

# Christ's Suffering Humanity

*The Book of Hebrews*

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**Bible Text:** Hebrews 2:10-18, Psalm 22:1-31  
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Well, tonight our series in Hebrews brings us to chapter 2 and verse 10 to 18. The title is this "Christ's Suffering Humanity." Christ's suffering humanity. We recall this thus far very clearly his divinity has been established. We find that in chapter 1 in those first four verses, and that's critical, absolutely critical that that be established because nothing else will make sense unless this Savior, this high priest, this sacrifice is all divine and the writer is making that very clear, and if they turn away from this Savior, well, there's none other because this is God himself who is at work in this cause. And if that won't satisfy them, well, nothing will and they won't find any satisfaction in anyone else or anything else; it will be a disaster if they turned away from him.

So he proves his divinity because that is vital for the sufficiency of what his ministry will perform. He won't be able to perform the ministry that he does, it won't have the success that we believe it has unless he is God. But we saw last time that also established is our humanity and of its value in the sight of God. That's the first half of chapter 2. And this humanity, as we saw, only receives its full fulfillment, only really comes into its own in the Lord Jesus Christ. That, that humanity been broken by sin. Though it is such an elevated quality in itself that only man can relate to God, only man is able to respond in that way of whom God communes and has fellowship with even in our broken and fallen state, but we have a future and the future is all there in the Scriptures but that future cannot be realized by us on our own. We don't have what it takes in and of ourselves but the Lord Jesus Christ does. There humanity, therefore, is not junk status, it's not something to be just discarded as though really it's an afterthought or a bit of a hindrance but really something of vital importance. No, it is of vital importance, so much so that it only will come to its full fruition in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. Then it surely will, then it is something to behold when we get finally to heaven, and our position will only come to being in the glory of heaven through the death of the Son of God.

Verse 9, as we saw last time, "we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone." Well, that is what was his to have to endure and that's there again in the passage before us this evening. And the writer here establishes, well, the humanity of Christ, in a sense, he's established that already, but this is in a way incidental. It's not as if he started with the divinity, right, we now move on to the

humanity and sort of have kind of an object lesson on that because it's actually very pastoral and very practical, that it is Christ suffering humanity in order that the writer can bring us to the remarks that he makes at the end of chapter 2, that the Lord Jesus, "that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted." Because these people were being sorely tempted. These people were feeling under great pressure as though they might turn away from the faith because of the mounting tide of persecution. So it is of a pastoral point, of a practical point that the writer is establishing.

Well, our first heading, then, is this: one with us in suffering. One with us in suffering. Well, verse 10 is a little bit of a backward glance to chapter 1 that the one for whom are all things and by whom are all things. Yes, there's the reminder ongoing of his great glory, reminding us of John 1 and Hebrews 1 as we've seen. But he is our mediator. That is a vital word to get our heads around. He is a mediator, a go-between between God and man, someone who is in the middle, and he's well-equipped to be in the middle because he has the nature of both. He has the nature of divinity because he's God, but he has the nature of humanity in that he is also fully human and he is able, therefore, purge our sins. He who was made perfect through suffering, and that is something we learn often, isn't it, the captain of our salvation. Nobody else, nobody else is in charge of this operation, nobody else's hands has it put in, our works don't feature in it, it's the Lord's table not the Lord's and ours table there that we kind of share a little bit of the outcome in this. No, it's entirely his work. He is the captain of our salvation but here is the thing, this was fitting for him to be made perfect through sufferings.

Perfect through sufferings. Alright of the suffering of the cross, it was ultimately to purge our sin, this we know, that it was not necessary for him to have sin purged out of him in order for him then to be useful as a mediator for us, representing our condition and the cause of God and being able to offer himself on the cross, as it were, to bring both sides together. He did not need sin purging out of him. That's what we need. That's what he suffered on the cross to obtain. But he didn't suffer that in life to obtain that for there was no sin in him to need purging, but there was an obedience to render to God. There was an obedience to render to God and God determined that 33 years of such obedience would qualify him, that this was fitting, this was the fitting amount of time to show that actually this is a very suitable Savior, this is a very sufficient Savior who didn't just drop down from heaven briefly and have a very comfortable lifestyle and have it all very very straightforward, no hardship, no decision, no great trials thrust upon him and could go in that fairly comfortable state admittedly to the pain of the cross but without having had a life that was rather difficult, rather uphill, rather much of a struggle and a battle. No, he had to be shown to be a Savior who had coped with all that life, all that the devil, all that his disciples, all that everything and everyone could throw at him and still be standing at the end of it. He had to be made perfect through sufferings.

