

## Christ's Life and Death for Us

Let us turn to our Bibles to Mark chapter 8. Mark chapter 8, verse 31. Mark chapter 8, verse 31. Let us listen attentively to the Word of God.

And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. Let us pray. And in these words, in short order, we are given by the inspiration of the Spirit and the pen of Mark what Christ taught as He is working through His ministry on earth and walking towards the cross.

And how certainly, Lord, the disciples hear them in verse 32 and following, and how shocking that is to them. But we see now most clearly 2,000 years later, I pray for all of us indeed, the necessity of this, and therefore the expression of love and compassion that you have for us by sending your only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to live and die as a man for us. May we learn this truth again as we take the Lord's Supper, this sacrament, a sign and a seal of the truth of the good news of Christ.

It's not a picture of the resurrection, but rather a picture of the death of Jesus. And therefore a reminder as well that our life follows such a similar path as we are on our way to heaven, that we walk this veil of tears, of suffering and difficulties and troubles that come within and without as it did upon Christ. But we see the great difference, Lord, that Jesus paid it all, that the suffering He took was a suffering He did not deserve unlike us.

But even then in our suffering as believers, we know it's a suffering not to justify us, but a suffering because we are justified and we are sanctified. And that you are purifying us in our growth and our sanctification in particular. Father God above, help us to draw nigh unto Christ again, this morning in particular, as we meditate and learn and reflect upon His life and death for us.

Amen. The Lord's Supper is instituted for the good of the Church and for the growth of the Christian. It is a meal to picture our fellowship with one another, especially our Lord Jesus Christ, because it was common back then and fairly common today that one way you show friendship and fellowship and communion is you sit down and have a meal with one another.

Yet the symbolism of the meal is not in the context of life as such. It's not a picture of the resurrection, for example. But the suffering and death of Christ, right? It points to His broken body and shed blood.

It points to the full redemption found in Jesus, our Deliverer, as vividly portrayed in His death in our stead, His death for our sins. However, it presupposes His life, of course, that He was alive at one time, that He had a body and indeed a soul like us. The Holy Communion does not make sense otherwise without this.

So I'm going to look at here in this sermon the totality of Christ's mission to save His people from their sins. And He saves them by His life and His death and His resurrection. Christ's life and suffering is the first point here.

## Christ's Life and Suffering

His life, that is, the incarnation that He came to earth over 2,000 years ago, the body of a man, the soul of a man. But this was proposed, if we can speak as a man, from eternity past to save His people. They had determined in the covenant redemption to in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to save their people, to guide them, to set them up for deliverance.

And part of that plan in the covenant redemption is that the second member of the Trinity, the Son of God, shall become a man as well. It was carefully planned out. It was not a last-minute decision, as though God's like, I guess I'll save them right now.

But rather because of His love and grace upon us, brothers and sisters, this was planned. And the purpose of this plan of deliverance for us is to destroy sin, a number of purposes. One of them is to destroy sin, Hebrews 2, verse 14.

And as much then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil. And so destroying sin and the devil and all that's associated with it is the reason why He became a man, that we have flesh and blood. We would say we have a body.

And so He Himself, that is, the Son of God, likewise shared in the same, had a body of flesh and blood, that through His death He might destroy him, that is, of course, the devil and all his works, including sin and death. Another purpose is to sympathize with us, that is part of why He became a man, Hebrews 4.15, the same great book. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are yet without sin.

How can He have sympathy with us to come alongside with us if He did not have a body, if He did not suffer lack of sleep, lack of food, such as His 40 days of fasting in the desert? I can't sympathize with that. But He can sympathize in many ways more than we could. We don't go through a lot of these struggles of the body that He did.

But the struggles that He went through with His body, such as sleep deprivation, perhaps, and certainly food, as we know of, and His fasting, was in all points tempted as well, yet without sin. None of this was because of His sin as such. We do foolish things, and so we end up not eating the way we're supposed to eat or sleeping the way we're supposed to sleep.

He did nothing foolishly. He did it all with a purpose, to have sympathy with us, to come alongside us as an elder brother. He was born of a woman, as we know, showing, therefore, His full humanity, and thus He can sympathize with us.

And that's the truth here of the incarnation, that the Son of God did not pretend to be a man. It wasn't like He looked like He was a man. It wasn't as though, oh, He had a human body, but it was a shell, and within it was not a human soul and a mind.

No, He had all that, what it means to be a man, and was born of woman, as we all are born of woman. He came down from the glories of heaven, where all the angels praised Him day and night and did His bidding, to a world He created. He became a stranger among His own people, and as we know, rejected, cast off, and ignored, and even hated.

