

Christ Suffered for Us – 1 Peter 3:17-18

February 14, 2021

We live in a country that, in both spiritual and physical ways, has been supremely blessed these past 250 years, and in fact one of the most blessed countries in the world - and for this we should be very thankful. *“God shed His grace on Thee.”*

- In this country, we have been blessed to have so many freedoms, freedom of speech, religion, and assembly, and we haven't really had that much persecution compared to other places in the world, like Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

But this is changing, for we now live in this cancel culture, in that time when we're losing these freedoms, and I don't believe it will be long before there's persecution, and the powers that be want to greatly restrict our freedoms as Christians.

- Now of course, we don't need to be afraid of what might take place, for we know God is always in control, that nothing happens by chance, and that He is with us.

- Well, we're going through 1 Peter, and a good portion of this epistle talks about persecution and suffering, and so it really is timely that we're going this book.

1 Peter 3:13-17. We see that we are to be zealous to do good.

- If we should suffer, then we are blessed. Matt. 5:9-11

- We are not to fear people, and are not be afraid to suffer for the Lord.

- We see that suffering may lead to an opportunity for the gospel. Mark 13:11, Phil. 1:12-14

- We are to be gentle and reverent towards unbelievers. We are to respect them; we are to be loving, sensitive, and compassionate toward non-Christians who are caught in their sin, whose minds are blinded by the god of this world, by the lies of the devil.

- We know the enemy who opposes us will be put to shame, maybe in this life, but for sure, they will suffer eternally in hell if they don't repent of their sins and turn to Christ.

We also read that we may be slandered or reviled for being a Christian. That is, one way we suffer is when people say bad things to us about being a Christian.

- The word slander is a general word meaning evil speech or verbal abuse.

- The word revile means to threaten, insult, or mistreat.

- And you're to keep a good conscience which means that even when you're attacked and persecuted for being a Christian you know you're doing what's right - you aren't wondering about what you're doing, you aren't second guessing yourself, or feeling bad or guilty about what others say about you. That is, your conscience is clear. 1 Tim. 1:5, 2 Tim. 1:3

You also know that it's better to suffer for doing what's right than for doing what's wrong. And when I say better, I don't mean physically better, or relationally better, or in a financial or worldly sense – I mean spiritually better, and eternally better.

- Rom. 8:18 – *“I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”*

1 Peter 2:20. As Christians we are to be righteous, we are to do what is right, and there will be times when we do what is right, and we suffer. But note what it says, that we're to patiently endure it, we're to bear up under this trial.

- Rom. 5:3. We read about tribulation, and suffering is a form of tribulation, and we see that we're to persevere, which means that we are to patiently endure, and this is godly character, character only God can give us. And a key to being able to endure persecution is to have hope, is to know God has a great future in store for us.

We see that this finds favor with God. That is, God is pleased with us when we suffer for Him and are patiently enduring it. And this means we're trusting God, that we're looking to God, and we're focused on Him when we suffer.

- 1 Pet. 1:3-9. And we have to see our trials and our suffering in light of the future, in light of the hope we have, in light of the fact that God will greatly bless us. 2 Cor. 4:17

But there's something else we have to see:

- Vs. 17 says, "*It is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer...*" You must know that God is sovereign over your suffering, that you only suffer because that is what God wants for your life, because it is God's will for your life.

- As you know, we've not suffered much in this country, and that has been God's will. And if we suffer more at this time, and in the future, then that's God's will too.

- Acts 18:21 – Paul was a godly person, he was always sensitive to the will of God.

Acts 21:14 – These Christians who were with Paul were submissive to the will of God.

John 21:18-23 – Jesus was talking about how Peter would suffer but John wouldn't, or at least not like Peter. Again, it came down to God's will. When it comes to suffering or any area of our life, it always comes down to what God wants, not what we want. Pr. 16:9

1 Pet. 3:18 – This is such an important gospel verse, for it really shares the heart of the gospel. And I want to go over it carefully, and so I have a number of points I want to share with you that relate to this verse, to what Christ did for us.

1. This verse relates to what we just read in vss. 13-18. Now we read the word for here, but if you go to the Greek you discover this word "*for*" comes from two Greek words, one that translates "*because*" and the other that translates "*indeed*."

- This means that what's being said in vs. 18 here connects to what we just read, which was about suffering. And we read that Christ died for us, and what Christ did for us in dying for us is the greatest example of suffering there is. And so Jesus is our #1 example of One who suffered, and we need to think about how He suffered for us. Heb. 12:3

2. This talks about our sins and that Jesus died for our sins. And our sin is our main problem, our biggest problem, that which keeps us from having a relationship with God, that which results in both spiritual death and physical death, and that which needs to be punished. Rom. 3:23, Rom. 6:23; Gen. 2:18; Gen. 4, 6, 16, 19; Matt. 25:41, 46

- If Jesus doesn't die and pay for our sins, then we have to die and pay for them ourselves, and that means eternal death, and being punished forever in the lake of fire.

