

## **“Perfection”--- Sermon for October 21, 2018**

### **Hebrews 5:5-10 Mark 10:35-40**

8 Son though he was, ***he learned obedience from what he suffered 9 and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.***-Jesus said to them, “You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with,...(Hebrews 5:8-9, Mark 10:39 NIV).

The Cherokee Outlet race (commonly called the Cherokee Strip) occurred in 1893. The Cherokee Outlet was one of three areas the Cherokee Nation had acquired after resettlement to lands in present-day eastern Oklahoma in 1835 as part of the Treaty of New Echota.

New Echota

It provided the so-called legal basis for the Trail of Tears, the forcible removal of the Cherokee Nation from Georgia. The Treaty of New Echota was signed December 15, 1835, ceding Cherokee land to the U.S. in exchange for compensation.... The discovery of gold in north Georgia led to the Cherokee Removal Bill in 1830, and Western European immigrants swarmed over Cherokee land. Without authorization from Cherokee Chief John Ross, the Treaty of New Echota agreed to the removal west of the Mississippi in exchange for \$5 million. Though ratified by one vote in the U.S. Senate, the Cherokee Nation rejected the treaty, leading directly to forced removal in 1838.

As commerce grew across the area of Kansas and Oklahoma, cattlemen became increasingly annoyed by the presence of the Cherokee on prime land that they wanted to use to drive cattle from northern ranches to Texas. The Cherokee Nation had already lost vast plantations in their original Northwest Georgia Nation that they had been forced off of in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. The cattle companies would have to lease their land at market rates if they wanted to graze their cattle there.

The commercial cattle interests prevailed in convincing the government to declare this Cherokee land as “public domain” and therefore open to Western European immigrant settlement. Next, President Benjamin Harrison and enough Congressmen were financially compensated by the Cattle interests to issue a proclamation, forbidding all grazing leases in the Cherokee Outlet

after October 2, 1890, effectively eliminating tribal profits from cattle leases. After this, the Cherokee Nation had no choice but to agree to sell these lands to the government at a price ranging from \$1.40 to \$2.50 per acre the following year. Part of the agreement was that individual Cherokees were to be permitted to establish claims in the Outlet, but land stake offices under military supervision excluded the Cherokees who sought to take advantage of this.

Today, The Cherokee Nation, the federally-recognized government of the Cherokee people, is the largest native tribe existing within the United States, with nearly 325,000 citizens worldwide. More than 124,000 Cherokee Nation citizens reside within the 14-county tribal jurisdictional service area that covers most of northeastern Oklahoma. With approximately 10,000 employees, Cherokee Nation and its subsidiary component units are, collectively, one of the largest employers in northeastern Oklahoma. The tribe has a \$1.55 billion impact on the Oklahoma economy.

The Cherokee Nation suffered much at the hands of the Western European American immigrants and their governments. Their prayers, rituals and incantations seemed to fall on deaf ears. God had seemingly abandoned them, or so they thought, so they decided to profit from their nation's conquest by the USA. Yet through their resistance and staying power, in the face of suffering and setback, they achieved a sense of completion as their nation faced the future in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium.

Perfection is not something achieved through self-inflicted suffering, acts of self-denial, fasting and doing without. God is not a masochist and does not call us to sadomasochism. Our salvation is not accomplished by suffering, yet Christ, was made perfect by what he suffered on our behalf.

By experiencing the human condition of suffering as we all do, yet without allowing it to define him as life's victim, Christ became the one designated by God to intercede for and impute the righteousness of God on us, the wholeness and completion of our lives that we call perfection.

The Book of Job asked, "Is God our enemy? Do we suffer because God is angry with us? Are we suffering because of our sins? Are we suffering from a failure to live fully in Christ's Lordship, or why are we suffering when we are living fully in his Lordship?"

The late Dorothy Soelle in her essay, "Suffering" writes that there is a process for the believer to get through her or his suffering:

The first is the dark night of despair, ***the cross, on which we are hammered (like Job) without being asked.*** Christians are people who through suffering know that their death is behind them.

3. Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3. For you have died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4. When Christ, who is our life appears, then we also will appear with him in glory. <sup>5</sup> Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.... you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips (Colossians 3).

It is the death of being, writes Soelle, ... the "I can't take it any longer," scream. Suffering causes death and no one gets around this death. The child that we once were dies. That youth with his inexhaustible vitality also dies. Our dreams and illusions die.

We don't have the choice of avoiding suffering and going around all these deaths. The only choice we have is between the absurd cross of meaningless (that which all human beings experience by virtue of the chaotic nature of human existence), and the cross of Christ. We either passively accept human

suffering and death, or we embrace the death that embraces us in the passion of Christ Jesus our Lord. No one saw Christ rise from the dead. The women who became to proclaim his resurrection and who eventually convinced the male disciples to come out of hiding, saw the empty tomb. Their credo was, “We believe, although we do not see.” This Job proclaimed when he stated,

Job 23:16-17 New International Version (NIV)

<sup>16</sup> God has made my heart faint;  
the Almighty has terrified me.

<sup>17</sup> Yet I am not silenced by the darkness,  
by the thick darkness that covers my face.

Resurrection faith, in belief in love, in God’s compassion.

Christianity is the religion of those marked by affliction. It concerns itself with their needs. People are pronounced blessed not because of their achievements or their behavior, but with regard to

their needs. Blessed are the poor, the suffering, the persecuted, the hungry.

Again we repeat what Dr. Soelle so aptly wrote,  
The cross we are hammered on (like Job) without being asked, is also the guarantee of our new life, of our completion of our perfection in Christ through his suffering and rising on our behalf.

Those who have been reduced through their identifying with the death of Jesus on the cross to the position of servility and “nobodiness” in our world, are free to rise in faith from that death, because Christ has proclaimed us the blessed of God. The closer we are to this reality, the closer we are to the perfection of Christ’s death in our lives.

For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted (tried, tested) like as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:15-16).

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.