

I Believe Jesus Suffered

Heidelberg Catechism

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Bible Text: Psalm 69
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I changed my mind about what we would read for this morning so instead of Isaiah 53, we're going to read Psalm 69. Psalter 184 is a versification of the first part of that Psalm but it takes us all the way through Psalter 187. So 184, 85, 86, and 87 are versifications of Psalm 69.

1 To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim, A Psalm of David. Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. 2 I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. 3 I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God. 4 They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored that which I took not away. 5 O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee. 6 Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord GOD of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel. 7 Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face. 8 I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children. 9 For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me. 10 When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach. 11 I made sackcloth also my garment; and I became a proverb to them. 12 They that sit in the gate speak against me; and I was the song of the drunkards. 13 But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O LORD, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation. 14 Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink: let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters. 15 Let not the waterflood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me. 16 Hear me, O LORD; for thy lovingkindness is good: turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies. 17 And hide not thy face from thy servant; for I am in trouble: hear me speedily. 18 Draw nigh unto my soul, and redeem it: deliver me because of mine enemies. 19 Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries are all

before thee. 20 Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. 21 They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. 22 Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap. 23 Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake. 24 Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them. 25 Let their habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in their tents. 26 For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded. 27 Add iniquity unto their iniquity: and let them not come into thy righteousness. 28 Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous. 29 But I am poor and sorrowful: let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high. 30 I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. 31 This also shall please the LORD better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs. 32 The humble shall see this, and be glad: and your heart shall live that seek God. 33 For the LORD heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners. 34 Let the heaven and earth praise him, the seas, and every thing that moveth therein. 35 For God will save Zion, and will build the cities of Judah: that they may dwell there, and have it in possession. 36 The seed also of his servants shall inherit it: and they that love his name shall dwell therein.

May God bless the reading of his holy word.

We use this passage and others the which we're going to refer the course of the sermon is the basis for the instruction that God gives to us in Lord's Day 15. Those words in the Apostles' Creed, "He suffered under Pontius Pilate."

Q. 37. What dost thou understand by the words, "He suffered"?

That He, all the time that He lived on earth, but especially at the end of His life, sustained in body and soul, the wrath of God against the sins of all mankind; that so by His passion, as the only propitiatory sacrifice. He might redeem our body and soul from everlasting damnation, and obtain for us the favour of God, righteousness and eternal life.

Q. 38. Why did He suffer under Pontius Pilate, as judge?

That He, being innocent, and yet condemned by a temporal judge, might thereby free us from the severe judgment of God to which we were exposed.

Q. 39. Is there anything more in His being crucified, than if He had died some other death?

Yes [there is]; for thereby I am assured, that He took on Him the curse which lay upon me; for the death of the cross was accursed of God.

The Catechism uses two Lord's Days to deal with the suffering of Jesus. In the Confession, the Apostles' Creed does the same, spends more time: he suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. The detail to which the Catechism goes in dealing with the death, the suffering and death of Christ is so that we would increasingly appreciate just what he suffered, that he suffered, but also that it would be reason for us to grow increasingly in our appreciation of what he had to endure for us; to save us from our sins; to say that Jesus, the Son of God, suffered, we say it so quickly, "He died for our sins."

This past Wednesday night, the senior Bible study dealt with the cross of Christ, the humiliation of Christ in his birth and in his life of suffering, that Jesus suffered all his life long the wrath of God. He suffered hellish agonies. That's the concept when we read in our Question and Answer 44 that he descended into hell, and those agonies of hell he suffered his whole life, and that's what we want to try to get a hold of and we pray, and only the Spirit can do it, that that Spirit would work and open our minds anew to this very old familiar subject, Jesus suffered. We look at the suffering, we look at the purpose of the suffering, and the fruit of the suffering.

First, he suffered in body and in soul. He suffered in his body, he suffered physically all the infirmities that his people suffer in the course of their lifetime here on earth. In Matthew 8:16, "When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, " now listen, "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." He took upon himself our infirmities and bore our sicknesses. There wasn't a childhood disease, a sickness, that Jesus didn't experience. He hungered. He knew what it was to be thirsty. He knew what it was to be fatigued, weary, tired, worn out. He experienced everything that we have experienced in our bodies, that was his experience as well. Injuries. Being beaten. Being scourged. Being whipped. He knew, he suffered.

He suffered in his soul, not just in his body but also in his soul. In John 12:27, this is just before he went into the Upper Room, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour." Now is my soul troubled. To understand that, think of these thoughts: he knew what it was, as his person, God the Son, in his divine nature he knew what it was to have the greatest joy and happiness when he dwelt in heaven, when he dwelt in glory forever. So in all of eternity past, there he was and the experience that he had was one of joy and happiness. When he was conceived as a child and he gave to himself our human nature, then he was deprived of all of that. At first he was deprived of the pleasures that he had in eternal glory when he became man.

