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WHY DID CHRIST DIE?

BY: C. D. COLE

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God," I Peter 3:18.

This is a suffering universe. Suffering is a most patent fact in all climes and among all classes. There is no class exempt from suffering. The rich suffer as well as the poor; the high as well as the low. Men suffer in body, in mind, and in soul. If all the breaking hearts could be collected and displayed, who would want to look upon such a scene? Saints and sinners suffer much alike. All this suffering is a mighty monument to the ravages sin has wrought.

But our text speaks of the suffering of one who was Just. And the question before us is: Why did He suffer? Why did Christ die?

Negatively:

1. Not because He was overcome by His enemies. Men have been overcoming and killing each other since the day Cain killed Abel. And to all appearances, Christ was hounded to death by His enemies. Every place He went, He was criticized, slandered, and abused. From His first to His last sermon, men were bent upon His destruction. But He did not die as a helpless victim of circumstances. *"Jesus answered, Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin,"* John 19:11. *"Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?"* Matthew 26:53.

2. He did not die to get God to love

us. Christ did not purchase the love of God for sinners. It was love that sent Christ to die for us. *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,"* John 3:16. Christ was the channel through which the love of God reached us. His death was the way God showed His love to us. Love always does something for those who are its objects. The love of God gave Christ over into the hands of Justice with all our sins upon Him, and Justice put Him to death. Love brought Christ to the judgment seat of Justice and cried, *"Awake, O Sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered,"* Zechariah 13:7.

The love of God is a sovereign love--not a love based upon relationship--not a love of obligation. Try to give a reason for God's love to sinners.

Positively:

1. The death of Christ was voluntary. The unjust are the only ones who are punished against their wills. Justice will not punish the innocent against their wills. The death of Christ was the voluntary doing of the will of God. His obedience unto death was not forced obedience, but voluntary and loving obedience. Christ was glad to die for sinners. It was love for both the Father and for us that caused Him to die. Speaking of His death, He said: *"This commandment have I received from my Father. I delight to do thy will, O God."*

2. The death of Christ was sacrificial and substitutionary. He died, the

Just for the unjust. A sacrifice is something done in the interest of others. A sacrifice is taking something from self and giving to others. A sacrifice hurts the one who makes it and helps the ones who receive it. The death of Christ hurt Him and helps us. It led Him to cry, *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* Matthew 27:46.

3. The death of Christ was purposeful. There was a design in His death. He did not die haphazardly, that is, without any definite aim as to results. Men do many things in a haphazard manner. They either do not have any definite aim or cannot insure the results of what they do. But Jesus Christ had a definite object in His death, and He is able to insure the results. Our text gives us the purpose of His death. It was to bring us to God.

Men by nature are away from God--not a physical distance between us and God. Our distance from God is a moral distance--a guilty distance. His Justice frowns upon us, and so to be brought near to God is to have the favor of His Justice. And there is nothing that can bring us into favor of Justice except the death of Christ. *"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ,"* Ephesians 2:13.

4. The death of Christ was powerful--the greatest of all miracles. The power to die is the greatest of all power.

a. Powerful in its nature. I could not trust Christ if He was helpless in His death. If He was a victim in death, then He cannot help me in death. Death was an accomplishment with Him.

b. Powerful in its effects. His blood was not wasted. He did not die in

vain. He will not be disappointed in the results of His death. On Calvary, He saw the travail of His soul and was satisfied. He died to bring men to God and many sons will be brought to glory. The captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering. Not perfect in His essential character, but perfect officially--perfect as the Saviour. He was sinless and perfect apart from His death, but He could not be a perfect Saviour without dying. *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit,"* John 12:24. God says of Him, *"My righteous servant shall justify many for He shall bear their iniquities."* If Christ on Calvary bore my iniquities, then my justification was certain. He would not bear my sins and then fail to justify me. *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified,"* Romans 8:28-30.

HOW TO KILL YOUR CHURCH!

Here are several good ways all can take part of:

1. *Don't come. If you do, come late.*
2. *When you come, come with a grouch.*
3. *At every service ask yourself, "What do I get out of this?"*
4. *Never accept an office. It is better to stay outside and criticize.*
5. *Be independent. Visit other churches about half the time.*
6. *Sit pretty far back and never sing. Let others do that.*
7. *Let the pastor do all the work, he needs to earn his money anyway.*
8. *Never pay in advance. Especially for religion. Wait until you get your money's worth.*
9. *Never encourage the preacher. Many have been ruined by flattery. You don't want his blood on your hands.*
10. *It is good to tell your pastor's faults to any stranger that may happen in. They might be a long time finding them out.*
11. *Tell outsiders the church troubles, too. They want to know. Besides, they will agree with you too.*
12. *If there happens to be a few zealous workers in the church, make a protest. You don't want the church run by a clique.*
13. *Stand on your rights even if everyone else agrees. After all, you are a member in good standing too.*

This will kill your church!

--Copied

THE MAN OF SORROWS

BY: C. D. COLE

"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not," Isaiah 53:3.

"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger. From above hath he sent fire into my bones, and it prevaieth against them: he hath spread a net for my feet, he hath turned me back: he hath made me desolate and faint all the day," Lamentations 1:12 and 13.

