

Devotional Refreshment

With Spurgeon and the Puritans

“At their best, Christians have saturated themselves in the Bible. They say with Job, ‘I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread’ (Job 23:12).” – D.A. Carson

I. The Prince of Preachers: Charles H. Spurgeon’s (1834-1892) *Morning and Evening*

March 29 – Evening Reading

“Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.” (Heb 5:8)

WE are told that the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering; therefore we who are sinful, and who are far from being perfect, must not wonder if we are called to pass through suffering too. Shall the head be crowned with thorns, and shall the other members of the body be rocked upon the dainty lap of ease? Must Christ pass through seas of His own blood to win the crown, and are we to walk to heaven dryshod in silver slippers? No, our Master’s experience teaches us that suffering is necessary, and the true-born child of God must not, would not, escape it if he might. But there is one very comforting thought in the fact of Christ’s “being made perfect through suffering”—it is, that He can have complete sympathy with us. “He is not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities.” In this sympathy of Christ we find a sustaining power. One of the early martyrs said, “I can bear it all, for Jesus suffered, and He suffers in me now; He sympathizes with me, and this makes me strong.” Believer, lay hold of this thought in all times of agony. Let the thought of Jesus strengthen you as you follow in His steps. Find a sweet support in His sympathy; and remember that to suffer is an honorable thing—to suffer for Christ is glory. The Apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to do this. Just so far as the Lord shall give us grace to suffer *for* Christ, to suffer *with* Christ, just so far does He honor us. The jewels of a Christian are his afflictions. The regalia of the kings whom God hath anointed are their troubles, their sorrows, and their griefs. Let us not, therefore, shun being honored. Let us not turn aside from being exalted. Griefs exalt us, and troubles lift us up. “If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.”

1. What is the apparent problem with the claim that Christ “learned obedience”? How do you and I “learn obedience”?

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.⁹ And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him... (Heb 5:7-9)

2. What moment during the earthly ministry of Christ (“In the days of his flesh...”) is in view in Heb 5:7? Why?
3. How does the following verse (v. 9) explain how Jesus was prepared for this moment? Is this true in your life as you have met trials?

Q. Wherein did Christ's humiliation consist? A. Christ's humiliation consisted in his being born, and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross; in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time. -Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q. 27

“...his whole life was nothing but a sort of perpetual cross.” - Calvin, Institutes, 3.8.1

“The heart and mind and will of our Lord had been moulded—shall we not say forged?—in the furnace of temptation and suffering. And it was in virtue of what he had learned in that experience of temptation and suffering that he was able...to be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. It was only as having learned obedience in the path of inerrant and sinless discharge of the Father’s will that his heart and mind and will were framed to the point of being able freely and voluntarily to yield up his life in death upon the accursed tree.” – John Murray, Redemption Accomplished and Applied, 30.

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, (Col 1:24)

For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, (Phi 1:29)

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. (1 Pet 4:12-13)

"...in the very harshness of tribulations we must recognize the kindness and generosity of our Father toward us, since he does not even then cease to promote our salvation. For he afflicts us not to ruin or destroy us but, rather, to free us from the condemnation of the world." - Calvin, 3.8.6

"Must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease, while others fought to win the prize and sailed through bloody seas?" Isaac Watts

5. How can we ensure than our afflictions will lead us nearer to God rather than farther from Him?
- (1) **Consider the Afflictions of Christ** - is there one affliction that I must endure that He has not already endured? Is He not the Breaker to go before His flock both in opening all our paths (Micah 2:13) and in being tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15)? All paths, all points. Jesus not only knows your affliction, He has identified himself with it.
 - (2) **Consider the Power of Christ** - And through the merit of these sufferings, He now receives royal power in heaven from His Father to rule and strengthen you in your sufferings (Matt. 28:18).
 - (3) **Consider the Presence of Christ** - In all your dark afflictions, your High Priest retains you in His high-priestly eye, preserves you in His high-priestly heart, bears you on His high-priestly shoulders, removes you not from the engravings on His high-priestly hands, and never ceases to remember you in His high-priestly intercessions.
 - (4) **Consider the Patience and Perseverance of Christ** - Despite your fears of perishing at the hands of "Sauls" through sixteen long years of persecutions as David did, you will not perish. Jesus has done too much, persevered too long (He is still persevering in intercession!) to let you slip through His fingers. "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28).
 - (5) **Consider the Prayers of Christ** - You, too, ought to make more use of prayer, especially in combating spiritual depression under afflictions. Bring all your needs steadily to your praying High Priest. Be assured He hears your every whisper.
 - (6) **Consider the Goal of Christ** - His God-centered goals are numerous for you, too, in sanctified affliction: Sanctified affliction humbles you (Deut. 8:2), teaches you what sin is (Zeph. 1:12), and causes you to seek God (Hos. 5:15). Affliction vacuums away the fuel that feeds your pride. Bell-like, the harder you are hit, the better you sound.
 - (7) **Consider the End of Christ** - Eternal glory is not only for Himself, but also for you. He returned to His Father differently than He came. He returned with His blood-bought bride. His church, figuratively speaking, ascended into glory with Him, accepted by the Father in the Beloved (Eph. 1:6). Oh, then think

more of your eternal end if you would be more submissive under affliction and learn to praise God in trial!
(From Joel Beeke's *Consider Christ in Affliction: An Open Letter to True Believers*)