He was the Holy One. He never sinned but he lived in the middle of only sinners. He words it this way, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you and

suffer you?" Every hour and every minute of every hour and every second of every minute, Jesus endured the contradiction of sinners. He observed sinners. He could know their hearts. He knew the deceitfulness that they had so they looked right but inside they were sepulchers, he called them, graves. So the sinful atmosphere that was his though he was perfect in his soul.

John 1:11 says he was rejected. Now it's not unusual to be rejected but the hardest part of rejection is when the rejection comes from those that are the closest to him. "He was rejected of his own and his own received him not." Isaiah 53 describes that he was rejected not only, but mocked, threatened, slandered, hated. Psalm 69 does that too.

We are tempted. We really don't know what instrument the devil uses, which one of his legions of principalities and powers he uses to tempt us, but we know this: Jesus was tempted by Satan himself for 40 days and 40 nights. Three of the temptations are recorded for us as a sample of those that he endured throughout those 40 days and nights. Tempted by the devil himself.

Do you know how you react when a loved one of yours is slandered or mocked or hurt? Mother bears come to the defense of their children. Mothers and fathers come to the immediate defense of their children. We come to the defense of our family name. Jesus had a relationship with the Father and yet everywhere he looked he saw the Father's will violated and not just the Father's commandments violated, he saw God himself, his Father violated. To watch your wife or your daughter being raped is nothing in comparison to what Jesus saw being his Father violated. That's the suffering that Jesus experienced in his soul and that's just a little effort to try to get a grasp on what it is. We can't because he's perfect and we're sinners, and he endured the contradiction of sinners. Can you imagine when Peter told the Lord, "Let it not be so." Is it any wonder he told him, "Get behind me Satan." You think you know better and you hardly know a thing.

The characteristics of Christ's suffering, just a few. He suffered all his life. All his life. Psalm 69:8, "I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children." So as a child, he suffered. You know how teenagers can pick on other teenagers, "Well, you just think you're a goody-goody." Now they have different ways of doing it, using social media. Jesus suffered as a teenager. Jesus suffered all of his life and, again, go that Luke 9:41 passage, "How long do I have to suffer you?"

What it was to live in the middle of sinners, but that wasn't the worst. We talked about this Wednesday night. It wasn't just in the three hours of darkness that Jesus experienced hell, he experienced the reality of hell throughout his whole life. Now why do we say that? What is hell? Hell is God's presence. Don't make hell to be the absence of God, it's the absence of his love but it's the very presence of God's anger and wrath against sin that makes hell what it is, so horrifying. No one but Jesus was able to perceive in every adversity, in every conflict, in every sickness, and in everything that occurred to him, he was able to see that behind it was the anger of God against the sins that he took upon himself or that were placed on him, if you will, either one. He was able to sense God's hand and God's wrath against the sins of the sinners that he represented. He tasted that

wrath and nothing was worse for him than to experience not the Father's love, he was the most sensitive to that, but to taste that wrath all of his life so that when he was 12, the significance of his saying to Mary, "Yes, father, earthly father, you want to find me here but don't you know I must be about my Father's business?" When he had to argue with John the Baptist, "You must baptize me. You as a relative, a cousin of one level or another, think that I am not worthy to be baptized because you have been baptizing repenters and you think I don't have to repent. No, no, no, I must because I have been taking upon myself willingly, I begin the journey here at my baptism that's going to go to the cross and that means I am going to be subject to the anger and wrath of God. I must be washed. I must. I am repenting for all of the sins and the sinfulness of all of my people."

He suffered the full weight of the infinite wrath of God. Now there's something that our time-bound minds really have a hard time getting a hold of. One sin, one embodiment of sinfulness, just think of an infant in the womb, it dies, it didn't commit any sin yet, it's rightful place because it carries sinfulness from its first father earns for it in the justice of God to abide in hell forever. It deserves wrath from God eternally. No escape. No, "I finished the sentence." It's forever there. Jesus took that infinite and eternal wrath of God, that enormous weight, and he compressed it within the 33 and some years of his life. We can't endure it for a moment. He took that infinite and eternal wrath and compressed it and he was able because he was not just man but also very God. But he did it. No wonder Lamentations, Jeremiah wrote in 1:12, "If there be any sorrow like to my sorrow which is done unto me, wherewith the Jehovah hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger." No sorrow like his sorrow. Incomparable. Cannot compare it and say, "Well, mine wasn't as great as his but it was like." No, there is no likeness even of our sorrow like unto his sorrow.