Who he was in his obedient and pure humanity and all of his responses to his fellow man and to God, it had to be shown to work under the greatest trials possible. Not an easy test. This wasn't, you know, sort of multiple choice kind of tests and where you can have a stab at that and there's bit of a breeze really that. No, he was put in the crucible. He was tested in the flames. He had the devil at his most aggressive and his most cunning, and in

his most full in-the-face, full frontal attack set upon our Lord. He had the Pharisees and the Sadducees who were not the most easy and comfortable of colleagues to have. Why, they hated him, didn't they, indeed? And so his suitability for being a Savior, perfect, able to be considered, true, holy, so excellent, of such noble and wonderful character, now that could shine through if his 33 years of living, and particularly his last three years when in public ministry have been done in the teeth of great opposition and surrounded by people who are trying to bring him down, looking for ways to destroy him, and this is exactly what he was able to demonstrate.

It's as in chapter 5, verse 7, "who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered." Wasn't that in a sense the obedience was in doubt but the obedience needed to be seen in actual life, and most certainly that obedience was seen. What worth is a vehicle unless you know it is actually road worthy? What will it do on ice? How will it function on the hills? Will it be able to get off to a good hill start? You want to know these sorts of things. Not much good if you're in Darbyshire and it's only a car that can sort of cruise at 70 on a flat motorway. No, you want something that can cope with the hills and the bends and still be found at the end of it there in working order. Well, our Savior has to be proven to be that perfect humanity shining through in his obedience through adversity, and all that he did in that way showed him to be precisely that of an obedient and perfected, perfect Savior.

That's the fact, isn't it, that we find out the real us, the real you, the real me in terms of trial. When things are going okay, it's when things are not going okay that we find out who we really are. Those trials are, opposition, how we handle it, how we approach it, how we deal with temptations, accumulated wisdom of the years perhaps that have gone by. People talk about spiritual experience, what are they often looking for there? Well, a feeling, aren't they? Looking to feel something, something unusual, something a bit exciting, maybe a sudden flush of joy or something like that. Well, spiritual experience is often to be found actually in the nitty-gritty of dealing with temptation, of learning obedience through what we suffer. Now that is spiritual experience and I would offer the thought far more worthwhile than some of the things that one hears about and getting prayed for that they'll have the joy or some such strange idea as that.

So that's when we find the real you and the real me. That's where we find the real Christ, we find what he's made of through the things that he actually suffers. Never despair if you find yourself in a trial. Never stop and think, "Well, what have I done wrong here that I find myself now under these great temptations and these great pressures?" That is the time, is it not, for the real spiritual person that we hope that you are and that I hope that I might be to emerge, to shine through, learning that obedience then through what he suffers.

Perfect through suffering. So we have there but our sufferings are in order to subdue our sinfulness but his suffering is in order to prove his sinlessness. But it is fitting, the writer says, this is a process that is so so appropriate. It's right that it should have been done in

this way because actually he is like our older brother in this, he is the captain of our salvation going ahead of his troops, being ahead of the others there who are following behind him but who, themselves, are going to experience the very same things that we're going to suffer, that we too are going to find that we are facing afflictions and adversities just as he did.

"For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one." Ah, it's one family. There's the family likeness, that he suffered, that it was fitting he should because that's what we're going to find as well, trials and temptations, a world around us there, the flesh within, the devil himself trying to unseat us and trying to destroy us. In fact, there's no glory, is there, for us other than going through suffering, through trials and temptations just as our Lord Jesus did. And well, it is wonderful, isn't it, that "He is not ashamed to call them brethren." There's the family likeness and he's not as though looking upon us there with disdain or despair or with superiority, "Well, I didn't find that so hard. What's your struggle with it?" But he's not ashamed to call us brethren.

It was fitting that he should go through suffering before glory. Is that not what the Lord taught the disciples on the road to Emmaus? Was he not to have suffered them then to enter into his glory because in the end that's also how it's going to be for us. He's only going the path that we ourselves have to go, though for different reasons. And we see once more, then, this elevated humanity, that our humanity is not something that he is ashamed of, that he is thinking now is beneath him or something that he's completely and utterly lost interest in. His connection to us remains. Gone into glory, surely has, raised from the dead, glorious resurrection body, well, it certainly was that but it hasn't ceased being that. He hasn't stopped being that. He is one with us in suffering and he continues to be one with us in everything.

