

The Suffering Son of Man Hebrews 2

by John Nelson Darby

Christ's suffering is necessary for redemption and to destroy Satan's power, and it gives us propitiation and substitution.

Scripture: Psalm 8:4, Hebrews 2:9, Hebrews 10:12

Topics: "The Suffering of Christ", "Christ as High Priest"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the dual nature of Christ as both divine and human, highlighting His suffering and humiliation as essential for our salvation. He explains that Christ's role as the Apostle and High Priest is rooted in His experience of suffering, which enables Him to empathize with our weaknesses. The sermon underscores the significance of Christ's completed work on the cross, which purged our sins and perfected our conscience, allowing us to approach God with boldness. Darby also discusses the four reasons for Christ's suffering: to glorify God, to destroy death, to make reconciliation for sins, and to provide succor to the tempted. Ultimately, he calls believers to recognize the full efficacy of Christ's work and to live in dependence on His grace.

Transcript

After the first four verses, which belong to chapter 1, we get a statement of the position of our Lord: all things are not yet put under Him, but He is crowned with glory and honour. In chapter 1 the apostle had spoken fully of the divinity of the Lord: in chapter 2 after the first four verses, we have His humiliation, and then the thought of God with respect to us in His becoming man. In chapter 2 we get what fits Him to be the Apostle and High Priest of our profession; then in the close of chapter 4 he takes up His priesthood.

It is a wonderful thing that "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us," and that He is gone up, as Man, to sit on the right hand of the Majesty on high. He is sitting there as having finished and accomplished the work which He came to do: "when he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." He is still there in His service as Priest.

"For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified saying, What is man that thou art mindful of him? or the Son of man that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hand." In Psalm 8 we get the purpose of God as to man: in Psalm 2 we get the dealings of God with Israel, and the rejection of Christ. "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," Psalm 2:7. Christ has this double character: He is King in Zion, and as born in this world, He is the

Son of God according to Psalm 2. Accordingly in John 1 Nathanael so owns Him Son of God; thou art the King of Israel," John 1:49. The Lord says to him, "Henceforth ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man," John 1:51. He takes that other title, that larger wider character that was purposed of God as declared in Psalm 8. It is not there that He is the Son of God and King in Zion, but that He is the Son of man. So in Daniel 7:13, 14: "One like the Son of man came to the Ancient of Days And there was given him dominion and glory and a kingdom; that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." He is the heir of all God's purposes as to man: all that He had created as God He was to possess as man, but (sin and evil having come in) He comes and takes the redemption title. Psalm 8 is quoted in Ephesians 1:22, and also in 1 Corinthians 15:27, where resurrection is spoken of, and here in Hebrews very definitely and distinctly. We are joint-heirs with Christ: the thoughts and purposes of God are all in man. "For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come." "My delights were with the sons of men," Prov. 8:31. Therefore when the blessed Lord becomes a man and the angels celebrate His birth, they say, "On earth peace, good pleasure in men," Luke 2:14. Then when He is rejected by His people as Son of God and King of Israel, He takes this wider title as Son of man, having charged His disciples strictly not to speak of Him as the Christ. As the Son of man He takes the wider title, but then He must suffer to accomplish redemption.

380 1 Corinthians 15 puts in a still stronger way His dominion over all things. "But when he saith, All things are put under him it is manifest that he is excepted which did put all things under him." Then what is said in our chapter is that that is not yet accomplished: He is sitting on His Father's throne, not on His own at all. "But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honour": we see part of the Psalm fulfilled, that part in which He is personally crowned with glory and honour, but all things are not put under Him. It is this that makes our new place. Therefore we find in this whole epistle that it looks at us entirely as walking on the earth; it is not union with Christ in heaven here, the church being only once mentioned in a general way. If I take the mystery then I get union with Christ, one spirit with Him; but this is not where the saint is seen here, but as a pilgrim and stranger in the world.