While he saw the instruments, he saw the people, just think as he grew up he became aware of how many infants died in Bethlehem because of him, how many mothers wept to their graves at having their little children taken from them and killed. But he didn't see Herod, he saw this to be God-determined, God-given, God-inflicted. What Peter said on Pentecost when he preached and he spoke of the foreordination of the cross and he put it somewhat like this, "According to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye with wicked hands have crucified and slain." Foreordained. God determined and nobody was more sensitive to God than Jesus. He saw that determination of God and, again, not only because he saw the holiness of God being violated but he knew that whatever befell him came from his heavenly Father for the sake of the sheep that he represented.

Another characteristic of his suffering was that he did it as a substitute. That's one of the reasons why the Apostles' Creed says under Pontius Pilate. Jesus experienced that trial by Pilate because as a representative of the Roman Empire who were very legalistic and very formal and very well-known for the clarity of their law, Jesus was judged by Pilate to be innocent. He was not worthy himself of what the Jews wanted to do to him, crucify him. The innocence of Christ according to human law was brought out under the trial by Pilate. So then, that he suffered though he wasn't worthy of it himself, was that he

suffered voluntarily, well, substitutionarily. He suffered for others. He suffered in the place of others and, yes, he suffered voluntarily.

Philippians 2, "He humbled himself even unto death, yea, even the death of the cross." He sent his Spirit into the womb of Mary so that his own conception could take place. He did that. He willingly accepted the responsibility of doing his Father's business. He willingly demanded that John the Baptist baptize him. Every moment of his life he chose the path of suffering because he let it be known that at any time he could have called legions of angels to deliver him from others, but he gave himself to the smiters. Isaiah 50:6 makes me think that when they spit on him, he didn't turn his head but he took it, he accepted it, not with an indignation, not stone-faced, "I'm not going to let it bother me," but with all of the realization that this was the punishment for the sins that he carried. Made to be sin for us, he accepted all that spit, all the whip, and just physically so worn and so drained after a night of loss of sleep in those trials, that he was not physically able at the age of 33 to drag his cross and somebody else had to do it for him, and he did it because he loved his Father and you. "No greater love hath any man than that he give his life for his friend." He suffered for me.

The purpose of his suffering. Again, my little grandchildren without knowing really what they're saying are able to say, "He suffered for our sin." He didn't suffer as an advocate for some principles. He didn't suffer in order to be an example of what it means to deal with others. He didn't suffer as a martyr. He suffered and there was a definite purpose, the penalty, the right penalty for his people.

His suffering was propitiatory. That specific word emphasizes that sin earns divine wrath. A propitiatory sacrifice means that he had to appease, conciliate, repair. He had to render us the opposite, not the rightful objects of his wrath but he had to render us favorable in God's eyes. That's propitiatory.

He had to, and did, fulfill the purpose of atone. Atone. That emphasizes that sin and sinfulness violates God's justice and that God's justice is not something that you can, "Well, we'll commute the sentence or we'll decrease the sentence or we'll exercise that so-called mercy," it's really not, "by violating justice." No, Jesus atoned, that is, he fully satisfied the penalty. If our sins deserve an eternity of the anger of God, he did it. That's what the word "atonement" means. He brought the atoning sacrifice so that we could be, someone divided the word "atone" up with "at one," so that we could be one with God, favored by him, so that his justice, then, instead of pouring out wrath has to say in divine justice, he makes the verdict, "You deserve heaven. You deserve to go to heaven." If we overstate it, forgive, God would say, "I have to take you to heaven. You deserve heaven. Your righteousness is so great and so perfect that you belong in heaven. Not hell. Not on earth again but in heaven." Atone.

Propitiatory, atoning, reconciling. Reconciling sacrifice. He restored a broken relationship and he makes a relationship that is absolutely blessed. There is no question, there are no moments of hesitation about the relationship. The relationship that he restores and reconciles for us is that we live in the consciousness that nothing can

separate us from his love. Nothing we do will make him love us a little less and then later a little more. He reconciled us, definite in its purpose and definite in its effect because the suffering of Christ truly accomplished redemption and salvation for his people.

Now Answer 37 says that all the time that he lived on earth, but especially at the end of his life, he sustained in body and soul the wrath of God against the sins, now listen, of all mankind. Of all mankind. It does not say for all men or for every human, it says for all mankind. That is obviously not every human. Jesus himself made that clear in John 10. There he said, "I am the good shepherd and know my sheep and have known of mine." Then in 15, "I lay down my life for the sheep." Then in verse 26 he says, "You believe not because you are not my sheep." We know there's a hell, the ungodly know there's a hell and they fear it. That there is a hell shows that Jesus didn't die for them because if he died for everybody and there's still a hell, then he failed for them. But Jesus was definite in his purpose and in his effectiveness. Only for the sin, "I lay down my life for my sheep." God told Joseph, "His name shall be Jesus for he shall save his people," Matthew 1:21. He will save his people from their sins. He died for a definite number of people. Hebrews 2 speaks of "the people." The people.