Brethren, he calls us, not disdaining us, and there he works in us to sanctify us. Suffering sanctifies us and sanctification making us holy, that's the word for that, isn't it, making us holy, the Holy Spirit is within, we've got the word of God here, there's this mysterious operation within the soul directed from the throne of God by the Lord Jesus himself sanctifying us. And what is that going to accomplish? That's going to make us truly human. This recovers our humanity, our proper humanity, what humanity, what was damaged and brought to dust by the fall. He is in the business of restoring our humanity here on earth before we get to heaven. Oh yes, then fully restored. All fine when we get there, we've left behind every vestige of sin, but in the meantime he's working towards that finished product. He has that template in view and he is molding us and shaping us into that precise image. He's wanting to make us fully and truly human.

Very strange, isn't it, sometimes that people think that holiness means weirdness, that we have to behave in a rather strange way, or in a rather odd way, and almost crush our humanity, destroy it, that it's got no place, and we have to instead behave in ways at times that mark us out as rather strange, rather weird. Well, he's trying to make us into fully functioning human beings, fully responding to bring liberty into the whole soul, to enable us to emerge as fully functioning human beings. That's what he was, isn't he? He was a full and perfect humanity his, not a bit of fiction as though there is the divinity and there's

sort of a fictional humanity, not a real, living, breathing humanity. That's heresy. It was a true humanity, full humanity. We've been looking at that on our Thursday evenings.

So he is wanting us to recover from the fall, looking to bring cure and remedy to all that sin has done. To the habits. To the ways that we have to the various things that we constantly fail in. To reorganize that inner world and that inner life, fine-tune it, make it respond more spiritually, more scripturally to the challenges and the opportunities of life. Come, if you like, real people. How the world is always looking for authenticity, isn't it? Become real.

Well, friends, this is what the Lord Jesus Christ is trying to bring to pass in us, make us real, real people, and we'll only find out what real people are in our union with him. That's what the world makes a mistake, it thinks it can find it out someplace else, some psychology here, a bit self-help there and you discover the inner you. Except you don't. You never find the real you, in fact, you're driven further and further and further away from the real you. This is the only place that you can really become fully functioning human beings is in and through him.

We notice there there are some quotations once more from the Old Testament. These people are thinking that Old Testament ways, old covenant ways are now to be relied upon. Well, he will say not the law as you understand it there in its [unintelligible], not those things which were then the methods of cleansing and of approach to God. No, not those things but in the Old Testament you'll find plenty that refers us to the Lord Jesus Christ and his humanity, something quite interesting, some of it may be even surprising.

We read Psalm 22 and in that second part of it when the sufferings there and how those are described to us in Psalm 22, how accurately and how minutely all that he endured on the cross, the nature of the opposition and hatred, and yet that still trusting in his God to deliver him, just as our fathers trusted in you, they trusted and were not ashamed. But then it changes, doesn't it? Then there is that bringing up of humiliation now to the exaltation and his resurrection and his looking forward to how he will meet with his brethren, and how he will address them, how he will speak with them.

Psalm 22 then in verses 22 and 25 are echoed there in verse 12 of Hebrews 2. He will declare, "I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You." Then he stands alongside worshipers. Why, actually he is the inspiration of worship. "I will declare Your name to My brethren," to us, partakers in flesh and blood, and he will take the things of God and he will make them known to us. He will relay to us and communicate to us the things of God by his Spirit. "In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You. That two or three are gathered together and there He is in the midst," as though encouraging us to direct your worship to your God, to be with us as a worshiper there, one with us in humanity.

And again Psalm 18:2 is quoted in the first part of verse 13, "I will put My trust in Him." Well, that speaks there, doesn't it, of the Psalmist trusting in God. Now the Lord Jesus Christ also in his position as mediator, as our servant here upon earth, well, we read he

offered up prayers and petitions with loud sobs. He was a worshiper in that way, going each Sabbath day as was his custom to the synagogue and there he would offer worship as a perfected human being, as one who should worship. Your God and my God, your Father and my Father, and there he is with his people trusting in God as we trust in him, trusting in him on the cross that he would be delivered, trusting in him that all the promises made for his support upon earth, helps that would be his, the angels to minister to him, the comforts and the support including what he would experience on the cross would be his to have.

Then an interesting one from Isaiah 8:18, the last part of verse 18 of Hebrews 2, "Here am I and the children whom God has given Me." Well, that's the prophet saying back there but it is here poised upon the lips of the Lord Jesus as though here he is standing before God and his children, his brethren "whom God has given Me." Well, we know of that, don't we? Father entrusted to the Son, gave to the Son a people that he was to save, a people that he would die for on the cross and for whom he would bring particular redemption in that. And this is speaking of it here, there is our Lord as though he's speaking to his Father on our behalf and alongside us, one with us in our humanity.