He suffered in His body for you and for me. So as we look here, not just in general at the incarnation and the significance of it, but in particular, His life and what He went through, that He didn't have to go through, that often we've kind of taken for granted, well, what's wrong with being a human? Because He's God! And we are inferior, vastly, infinitely inferior. There's no comparison.

I like to use the imagery of a moth to a sun. You couldn't even see it on a radar blimp, compared to the sun. But even that pales to the difference that we have to God Almighty.

And so here, going into details of His life, we can have a better understanding of what it means that He was man. He was born under the law, as we describe in our confessions and the like. That is, He lived under the Mosaic economy of the law in particular.

So He had to be circumcised, He had the priests He was under, He had the temple system and all that, which we do not have. But of course, more than that, Galatians 4.4 reminds us, But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Galatians 4.4. And so, Him being born under the law, not as a burden or conviction that He would become a better man, that's not the idea here.

No, He was already perfect in thought, word, and deed. He came with a two-fold purpose. One, to fulfill the ceremonial law, and that perfectly.

I came to fulfill all righteousness. You recall the conversation with John the Baptist. And that was part of it.

That's why He went through the ceremonial activities as well. But more in particular for our purposes is the moral law. He obeyed the Ten Commandments.

He fulfilled them in thought, word, and deed. He had not one word out of place. Not one step in the wrong direction.

Not one misthought. As you and I know so well with ourselves and each other. And why? For His own sake? Like He needed to justify Himself? No, brothers, a thousand times no.

As we know from the rest of the Bible, He did it for our sake. He obeyed the law in our stead. And for us.

When speaking of Christ's life, we mean, and I mean in particular here, His life of obedience. That is, we are saved by His life and His death. His life insofar as He obeyed.

And every step, what we call in theology, is active obedience. Which was the entirety of His ministry. He did it knowingly, willfully, in the best sense of the word, with His whole being, under the will of God.

He says, the will of my Father is food for me. Like you desire food for your body, I desire the will of God for my life. And that will, of course, is a perfect living.

And a perfection for His people, not for Himself. And His death, of course, part of that is a description of what we call passive obedience of Christ Jesus. Which was in parallel, they both were happening at the same time.

Whenever He suffered, whenever He was beaten, whenever He was hated, He was rejected. Which was happening at the same time as He was, what, preaching and obeying and actively fulfilling God's law? They happened both at the same time. He's nevertheless suffering and doing it for us.

He had you in mind, brothers and sisters, when they spat upon Him, when they smacked Him in the head and put a crown of thorns upon Him, and when He continued to be faithful to God and teach the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, even though entire crowds left Him and even hated Him. And therefore, as we know here, the suffering of Jesus, what is especially pictured here in the Lord's Supper. The suffering of Jesus, passive obedience of Christ, is for our violation of the law of God.

We have broken it, and of course even now we continue to break it to one degree or another as believers, and that's what's so frustrating for us. Jesus did it all. In Isaiah 53.1 we read an amazing description and picture, such detail here of what Jesus had suffered for us.

Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For he shall grow up before Him as a tender plant and as a root out of a dry ground. He has no form or comeliness, and when we see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him.

He was despised and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. This is Isaiah, several hundred years before Christ, describing in detail the kind of punishment Christ goes through, the rejection, the social isolation.

He was a pariah by the end of his ministry, but he purposely walked through that gauntlet for us, knowing his suffering and his hardship that he would endure, he'd endured for our sake. The personal hardships that he went through in particular are quite illuminating. Things that he did not deserve, things that we deserve.

The things that came upon him were from the results of the sinners around him and not because of anything that he did. It's not evidence of him sinning at all. People come to this text like this, the Jews in particular.

As you know, I have written two introductions to two different books from the Bereth Publishing House. That publishing house out of Oklahoma is by a Jew, a converted Jew. He's reformed, he's confessional, he's in the OPC now, and he interacts and debates, because he has that background amongst Jews, with other Jews.

And these other Jews will come up with all kinds of excuses, that this isn't the Christ, this is not the Christ we're supposed to look for, this is not the true Christ, the one we're supposed to submit to, our Redeemer. Now this is a made-up guy, he's not a real Messiah, he's a sinner, that's why he went through all this punishment. Our deliverance is supposed to be glorious, not ignoble, like his death.

All kinds of reasons and excuses. Things that you kind of expect, actually. And he's very patient with them, and he goes through and explains these things to them.

