

The Sufferings of Christ

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon explores the sufferings of Christ, His resurrection, and the blessed effects of His work on His brethren.

Topics: "Faith And Trust", "Christ Our Guardian"

Description

In this sermon on being entrusted, the preacher delves into the concept of 'paratheke,' which refers to a deposit or trust committed to another for faithful keeping. Paul uses this term to exhort Timothy to guard the deposit of truth and avoid worldly distractions. The imagery of entrusting something precious to another for safekeeping is likened to our relationship with Christ, where we deposit our lives into His care, trusting Him completely. The sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting Christ with our lives, knowing that He is able to guard what we have committed to Him until the day of judgment.

Transcript

THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST

PSALM 22 : 22

THE whole of this Psalm evidently contains the words and experience of the Lord Jesus Christ. It begins with one of His most momentous sentences, as if a direct quotation from prophecy: "My God, my God, why art thou forsaken me?" and gives the very words of the infidel Jews, when the Saviour was expiring on the tree, in the eighth verse : " He trusted in the Lord, that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him."

The whole Psalm is an accurate scene of our Lord's sufferings. In the verse preceding the text, His agony of soul is described : " Save me from the lion's mouth! " the intenseness of which agony is thus described in Hebrews 5 : 7 : " Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears " ; and of which we have witnessed the facts in the garden of Gethsemane, where His soul was sore amazed , " and He prayed, if it were possible, to have this cup pass from Him. And in the concluding part of verse 21 ("Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns "), we have Him brought to the crisis of extreme suffering, on the very horns of the altar, as describing the sacrifice bound and laid on. We have His delivery thence, " Thou hast heard me," as in Psalm 40 : " I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry: he brought me up also from out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and ordered my goings." The very next verse describes Him

thus : " I will declare thy name unto my brethren : in the midst of the congregation [or church] will I praise thee."

Here we read our Lord's testimony after He had been heard, after He had come out of the horrible pit, after the agony, and suffering, and woe, and death had been past; in short, at His resurrection. It is just at that time this verse describes Him : and in it we see, first, the office He has taken in declaring God's name to His brethren; and, secondly, we see Him as He stands in the midst of His church, as its Head.

And who is it that thus testifies, " I will declare " ? Who it is we cannot mistake, from the entire tenor and express words of the Psalm. It is the Lord Jesus Christ. And what does He declare ? Thy name " : " I will declare thy name unto my brethren the name of Him to whom He appeals as His God. And that, brethren, is the only way we know anything of God; when the Lord Jesus Christ Himself reveals Him and declares Him. It is God's appointed way of communicating anything of Himself ; and without a knowledge of God through Christ we never can know peace. In declaring God's name, Christ declares His own: He testifies what He has done for man, and the consequences of it. Immediately after the work is finished, He communicates it to His brethren : " Save me from the lion's mouth; for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns." And immediately after His delivery, He exclaims, " I will declare thy name unto my brethren."

The Psalm, throughout, gives us the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, and also His strength, and comfort, and trust in God in the midst of them, which prophecies meet their fulfilment so accurately and fully in His life : " I knew that thou hearest me always " ; " I am not alone, for the Father is with me." But there was one hour, one period of darkness, and of agony, when Satan was let loose to buffet Him, but not yet able to turn Him aside-to take Him off from His high trust in God, when He was brought so low as to say, " The waters have come in even unto my soul " : " My soul is troubled, and what shall I say ? Father, save me from this hour : but for this cause came I unto this hour." The very height of His trouble was the hiding of God's countenance.

There were three things which the Lord Jesus had to encounter, and to triumph over, and which were ever before Him-death, guilt, and the power of Satan. The union of these against Him was the " power of darkness," which He acknowledges to the multitudes who came to apprehend Him - This is your hour, and the power of darkness." Now these were the three great enemies which were against us. We had sinned, and God had declared, " The wages of sin is death." We were guilty; and condemnation could not be put away but by the removal of the occasion of it; and Satan was manifestly against us, as an adversary to our final freedom. Now the Lord Jesus Christ had just to meet all these, and if they were overcome in Him, as the federal Head and representative of His people, then there was liberty-glorious and everlasting liberty.

We find then that Christ had really these three to contend with. He came to be the sin-bearer ; and, bearing sin, He must necessarily subject Himself to its wages, which was death. Thus bearing sin, guilt was necessarily imputed to Him, and He must suffer its condemnation until God was satisfied. And finally He must, as the Head of His people, overcome him under whom Adam, and all mankind in him, had failed. *This Christ did; these He met, took, sustained, remained stedfast under, and overcame; conquered them all, obtained the victory-with wounds and bloodshed indeed; but having triumphed, He rose with the full blessedness of the enjoyment of God's countenance, death having passed , and guilt removed, and Satan overcome by Him, in the name and for the eternal blessedness of His people.

This was fully manifested at His resurrection, which was a seal of His perfect accomplishment and acceptance; when He rose (a living witness to the full satisfaction for sin having been asked and obtained, and God's faithfulness being manifested), "Thou hast heard me," said Christ, "from the horns of the unicorns." And then, without any delay, He immediately adds, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren": as if the enjoyment He possessed was incomplete until the knowledge of it was communicated to them whom He had made part of Himself.

