

## REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 22 MAY 2011 EVENING SERVICE

**Sing before:** Psalm 130:2

*Let us commence this meeting with God by declaring openly to one another and to God:*

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Beloved grace and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, through the mighty working of God the Holy Spirit.

**Amen**

Psalm of praise: Psalm 145:1+12

**Prayer:**

- **Doxology**
- **Worship**
- **Confession of sins**
- **Forgiveness**
- **Gratitude**
- **Prayer for the need of the congregation for the church, the authorities and the sinful world and appeal to God's promises.**
- **General prayer**
- **Enlightenment from the Holy Spirit for the sake of the ministry of the Word.**

**Amen**

Hymn 5-2:4

**Scripture reading:** Luke 24:13-35.

**Scripture text:** Luke 24:26 and Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 15.

### **Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?**

Many people want to know Jesus only as the God of glory.

- They do wish to know of his agony and all the humiliation He suffered as man.
- It is clear that these people do not know what causes their resistance to the Messiah and all the agony He had to suffer on the cross.

One could say that the main error of these people is that they refuse to accept God's counsel concerning the coming of the Christ in the way that God made it happen.

- There was and still is a strong resistance to the suffering of Christ.
- They do not accept a Redeemer who had to suffer and be despised by people.
- This caused many people to reject Jesus – which increased His suffering and agony.

Tonight we consider the following aspects of Jesus' agony:

- 1. What was the extent of Jesus' suffering ?**
- 2. What was the purpose of the suffering of Jesus Christ?**

### 3. The Divine justice in the suffering of Christ.

#### 1. What was the extent of Jesus' suffering?

The passage we have read deals with the occurrences after Jesus' death.

- The people on the road to Emmaus were debating the issue of Jesus' suffering.
- They had sincerely hoped that Jesus would save them – but he had not.
- That day was already the third day after his death.

That is what they were discussing.

- Their long-awaited King, on whom all hope was fixed, was dead.
- He was crucified.

The Lord Jesus' physical agony was already foretold in Psalm 22:14-16:

**"I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet."**

When we look at our articles of faith we see that a wide description is given of Christ's suffering.

- It encompassed his entire human nature – body and soul.
- We therefore confess that He bore, in body and in soul, the wrath of God.

The agony of someone who hangs on a cross speaks clearly from these words of the Psalm.

- Even the Roman soldiers around the cross are described in the word *dogs that have surrounded me* – the word *dog* is commonly used in the New Testament with reference to heathens.
- Apart from what is described here, consider the physical suffering He experienced that day:
  - He was drained by the pain.
  - He had been scourged and there were nails in his hands and feet.
  - He had been beaten in the face.
  - He was suspended in the burning sun.
  - He suffered a tremendous thirst.

Who would be able to suffer so much continuous pain and not give up his faith?

#### ***Added to that was the suffering of the soul which He had to endure.***

- Not only the agony of being rejected by the believers.
- Also the scorn of all the people standing around the cross.

He hanged there absolutely humiliated. He was despised and ridiculed:

- At first only by His persecutors,
- But subsequently in His dying moments also by one of the others crucified with Him.

*It is as if Satan employed the death on the cross to show people that Jesus was not God as He was dying before their very eyes.*

*It is as if he employed the scorn of the people and the cross to erase all signs of Jesus as Mediator and as Redeemer.*

This hate was therefore part of Jesus' suffering in the soul.

The life of the Lord Jesus ends before the eyes of the people completely different from that which had been prophesied of Him.

- Instead of standing before them as King of eternity, He dies as the caricature of a king wearing a crown of thorns.
- And Peter disowns Him-
  - Peter, the one who previously professed Him to be the Christ, the Son of God.
  - Peter, who should therefore have been willing to declare in those circumstances the divine power and glory of Jesus, denies knowing Him.

That was only the agony on the cross. But it was not the only suffering borne by the Lord Jesus.

- His passion lasted all His life – only it was less at the beginning.
- The closer He came to the cross, the more intense the passion until it reached its nadir on the cross.
  - The wrath of God debilitated Jesus more and more.
  - The stress He had to bear for the redemption of the elect increased more and more.

His passion is underlined boldly by the fact that Jesus Christ had to bear the wrath of God against all of humanity. If you wish to have an inkling of how hard this was, just draw an account of your own sins.

- To start off, we have inherited sins.
- Add to that the sins we do each day – what we think and say and do.

The punishment for those sins cannot be light because no human can survive it. Consider then what Jesus had to face because He had to bear it for all of us.

## **2. What was the purpose of the suffering of Jesus Christ?**

There is something peculiar in the ministry of the office of the Lord Jesus.

- We can partly follow Jesus in His office of Prophet.
  - Because we too can preach the Word of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
  - We can also explain the Scriptures – although we have our limitations.
- The same is true of Jesus' Kingship.
  - We are partly able to rule over creation.
  - And we can reign over sin – through the cross and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

***But we are unable to follow Christ in His office of High Priest*** because we are unable to propitiate anybody's sin with God.

