

COMMITMENT

By

Curtis Dickinson

THE EXAMPLE

“Christ...suffered for you, leaving you an example.” (1 Pet. 2:21)

Suffering is so widespread and common to the whole race of man that we are apt to say to someone in distress. “Everyone has his share of suffering.” Then he answers. “But no one has suffered as I have.”

This is true. Every suffering is unique. Even if the same thing happened to me, it would not be felt exactly the same. Therefore the suffering would not be the same. It is true that everyone must suffer. And it is also true that no one has suffered as I have, or as you have. The deepest suffering is always unknown to the world. You can say that you have a headache, or that you are lonely, or that you have lost a treasured possession. But none of this really explains how deeply you suffer. For this reason a wise person doesn't attempt to impress others with his deepest suffering. He knows that they cannot feel it, and to continue describing it in more terrible tones only bores them. They have their suffering, too. No, the wise person will not enter the contest of comparing sufferings to prove that his is greater, for the greater it is the less likely is anyone to understand it. If it is a simple pain, he might mention it, but if it is a deep sorrow, a terrible burden that he must suffer daily, he will only smile and speak of the trivial aches and pains, for no one has suffered as he has.

That is, no one but Jesus. Our Lord suffered the limit of suffering. Indeed no one ever suffered as He. And what did He do with His suffering? “When he suffered threatened not, but committed himself to him that judges righteously...” This is our example: that in suffering we commit ourselves to God who judges righteously. He does understand; He knows exactly how we suffer.

This does not mean that He will make suffering cease, He allowed His own Son to suffer all the way, even to death. But this was the Son's purpose, to do the Father's will: so He committed his suffering to God and it became a part of God's means of obtaining His purpose.

So do not say “no one has suffered as I have.” There is One, and He has set an example. Commit yourself – suffering included – to God. It is His purpose you are going to gain.

PRAYER: Father, I thank you for the suffering and death of Jesus on my behalf. Help me to follow in His steps that I may be pleasing in your sight. In His name I pray. Amen.

THE PURPOSE

“Ye shall be holy, for I am Holy.” (1 Peter 1: 16)

Conditioned to sin as we are it is almost impossible to imagine what is meant by holiness. We are apt to think of God as being indulgent and lenient because He forgives sin. But even if God forgives sin, it is no less hateful in His eyes. He loathes all evil. If there is any sin, he hates it, always did hate it, and always will until the day when all sin, sinners, and the devil himself are destroyed.

God never compromises with sin and sin cannot be camouflaged before His eyes. He sees through all our attempts to cover it up. He makes no excuse for sin, for there is none. There is only one way to deal with it: put it to death! This is what happened on the cross – our sins in Christ, and Christ put to death! Otherwise we would be without any hope at all.

To come to Christ for salvation is to come to Him for holiness. The question is: do we want Him to make us holy? It is one thing to be clean of sin in the eyes of God to have the penalty for sin exacted through Jesus: it is quite another thing for us to be changed into actual holy people – as holy as God is!

Yet that is exactly what it's all about. He expressly stated that He wants a people who are holy and without blemish. So after the sin is forgiven by the just penalty being paid by Jesus, the real work begins. Then we learn that we have to be made over: we have to be changed. This is far different from the usual notion people have of finding happiness in faith. We want faith so as to move mountains; to change circumstances; to get everything fixed up to our own specifications. But, instead God sets out to change us. He isn't going to save the circumstances. He isn't trying to make the world holy – it is doomed to destruction anyway – but He wants you and me to be holy.

Are you concerned with changing circumstances or changing self? Pray not to be excused but to be exercised: not for less work, but for more strength. “You shall be holy.” It is a solemn promise to everyone who takes seriously the purpose of God: to have life in His image. For He is holy.

PRAYER: Father, I confess that I am unfit to come into your presence, save by the mediator, Christ Jesus. In His name, I pray for your cleansing power, that I might be transformed to your likeness. Amen.

ACCEPTANCE

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us that we should be called children of God; and such we are.” (1 John 3:1)

The prodigal son, under conviction of sin, confessed: “I am no longer worthy to be called your son” (Luke 15:19). Nobody argued with him. No one said, as do false teachers today, “There is no sin. Your guilt feelings are products of a Victorian idea of morality which is no longer valid. Adjust to modern society; be broadminded and uninhibited; it is

all right to exploit your desires as long as you have a feeling of love..." He knew that he was unworthy and so did the Father.

The Father's acceptance of him was not because of his worthiness, but because of the Father's grace. It is so with each of us. We are unworthy because of sin. God owes us nothing. Were we to receive what we deserve it would be swift condemnation and death in the Day of Judgment, hence we would have nothing but fear and doom for which to live. But the Father has loved us, and called us His children in spite of our sin.

More than that, He is the One who removes the guilt and punishment for sin by the death of His own Son, who took our sin and punishment at the cross. The rebel sinner who comes to God must confess that he is unworthy. It is just this honesty, this humble contrite facing of the reality of what we are that brings us to the Father's doorway.

Then we see the Father's love, such love that He doesn't give us the punishment we deserve, but instead bestows on us such a blessing that we are henceforth "children of God." "And if children then heirs: heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17).

Can you see it? Can you fathom such love? Can you realize WHO you are? A child of God, an heir of God" a joint-heir with Christ! Are the plans of your life in harmony with the One who is your joint-heir?

It is the challenge of your heavenly heritage. Live no more as the offspring of the world and tied to its doom, but as the child of God, destined for His eternal glory!

PRAYER: Merciful Father, thank you for making me you son, though I am totally unworthy. Teach me and discipline me as a son that I may grow to be obedient and faithful, and fit to dwell in your house forever. In the name of Jesus I pray.

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