

CHRIST, AN EXAMPLE

BY B. G. ECHOLS

Peter encourages Christians to endure any suffering that comes and not give up Christ because of persecution. "For it is better ... that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing. Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit" (1 Peter 3:17,18). Later he spoke of "the resurrection of Jesus Christ; who is on the right hand of God" (3:21, 22). Thus the apostle affirms basic facts of the gospel, the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. All this was done for the redemption of man.

This is a good reason for thinking it must be better to suffer for well-doing when one is innocent. Jesus did, and that is an encouragement to us. He is the great example of innocent suffering (1 Pet. 2:21, 22). Let us suffer patiently with Him as our example. Christ died for us and His death "once and for all" has taken all terror out of death for those who are innocent sufferers for Christ. "Once" (hapax) is defined "once for all, of what is of perpetual validity, not requiring repetition" (Vine). He was a perfect sacrifice that need not be repeated (Heb. 7:27; 9:26, 28).

How does this help or encourage us? No Christian will have to die more than one death and it is soon over. The suggestion is that happiness and peace are beyond death as they were with Him. Jesus died while innocent and we may suffer for "well-doing." In so doing we become like Him. Some times God's holiest servants are called on to suffer greatly. Let us bear with patience the sorrows to which faith exposes us. This is one of Peter's repeated themes (2:29,21; 4:16,19). If we in our sufferings look to the cross, that will prevent our dwelling overmuch on our own afflictions. Our suffering is only once; then blessedness. He led the way for all to follow. The fact that Christ is said "also" to have suffered, died, and been made alive, it seems safe to say that the same will be for us.

Sin was the cause of His death, but not His own sins. He lived in perfect harmony with the will of the Father. He suffered in regards to the sins of others. The idea on which the apostle would

fix our mind is that Jesus was innocent as a sin offering. This reminds us of Isa. 53:11 as Peter has often quoted from that chapter. The unrighteous for whom Christ died are all who do that which is contrary to His will (Rom. 3:10, 23).

Why did He suffer? "That He might bring us to God." Clearly Peter is saying that the death of Jesus is the means of our being reconciled to God. What stronger appeal can there be than that He suffered on our account (Rom. 5:2). His purpose was to restore the fellowship between God and man that was broken by sin (Isa. 59:2). The ultimate aim of all religion is to reconcile man to God. Only the gospel does this. Anything less is ultimately valueless. The social gospel does not bring one to God. Emotional highs, community standing, or a "feel good about yourself" response are also valueless if one is not brought to God by Jesus' death. He will someday present us to the Father in heaven. Thus we must follow the way He went, the way of the cross. Since His purpose is to bring us to God, let us follow Him in faith, love, and gratitude.

Put to death "in the flesh" means as a man in His human nature. As a man distinguished from His higher nature over which death had no power. Death to Him was what death is in any other case, the separation of the body and the spirit with all the pains of that separation. As far as His human nature was concerned, He died. Being delivered from the burden of the flesh, He was alive to new energies, new and blessed activities. He was in a new sphere of activity.

By the resurrection He was declared to be the Son of God and able to save all who believe in Him. He now can give grace and power to us because He is at the right hand of God to intercede for us. Christ returned to the realm He inhabited before He became flesh. Upon His ascension He was crowned King and began His reign from His royal throne. At the right hand of God is a position of honor and sovereignty (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 1:3; 12:2). Christ is now King (Acts 2:29-36; Eph. 1:19-23).

His story is carried to completion. Christ suffered and died, but what else happened? He was

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AGENDAS

BY STEVEN F. DEATON

Everyone has an agenda in life. Sometimes it is an over-arching agenda which includes smaller agendas. We might also call them goals. Yet they amount to the same thing – an end purpose. The Lord had a certain agenda in the ninth chapter of Luke. “*And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem*” (Lk. 9:51-53). Let us learn a few lessons from this account.

The over-arching agenda of the Lord was to do the will of the Father in heaven (Lk. 22:42). No one can doubt that all other actions of Jesus were oriented toward this goal, the eventual outcome of which was the salvation of man. Yet, in order to reach this goal, he had to do many things. The Lord of glory was *born* into this world and *grew* into adulthood (Lk. 2:7-11, 40, 52); went about *preaching and teaching* the kingdom of God, confirming his message with miracles (Matt. 4:23); *endured mocking and ridicule* (Mk. 14:65; 15:17-20). All of this led up to the final goal of shedding his blood for the remission of sin and being raised to take the throne of David (Matt. 26:26-28; 28:5-6; Acts 2:29-33). What does all of this tell us? Well, if you will, there is *no short-cut* to our goals. For those who have a goal of going to heaven, there is no “*express lane*” which will allow us to avoid the necessities and challenges of life. We must experience certain things here before we arrive there. We must *attend the assemblies* of the church (Heb. 10:25); *study our Bibles* (Acts 17:11); *pray to God* (Heb. 4:16); *help the sick and unfortunate* (Matt. 25:31-46); *teach others* (2 Tim. 2:2); *endure hardships* (2 Tim. 3:12; Heb. 12:5-13); and so on. Truly, most of life’s experiences are a *blessing* on the way to our final goal.

Moreover, Jesus in sticking to his agenda, was *rejected and resisted* by others. It is beyond question that our Lord was the most offensive man who

ever lived. On every turn he was faced with opposition as he went about doing God’s will. Jesus was *tempted* by the devil (Matt. 4:1-11); *mistreated* by the people (Lk. 4:28-29); *betrayed* by a friend (Matt. 26:47-50); *falsely accused* by many (Matt. 26:59-60); and *hung on the cross* by his enemies (Matt. 27:35). Likewise, when faithful children of God hold fast to their agenda of going to heaven, they will be *cast out and condemned*. When we teach *one Savior*, the Muslims and Jews will not accept us (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4). When we teach *one cause for divorce*, the adulterers will ridicule us (Matt. 19:9). When we *expose false teachers*, they will hate us (2 Tim. 3:1-5). The Lord Jesus Christ faced hindrance and obstruction, therefore it should be no surprise when it happens to us (Matt. 10:24-25).

In keeping his agenda to reach Jerusalem, Jesus was *steadfast*, and so must we be in our agenda of reaching heaven. “*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord*” (1 Cor. 15:58).

CHRIST continued

raised, ascended, and glorified. If the believer will retain his good conscience, he may hope for a similar experience. Peter knew Jesus as a man on earth. There is no way a man would invent such a story as this about another man unless he was conscious of the resurrection and ascension as historical facts. No sooner did Jesus suffer than He went to glory. Let us take heart in all our trials.

