

5. Divine suffering

January 11, 2015

In my opinion the best and the most qualified people to minister effectively to those who are suffering due to serious or terminal illness, financial or job loss, death of the loved one, or betrayal or failure of marriage, or struggle of addiction are the born-again believers who have been there, done that, and have overcome with the power of God, because they can really understand what the other people go through.

Their testimonies and wisdom are from the gut level and from their hearts, not up from the brain level with ten page thin borrowed knowledge. The people with book knowledge just cannot fathom what these people go through.

Like no other religions in the world, only the God of Christianity provides not only the comfort to those who are neck deep in sins and temptations that lead them to suffering and eternal death, but also provides the way of salvation to heaven, because this God has been there and done that, yet without a sin.

One can wonder, "How could God go through men's suffering? Didn't the Bible say that He is Spirit? How can He know what I suffer without a human body and human heart?" That person's question is valid. God the Father and God the Holy Spirit couldn't, but God the Son Jesus Christ could and did. That's Divine suffering for us.

This morning the Word of God is going to explain to us how the Messiah became one of us to underwrite our salvation without being subject to the power of death and give us the privilege of becoming the family of God.

A. PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERINGS

Hebrews 2:10-13 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. 11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, 12 saying: "I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You." 13 And again: "I will put My trust in Him." And again: "Here am I and the children whom God has given Me."

The Greek word for 'captain' is "archegos" and its definition is "one that takes the lead in any thing and thus affords an example." In my opinion, the better translation would be "leader." Like the leader of a team in the middle of a thick jungle using a machete hacking the tangled overgrown leaves and branches and leading them a way to the safe destiny, Jesus joined us right in the middle of our overgrown human sufferings of sins. He is our leader who shows us the way of salvation.

But there are words that seem oxymoron – "perfect through sufferings." It almost sounds heresy. How do you perfect God who is already perfect? We have to look at this in context. We are not talking about the deity of Christ, rather His humanity. His humanity became perfect through the same sufferings we encounter as we walk through life's jungle. He didn't do it from heaven, rather from earth where we all are.

Philippians 3:10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death

I love the way v11 says,

v11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren

He, Jesus who sanctifies us joined us who are in the process of being holy by the power of the Holy Spirit as one. And He identifies us as His brothers and sisters. Get this, ladies and gentlemen. It is not remarkable that we are not ashamed to associate with Jesus. But it is remarkable that He is not ashamed to call us brethren. That's beyond cool.

To show us further proofs, the author of this Book quotes three verses from the OT – Psalm 22:22, Isaiah 8:17, and Isaiah 8:18. In each of these examples the Messiah is willing to associate Himself with His brethren, whether it is in a congregation of worship, a community of trust in the Father, or in the declaration of a common family association.

B. DESTROYING THE POWER OF DEATH

Hebrews 2:14-16 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. 16 For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham.

There are people who insist that Jesus was not an actual human being, but a spirit in the shape of a man. Obviously they didn't count the death of Jesus into their calculation.

Listen, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ explain to us His humanity and deity completely. No spirit being can die. That's why none of angels could be our atoning sacrifice for us. That shows us that Jesus was a human. But at the same time no human can raise oneself from dead. Do you know anyone who pulled it off? Many have claimed it, but their remains are still in the boxes. Only God can resurrect from the dead. Jesus claimed that He would and He did. That proves to us that He is very God.

John 10:17-18 Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. 18 No one takes 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. This command I have received from My Father."

Let me make the death of Jesus clear here. The Roman soldiers or the Jewish religious rulers didn't kill Jesus. Actually, they couldn't kill Him even they wanted to do so. The Lord Jesus allowed them to carry out what their carnal murderous hearts that were enticed by the devil.

It has been said, "Death and taxes are inevitable." But at least death doesn't get worse every time Congress meets, right? You and I are going to die. There is no escaping it. But as born-again Christians, we no longer have the sting of death, because our Lord Jesus had overcome the power of death. Through His victory over death, we who have faith in Him, too, are not bound by fear of death.

1 Corinthians 15:55-57 "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The power of death holds its control in the fear of death in the hearts of mankind. No human, without Christ in one's heart, can honestly say that he or she is not afraid of death or dying. And the power of death was in the hands of the devil ever since our ancestors, Adam and Eve committed the sins of pride and disobedience.

But the Lord came to rescue for His disobedient creatures. When the author of this Book said, "*through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil*" in v14, he didn't mean that the devil has no longer power over us. I wish that it is the case, but he is very much alive and still going unfortunately.