This is a sick and sinful world. Humanity is head-dizzy, body-weary, soul-hungry and heart-faint. The world is sin-soaked, blood-bathed, and hell-bent. Man has traded the government of God for the bondage of sin. In seeking freedom from God, he has bound himself with the cords of sin.

This old world is full of sorrow and suffering. Sorrow is real in spite of the philosophy that pain is only an imagination of mortal mind. The mother with her dead baby in her lap is in real sorrow. The wife waiting for her drunken husband to come home in a rage is in real sorrow. Parents whose children have gone to the dogs, and whose path is in the way of the godless, are in real sorrow.

But the sorrows of Him who is the man of sorrows are in a class to themselves. The sorrows of Him who needed to have no sorrows were the most amazing of all sorrows. Of what did the sorrows of the Son of Man consist? What were the ingredients in the cup of sorrow that belonged to Him? We find Jesus Christ speaking of His cup--the cup which the Father had given Him to drink. What was in that cup?

Christ's sorrows consisted of:

1. The sorrow of homesickness. Anybody who has ever been homesick knows it is a bad sickness. When as a boy I left home to go five miles to school,

the first few nights away from home were almost unbearable. But think of the long distance the Son of God came to undertake our redemption. He came from the heights of glory to the depths of earth. He came from the praise of angels to the persecutions of men. He left the air of purity for the stench of earth. He left the place where everybody loved God for the earth where everybody hated God. *"I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil,"* John 17:14 and 15. *"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you,"* John 15:18.

2. The sorrow of poverty. There is sorrow in poverty. Poverty is not an ideal to be sought after. There is no virtue in being poor unless it is for righteousness' sake. Heaven is going to be a place of plenty. But our Saviour who was rich became poor for our sakes that we through His poverty might become rich. His poverty was voluntary and self-assumed. He who made angel's wings was weary and footsore as He sat on Jacob's well to save a fallen woman. He was so poor that He had not where to lay His head. He was poorer than any creature He had made. And remember that Jesus Christ had all the attributes of man apart from sin. He could get hungry, and the pangs of hunger were as real to Him as to any of us. He could get tired. He could get sleepy. He could weep.

3. The sorrow of human hatred and misunderstanding. He came to the world He had made and the world knew Him not. The world could not recognize goodness. He was the light shining in a dark place, and the world could not comprehend it. He came unto His own and His own people, His kinsmen after the flesh, would not receive Him. His relatives were ashamed of Him. They thought He was crazy, but they were the crazy ones.

Nobody was so badly misunderstood as the Lord Jesus Christ. The people could not understand His teachings. When He said, *"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,"* they misunderstood and misquoted Him. They thought and said He claimed that He would destroy the buildings of the temple and raise them in three days. But He spake of the temple of His body. When He said, *"Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you,"* they said, *"How can this man give us His flesh to eat?"*

And even His own disciples could not understand Him. When He said to them that He must go and awake Lazarus out of sleep, they said, *"Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well."* He had to say to them, *"Lazarus is dead."*

Some of us know how painful it is to be misunderstood. Wives wish their husbands could understand them. And husbands wish their wives could understand them. And parents wish their children could understand them. And preachers wish their people could understand them. Much of the friction in human relationships is the result of misunderstanding.

4. The sorrow of the cross. Who can estimate it? In the cross He exchanged the Father's love for the Father's hatred. He was being made sin and God hates sin. He exchanged the Father's blessing for the Father's curse. In redeeming us from the curse of the law He had to be a curse for us. At the cross He exchanged the place of nearness with the Father for the place of separation from the Father. At the cross He could not even say "Father," for at the cross God was not showing the love of a Father but the justice of a Judge against sin.

What is your response to the sorrows of Christ? *"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrows like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his*

fierce anger, "Lamentations 1:12. We fear many people are hoping in the general mercy of God apart from Christ. They reason that a merciful God will not send anybody to Hell. This was once the best hope the author had, but he came to see that it was a vain hope. A minister once visited a sick man and sought to interest him in Christ. But the man was indifferent, telling the minister that he had no fear, that he was depending on a merciful God and did not believe such a God would send him to Hell. The preacher left with a sad heart. But a few days later the same sick man sent for the minister who, when he came, found the sick man greatly disturbed. Said the sick man: "I have been depending on the mercy of God, but it has just occurred to me that God is just, as well as merciful, and if He should deal with me in justice instead of showing mercy, I would certainly be damned for my sins. Oh, tell me how I can be sure He will deal with me in mercy? Then the minister presented Christ crucified as the one and only way of salvation.

Is it nothing to you, my sinner friend--nothing to you that the Son of God suffered as He did to save sinners like you from an endless Hell?

Is it nothing to you, my believing friend--does it not move you to please Him? Does not such love constrain you to faithful service? Does it not move you to keep His commandments? *"And be not conformed to this world."* World here means the inhabitants of the world morally considered. The world is bad; it lies in the lap of the Wicked One (I John 5:19). The devil is its god. He has dominion over it. The world is self-centered and Satan-controlled. The believer is not to agree with it, or be like it. He must not fall in with the world in its thinking and doing. He must think and do according to the Word of God. What the believer hopes for is laid up for him in heaven (Colossians 1:5). Our inheritance is reserved for us in heaven. *"To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,"* I Peter 1:4. Christ did not die to guarantee an easy time down here, but to assure us of a glorious time throughout eternity.