Christ Himself bore witness, and still bears witness by the Spirit, to the souls of believers, that redemption work is completed, and by this they are participators in all His blessedness. He comes to them with the blessed information of death being triumphed over, guilt being put away for ever, and Satan overcome. That is the comfort, the joy, the peace He brings to the soul, which the knowledge of these facts leads to. "I will declare thy name unto my brethren"; as if He had said, I will come and make known to your souls, my brethren, the victory I have obtained over all your enemies, and the consequences resulting from it, as standing perfectly justified. And in this full position of acquittal all His people stand, when Christ was declared "to be the Son of God, with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." And having ascended, think you that He has less power now? No. Having risen over sin, death, the grave, and Satan, He gives the Spirit now as a witness to the soul, to prove the subjugation of all its enemies - death triumphed over, guilt removed, and Satan overcome.

And thus He brings believers to the adoption of children, to the endearing character of family relationship, not as servants, but sons. He shews them that He has redeemed them that were under the curse of a violated law, that they might receive the adoption of sons; and then He brings them into the communion of the Father's love-"Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

This is what He does-that is what He declares in the hearts of believers by the indwelling of the Spirit; and this union between Himself and His people-this blessed relationship subsisting between them and the Father, He blessedly proclaimed, immediately after His resurrection, when He declared, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God."

He was just about to ascend to His Father, to ascend to that glory which He had with His Father; but what does He do previously?-there standing as the representative of His people, He identifies Himself thus with them: "My Father, and your Father; my God, and your God! O brethren, the consciousness of this is great blessedness to a soul having gone through the conviction that it is lost, ruined; finding it just and right for God to cast it off because of its transgressions. O the happiness, when Christ comes by the Spirit, in the power of His resurrection, and demonstrates this to the poor soul, who knows it has sinned, and has been justly cast out of the presence of God, because, like Adam, it practically refused and rejected God. Then can the believer understand the full peace Christ brings, when He testifies what He has done for the soul, and the position into which He has already brought His people: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

If the Lord were pleased personally to appear, and to say to your souls: I am come to tell you what I have done for you; I have conquered all your enemies, and brought you into so wondrous a state of privilege, that you are the sons of God - joint-heirs with Me in My Father's house-all sin is done away for ever, and there is no more condemnation you-what a witness would this be to your soul! But, brethren this witness you have had, when Christ rose after the battle had been fought-rose triumphant, and just on the eve of His ascension to glory, testifies to His people, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father." Christ gives-the

believer faith just to see Him standing in that position, and to believe as though he saw Him with his bodily eyes, recognising Christ as his representative entering into heavenly places for him and now in that glory which shall be his. Thus is the believer's peace firmly established, as the Saviour says, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you."

And was this peace to cease when He went from the earth? No; He expressly says, "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come unto you." This He will do manifestly-but now by the Spirit of holiness, who comes to the soul in a new power; declaring the same truth which Jesus had before revealed; still bringing home this testimony to the soul, "My Father, and your Father." And He just brings in the same blessed truth-"Ye are sons." It is not less true-it is not less real-not less certain because Christ is actually gone to the Father. No, that proves its reality, for He is thence declared to be the Son of God with power, by His resurrection; and this He declares to His brethren, and in a way the most engagingly convincing.

He says it, when these things had been done; after death had been triumphed over, sin blotted out, guilt removed for ever, and Satan foiled! And now, He comes with this message, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." There is no more sacrifice for sin-He Himself having suffered all the penalty due for all the sins of His people, gone through the punishment of it-God's wrath, and received the wages for it-death: so He is entitled well to credence, as He brings the truth to us in a way of suffering and in a way of love unparalleled.

Now there are two ways in which sin would hinder our peace with God: either in not seeing the sufficiency of Christ's blood to wipe it out of the book of God's remembrance, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; or not having a consciousness that the guilt of it is removed from ourselves; which feeling of guilt the devil endeavours to tie on our conscience and thus to keep us from peace. But when the Comforter, the Spirit of holiness, enters into our hearts, "to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God" in the face of Jesus Christ, then we see that Christ having ascended, having entered into heaven, His work for sinners has been accomplished, and as the representative of all believers He is now before the throne appearing there in the presence of God for us: and as He is without spot, having fulfilled all righteousness, so in Him we are spotless and righteous.

Here we see the Perfectness of His love; having removed their sin and guilt, He makes Himself one with them-He calls them His own brethren: "I will declare thy name unto my brethren." "He is not ashamed of them brethren."