"This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." It is not like Aaron standing there, "offering oftentimes the same sacrifices which can never take away sins"; the apostle contrasts that distinctly in Hebrews 10. Christ is glorified in heaven, but the things are not under Him yet. There is far more of contrast than of comparison in Hebrews. Take Aaron's priesthood, and you find a constant repetition of these sacrifices in contrast to Christ's own sacrifice: you get many priests, whereas Christ has an unchangeable priesthood. The veil shewed "that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest"; now "we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus"; and, instead of a high priest not going in lest he should die, we find Christ seated at the right hand of God. Christ did not sit down till that work was completely finished; the Holy Ghost insists upon it in connection with the perfect purging of our conscience. You have in Hebrews the testimony of the Holy Ghost, but not His operation in us, nor do you get the Father; because it is a question of our standing with God as such. The question is, Does the sacrifice of Christ make the comers thereunto perfect? This part of the Epistle says it does: it is a conclusion drawn in chapter 10, having been largely reasoned out in chapter 9.

381 Now "the worshippers once purged" have "no more conscience of sins." Christ purged our sins by His work, and the divine testimony by the Holy Ghost purges the conscience. If the "one sacrifice" did not make perfect those coming to God by it, they could not be made perfect at all. "Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others, for then must

he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." If He did not suffer for sins, He could not put them away. He must drink the cup at the dreadful moment. It was not a mere form of suffering that Christ went through, but suffering such as we cannot fathom. If the work was not done in that one offering, it never could be done, "for then must he often have suffered," and He is now in glory. As regards our approach to God the conscience is purged and perfected for ever; the worshippers once purged" have "no more conscience of sins." These priests were always standing ("standeth" is the emphatic word in verse 11), "offering oftentimes the same sacrifice which can never take away sins; but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God" (He did not sit till He had finished His work), "from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool." He has finished the work for His friends - believers, I mean; they have no more conscience of sins, "for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." It is not a question of the work done in us; He appears in the presence of God for us, He is in glory, sitting there because His work is finished, giving the testimony that we are clean and our conscience is purged, besides that He has obtained this glory. "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

382 "For ever" is a very strong word in this passage, it expresses a thing that is continuous and uninterrupted. As He sits there continuously, so we are perfected continuously. We are always there before God according to the value of the work of the Lord Jesus. In Hebrews 10 you get not only the goodwill of God ("Then said he, Lo I come to do thy will, O God"), but the work done divinely, and the testimony of the Holy Ghost that it is done. I have got God's will and thought towards me; then by the offering of Jesus Christ I have got the work done, and I have got His testimony, "Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us . . . and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

Whenever I know really by faith the value of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, I cannot go to God with the thought that He imputes anything to me: I may be in the dust before Him if I have sinned, but I know He cannot impute it to me. The thing is done once for all; as those priests were standing because it was not done, so Christ is sitting because it is done. "Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," Col. 1:12. Do not suppose that it is a light thing, having our conscience thus perfect before God; if we fail, we cannot be exercised about it too deeply; but let us be exercised ever so deeply, the question when I come before God is, not what I have done, but what Christ has done. If I go on the ground of what I have done, I can look for nothing but judgment. "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified."

The value of what I have done is that I am perfectly lost; but what is the value of what Christ has done? If I go to God really, I find Christ in the presence of God for me, the perfect witness in God's sight that sin cannot be imputed to me. I cannot walk with God otherwise. Can I, if I am a criminal, talk of walking with a judge? Suppose a child has been disobedient and naughty, he cannot feel free and happy when he sees his father. You cannot have blessed and holy affection without a conscience that is perfect. You must get a clear conscience to have a free heart. In order to lead me to walk in fellowship with God, He makes my conscience perfect because Christ bore my sins, and He is now sitting at the right hand of God. He, "when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." He did not sit down till He had finished the work, till He had blotted out our sins, all our sins. If that work has not been completed and finished, so that He has no more to do, it cannot be done at all. It is the contrast of Christ's work with the Jewish way of going on that we get here. Therefore do we thank the Father, "which hath made us meet," etc.

