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Sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at Shaw's Corner Chapel, Redhill
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Text: For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin neither was guile found in his mouth. I Peter 2, v. 21,22.

One great design and end of the Holy Scriptures is to bring before us the person and glory of the Son of God, and this revelation is by a number of different important and vital considerations of Him, wherein He appears as an almighty Saviour and a perfect example. Perhaps the latter point is not often so apparent to us, or it may not appear to be so important, but it is well to observe that in the Scriptures nothing is unimportant, and the example of the Lord Jesus Christ is important and vital to us, as is His redeeming work and His great Salvation.

He is before us as God's eternal, co-equal Son, as very God, possessing all perfections of Deity, as being in the form of God, as not considering it robbery to be equal with God. He is before us in His distinct personality. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." He is before us in His blessed, pure humanity, as the Word made flesh, wherein the great mystery of godliness consists. He is before us in His great Sacrifice, His death, and His prevailing mediation in heaven. And He is before us as a perfect example to all His believing followers.

The Apostle writing to the Philippians has a striking word where he says "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," and it is to be noticed how very closely interwoven the precepts are with the doctrines of the gospel; and it is usually observed and felt, too, that when the gracious influence and authority of the doctrine is felt in the heart, then the precepts are attractive; and this is where the Lord Jesus is an example to His people, to walk in his steps and to follow Him; not to obtain salvation by their works, but "to show forth the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvellous light."

Both Paul and Peter deal extensively and solemnly with the conduct of believers, and exhort them in all fervency and affection to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called in all lowliness and meekness. But it must be confessed and felt, at least with regard to my own case personally, and is generally observed, that there can be much religion and profession of religion, but very little conformity. How much do we respond to the exhortations of God's word preceptively and "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things?"

In this word that I have read, the Lord Jesus Christ is brought before us as a suffering Saviour and a perfect example, and the two points are intimately connected. "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow His steps." Not Christ suffered for us, therefore we may live as we list. Not He died to save His own and if we belong to Him nothing else matters in that sense, as though there were no need for gracious exercise of soul or conformity of life. Moreover that gracious conformity to the precepts of the gospel bears its own fruits of an interest in it for "even hereunto were ye called." And notice, the verse before, "For what glory is it if when ye be buffeted for your faults ye shall take it patiently? But if when ye do well and suffer for it ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto, are ye called;" to walk in this path and to exercise this gospel grace, and bear one with another under provocations and sometimes under very painful things. What a striking reference he makes to the Redeemer in the verse following: "Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again, when He suffered He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." When confronted with His persecutors and those who blasphemed and condemned Him and reproached Him and crucified Him, "He opened not His mouth."

"For even hereunto were ye called." The Apostle is writing to the scattered tribes, to believers who were passing through much suffering and persecution for the gospel's sake. He confirms them and encourages them to press on and to continue in the divinely appointed path of tribulation which has attended and will attend the followers of the Lamb, more or less till the end of time, not with the same severity that it attended our blessed forefathers who laid down their lives and sealed their testimony with their blood. We suffer not as they did comparatively speaking. "The lines are fallen unto us in pleasant places", but there will be a burden, a trial, a weight, a need, an affliction, and more or less a tribulative path, and it is in walking this out that we follow, if we do, the suffering Lamb of God in His steps.

He left us an example that we should follow His steps, who did no sin; and yet though He did no sin, He suffered more on account of sin than ever we can or shall suffer. "Neither was guile found in His mouth." Absolute purity of thought, word and action always pertained to Him.

I would desire, as I may be helped, to speak a little first of the Lord Jesus as a suffering Saviour, and then more particularly as a perfect example to follow. He suffered for us, that is for all who were eternally chosen in the Covenant of grace and were given to Him in the purposes of the Father and for whom He paid the ransom price. And what a wonderful

mercy if we are ever favoured to feel that it was for us! What a remarkable moment in our lives was that when an inward witness was felt that we were interested in that word "It is finished," because "Christ also suffered for us."

O, we might enquire here as to why He should suffer. Why should He? To what purpose was it? Hart, in striking language brings forth the enquiry

"O tell me, Saviour tell me why
Thou thus should suffer, bleed and die?
What mighty motive could Thee move?
The motive's plain, 'twas all for love."

