will of God perfectly. And His obedience was voluntary and complete.

Christ learned the hard way how much obedience God's holiness demanded. He learned by experience how much the human body can resist obedience. Christ learned submission by yielding to the Father's will.

Christ learned by the things that He suffered.

First, He learned **meekness**:

Matthew 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

Second, He learned **self-denial**:

Romans 15:3 For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

Third, He learned **patience**:

Revelation 1:9 ¶ I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Fourth, He learned **faith**. Speaking in third person:

Hebrews 2:13 And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.

As Christ's sufferings grew, so did His obedience. It was through the **practical experience** of suffering that Christ learned about all of these things that are expected of us as Children of God, and joint heirs with Christ.

Though these things were part of His nature, He learned how they worked in human experience. He learned these things by experiencing them through suffering. He had to learn how meekness, self-denial, patience and faith worked in the human body. He learned these things through the things He suffered. He learned these things so He could be a faithful high priest.

So what do we see from v. 8?

Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

First, our Redeemer has left us an example that we should follow His steps. He has shown us how to act as God's creatures – we are to have complete and unquestioning subjection to God in everything that is required of us.

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Second, Christ taught us how far our obedience to God is to go – He was **obedient unto the death**.

Philippians 2:8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Third, obedience to God cost something. It cost Christ His life:

2 Timothy 3:12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Persecution can be defined as anything that seeks to get us to compromise our Christian walk. It could be physical or emotional.

Fourth, the sufferings we go through that are according to the will of God are highly instructive we can learn a lot from them. Christ Himself learned by the things which He suffered. How much more than what Christ had to learn do we have to learn by suffering?

Hebrews 12:10 *For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. 11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*

Fifth, God's love for us does not exempt His people from suffering. Though Christ was the Son, He was not spared great sorrows and trials. Christ told His disciples that they could expect no better than their Master received:

Luke 6:40 *The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.*

Finally,

Hebrews 5:9 *And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;*

Christ being made perfect does not imply any wrong doing on His part. Rather, it tells us that Christ became totally qualified for His office as the High Priest for His people through the things that He suffered. His suffering fully qualified Him to carry out what He was given to do in eternity past by mutual agreement among the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost.

And thus we see that the primary purpose of the suffering we go through is to teach us to obey God no matter in what condition we find ourselves.

In prosperity, we forget God; we become self-confident and rebellious. Then God lays His hand upon us; He breaks up our plans, crushes our hopes, throws us in emotional turmoil, removes our health. In doing these things, God teaches us that we must be submissive to His will. Some of the most valuable lessons of obedience we will learn are learned in the furnace of affliction.

Philippians 2:3 *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*

How do we learn lowliness? By suffering. How do we obtain that **meekness**? We must obtain that meekness the same way Christ obtained His meekness it is through the things we must endure here in this life.

Hebrews 5:8 *Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;*

Distress? Suffering?

I must admit, I do not enjoy the distresses and sufferings of this life, but I want to be like Christ in **meekness**, in **self-denial** and in **faith**. Christ learned these things through suffering. How can we expect to learn these things without sufferings and distresses?

What are we going through? What does the Lord have for us to learn?

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