

Our Fellowsufferer

“Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all that obey Him” (Hebrews 5:7-9).

Jesus Christ is our High Priest; our Great High Priest; our Eternal High Priest. But He was also our “fellowsojourner” on the earth. And as our “fellowsojourner” He was our fellowsufferer. And as our fellowsufferer, He experienced on the earth, things which we experience—the frustrations, the humiliations, the limitations that constantly shackle the inner spirits which, for those possessed by the Spirit of God, would soar in the stratosphere. As victims, or perhaps prisoners of the space-time cosmos, we suffer—saint and sinner alike.

The basic word for “suffering,” in the Greek text is *patho*. It has many derivatives, such as *pascho*, but essentially the word refers to feelings. The most devastating aspects of the human nature on earth have to do with the emotions, rather than physical pain per se, which animals also share. What the animals lack is the understanding of and therefore intensity of the emotions, which are seated in the frontal lobe of the brain. This frontal lobe for which the skull provides a cavity in the forehead, is not present in animals. Therefore, while animals are sensitive to pain, the interpretation of that pain, which usually provides the greater distress for humans, is lacking. The frontal lobe of the brain is where all integrated thought takes place. That is to say, when impulses enter the brain from the external environment, they are interpreted by the frontal lobe of the cortex which is the storehouse of all the data accumulated over the years of one’s existence. The meaning of an object, or a feeling, is based upon this accumulated knowledge and experience. The response to this data is often in the form of emotions or feelings. All of the heartaches and sorrows; the pains and pleasures; the perplexities and turbulence, that we experience in our day-to-day existence are based upon the way we perceive things in the frontal lobe of the brain. Jesus, partaking of human nature, possessed also this kind of brain and nervous system. He was therefore subject to the same “slings and arrows of outrageous fortune” as we are. His suffering was not confined either to the cross per se, nor the animosities of His enemies, but to all of the earthly pains that humans must endure. This is not to minimize the severity of the cross, but only to expand the implications of Christ’s sufferings to show the true oneness of His sufferings with us in our day-to-day existence.

It must be understood, however, that the experience of suffering is intensified for believers as it was for Christ, by the very perception of our true natures that the presence of the Spirit of Christ within brings to us. Those who do not possess this inner spirit nature which are certainly suffering intensely as victims of this corrupted cosmos, do not suffer in the same sense, failing to perceive the true nature with which God had originally imbued His creation. A good analogy would be in the realm of canines. If a human being had conspired

to save the world of the canine, but to do so had to become himself a member of the species, and yet retaining the full consciousness of what he was in his true nature, while at the same time being reduced in his actions to barking and wagging the tail and rummaging in refuse, it would be an almost unbearable suffering. So Jesus, Spirit in nature, voluntarily “emptied himself” in regard to His divine nature and imprisoned Himself in a human form. According to I John 4:17, *As He is, so are we in this world*. Possessed also by our sense of the Spirit nature, we, like Him, chafe under the burden of our fleshly nature. It is important to understand that suffering with Christ is not simply in some kind of extraordinary sacrifice or martyrdom, but in the anguish of our earthly sojourn while being partakers of the divine nature. In His suffering on the earth, as a prisoner of the space-time realm, Christ, our High Priest, experienced personally the nature of the distresses and desolations that drive His people to seek His help. And thus it is that our High Priest is “touched with the feelings of our weaknesses.”

“*Yet learned He obedience.*” The word “obedience” (*hupakouo*) is probably better translated “submission.” Jesus would never have been “disobedient” to the Father. He did not have to learn to “obey instructions,” Rather He learned what it meant to have to submit to the pressures and problems created by His earthly condition. And, of course, He experienced the meaning, as a human being, of receiving the wrenching circumstances of His life and death from the hand of the Father.

“Who in the days of His flesh offered up petitions and supplications with strong crying and tears to the One who was able to save Him from death and was heard because of His respectful submission” (Hebrews 5:7) (Author’s translation). The word translated in the English text as “feared,” is the Greek word *eulabeis*. Literally the word means “to receive well.” The best illustration of this is Jesus’ response to His disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane—**“the cup which My Father hath given me shall I not drink it”** (John 18:11). The surest way to peace in our Christian experience is to be open and receptive to whatever circumstances Christ will bring to us. It is very frustrating to be a human being on the earth, but we will weather the storms if we accept them as something which Christ allows in our lives. The “strong crying and tears” with which Christ addressed the “*One who was able to save Him from death,*” were not in a cowardly recoiling from the physical pains of the impending crucifixion, but rather recoiling from the abhorrent prospect of bearing in His flawless frame the guilt of the heinous crimes of the satanic world. It would be like someone who was completely innocent being convicted of a crime not committed, and bearing the onus before the community of a criminal. “He who knew no sin became sin for us.” Jesus addressed the “*One who was able to save Him from death.*” In the Garden of Gethsemane, great drops of sweat, like blood, poured forth from the brow of the Holy Son of God, reluctant to pass through the dark night of sin, but ending His prayer with, “nevertheless not My will but Thine be done.” There is nothing wrong with experiencing deep emotional distress over the circumstances which God has allowed to come to pass in our lives. We are allowed that as human beings, so long as we accept, nevertheless, what he purposes for us.

“And having been made perfect [fulfilled], He became the author of eternal salvation to all who are submissive to Him” (Hebrews 5:9) (Author’s translation). The Greek word which is translated “made perfect” (*teleo*), means perfected in the sense of being fulfilled. Everywhere in the New Testament this word refers to consummation or fulfillment rather than flawlessness. Jesus was, of course, flawless, but we too are urged to perfection—not in the sense of “flawless,” but “fulfilled.” Jesus was flawless and fulfilled. We are fulfilled and faultless before God, but not flawless. We are fulfilled in the sense that we become the vehicle for the spirit of Christ. It is as with an automobile. Its purpose is to transport passengers. It fulfills its purpose when it does that, even though the vehicle itself may have many flaws in it.

So Christ, our High Priest, was also our *fellowsufferer*. He suffered in the confinement of the space-time prison, and the frustrations and desolations of the human nature. We suffer with Him in the same way, because we too have a grasp of the spirit nature which we have from God, and yet struggling with the limitations of our earthly frame. Paul sums the matter up in (Romans 8:16,17) ***“As children of God we are heirs together with Christ; sufferers together with Christ and glorified together with Christ.”***

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