

CHRIST'S REDEMPTIVE SUFFERINGS

TEXT: I PETER 3:18

Introduction:

1. Last week I preached from I Peter 3:13-17, which deals with Christians suffering for their faith.
2. This leads us to I Peter 3:18, which deals with the sufferings of Christ.
3. The example of Christ is proposed as an argument for patience under sufferings -- "For Christ also..." (3:18).
4. Matthew Henry said. "Now, if Christ was not exempted from sufferings, why should Christians expect it? If he suffered, to expiate sins, why should not we be content when our sufferings are only for trial and correction, but not for expiation? If he, though perfectly just, why should not we, who are all criminals? If he once suffered, and then entered into glory, shall not we be patient under trouble, since it will be but a little time and we shall follow him to glory? If he *suffered, to bring us to God*, shall not we submit to difficulties, since they are of so much use to quicken us in our return to God, and in the performance of our duty to him?"
5. Matthew Henry said this about Christ's sufferings:
 - 1. Jesus Christ himself was not exempted from sufferings in this life, though he had no guilt of his own and could have declined all suffering if he had pleased.
 - 2. The reason or meritorious cause of Christ's suffering was the sins of men: *Christ suffered for sins*. The sufferings of Christ were a true and proper punishment; this punishment was suffered to expiate and to make an atonement for sin; and it extends to all sin.
 - 3. In the case of our Lord's suffering, it was the just that suffered for the unjust; he substituted himself in our room and stead, and bore our iniquities. He that knew no sin suffered instead of those that knew no righteousness.
 - 4. The merit and perfection of Christ's sacrifice were such that for him to suffer once was enough. The legal sacrifices were repeated from day to day, and from year to year; but the sacrifice of Christ, once offered, purgeth away sin, Heb. 7:27; 9:26, 28; 10:10, 12, 14.
 - 5. The blessed end or design of our Lord's sufferings was to bring us to God, to reconcile us to God, to give us access to the Father, to render us and our services acceptable, and to bring us to eternal glory, Eph. 2:13, 18; 3:12; Heb. 10:21, 22.

- 6. The issue and event of Christ's suffering, as to himself, were these, he was put to death in his human nature, but he was quickened and raised again by the Spirit.
- 6. Note the word "also" (I Peter 3:18; cf. 2:21). We do suffer, but Christ also suffered. Isaiah 53:3 says He is "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."
- 7. Hebrews 4:15 says the Lord Jesus Christ is our great high priest, and is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities."
- 8. Our Lord's sufferings, referred to here in I Peter 3:18 (and in 2:24), were redemptive. We refer to this as the vicarious or substitutionary atonement of Christ.

I. THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS

II. PURPOSE OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS

III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS

I. THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS

1. He suffered for our sins on the cross "once" (3:18). This once-for-all offering of Christ stands in contrast to the annual sacrifices of the high priest on the Day of Atonement.
2. This is brought out in the Book of Hebrews. "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:12).
3. When we speak of the character of Christ's sufferings, we must emphasize it was "for sins" (I Peter 3:18).
4. This is the heart of the Gospel. First Corinthians 15:3 says, "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures."
5. John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).
6. Seven hundred years before the cross, the prophet Isaiah said, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).
7. In fact, this doctrine of substitution is taught all throughout the Bible. We see it in Genesis 22:8, where God says, "God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering."
8. In the book of Exodus, we see Christ is our Passover Lamb.
9. And we see this all through the book of Leviticus, with the various animal sacrifices.

10. We see it in the Messianic Psalms and prophecies.
11. We see it in the Gospels, where Jesus said, "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).
12. We see it in the book of Acts. It was central in the preaching of the apostles.
13. We see it in all of the epistles.
14. And we see it in the Book of Revelation, where over and over again, the Lord Jesus Christ is referred to as "the Lamb."
15. The vicarious nature of Christ's death is brought out here in I Peter 3:18 by the words, "the just for the unjust."
16. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:21).
17. These Scriptures also emphasize Christ's sinlessness. He "knew no sin." He is holy, righteous, and just; whereas we are unholy, and unjust sinners.

II. PURPOSE OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS

1. "That he might bring us to God" (I Peter 3:18). This was the only way He could bring us to God.
2. To "bring us to God" -- this is man's greatest need.
3. According to Romans 5:10, before we were saved, we were the enemies of God, but now we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. Ephesians 2:3 says we "were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."
5. Therefore, the purpose of Christ's sufferings was "that he might bring us to God" (I Peter 3:18).
6. Colossians 1:20 says, "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."

III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS

1. Death and resurrection -- "being put to death in the flesh, but quickened (made alive) by the Spirit" (I Peter 3:18).
2. "Put to death in the flesh" reminds us of the violent death of our Lord.
3. Over 500 years before Calvary, Daniel the prophet said the Messiah shall "be cut off, but not for himself" (Daniel 9:26).
4. The early Christians had to contend with false religious cults, just as we do today.

5. There were various Gnostics (e.g. docetics) who taught that Christ was not a man with a physical body. They taught Christ was merely a spirit.
6. That is why the apostle John says, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).
7. And, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life" (I John 1:1).
8. That is why the apostle Paul said, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh..." (I Timothy 3:16).
9. Therefore, since these Gnostics denied that Christ was God manifest in the flesh, they did not believe He was literally crucified on the cross.
10. But Peter makes it plain that the Lord Jesus Christ was "put to death in the flesh" (I Peter 3:18).
11. "Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (I Peter 3:18). Our Lord's redemptive victory was not complete until His resurrection from the dead.
12. Christ died on the cross as our sinless Substitute -- "the just for the unjust" -- and He arose as our glorified Lord and Saviour.
13. *Lifted up was He to die;
"It is finished!" was His cry;
Now in Heav'n exalted high.
Hallelujah! What a Savior! -- PP Bliss.*

CONCLUSION:

1. A Roman Catholic priest was visiting one of his parishioners in the hospital, when this parishioner mentioned to him that the lady in the bed next to hers was very sick and likely to die soon.
2. The priest then went over to the dying woman and said, "I can offer you absolution."
3. The woman was a Baptist, and was not familiar with the term "absolution," since the word is not in the Bible.
4. So she said, "Sir, I have no idea what you mean."
5. The priest said, "I have come to forgive your sins."
6. The woman then asked the priest, "May I look at your hands?"
7. The priest said, "Yes, you may."
8. Looking at his hands, the lady then said, "Sir, you are an imposter!"

9. "An imposter! What do you mean?" the priest asked.
10. "You are an imposter, because the Man who has forgiven my sins has nail-prints in His hands."