The Greek word for 'destroy' in that verse is "katargeo" which means "to render idle, unemployed, inactivate, inoperative." Yes, satan is not destroyed yet, but he is disarmed from holding the power of death over the born-again Christians due to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The devil still is using the fear of death over them instead of the power of death. But for the unbelievers, they are under the power of the devil and death.

C. THE HIGH PRIEST WHO UNDERSTANDS

Hebrews 2:17-18 Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

Unlike being pure spirits of angels, Jesus knew what it was to be a helpless baby who had to be nurtured; a growing child who had to be told what to do around the house; and a maturing adolescent who was preparing Himself to start the earthly ministry as well as following orders of His earthly parents. He knew the experiences of weariness, hunger, and thirst. He knew what it was to be despised, rejected, jeered at, to be lied about, and falsely accused. He understood our feelings and loneliness.

The more you think about it, the more staggering it gets: that God became a man, that God became even a baby. When you stop and think about it, no other way would have accomplished His goal. He could have appeared as a full grown man with a stunning look and charisma and said, "Here I am. I have arrived."

But if He did it that way, He would appear unapproachable. He would not have seemed human. It would be hard for us to believe He was a man like us. God picked the right way. It's even the logical way. Jesus had to truly be a man, to live and suffer and be tempted as a man among people on earth. This way, we could know that He understands our trials and temptations we face.

So the next time you are tired, hungry, thirsty, angry, offended, rejected, or lonely, remember that you have a God who knows what it's like to stand in your shoes. He is the only One who can truly say that He knows our sorrows and understands our grief. No one else can say that with such accuracy. But Our God, Jesus can.

Before we rush to the applications for the end of the sermon, we must understand the temptations Jesus faced on earth. Jesus also left us an example to follow as we face temptation. Some might say, "When had Jesus ever faced temptations like us?"

Luke 4:1-2 Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, 2 being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry.

It's important to note that Jesus did not meet satan with His supernatural power. He could have said, "I don't want to fool around with you right now. I have other things to do." And He could have ignored the devil and have disappeared. Or He could have called on the angels to intervene. Or He simply could have even overruled satan because of His clear authority over him. Instead, He met the devil with the written Word. He countered every temptation with Scripture. Do you know why He used the Word of God instead of His divine power? By doing so, He was making an example for us to follow.

So when you are tempted, you, too, need to have Scripture stored in your mind and heart to deflect the blows of the devil. When you have memorized Scripture, when you have gotten it ingrained in your memory banks, it is there to use through times of temptation.

In last 27 years of walk with Christ, I've met several Christian brothers who were under the addiction of alcohol, drugs, or pornography. They all are great people and brothers in the Lord. But they have these weaknesses that were revealed to the devil who constantly bombarded them with temptations.

Some became victorious in their fights because they relied on God's strength, but some repeatedly gave into their addictions. When I asked them why they gave in, they said, "You don't understand. The addictive desire is too strong for me to handle." I have an Italian word for that, "Bologna!" They CHOOSE to drink, snort, or look at more porno pictures, because they want to. Jesus understood their temptations. And He made Himself available to help them, but they choose NOT to rely on Him, and they went back to their addictions.

I even gave them my cell phone number to call me day or night so that I could pray with them. Most of all I asked them to call out the name of Jesus when they faced their temptations and told them to walk away and change the surrounding as resistance. What did they do? They ignored all of my advice, didn't call out Jesus' name, and gave in to temptations. Then, they wondered why they couldn't get out of the addictions they have.

How many times did Jesus go to the temple during His earthly life? Each year when He attended one of those feasts where His earthly family took their animals, He keenly was aware of His own sacrifice was coming up. Until Jesus offered Himself up to God the Father on the cross as our atoning sacrifice, all the sacrifices at the tabernacles and temple were only covered their sins until next sacrifices, because they were merely animals' lives and blood, not the sinners' own lives and blood. But with Jesus' propitiation, no longer sacrifice needs to be made. No wonder, Jesus' last word was, "It is finished."

D. APPLICATIONS

- 1) We don't need to have the fear of death or dying because our Savior has overcome it.
- 2) Jesus is not ashamed to call us His brothers and sisters. Are you ashamed to call Him "Lord" in front of others?
- 3) There is not a temptation that Jesus didn't face as a human. As believers, we can overcome temptations with His power, the Word of God.