Why does the Catechism, then, use that expression "all mankind"? The best way that we can understand that expression is to use the figure of a tree. No tree grows into a perfect shape. Each one has their own unique shape. Maybe we look at them with our inexperienced eye and the pine trees all seem to have that cone shape generally, but no tree is of a perfect shape. So now think of it this way: Adam is the root of the tree of mankind, cursed, fallen. God as he implements his eternal decrees in his providential action, works on this tree of the human race of all mankind, he works on it by pruning. He cuts a big branch at the bottom, a small branch somewhere else, and when God is finished with this tree, then he's changed the root from Adam to Jesus and the tree are all of the elect that God gave to Jesus. Now around that tree on the ground, it is littered with pruned branches, dead branches that have been cut out of the tree of mankind and all that's left are all of the elect and mankind is the word that's used to say every nation, every tribe, all the people over the whole world in all the history of the world now are represented in this tree that is absolutely beautifully shaped. Root Christ, made up of all mankind, all the elect out of every nation, each with their own unique place in that beautiful tree with all the reprobate cut out. So there ain't just Dutch and there is not just Jew, all mankind are in the tree for which Christ suffered. Definite in its effect.

That leads us right into the fruit of his suffering. Jesus' suffering bore fruit. He actually atoned. He actually atoned. In John 10:28 Jesus put it this way, "I give unto them eternal life." "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish but have everlasting life." The gift of eternal life. John the Baptist said it in John 3:36, "the wrath of God abideth on them who believe not but unto them that believe," they have already, not will have, but they already have eternal life.

Listen to the description of what is an accomplished fact for the elect. Colossians 1, "In you," he says to these Gentiles, "who were sometime previously alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through

death to present you," reconcile, "holy, unblameable and unreprouchable." Nobody can lay a charge against one of God's elect. "Unreprouchable in his sight." And notice, past tense. It's an accomplished fact. Each and all of the sins and sinfulness of God's people so that we could pray as we did, "Who shall stand before him when we come before him in worship? We can. We may dare to come here." Maybe we might hesitate a bit because our sins rise up against us in the consciousness of them, but then we come here and we stand in the blood of an accomplished work of Jesus. We may stand here. We must stand here. Faith says, "I may and I must and I can and I will forever stand before him."

If he didn't say it, I wouldn't dare but he says it and he says it so clearly, so powerfully. The fruit of Jesus' suffering is a demonstration of the greatness of God's love and of Jesus' love. Of God's love, on his part he spared not his own Son, his own beloved Son. He gave him up for us all. Of Christ's love, his willingness to suffer so that he could say it in John 15:13, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." You are his friend and nothing is going to change that. We're going to still sin, shame on us, but even though we're still going to sin, we're never going to stop being his friend. Never.

There is no more wrath left. God has no more wrath left for us. Do you hear the second to the last cross word? "It is finished!" And that's why Romans 8 ends the way it does. "Nothing," my death, a loved one's death, "Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Because he was God's Son and because he is the Son of God and because he did it so willingly, the death of the Son of God is so infinitely precious that it can merit our deliverance out of the eternity of hell into an eternity of heaven. We never taste, we might think so, we never taste in spite of what we feel, God's wrath. The proclamation has to always be the love of God is behind what happened. That's what Jesus earned. That's the fruit of his suffering.

Where do we go from there? Let's stand before each other and before the reprobate with our head low. We can't stick our nose in the air. We have not made ourselves to differ and the recurrence of our sins and the ever-presence of our sinfulness is every reason for us, and again, the first part of self-examination and the first principal part of the doctrine of holy baptism ends we abhor, we loath ourselves. Humility. Humility. Humility. No noses in the air. Everything we do right, it's a gift. How can we glory in that which was given to us? Hate your own sin as much as you would hate anyone who would hurt your friend or your family. Hate your sin. Flee from it.

Humble, hating our own sins, and fleeing from them, but then thanks. That lifts the head up and if I look up, it's going to be because of thanks and love, returning love. Look up to thank him and never stop finding reason in that love in what he suffered to be joyful and happy. That's the meaning of blessed. Blessed, happy, with an inner joy that no one can take away. He suffered for you. Amen.

Our praise and thanks and love go to thee. What a Savior is Jesus our Lord and it all started when he conceived, caused his own conception in the womb of his mother, when

he cried as a baby in the manger, when he went about his Father's business, when he drank the cup of thy wrath for our sake. Thanks, Father. For Jesus' sake. Amen.