So friends, he doesn't reject us for failure. He doesn't chide us for slowness or infirmity or weakness. He does not discard us because of bad health or old age or some handicap or other. He is a very involved Savior and a very interventionist Savior. We move on, our second heading: the defeat of death. He's one with us in suffering and this, of course, finds an ultimate fulfillment in that he also died. One with us in dying, dying in a way that is different to our death, a death that showed fully he is human. That's why we have the bread and wine on the table. He has "partaken of flesh and blood, how so that, "He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death." Well, this humanity had a very particular end in view. Yes, had to be obedient. Yes, had to live out a real life, a full life, a life where there's much opposition, much difficulty, many reasons and temptations why he could say, "Enough, I'm going back to heaven." He doesn't. But it is so that he could go with that perfect humanity to the cross, and there because he has humanity, he can die. Only divine, well, he can't die. Divinity does not die, dear friends, it does not, but when there is humanity, well, that can die and that's why we say in a hymn there, we could marvel that the God-man dies and somehow the divinity and the humanity, we can say when the person of Jesus Christ, he dies. When God dies? Well, the man certainly does and we see in that death the value of divinity conferred upon it.

So he took our nature, lived in our nature, died in our nature. Died, well, it's described here could have described it in many ways, couldn't the writer? Could have gone to justification by faith. We could have talked about redemption. We could have talked about all of the sacrifices and how these were fulfilled in what he did. But instead he dwells upon the release that his death brings to his followers, to those he is one with, in whose flesh he is partaking to deliver us from fear, to take us away from the bondage of the fear of death, to take from the devil power that he had, the uncertainty of death when faced without a Savior, God himself to be able to give you assurance and peace or otherwise death looks very uncertain and in a very shadowy kind of thing in the future.

But here he has disarmed the devil of that power, that uncertainty, that remaining doubt because how can an animal properly represent the sin of a human being?

Well, we know more doubt because the Son of God has come. He has made propitiation, he has satisfied the wrath of God in this. Now he can release people who are afraid of death. These people were very pastoral, you see. These people were afraid of death. They thought, "How do we escape death? Ah, this is what we'll do, we'll back away from our belief in Jesus Christ as exclusive and we'll merge a bit with the Jewish rituals and the sacrificial system there. That way we'll escape from death perhaps, we'll dodge the bullet in that way." Well, the writer is saying actually you can be delivered from the fear of death through the sacrifice of the Son of God. An animal, not a goat, not a bull, but him. All you need is in him. He shows you the future. His resurrection and his defeat of death and taking away the keys of death and hades, holding them in his hand as his to dispense with shows you you do not need to be fearful, guilt need not bear down upon you, a sense of shame and of what might happen on judgment day, that it may not turn out right for you.

Oh, he says, "Do not fear. That is bondage and that bondage is lifted in Christ, the sufficient Savior, one with us, who in the flesh took our sin and made propitiation for them and then rose from the dead." It's the cure of fear. Here is the answer to that day of judgment, the day we stand before our God, our Maker and our Judge. Well, how will that day go? Badly, let me say this, if you're not trusting in Christ. Very very badly if you are not believing in him. No refuge. No hope. No place to hide. Nothing that you can answer because in the end you're merely having to rest upon why what you've done, the person that you are in the hope that God might somehow show some clemency and allow you to share heaven. Except God is just and God is holy and God does not break the rules to make an exemption for you or for me on that basis. One rule for all and the requirement absolute perfect so we all fail. But the Lord Jesus Christ who is life, was shown by the way he suffered how he was perfected through all that his experiences and show forth the fruits of true holiness and righteousness, but when he dies on the cross, pure and perfect sacrifice offered up to God, there's no other sacrifice beside. Our guilty conscience seeks no sacrifice beside him. And so we need not fear death, we need not fear judgment, and we need not fear our insufficiency because he is all our sufficiency in and of himself. The cure of fear. No condemnation now I dread.

So his sharing in our humanity, his suffering in death brings a very real help to these believers in their particular situation here. That's why the writer develops this. They're fearful, they're worried, they need not look to anybody else, should not look to anybody else. How can they? They'll find no peace in the offerings and the sacrifices of the old covenant. That is law. That is saying, "Do these things and live." Well, nobody will do those things and live. None. But if they look to the Lord Jesus Christ, they will. We need to make sure, friends, are we trusting him? Is he the one that we are resting our hope in because everything else will fail. Every other thing will fail. If we've had Christian background or family, we may have been schooled in these things to some extent and grown up with these things, but it won't help if it's not real and it needs to be a real Christ, a known Christ, a felt Christ. No good to sit in a church even here and, well, we trust we

preach something that vaguely resembles what the Bible teaches, and you can sit here and hear it for years and still not be converted, still be remaining locked into some other system of thought, some other hope. It has to be Christ and if you know him, you find him, well, you find release from the fear of death and that's wonderful.

