

Heidelberg Catechism 37 – The Nature and Implications of Christ’s Suffering in life and in death

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: There are some sufferings that evoke 勾起 strong emotions and response. For example, you hear that a fireman died in a fire trying to rescue an old person or a child. You imagine his suffering-the smoke, the fire - and your heart goes out to his family. You might even make a donation in the fund that the bank started to help support his wife and kids. Or when you hear “poor African kids” you picture half-naked kids, in a little mud hut 棚屋 with a dead father, and no food. And you feel their pain and loneliness. You might even give some money to help care for them.

But what comes to mind when you hear “the suffering” of Jesus Christ? What emotions do you feel? Do you just treat it as an abstract fact and then go about your business? Or maybe you give the “Yeah, yeah, I know” response. I would venture to say that we all do so from time to time. But it ought not to be so. Christ’s suffering was the worst suffering of all...and it was a suffering that belonged to you that he took. So today, God willing, you will be refreshed and hopefully get a fuller grasp of the suffering of Jesus Christ for you, that you won’t treat it as some ancient insignificant fact, and that you love him better for it. **These are our goals.**

Our headings are: Jesus Christ’s Suffering During his Life, Jesus Christ’s Suffering During his Death, and Jesus Christ saves you by his suffering in life and in death.

37 Q. WHAT DO YOU UNDERSTAND BY THE WORD “SUFFERED”?

A. That during his whole life on earth, but especially at the end, Christ sustained 蒙受 in body and soul the anger of God against the sin of the whole human race. This he did in order that, by his suffering as the only atonement sacrifice 赎罪牺牲, he might set us free, body and soul, from eternal condemnation 定罪, and gain for us God’s grace, righteousness, and eternal life.

Jesus Christ’s Suffering During his Life

1. Jesus Christ suffered throughout his life in his body. He faced hunger and thirsting. He often had no place to rest his head. His pillow was often a stone. He traveled without shelter in 40 degree weather in the day and very cold temperatures and night, often sleeping out in the open. He was often tired from his journeys to preach the Gospel and sometimes had to escape those who were trying to kill him. His family in which **he grew up was poor.** Jesus’ family had little by the world’s standards. Can you imagine their meager 微薄的 meals? Can you see his bed? Even as a baby, Christ’s parents could only offer pigeons for his redemption; they did not even have a lamb! Jesus Christ lived in a land controlled by foreigners and his own people collaborated with 合作 Rome and extorted 勒索 much from them.

2. Jesus Christ had to suffer throughout his life in his soul.

Isaiah 55:3 He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with 熟悉 grief 悲苦. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised 被鄙视 and we did not esteem 敬重 Him.

Sorrow characterized the life of Jesus. **Sorrow and grief were his constant companions.** He faced abuse from his own people. They tried, and often succeeded, trying to force him out of their town. Consider the emotion of Jesus when he saw the rejection of Jehovah by Israel through the prophets of old and himself.

Matthew 23:34 "Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge 鞭打 in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, 35 "that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36 "Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. 37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!

Some only wanted the free food he gave them. Others wanted to see miracles. Jesus Christ was mocked 嘲笑 working for the Devil. Jesus Christ’s own family tried to stop him from preaching the Good News. Jesus Christ had to endure and pass the Devil’s test of lust of the flesh, lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life. And at his birth, as you saw already, he had to subjected to and dependent on a human family in backward 落后的 Galilee. He had to learn the poor carpentry trade 木工. The King of all creation – the sustainer of all creation - had to suffer this way throughout his life! Jesus had to be trained in the law. He gave the law, and then he had to go through the process of learning it as a man. How humiliating 羞辱! Knowing how hard it is, most people don’t even like to learn a new language.

Jesus Christ's Suffering at his Death

1. Jesus suffered intensely 强烈地 in his body at his death. Jesus had to suffer in the worst possible way. The Jews, if they had their way, would not normally execute someone by crucifixion. Crucifixion was a Roman thing. The Jews normally would have executed by stoning. The chest was crushed by a big stone and then stones were piled on 堆 in the body...it was short...a few minutes perhaps, and not as gruesome. But the Father would not have Jesus die that way, as it took the **worst death** to satisfy his anger. And Jesus had to **publicly die** as an oblation 祭品 to God.

Isaiah 55:5 But He was **wounded** for our transgressions, He was **bruised** 伤痕累累 for our iniquities 罪孽, The **chastisement** 惩罚 for our peace was upon Him, And by His **stripes** 鞭痕 we are healed.

He was **stripped naked, impaled 刺穿 in his side, and his hands and feet were nailed to a cross.** They slapped his face. The Romans scourged him – made furrows on his back – hit and pull. They crowned him with a crown of thorns. He had a painful thirst, and when he asked for water, they filled his mouth with vinegar. They did this to the one who created heaven and earth...things seen and things not seen.

2. Jesus suffered intensely in his soul at his death. He felt his Father's abandonment 遗弃 – the worst punishment of all. So he cried out to his Father in intense agony of spirit: Father, Father, why have you forsaken me?

Isaiah 55:7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted 被折磨. Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter 屠宰. And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.

