

"The Sufferings of Christ"

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CHRIST is identified with His people. They abide in Him, and He dwells in them. That which is done to them, is done to Him. To one class of people it will be said in the day of God, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me," and to the other class, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do *it* to one of the least of these, you did not do *it* to Me" (Matt. 25:40, 45). The joys of His people are His joys, and their sorrows are His sorrows. He is touched with all the feeling of their infirmities.

Christ suffered in the flesh. He was a "man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He bore the sins of the world; He was "in all points tempted as we are" (Heb. 4:15). He died for our sins, was raised from the dead, and ascended to the right hand of God; but His identity with humanity did not cease. He is still made manifest in the flesh; He still feels its infirmities; for He is "touched" with our infirmities, and not only with the knowledge of them, but with the "feeling."

The sufferings of Christ did not end when He ascended in glory to His Father; neither did they begin when He assumed man's form and nature as the babe of Bethlehem. In Moses' day there was "the reproach of Christ," which he esteemed "greater riches than the treasures in Egypt" (Heb. 11:26). This reproach was that which he chose in preference to being called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; and we are told that it was "to suffer affliction with the people of God." Christ identified Himself with His people in their Egyptian slavery. He has been identified with them in all the ages past, and will be in all time to come. So the Apostle Paul, in speaking of his sufferings, says, "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church" (Col. 1:24). There was a measure of the sufferings of Christ left in Paul's day, and a part of that measure was filled out by his own life. And the life of every Christian since his time has fulfilled the same office. There has been, and is still, some part remaining of the afflictions of Christ, to be filled up by the experience of his followers.

But let us bear in mind that the sufferings are Christ's, that He feels them, and that being His, He is able in us to bear them, and we need not tremble for the result. To be saved we must be identified with Him, and to be identified with Him we must be partakers of His sufferings. This is how the martyrs have been able to endure with fortitude the terrible ordeals in which they have yielded up their lives. Their sufferings were the sufferings of Christ, a part of that which was "left behind" after

He rose from the dead, and He bore them in their bodies. "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows" (Isa 53:4). The afflictions may be called ours, but it is He that bears them. He lives in us, and our only life is His life. (Gal. 2:20). Therefore it is He that feels the sorrows and the pain. We are the members of His body. (1 Cor. 12:27). He is the Head, and as such feels all that affects the body. The seat of consciousness is the head, and Christ is as keenly conscious of all that afflicts His church as the head is of pain or sickness in the members of the body.

But with the sufferings of Christ, there is also joy and glory. We are graven on the palms of His hands (Isa. 49:16), but with the marks of the nails of His cross there are also beams of light. In all our tribulation we are comforted by the God of all comfort. "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ" (2 Cor. 1:5). In being partakers of Christ's sufferings we are identified as children of God. (Heb. 12:7, 8). "If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed *are you*, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you" (1 Pet. 4:14). There is glory with His sufferings in us, and as our sufferings are His, so also His glory is ours; and when that glory shall be revealed, we shall also be glad "with exceeding joy" (1 Pet. 4:13).