

Remember us, as You thought graciously upon the one thief on the cross, O Lord, unworthy as we also are, and open to us the kingdom of Your grace, that our enemy may not prevail over us, that hereafter we may be with You in the kingdom of Your glory, where You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.

In Christ Jesus, who thought of us with everlasting compassion as He endured suffering in this life for us, dear fellow redeemed:

Jesus passively obeyed His Father's will by coming into this world and being the sinners' Holy Substitute. He had us in mind while He endured the suffering for our sin. Jesus was not experiencing this suffering for Himself, for His sin, but for yours and mine. He of all sufferers in this life could have cried out – *"Its not fair, I did nothing wrong."* But He did not make such an appeal. He endured it willingly because it would bring us deliverance from our deserved suffering here in time and there on into all eternity.

He has not stopped thinking about us. That is why He has promised to be with us always even unto the end of the age as we struggle with sin and its many forms of temptation. We now, as His

followers, suffer in this life at the hands of His and now our enemies. To imagine that we do not deserve all such suffering in this life is to think falsely about ourselves. Jesus suffered for us sinners, so as we suffer we should think rightly about ourselves and personally pray:
Lord Jesus Think on Me, that I May Likewise Think of Myself.

I

In the face of temptation to sin our Lord stood steadfast and resisted all such temptations, tempted as we are told elsewhere just like we are tempted. He came to produce that perfect life under God's holy Law, which demands holiness from us all. Our God made flesh, Christ Jesus, was made to suffer in this life not justly but in His great love for us He suffered in our behalf. Sin was not an option for Him as our Savior. He was here to fulfill the will of His Father for us: actively by obeying the law - passively by receiving our punishment.

You and I are now called to lives of picking up our crosses of suffering and following Him. Whereas Jesus did not deserve any of the suffering He received, we do on account of our sin. Suffering in this life as Christians is a constant reminder that our sin is the cause, not perhaps in the direct sense that you do something wrong and you are made to suffer for it. No, but the suffering we experience is a consequence to the sin we have brought into this world. As believers

in Christ as Savior we know that suffering is not an excuse to indulge the passions of the flesh, which are contrary to God's Law. Rather in repentance we are committed to stop sinning and to pursue fulfilling the will of God. Jacob limped away after pinning Christ; David had rebellion in his own family after being absolved of adultery and murder; Paul had his thorn in the flesh after his revelation of heaven to keep them humble repentant believers. We also heard in our Old Testament lesson that after hearing the Gospel about the woman's seed coming to save – Eve would have pain in childbearing, Adam would have pain in getting his food from the ground.

So we pray that we may think about our sin in the midst of our suffering in this life, just as our Lord thought of our sin in the midst of His suffering for us. Even when the suffering appears to be unjust, we as repentant sinners should not become indignant, knowing full well we deserve even worse, namely everlasting punishment in hell.

Sin is to be taken seriously by us. Evidently the first readers of Peter's letter became Christians later in life, so he comments: "For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry." Now it is possible for Christians who were born and raised as Christians to have fallen away and have dabbled

in the things of debauchery as listed during a portion of their lives. But that means very likely having fallen from grace. Maybe that describes you, but as Peter says, now as a Christian that “time ... suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do.”

Now is the time to take our sin seriously and consider how grievously it offends our Lord. Avoiding all such temptations in penitent humility we will find that unbelievers are surprised when we do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they will malign us. We will hear charges of being *“holier than thou”*, a hypocrite. This is no excuse to ignore what is sin to please the unrighteous. Rather we are called upon to receive their abuse as part of our suffering in this life, which soon will come to an end.

II

Jesus think on me that I may think of myself rightly and trust that in You I am forgiven of all my sin by Your suffering and death. It was this truth preached to us, whether in the waters of our baptism or the word heard with our ears, when we were dead in our trespasses and sins. We now are made alive to live not for ourselves but for God and our neighbors whom He has placed in our lives.

So as we have entered this holy season of penitence when we focus on the sufferings of our Lord, examine your lives my fellow

redeemed. Does the unbelieving world notice the difference in you as one who takes sin seriously and avoids it? Does your language used in the workplace, or in your places of leisure reflect your state of penitence and faith in Christ? Is the world surprised at your speech, spoken in kindness and charitableness? When you suffer in this life, is it obvious to the world you are not cursing, but rather blessing? Or do you act like a Christian only when you are among your brothers and sisters in Christ?

Earlier in this same letter Peter wrote: “But if when you do good and suffer for it - you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth. When He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. “

So it is that this Holy One who suffered for us had not Himself in mind but you and me, so we must see ourselves in our suffering too. We do this best by seeing the suffering of our expiation – Jesus’ suffering our real suffering which has made payment for all our sins.

Sin is a most serious matter. God took it most seriously by sacrificing His only begotten Son for us and all sinners. May this same mind be found among us in our lives of suffering. Trust that for all your many failures you are forgiven and therefore have now died to sin to live to righteousness. This was the understanding of David in Ps. 25: “Remember Your mercy, O LORD, and Your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to Your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of Your goodness, O LORD! Good and upright is the LORD; therefore He instructs sinners in the way. He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble His way. All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness.”

Jesus was truly tempted in every way as you are to this day, yet was without sin, so that He might produce a righteous life for you. As He went about suffering in your place He made payment for all your sin. Jesus does think on you. He remembers you all the way to the end of days and into all eternity. He has called you out of this world of death and destruction to live. May this work begun in you be brought to completion on the day He returns to judge the living and the dead. Amen.