Well, my final heading and we move on: his experiences count. His experiences count. They really do. All of it. All of his life as lived really does count and it counts right now for us, his people. For that's what we find at the end of this passage. He does indeed give aid to us, to the seed of Abraham. Well, that, friends, is us. He is the, as it were, the father of us all. He is the man of faith and stands out as a type in that way. He's an example of what faith looks like, what a man of faith looks like. Why, it's Abraham who believed God and God accounted it to him for righteousness. There's no difference. That's where we are as well. When we believe God, we believe in his Son, he accounts it to us as righteousness.

So to the seed of Abraham he gives aid. Not to angels, the angels there who were taking us up a little bit in chapter 1. Well, he's saying it's not about them. He keeps referring back, doesn't he? He keeps, as it were, shutting the door on the angels here. They're not your saviors. They're not your mediators. They're a great help but not in the matter of salvation here. No, it's not angels that God, as it were, is taken up with. It's us. It's us, people in precisely the situations that we are in. Flesh and blood people. People that are fearful of death. People that as believers are afraid what might happen to them if they stand up for him, or they might have to suffer themselves. Well, his death has already put paid to the fear of death, properly applied, versus even if we're still stuck with something of that and other temptations are coming in.

Look what he is able to do. You see, in all things, all his sufferings he was made like his brethren. He experienced the same temptations. He had to go through a world that through the same kinds of things at him. "No, do it this way. Oh, I wouldn't be doing that. Ease it up a bit here. You don't need to be so zealous there or those kinds of things and he's not forgotten any of it, he's not forgotten any of it. He had to deal with it. He had to resist it. He had to bring the word of God in his temptations to bear upon it. He had to turn his face like flint to go to Jerusalem when others were saying, "No, go a different way." He had to rebuke Peter, didn't he, when Peter tried to insist the he should not go to the cross, "This will never happen to you, Lord." And he was told, "Get behind me, Satan."

So he knows. He knows how to help people like us where he is a merciful and faithful high priest. Well, he was always like that on earth, wasn't he? He was merciful and he was faithful. He didn't give up in his mission. He didn't give up on the people. He was merciful to them, received sinners to himself, and he hasn't changed. His character hasn't changed because he's now in heaven, as though now in heaven he thinks, "Well, I can't have anymore of that humanity. All that old experience that I had here, I'm not having anymore of that, thank you. That is now beneath me and it's all on a different footing now that I'm in heaven and I'm at the right hand of God." No, he takes of his experience and he pours it into us. The Spirit takes of that, takes of his knowledge and his wisdom and



how he's longsuffering and he's patient and builds it into us. And what a high priest that we have. He is in things pertaining to God making propitiation for the sins of his people and praying for us, giving aid to those who are tempted.

Well, the church, maybe it's to the church in Jerusalem had the benefit of this, first of all, they were the people first amongst the believers in those days, the first to know and need the experience of his help facing persecution, facing difficulties, but it doesn't change. Time has not diminished him or wearied him, or he's lost his touch, forgotten what it was like. Well, we forget, don't we, and forget what it was like to be young, don't we? When we get older, we forget what it was like to be 21 or 31, or 30, that's an age to be, isn't it, dear friend? No, some of us have gone beyond that one and forget virtually what it was like. He's forgotten none of it, none of it for any period of life, what it's like for younger people, middle-aged people, older people, what it's like for those who are suffering with sickness, what it's like for those who are bereaved, what it's like for all of us in any eventuality in life and he has something relevant that he can share with us.

For these people, then, his experience counted. There was real help to be found. We can be assured of that. He hasn't changed. He's still a merciful, faithful high priest. We seek him and believe that he is able, then there are many things yet that he can pour into our hearts, wisdom, strength, a bit of boldness here and there, but a courage where we needed it, a little bit of belief, a little bit of faith when we thought this was not going to happen right here and we see and we persist and we persevere and the thing changes. Ah, he knew about that. He knew for people like that. He had disciples who were in that and he understood it and he felt for them and he feels for us still.

So Christ's suffering humanity in order that now he can be as humanity still, allied to that divinity but which is able to remember our suffering humanity today, and can minister through us grace within the heart and give us strength from power to persist in this evil, dark and wicked world and still serve him acceptably with reverence and with awe.  
Amen.