Jesus was born relatively poor, he was not wealthy on the flip side, although he deserved to have all the wealth in the world. His fame that he had, as you know, was fleeting, about halfway through his ministry, more and more people started jumping ship, as we say. John 6-6-6, a passage you've heard before, that's why I always remember it.

Jesus preached these things, in particular, of the deity and the supremacy of God Almighty, and His omnipotent power to save whom He will. And it says, from then forth, from there on after, many walked away, no more followers. Because He spoke the truth, of, in that case, the doctrine of election.

The crowds that welcomed Him at Jerusalem, as we know, it's just like a light switch. Hosanna, blessed be the name of the Lord our God, and they have the palm leaves, and they're bowing before Him, even kids. And then, boom, same crowd says, crucify, crucify, crucify Him.

They're fickle. Even His disciples fled and left Him alone. Left Him hanging high and dry, as we say.

And one of them, in particular, disavowed. He cursed and swore before God, Peter did. I know not this man.

Jesus did that, with eyes wide open. I wouldn't have done that. I'd have a very hard time doing that.

Now, as we read in Romans 5, for example, maybe for a good man, maybe for my wife, I would do a lot of things, certainly. But everyone else? Jesus did it and went through this. As far as the world was concerned, brothers and sisters, He was a total failure.

Fasted for 40 days in a stark wilderness and resisted the devil's temptation when I would have quickly grabbed a pizza bite as soon as I could. You're at your lowest when you're fasting for a few days. You have very little energy.

And so the temptation would be even stronger. And Jesus resisted nevertheless. He went through that, 40 days, for you.

He said, I want to do that because I love my people. And of course, the physical beatings, by hand and by a whip, a cat and nine tails, in which they thread through it pieces of glass and rock tearing across His skin. And He did all of this, not for His transgressions as though He were a sinner, but for your transgressions.

And not for your past transgressions, but for your future transgressions as well. It's not as though He came to earth and fulfilled everything from the past onward and then when you become a Christian from there on out, you have to try harder to be justified. Some churches teach that, even in Protestant circles.

I guess you could say so-called Protestant. No, no, a thousand times no. His suffering was for all our sins.

## **Christ's Death and Resurrection**

His life and death, and then lastly here, the second point, Christ's death and resurrection. His life and suffering, excuse me, and Christ's death and resurrection, point two. His death, the ignoble death, as the world describes what is noble and ignoble, what is glorious and inglorious.

We know it to be glorious because it expresses the wonderful grace of God. Colossians 1.20 By Him, that is Jesus, He came to reconcile all things to Himself, and by Him were the things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. Colossians 1.20 Having made peace through the blood of His cross.

Peace for us. Reconciliation between the judge of the universe and you, in particular. You who have repented of your sins, who hate and flee and trust in Jesus.

His blood was for you, that you could come to our Lord and Savior. You can come to God the Father, and He would now be your Father, no longer your judge. That's the picture.

And even His name, Jesus, as His name is so He is, God who saves, not some smart man, not some holy person, but the judge himself, the second member of the Trinity, to save those who were condemned. Condemned forever. And will save us from sin.

Justification. Sin's consequences are hell and eternal damnation. Sin's nature is a violation of the law of God.

It's defined by the Ten Commandments. In thought, word, and deed. And He covered all of that.

Your sins of hate, for we've all experienced hate at least once, I'm sure. At least as a child, if you had a sibling, you probably fought with them at least once. And that fighting was not because you loved them.

Hate of any kind is wicked before God when it's hatred contrary to His word. Hating of our family, of our friends, of our fellow men, disobeying those in authority over us, belittling

their character, coveting their possessions, being selfish, impatient, unloving, even indifferent when you shouldn't be indifferent towards your spouse and towards your family or towards your church. We're going to see a list this afternoon, 2 Timothy 3. The last days, the perilous times.

It goes through this long list of sins. We read that list. We say, that was me.

That's me. So He covered not only your hatred of your neighbor, of your family members and the like, which gross violations, even small violations, I guess, could be looked at one way or another as a variation of hatred or indifference. Why would you do that? Why would you break the second table of the law towards your fellow man? And, of course, the first table of the law, hatred of God, not taking Him seriously.

He's not the center of our life. Not honoring Him with our first fruits of the tithe in our time on Sunday, for example, or putting your spouse or your children before God in your life. Whatever it is, whatever it looks like, Christ died for that.

He suffered for that. It wasn't just the death. The death description you read in the Bible passages, like I read in Colossians 1.20, for example.