383 There is where I see Christ. I see Him sitting at the right hand of God as our Priest, and by His work, finished before He sat down, my conscience is perfected for ever. We are now between this work of the Lord and His coming again. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many: and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

The question for us all is, not whether we own Christ, but whether we own Him as our Saviour, or own Him as Judge and then have to answer for all our sins. Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, all things are not yet under Him; but the work has been perfectly accomplished which gives us boldness to enter into the holiest. There is no veil now. The veil has been rent.

If I look back, I see that the first paradise - the garden of Eden - is over; this world is not paradise, I am sure. Well, what is the state of things? We see in the world sinfulness, corruption, misery, wars: Christ is hid in God, but there is another paradise, and Christ is there, though we are not there yet. Meanwhile, "being justified by faith we have peace with God" - not joy merely, but peace. A very great word is "peace." There is not a single thing between God and us except Christ as the testimony that the work is done.

It is interesting to see the four things in this chapter (Heb. 2) which made it necessary that Christ should suffer.

The angels - witnesses of God's glorious power in creation - are in a certain sense passed over, but there is no jealousy in these blessed creatures, and when the Lord becomes man, they say, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men." The first thing that caused the blessed Son of God to become man was the glory of God. Nothing but the cross maintains the glory of God. The more we look at it, the more we see that the cross stands alone in the history of eternity. "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." If the blessed Lord undertakes the work, He must go through it really. If we sinners are to be received to glory, Christ must suffer. It is only through the cross, morally speaking, that perfect righteousness and holiness and perfect love are reconciled. If God had cut off Adam and Eve when they sinned, where would have been His love? If sin had been passed over, there would be no righteousness in that; but the moment I get the cross, I get the fullest and most terrible testimony of God's righteousness against sin. The more you look at it, the more you see how all good and evil were brought to a complete climax there. You get sin and wickedness at their height at the cross. It draws out the complete absolute enmity of man against God. Then I get another thing, the full power of Satan. I see in the cross of Christ man's perfectness as well as man's absolute sinfulness; I see His perfect obedience to the Father and His perfect love where He was made sin for us; and I see God's perfect righteousness against sin. All that man was in wickedness; all Satan's power; all that God is in righteousness and love was brought out at the cross. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" The whole thing has been settled, and Christ is sitting down at the right hand of God because it is settled.

384 I get another thing too in this chapter - Satan's power destroyed; "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil." His power is destroyed, though its effects are not yet gone. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you," James 4:7. We may listen to his wiles, but his power is destroyed. Satan put forth his whole power against Christ, and he was allowed to succeed apparently, but his power was broken in resurrection. "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive," Psalm 68:18. The results are not produced yet, but the work is done that will produce them.

385 Then I get a third thing. Christ came "to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." You get the double character of Christ's work in Scripture. The blood presented to God gives us the propitiation side, while the scape-goat gives us the substitution side. The blood is the perpetual witness before God. The scape-goat has borne away all my sins, not some of them, not my sins up to August 10th, 1874, but all my sins. I cannot think of sinning to-morrow, and I can feel only the sins that are on my conscience (conscience deals with past sins); but when I look at the work of Christ He did not bear my sins merely up to a given day, but "once for all." The scape-goat has carried them to a land not inhabited. I get this double character of the work: the blood under God's eye, the perpetual testimony there; then, if through grace I do come, I find that Christ has been substituted for me, and so the whole thing is settled. I get God's glory requiring this sacrifice; I get Satan's power destroyed; I get the precious blood before God, and Christ bearing my sins in His own body on the tree. It gives me boldness.

There is a fourth thing in this chapter. Christ suffered that He should know how to succour them that are tempted. "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." The believer is looked at as a poor weak creature always in Hebrews. The priesthood of Christ in Hebrews is not about our sins (it could not be, because we "have no more conscience of sins"), but about our weakness. When faith has got hold of the fact, in the power of the Holy Ghost, that Christ has borne my sins, and I come to God by Him, I come in virtue of the work that has purged my conscience. What I do get in Hebrews is, that Christ can enter into all my temptations. I find temptations every moment, the world is a snare; if I want to live godly, I need His sympathy. Christ found none in this world. He, the most accessible and gracious of men, sympathised with everybody, but there was no one to sympathise with Him. He can understand the nature of all these trials and temptations of mine. He knows them a thousand times better than I can, because He has suffered a thousand times more.