- The purpose of the Lord Jesus Christ's passion was that He could present Himself as atoning sacrifice in our stead – so that we could thereby be saved from eternal damnation.
- At issue is therefore Jesus' priestly ministry and then particularly that He had to sacrifice Himself.
- It was all required so that He could with a perfect sacrifice obtain the eternal life and salvation for the elect.

Consider the description thereof in Isaiah 53:4-5:

**“Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; ...”**

***The fact that Jesus as Redeemer had to suffer for our sins distinguishes Him from us.***

- ***We also experience sorrow and trials, but in our case the purpose is different – it is to test our faith.***
- ***We do not thereby redeem other people from the wrath of God.***

The Bible describes this ministry of salvation in different terms:

- Ephesians 1:6 says that the Lord Jesus acquired for us God's glorious grace.
- 2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us that because of the cross we became the righteousness of God.
- John 5:51 teaches that because of the cross we have the eternal life.

We can summarize it as follows:

- The purpose of Jesus' suffering was that by it He obtained for us, who are guilty and disobedient, the grace of God.
- With it He obtained for us, who deserve hell because of our sins, the eternal life.

### **3. The Divine justice in the suffering of Christ.**

Christ, though innocent, had to be condemned by a temporal judge so that He could bear the guilt of others. Our guilt.

- According to God's justice the wrath and punishment for our iniquities rested on us, because we had sinned.
- This means that we were under threat of destruction because God's majesty was injured. The LORD pronounced the penalty of death over sin.
- Death on earth (bodily death) is the symbol of the eternal death. In other words, if no salvation could be obtained for us we would die the eternal death when we appear before the throne of judgement of the Almighty God.

The Lord explains in Romans 8:3-4 that He let Christ in the likeness of sinful man be a sin offering so that the sins of man be condemned and the righteousness of God be satisfied.

- It means that God's condemnation of us humans was transferred to Jesus Christ.
- He was condemned in our stead and suffered the penalty of death in our stead.
- He therefore stood before God's throne as the Condemned in the place of the elect.

That is why Jesus was officially declared to be innocent by Pontius Pilate.

- The meaning of it is that God Himself declared His Son to be innocent.
- One could say that with this finding of Pontius Pilate the devil himself admitted that Jesus was innocent because Pontius Pilate was an unbeliever.

Yet He was delivered to the punishment that was demanded – death.

- The people demanded that He be found guilty.
- Therefore the whole event shows that He bore our guilt, for He himself was innocent.

From the beginning people have struggled to understand this. Those on the road to Emmaus also failed to understand it. The Lord Jesus had to explain it to them.

- He explained to them that it was for the sake of God's righteousness that He so willingly and patiently bore the suffering.

- He also told them that this was also the reason why He completed His task so perfectly and holy, that He truly died and arose from the dead.

Beloved, we must always:

- Know and believe that the suffering of Jesus Christ opens for us the door to the eternal life.
- We must not be ashamed of the suffering of the Lord Jesus. We cannot be saved in any other way except by the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence this suffering is to us a necessity of life.
- The passion of Jesus changed our legal position before God – to such an extent that in the moment of judgement before God He shall declare us righteous through the merit of Jesus Christ notwithstanding the fact that we deserve eternal death.

Let us read the Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 15 together.

### 15. Lord's Day

Q. 37.

What dost thou understand by the words, "He suffered"?

A.

That he, all the time that he lived on earth, but especially at the end of his life, sustained in body and in soul, the wrath of God against the sins of all mankind: (a) that so by his passion, as the only propitiatory sacrifice, (b) he might redeem our body and soul from everlasting damnation, (c) and obtain for us the favour of God, righteousness and eternal life. (d)

(a)

Isa.53:4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

1 Pet.2:24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

1 Pet.3:18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

1 Tim.2:6 Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

(b)

Isa.53:10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

Isa.53:12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Eph.5:2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

1 Cor.5:7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:

1 John 2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

1 John 4:10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Rom.3:25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

Heb.9:28 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.

Heb.10:14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

(c)

Gal.3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

Col.1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

Heb.9:12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

1 Pet.1:18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

1 Pet.1:19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

(d)

Rom.3:25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

2 Cor.5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

John 3:16 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 6:51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

Heb.9:15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

Heb.10:19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

Q. 38.

Why did he suffer "under Pontius Pilate, as judge"?

A.

That he, being innocent, and yet condemned by a temporal judge, (a) might thereby free us from the severe judgement of God to which we were exposed. (b)

(a)

John 18:38 Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.

Matt.27:24 When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.

Acts 4:27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

Acts 4:28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

Luke 23:14 Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him:

Luke 23:15 No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.

John 19:4 Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him.

(b)

Ps.69:4 They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored that which I took not away.

Isa.53:4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

Isa.53:5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

2 Cor.5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Gal.3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

Q. 39.

Is there anything more in his being "crucified", than if he had died some other death?

A.

Yes there is; for thereby I am assured, that he took on him the curse which lay upon me; (a) for the death of the cross was accursed of God. (b)

(a)

Gal.3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

(b)

Deut.21:23 His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

**Amen.**

Closing prayer.

Closing song: Hymn 19 -1:1

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**Amen**

Dr MJ Du Plessis

Reformed Church Bellville

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Scripture: New International Version