3. Only Jesus Christ could take away our sins, no one else could do it. And Jesus could do it because He's both God and man, He's the Son of God and the Son of man. And only by being both God and man could He pay for our sins. 1 Tim. 2:5-6 – *“There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all.”* And so it is our sin that caused the sinless Christ to die. And Christ wouldn't have died if He hadn't taken our sins upon Himself. Isaiah 53:5-6

4. Jesus' death was purposeful, was meaningful, was important, was necessary. There was a reason Jesus died for us, a purpose for His death. Our human deaths are so unlike His death, for we die because we are sinners, but He died for us who are sinners, so as to forgive us of our sins, and make us holy. John 1:29

5. God predestined and planned that His only begotten Son would come to this earth and die for us. John 6:38, 6:57. Indeed, God sent His Son down to this earth to carry out His Father's will and plan. Acts 2:23 - *“This man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to the cross.”* - And so God was sovereign over the death of His own Son and in fact, wanted Him to die for us. Isaiah 53:10-12 – *“The Lord was pleased to crush Him...”*

6. Jesus Himself predicted that He would suffer and die. On numerous occasions, Jesus told His disciples that He would suffer and die, but they never really understood what He was saying. Matt. 16:21, 20:18-19. And think about this, that Jesus knew ahead of time that He was going to suffer and die for us. He knew it would be the most difficult and painful thing He would ever do, but He was willing to do it, for His Father, and for us. Luke 9:22, 12:49-40

7. Jesus died for our sins. Now the KJ and ESV don't say that He died for our sins, but that He suffered for our sins. There are a couple of variances in the original manuscripts, and the one Greek word means died and the other Greek word means suffered. But it's important that we know that Jesus suffered and died for our sins. It wasn't like Jesus just physically died for our sins. It wasn't like He was stoned and died quickly, or like He was stabbed to death and died right away. Jesus suffered and died for our sins, and this took awhile, a number of hours.

Jesus was crucified, the most painful way to die back in those days. Typically, a person would be nailed to the cross and hang there for a couple days and would very slowly and very painfully physically die. Psalm 22:14-15.
- But it wasn't just that Jesus physically died but that He also suffered for us and then physically died for us. And Jesus paid for our sins by suffering on the cross.

You know that the sky went dark at noon, and that Jesus then hung on that cross for three more hours and then physically died. You know that Jesus cried out, “*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*” And He said that because His Father forsook Him, and it was during that time that God poured out His wrath upon His Son because He was punishing His Son for our sins, and Christ then was paying the penalty for our sins, the penalty we should have paid. And so Christ suffered and died to pay for our sins. Rom. 5:8, 1 Cor. 15:3

8. Jesus Christ, the just, died for the unjust. I love this phrase, for it really hits at the heart of the gospel. Jesus was perfect, a perfect man, and He never committed any sins. Like an unblemished lamb, He was the perfect sacrifice, with no imperfections, no sins. Because Jesus was perfect, then only He could have paid for our sins. No sinner, no other person can pay for your sins because they have to pay for their own sins. Ps. 49:7

And Jesus died for the unjust. As I said before, we are sinners, and each of us are worse sinners than we realize. For we have sinned every day of our lives. And we have sinned a lot each day. We have sinned a lot in our thoughts, and also in our words, and in our actions. And we have sinned in all kinds of ways. 2 Tim. 3:1-4, Gal, 5:19-21, Rom. 1:28-32. God has these lists of sins in the Bible, and more besides this, because He wants us to know how we’ve sinned, how much we’ve sinned, and how bad we’ve sinned. And so we are not a little bit unjust, we are a lot unjust, we are very bad sinners, and we really deserve to die for all our sins, and be punished for all our sins.

Jesus, the just, died for sinners, for the unjust. This is what we call “*substitutionary atonement.*” That is, Jesus became our substitute, He took our place. We should have died for our sins but instead, Jesus died for us. And by His death, God’s wrath was satisfied. That is, God was pleased by what Christ did for us. And what Christ did for us by suffering and dying for us was sufficient to pay for all our sins.

The result is that we are made righteous, we are perfectly holy in God’s sight. And this word righteous is a legal term, and God as a righteous judge, because of what Christ did for us, looks at us and pronounces us not guilty, and so we’re freed from sin, and freed from any condemnation, and from any punishment. Rom. 3:21-28. These great vss. talk about how we are righteous because of what Jesus Christ did for us. And the way a person becomes righteous and holy in God’s sight is to have faith in Christ, to believe, that Christ, the just, paid for his sins. Gal. 3:6-14, Rom. 5:8-11, 1 Pet. 3:18 – We’ll talk more about this verse next week.