Love to His Church moved Him to undertake their cause and to suffer freely and willingly all that was necessary to deliver them from their deserts, the sentence of death under a broken law, and the bottomless pit. It is wholesome for us to notice that no mercy in the Gospel can reach us, that is if we are the Lord's people, without suffering. No, nothing in the way of mercy can reach us without suffering, and that suffering far deeper suffering than we can conceive. But what did the Redeemer suffer, and why did He suffer? He suffered to appease offended justice. Sin made a gulf that could never be bridged by any human power. The wisdom of God alone could conceive how fallen man could be honourably saved, consistently with His own character, and this He did by the satisfaction of the Redeemer, whereby justice, offended justice, was perfectly appeased and satisfied. It is by justice inflicting the wound upon the innocent Saviour, "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." This smiting of justice upon the head of the person of Immanuel, who stood between, is an amazing consideration. He bore the stroke alone. He received the fatal wound in His own soul. He suffered in order to remove the curse of the broken law. We had incurred the curse by our sin, but we could never remove it. The Saviour removed it in His own person by standing in the place of His people and answering to every claim of justice. He bore the awful stroke that would have crushed any mortal creature. Immanuel alone could sustain the weight of imputed sin and yet, in those sufferings, He stood and stood alone, stood under the strokes of justice and of penal punishment. It was an amazing scene of love and blood, and is at times a heart softening consideration; because "Christ also suffered for us;" but not that He had Himself any need of this. His sufferings were absolutely vicarious and were also efficacious. He suffered, and we cannot enter very much into what is really involved in the Saviour's sufferings. We could not bear much and yet in that measure whereby they may be knowable to us, or we may have fellowship in them, they are very sacred moments.

"Sweet the moments rich in blessing,
Which before the cross I spend."

"Christ also suffered for us." He suffered in order to atone for His peoples' sins. He Himself is that atonement by the shedding of His precious blood because "without shedding of blood there is no remission" and this is a sober consideration. We may often talk about the Gospel and hope we feel faith in it, but we have a very faint conception of the cost of our redemption, yet it is a mercy to be led in any measure even to the fringe of Gethsemane. We cannot go very far. It is faith alone that can gaze upon that scene of love and blood, an agonising Saviour there groaning under the intolerable load of His peoples' guilt. His sufferings were not only those of His crucifixion, but all through His life, in His temptations, in the opposition He encountered, in the scorn and contempt that was poured upon Him by His enemies and by the scribes and Pharisees and other professing people. It was a life of suffering and yet with a holy willingness He went through it. He never drew back from that which was committed to Him. "I have set my face like flint." He says "The Lord God will help me. I shall not be confounded." He suffered, and by His sufferings opened a way from hell to heaven for hell-deserving sinners. This is a wonderful mercy, because apart from the cross and what is involved in it we could have no contact with God, and contact with God is the life and essence of vital godliness and of worship. There is no real worship without suffering, no hope without suffering. "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us."

The principal point here is the example of Christ in these sufferings, "leaving us an example." That was one end in His sufferings, although the great end, was to remove all guilt from His people by atoning meritoriously, for their sins and transgressions. But another end was "to leave us an example, that we should follow His steps." Now this comes right into the very path of the gracious experience of following Christ, because as there could be no Salvation without suffering, neither can there be any right following without suffering. "If any man will come after Me," said Christ, "let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." As an example and pattern, not only is He a Saviour to save us, but He is a pattern to be followed by us. He is a pattern and to a great extent real religion may be measured by the conformity that is borne to Christ, in the heart and in the life. So the Apostle, wrote to the Philippians: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation."

Think of that "Made Himself of no reputation". Not "was made of no reputation. but "made Himself of no reputation," that is among men. This describes His amazing condescension. He laid His glory by, veiled Himself in human flesh and as a man upon earth He "made Himself of no reputation;" "He hath no form nor comeliness and when we shall see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him." "He took upon Him the form of a servant, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross".

The chief point here is that He is an example in suffering and an example in the way He bore those sufferings, too. "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth." He could have done. He could have silenced His accusers. He could have called legions of angels to have delivered Him from them. But no, He submitted Himself, committed Himself, in the face of all, "to Him that judgeth righteously." That word in Isaiah has sometimes been wonderfully sweet to me, where we read "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth. He is brought as a Lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb so he openeth not His mouth;" answered them not a word. He is an example in suffering.

He, the Lord Jesus Christ is an example for His people to follow in many things. For instance, He was an example in willingness,

"How willing was Jesus to die
That we wretched sinners might live."

There was in Him an eternal willingness, as in the 40th Psalm where in the spirit of prophecy it is said "Lo I come. In the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight" - that is a wonderful word - "I delight." not I am obliged to, "I delight to do Thy will O my God. Thy law is within my heart." Has it ever occurred to us in this way, that the Saviour delighted from all eternity to undertake the cause of His people and to bear our sins away? He delighted to do it. As in Proverbs 8 "His delight was with the sons of men" from eternity. He is an example of willingness to His people to bear their cross for His sake, to walk in His ways, to bear reproach for the name of Christ, to walk the path of tribulation His providence appoints to His people, which is often an inward tribulation.