Jesus was not quietly executed in a private executioner's chamber. He had to be **shamed** – humiliated – as crucifixion was reserved for the worst criminals. And he was **further tortured by being crucified with real criminals**. Jesus was **accursed by God**. He was **arrested** as a common criminal and **endured a mock trial** by those over whom he had all authority. They **mocked him as a pretending king**, dressing him as a mock king. (How hard to be silent when you want to put someone in his place.) They **spat 吐唾 on him**. He watched as **his friends abandoned and denied him!** How that must have hurt. The Jewish **religious leaders**, who should have supported a godly man, **abandoned him**. His **people** who had a few days earlier chanted 高唱 "hosanna" **were chanting "crucify him"**. He came to his own, but **his own did not receive him**. And what an aggravation 加重 of Christ's suffering - **to die for those who did not care that he was dying for them**... (The movie "Passion of the Christ" is weak because it mostly shows the physical suffering of Jesus Christ.) These wicked people called for God's judgment upon their own children for whom Christ was dying...ignoring 无视 his teaching...and ignoring the only hope that could be theirs...

Deuteronomy 21: 22 "If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, 23 "his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile 污化 the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance; for **he who is hanged is accursed 被咒 of God.**

3. And scholars unanimously 一致 agree that mental or spiritual suffering is worse than the physical suffering.

Jesus Christ Saves you by Suffering in Life and in Death

1. Jesus had to die with suffering of his body and soul because you deserved to die with the suffering of your body and soul.

2. Jesus had to suffer in life and in death for the whole human race, not just the Jews. This shows his love for all kinds of people. It also reminds you that the Jews by themselves were not a special people. It was the love of God for them that set them apart. So when God puts his love on you, Gentiles, it sets you apart as well. Consider the promise to save the world:

John 3:16 "For God **so loved the world** that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

1John 2:2 And He Himself is the propitiation 赎罪 for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the **whole world**.

Galatians 3:13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), 14 that the blessing of Abraham might **come upon the Gentiles** in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

How sad that the Jews are still waiting for the Messiah and seem themselves as unique 独一无二的 because of their nationality. Apostle Paul said that they were only the seed of Abraham if they had faith in Christ.

3. Jesus Christ's suffering was considered an atoning suffering and sacrifice...for you! His offering of himself was to atone for your sins...all of them. He received due recompense 报应 for you! You owe him everything now!

Isaiah 55:10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong 延長 His days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.

1John 4:10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

What do you think now of those in the United Church of Canada who deny the atonement, or the Muslims who believe you work for your salvation and that charity removes sins, or Hindus who believe that your sincerity will cause you to please God?

4. Jesus Christ's suffering in life and death was done as an atoning sacrifice to God to set you free from eternal judgment. There is no purgatory 炼狱...or temporary punishments as the Roman Catholics and Muslims say!

Romans 3:24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance 忍耐, 克制 God had passed over the sins...

5. Jesus Christ's suffering and death put God's grace, righteousness, and eternal life to your account. John 3:16.

1Peter 2:23 who, when He was reviled 辱骂, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; 24 who Himself **bore our sins in His own body on the tree**, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.

So much for those who minimize 最小化 the suffering of Jesus by stating that it is physical healing!

1Peter 3:18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might **bring us to God**, being put to death in the flesh **but made alive** by the Spirit,

Hebrews 10:14 For by one offering He has **perfected forever** those who are being sanctified 圣化.

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. **3** For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 that the **righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us...**

2Corinthians 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the **righteousness of God** in Him.

6. I know how you respond when you hear that a fireman suffered and died to save the weak, or how you respond when you see the suffering of a poor African child. But how do you respond to the one who personally suffered for you in the worse possible way, physically and spiritually, in his life and in his death, in his childhood and throughout his adult life...to the one who became sin for you and to the one who let himself be abandoned by God for you? Tears! Love!

Conclusion:

Love for the sinner moved the Lord to take on a human body and live a holy life. The one who was perfectly satisfied in himself...subjected 使服从 himself to obedience to the law because he wanted you to get the credit for that work. Love for the sinner moved the Lord to the cross to bear the horror, terror, and violence of his Father's justice. Even when there were those who opposed him, he set his face like flint 打定主意, 绝不变更...to do what was necessary for those the Father had given to him. It was as if your hand were put upon the Lord's head and your guilt passed from you to him...and then he was led to the cross to be killed. Jesus Christ was as your scapegoat 替罪羊!

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Now what? Look at Titus 2: 11-14 *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly 清醒地 righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous 热烈 for good works.* The cross was a remarkable thing. But it means little if it is just a sad story about an innocent man who was killed. This type of unfairness happens all the time. The cross must mean more to you. The work on the cross by Jesus is the work that brings life giving change that lasts for eternity. The cross was the means by which Jesus Christ atoned for your sins and set you free. Now look for heaven and be zealous for good works while you wait for heaven.

Finally, if you don't know this Jesus intimately 個人性地...believe in your heart what he did...then you are doomed 灭亡地. But if you ask him to show himself to you...and to show you his work on the cross...and you believe with all your heart in what he has done...eternal life is yours!