There were then these four reasons for Christ becoming a man: -

- (1) For the glory of God.
- (2) To destroy death which was the power of Satan.
- (3) As regards sins, "to make reconciliation [atonement] for the sins of the people."
- (4) To be "able to succour those that are tempted."

386 As to our walk through this world with all its trials and difficulties, He can enter into all, feel it all, sympathise with it all. Christ having accomplished the work, He could take His people straight to heaven (therefore the thief could go at once to Paradise); but in an ordinary way He leaves them to pass through the world where they need His help in their weakness.

When it comes to sins, I get (in the Epistle of John) "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Righteousness is not touched: the value of the propitiation cannot be shaken. In virtue of this propitiation instead of imputing sin, the advocacy of Christ is brought out for me. It is not a question of imputing sins, because Christ has already borne them, and God must despise that blood before He can impute sin to me.

You find in John's Epistles that he does not speak of access to God but of communion with the Father. Communion with the Father and the Son is totally destroyed for the time by an idle thought. Perhaps I may have been in a state of carelessness, and the effect of Christ's advocacy is to make me conscious of this.

Whatever the flesh produces in my nature God can have no fellowship with. But grace is at work: it is not a question of imputation because Jesus Christ the righteous is there, the Advocate is there to restore my soul. The effect of my failing is that He intercedes for me, and the Spirit of God brings home the word to my conscience, "How can you who are sanctified to God act thus?" I may get outward chastening too, if needed. "He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous," and there in Job He is speaking of chastening. There is not an instant that the high and holy God is not thinking of me a poor worm - not an instant.

"He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet," John 13:10. The Lord is speaking of water there, not of blood. You are picking up dirt in your walk: I cannot stay with you down here, but I am not going to give you up." Where was He going? To God. Through the Spirit and the word they really were washed, and He washes the feet. Everything inconsistent that has come into my ways or heart, He cleanses the heart from it. This is not the subject here in Hebrews, but the ground and character of our approach to God.

387 If I fail through carelessness or want of prayer, I get grace working to restore my soul, as in 1 John 2:1. Never be content if your communion is interrupted; whenever you get into the presence of God, if the light of His countenance is hindered in any way, do not you be content.

There is no perfection for the Christian till he is like Christ and with Christ in glory. "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly"; there is no other perfection for the Christian. We are "predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son"; it is looking at this that leads us on in practical holiness. When I know I shall be perfectly conformed to Christ in glory, then "he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." If anything hinders my being positively in the light of God's countenance, let me judge it; as we go on with the Lord, we shall learn to see better what hinders us. There is growth in this surely, but there is no growth in the value of His blood, no growth in the value of His work. If we fail, grace is there to restore the soul to communion; and coming to God we find it out.

"For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one" - one set, as it were, in glory (the expression is a very abstract one) - "for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." This is not forgiveness merely. What a thought it is! It is God's revelation to act on our affections. What unutterable grace it is! How thoroughly we see these are divine thoughts!

The moment, beloved friends, God is shewing "the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus," we cannot wonder at anything. When the angels themselves see the thief on the cross, the woman that was a sinner, one of us, in the same glory with Christ, and like Him, they will know the exceeding riches of His grace. The moment I see the blessed Son of God come down here, and die on the cross, what can be too much to expect? The most wonderful thing of all is the cross: after this no glory is too great. That which we have to desire is hearts that own the unspeakable fulness of the work of Christ, and in everything down here to glorify Him. We need the abiding sense of dependence so as to look for that strength which is made perfect in weakness, the care of Christ, the grace and mercy of God in passing through this world.

388 The Lord give you, beloved friends, to see the full efficacy of His finished work, and then to keep in the sense of entire dependence, seeking continual grace from Him. It is death to mere nature of course, but "it is joy unspeakable and full of glory."

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