Not only so, the Lord Jesus Christ was an example in love: "Greater love hath no man than this that a man should lay down his life for his friends." And this was a commandment. The Lord speaks of the commandment He had received from His Father, that He should lay down His life for His friends, and that they should love one another as He had loved them. And how much conformity is there in this particular? He is a pattern. His love is beyond example.

"O love of unexampled kind
That leaves all thought so far behind.
Where length and breadth and depth and height
Are lost to our astonished sight."

It is a wonderful moment with a child of God when a touch of Christ's love melts him and when a spirit of contrition flows, and it may be a few tears from the eye, in contemplation of such wonderful love to unworthy sinners. He is a perfect example in His love, and nothing moved Him from it or separated Him in His love to His people. "Not tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword," and none of these things could separate. His love was never more apparent or real than when He was groaning under the burden of their sins. What amazing love, and what a mercy to get a little breaking in the heart and to be enabled to follow Him in this. He has left us an example that we should follow His steps, and if the Lord condescends to come and touch your poor heart with His love you will be sure to love Him. You cannot help it. It flows back again. The union, the bond is profoundly sweet. "We love Him because He first loved us."

But not only is He an example in this sense, in His sufferings and love, but He is an example in patience. The Apostle writing to the Thessalonians desired that they might have their hearts directed "into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ." But in the margin it says "into the patience of Christ," that is, the patience of Christ in His sufferings, and that will produce a conformity. If we are really led into it in a spiritual way it will produce a conformity and a desire to follow Him. For we are called to this, called to patience under suffering; which patience is a grace actually, a grace, not a natural endowment. But when the Lord's people are graciously favoured at times, whatever the natural temperament may be, it will produce a holy patience in them and a spirit of resignation also, to bear the cross and follow Him.

He left us an example in all this, in fact everything He did was an example unto us, that we should follow His steps, and it is a wonderful mercy when the Spirit of God reveals in the heart a little of what is involved in the sufferings of the Redeemer; even as an example; how He deported Himself under those sufferings; the patience and fortitude of grace and resignation and submission that He evinced under those sufferings; and all this not only in relation to His substitutional work, but as an example unto us, "that we should follow His steps."

And what about this following? How much real following of the suffering Son of God is there with us? This following supposes a knowledge of Him. You would not follow the teaching of a person you did not know. No, it involves and supposes a gracious knowledge of the Lord in the soul, by the

Holy Spirit, and when He is revealed in your heart as a personal Saviour and is made precious there, then it will be sweet to follow Him. You cannot help but praise Him and this is a wonderful drawing. It draws the affections, and this is a sweet following. The Church prayed for this in the Canticles. Draw me, we will run after thee." That expresses the fervency of affection and a burning desire to have communion with Him and to enjoy His company. "That ye should follow in His steps."

Dependence too, is involved in this following. Dependence upon Him for grace and strength and confidence in Him. It is very sweet at times to be really coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon our Beloved, to have Him before your faith as Alpha and Omega, and to be conformed in your spirit to Him. O, but, you say, I am so full of sin. Yes, but that consciousness of sin and having so much that is opposite in your nature to all this can be quite consistent with a gracious conformity. In this conformity is repentance. No conformity can be sweeter than to weep at the cross or to be brought where the Apostle was, when he said "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." That is a wonderful conformity; if you get there for a moment it transforms you. The world is nothing then, you are swallowed up in love and blood.

He left us an example not that we shall be perfect in our following, far from it, but there is the pattern. Was it through much tribulation with Him? It will be in some tribulation, through much tribulation, to His real followers. Was it at great cost to Him? It will be at some cost to His followers. Not that Salvation can be purchased by any sacrifice we make; not at all. It is all absolutely free, but still there will have to be a cross to bear in some way, if we are really following Christ. And in this following, every time you get some fresh glimpse of Him in your soul, it renews that willingness. It will make you say Lord, what is this world to me? Help me to follow on, to bear the reproach and the shame, the blasphemy or whatever it may be. Yes, but it is not often that we can lie down under provoking things, but you can, and you will, if the Lord comes into your soul. O, it will overcome all sin then, as to its dominion, and will make you willing to lay your body in the street for men to walk over. It brings a willingness. He is an example for "even hereunto were ye called because Christ also suffered for us leaving us an example." That is the point I wanted to bring home particularly, "Leaving us an example that ye should follow His steps." Amen.

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