The blood of the cross. It's not just the cross, per se, although that's the apex, because of how gruesome it is and how vivid and public it is, but it's His entire life. All the suffering up to that point is part of His work for us.

His death also purchased our sanctification. You have the gift of the Holy Spirit when God works in you, both to will and to do His good pleasure, Philippians 2. The means of grace are granted to us to mature in the faith, the baptism, and then, eventually, the Lord's Supper, if you grow up in the covenant home. Prayer, Bible reading, all these things were given to us as the fruit and the result of Christ's life, living in obedience for us, and His suffering and His death for us.

It's all of a piece. If you have one, you have it all. If you have Christ, you have it all.

These things here are for us. These tools are our sanctification. The Spirit, the gift of Spirit above all, in terms of our sanctification for our walk in this life.

And lastly, the resurrection. So His death purchased our redemption, and the resurrection sealed it. Jesus raising from the dead was not, of course, for His own sake, but for us.

Be part of our redemption as well. Romans 4.25 ties it this way. Who, that is Jesus, was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification, as raised from the dead.

Without the resurrection, there would be no justification. And so in our debates over 100 years ago, against the liberals of the day, they were actually called progressives, politically, ironically, at that time. They argued, in their Auburn Affirmation, I think 1921 or something around there, that things like the resurrection are just one of many theories of doctrinal truth of the Bible.

Virgin birth, incarnation. No, without it, you don't have justification. Romans 4.25. You're denying clear passages of the Word of God.

John 11.24, Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live. We get the fullness of life because of Christ's resurrection for us.

He did it in our stead. His raising from the dead was for our justification. In other words, His identity being the head of the covenant of grace, whereas Adam was the head of the covenant of works.

What Adam did, we did in Him. What Christ does, we do in Him. That is, He does it for us, more precisely.

We are identified with Him by faith. It was not only His incarnation, His life and His death, but also His resurrection. It's the future hope of every Christian.

But of the life and suffering and death and the resurrection of Christ, God chose to emphasize the suffering and the death of Christ here in the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist, the celebration of His work for us, of His redemption in our stead. That we may know the depths of His love. And so we must, or I must, remind you again what the Lord's Supper is about.

It is a picture of the saving work of Jesus for us, although, of course, a snapshot. And not all of it. You don't see His incarnation here explicitly, although the picture of a body is there, so it's there implicitly.

You don't see the resurrection, on the other hand, here. It's in the middle, where God emphasizes the suffering and the death of our Lord and Savior for us. And so it makes only sense if Christ came to Earth as a man to live and die for us.

But more than a sign, it's also a seal. Now this idea is sometimes taken in a strange way or mystical way as such, but it's a tool to help our weak faith. The Supper, in other words, is not a magical event.

Roman Catholic Church and others teach it's the physical body and blood of Christ, that it tastes like bread and wine, but it's actually body and blood. The taste is different, but the substance is the same. It's cannibalism.

They teach cannibalism. Nor is it some vague, charismatic encounter. It's a seal and an effect upon your conscience to strengthen your weak faith that God loves you with an everlasting love.

He knows you are weak. He knows you are of the flesh and of the body, and so he gives you something tangible to remind you of his love. That's the idea of a seal.

Like a ring is a seal of our marriage. Nobody confuses the marriage with the ring and vice versa, and so we shouldn't confuse our relationship with God with the Lord's Supper, but

rather it's given alongside, like a ring is given alongside the actual relationship to reinforce it because we are visual. We are visual.

We see with our eyes. We touch with our hands creatures, and God acquiesces in that sense to us and gives us here the water of baptism and the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, and so it's designed to assuage our conscience and to strengthen it and aid it to look to Jesus. But we all struggle one way or the other, brothers and sisters, and the Supper is here to prop up our weak faith, not by itself, of course.

You must have the preaching of the word to describe what's going on here. Otherwise, you can have a simple unbelieving or a pagan understanding of the Lord's Supper. It is a visible sign of an invisible reality if you are one who repents of your sins and believes in Jesus and trusts in him to live and save you.

The Supper is another way to point to Christ's love and salvation. Preaching is doing it audibly. That's the primary means, and the secondary auxiliary, as it were, to support that here is the sacrament.

Never forget the grace and goodness and love of God Almighty through his only beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Redeemer. Amen. Let us pray.

Father God above, as we meditate upon your Son, how he became a man and lived a life forgotten by many, but also suffered, and suffered for many, for us. Lord Jesus, may your Spirit be upon us and guide us and strengthen us as we partake of the Lord's Supper. That your name may be glorified in all that we do.

Amen.