Oh, this is a blessed identity into which the child of God is brought! Have you any consciousness of this in your souls? If you have, you are blessed. How wondrous is that manifestation of His anxiety and willingness to make known immediately to His brethren His deliverance, and the consequences of it to them! His first declaration, on being rescued from the horns of the altar, is to make His brethren partakers of its blessed effects; He declares it to those He loves; as though He would say, It is all done now, and I must go and tell them. It is done that they may participate in My blessedness, being about to enter into the presence of God with great joy for them, and as their representative. Thus, being delivered Himself, He delivers from sin, guilt, death, and Satan, all those who are part of Himself-who "are members of his body of his flesh, and of his bones" - by declaring His finished work, making known the Father's love, and bringing them to the sweet consciousness that God is their Father.

Jesus has declared Himself to be the Apostle and High Priest of their profession ever living to make intercession. Having entered within the veil, He is there pleading the efficacy of that blood which He has

shed; and He sends down this testimony of love by the Holy Spirit, who, being a witness to His work, stamps the truth of it in the soul, where He takes up His dwelling, and thus unites the believer in sweet association and fellowship with Christ, in all He has done, and suffered, and in the high station to which He is now exalted: and they are Christ's brethren, who are brought to see Him thus their Head and representative - to know Him and the power of His resurrection, as rising for them without sin unto salvation. This the world knows nothing about. Christ's fellowship was not with the world, but with His own, whom He had chosen out of the world: " I pray for them: I pray not for the world." He is a Christian to whom Christ has declared the Father's name, as reconciled to Him by the peace-speaking blood ; that He has carried into effect His glorious purpose of redemption-this He declares in the midst of the Church, of those whom He has gathered out of the world, and translated into the kingdom of heaven. There He stands in the midst of them, as their glorious and triumphant Head-they are His. " They Are not of the world," He said Himself, " even as I am not of the world." They are no longer in connection with the world ; they have done with it, as a rule of life or conduct ; its fashions, pursuits, customs, and desires, no longer guide them ; instead of being led by them, they are led by the Spirit, and choose those things which the Spirit delights in.

As Christ offers up the prayers of His church, so He is said to be the Head of their praises. The believer sees Christ brought into the " dust of death " ; but he also hears Him, after His conquest, in the midst of His church, declaring the Father's perfect satisfaction and pleasure. Christ's joy in the church's salvation, and in the inward witness of the Spirit of love to the work of Christ, we have the blessed certainty of the Father's love. All is thus finished. Now, did the Lord begin to praise before the work was finished ? No ; it is upon His resurrection He shews forth praises ; then He begins the " new song," which His redeemed are taught to sing: " And they sing a new song, saying, Thou art worthy; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." It is a new song, because a redeemed song, and they have done with sin, that is, as to any condemnation ; they may, indeed, before they join the church triumphant, while they are here below, be tempted still, harassed, and oppressed ; but greater is He that is for them than he that is against them.

Here we see what the Lord's work is, and the blessed effects of it. Nothing could so completely satisfy a soul of this, as the declaration of our Lord, after He had effected redemption : " I ascend to my Father, and your Father ; to my God, and your God," leading the way to the Father, and then bringing them by that way that He went Himself ; bringing them as His associates-His brethren-as His own, engaged with them in the same work of praising God. Now, that is what the world cannot do. The world never praises God ; it knows not how; it knows Him not, and never can know Him by its own wisdom: "The world by wisdom knew not God" ; but Christ's brethren know Him, and praise Him, when He comes and declares God's name to them; and it is the very declaration of the Father that calls forth their praises : they cannot but praise when they hear Christ saying, " I have declared unto them thy name and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." Now, dear friends, have you received this declaration of the Father's love by Christ ? If you have, are you now praising Him ? Have you entered into the vastness of that guilt to which you have individually contributed, which could call for such wonder-working effects as the descent of the Son of God into this world of woe ? And have you seen it put away ? Have you measured sin-your sin-by the sufferings and death of Jesus ? And have you set your sea] to the truth of God's word, as seen in Christ , that " the wages of sin is death " ? What was all the work about ? Is it true, or was it all a mere story or tale ? What was all this suffering for ?

Christ has declared His Father's name unto you. If you know why it was, you know that you are living in a world guilty of the sin of rejecting Christ, and that He thus permitted Himself to be rejected, that in Him you might be accepted; that He might pay the ransom price for your souls, and set you free. This He tells you, and declares that what He does, He does surely. Do you want security for it ? You have the word of God, and the oath of God for it, " that by two immutable things, wherein it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us." Has God made such a declaration to you ? O, wondrous intelligence! Then is He of inestimable value to your souls. As sinners you were lost; but, as sinners, He has declared that there is hope-that there is joy-that there is salvation, and that He brings it to you. He does not wait for you to come for it, for then you would never receive it, but He brings it to you-He makes known the Father's love-that it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom that God the Father is pleased, satisfied, glorified; and He brings you to the same acknowledgment of satisfaction in Jesus, who lived for you, who died for you, who rose for you, and " who ever liveth to make intercession for you." O, what a claim has He on you to live

for Him! Can it be possible that you still love the world? that you are still fond of the world which hated Christ, and drove Him out of it ? The world is the enemy of God. Will you then be its friend ? Oh, may the Lord draw off your affections, that are now drawn out and placed on the things of the world, and fix them on Himself, on Him who changeth not, but is " the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever! "

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