

# CHRIST OUR SUBSTITUTE

## 1 Peter 3:18

### INTRODUCTION

- In recent days we have been confronted with heartbreaking news of innocent people slaughtered for no apparent reason
- Such events are often described by an unbelieving world as “senseless tragedies” – they cannot make sense of how or why such things happen to people
- But for the believer, even with our limited understanding of the events in the world, we can make sense of even the most tragic events, knowing that they all are under the almighty hand of divine providence
- When confronted with our own suffering in this world, we are encouraged to look to the suffering of Jesus Christ
- Christ’s suffering brings sense, meaning and purpose to our suffering
- It elevates and dignifies our suffering, transforming it from a senseless burden to something more precious than gold (1 Peter 1:7)
- Christ shares in our suffering (Hebrews 4:15), and we fellowship in his suffering (Philippians 3:10)
- The Lord Jesus encouraged his disciples, saying, “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)
- In the midst of tribulation in the world, the Christian has peace and joy, and more than that, has the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to sustain him through it all (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)
- In this chapter, Peter has addressed the suffering of the Christian for righteousness sake, saying that it is a cause for happiness (v.14)
- The believer’s joy in suffering then becomes a testimony to the world of God’s grace (v.15)
- Then here in verse 18, Peter turns the suffering Christian’s attention to the sufferings of Jesus Christ, as he does elsewhere in this epistle (2:21; 4:1)
- The word “also” in v.18 connects the Christian’s suffering to Christ’s suffering
- Peter’s exhortation is precisely the same as that given by every other herald of the gospel: “Look to Jesus Christ”
- One sure test to expose whether a man or church is truly of God or not is to ask, “Do they exalt Jesus Christ and point men to him?”
- This verse is one of the clearest statements of Christ’s substitutionary atonement in the Bible and should be as familiar to us as John 3:16
- Having encouraged us to suffer for doing what is right (v.14), with a good conscience (v.16), and according to God’s will (v.17), Peter points us to the perfect example of Christ who suffered for doing what is right, with a good conscience, and according to God’s will

- But we have in Christ something far greater than an example, we have a Redeemer who delivers us from sin and death, and raises us to life and righteousness

## I. THE REDEMPTION OF CHRIST BRINGS FORGIVENESS WITH GOD

- A. It is *Christ* who suffered for us
1. The term “Christ” is not a mere surname, but a title meaning “anointed” and “chosen” and corresponds to the Hebrew “Messiah
  2. As Christ, he is God’s chosen Saviour of mankind, prophesied, ordained and sent by the Father with all authority and power to perform the work of our redemption
  3. The Jews looked for a Christ who would deliver them from Roman oppression, not expecting a Christ who as a servant would suffer and die (Luke 23:35), yet this is what their prophets had foretold (Psalm 22, Isaiah 53)
- B. Christ *once* suffered for sins
1. As he died on the cross, he cried, “It is finished” (John 19:30) – the work of atoning for our sins was complete
  2. This sacrifice for sin is never to be repeated, contrary to the blasphemous Roman Catholic mass (Romans 6:10; Hebrews 7:27; 9:12,26; 10:10)
  3. This sacrifice for sin does not require man’s works to supplement it
- C. Christ suffered for *sins*
1. His death was as our substitute and sin-bearer, the fulfilment of all the Old Testament animal sacrifices that provided a temporary atonement, but could never take away sin (Hebrews 10:11)
  2. His death was not a mere example to us, but a sacrifice for us
  3. His death was not as a martyr for his faith, but as a Saviour for our sins
  4. His death was not a testimony but a substitution
  5. His life was not taken from him, he laid it down himself
  6. He suffered not only the wrath of men, but the wrath of God
- D. The just for the unjust
1. Christ is “the just” (*dikaïos*) – the righteous one
  2. It is his perfect righteousness that makes his sacrifice effectual to us
  3. We are “the unjust” (*adikón*) – the unrighteous ones

## II. THE RECONCILIATION OF CHRIST BRINGS PEACE WITH GOD

- A. Man needs to be brought to God
1. Prior to the fall, man enjoyed perfect communion with God
  2. But sin severed that fellowship, separating sinful man from a holy God (Isaiah 59:2)

3. As children of Adam, we all enter this world estranged from God, dead in trespasses and sins, under his condemnation and wrath
- B. Sensing this problem, man has attempted various means to bridge this great gap, and restore communion with God
1. They all boil down to man's efforts of righteousness, of religious observances
  2. It is the proud heart of man that thinks he can make himself accepted with God by his own works
  3. "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" (Proverbs 20:9)
- C. We need someone else to bring us to God
1. Job complained: "Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both." (Job 9:33)
    - a. A daysman is an arbiter, an umpire, and Job felt that if he could only find one who could intercede between himself and God, then he could be vindicated
    - b. Jesus Christ is that daysman
  2. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5)
  3. He is the *only one* that can bring sinners to God – "no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6)
  4. The temple in Jerusalem had a huge, thick veil between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, signifying the great barrier blocking man from accessing the presence of God
  5. At Christ's death, this great veil was rent in twain, showing that his sacrifice had opened the way for us, not into a mere earthly temple, but within the veil of the heavenly sanctuary, to the very presence of God (Hebrews 10:19-20)
  6. He is called our "forerunner", entered into heaven before us, preparing the way to God for us (Hebrews 6:19-20)
  7. The Greek verb for "bring" is *prosagein*, and describes the right granted to enter into a king's presence
  8. The noun (*prosagogen*) is rendered "access" – through the blood of Christ we have access to the Father (Ephesians 2:18; 3:12; Romans 5:2)
- D. He brings us to God
1. As wayward sheep are brought into the fold
  2. As unfaithful servants are brought back to their master
  3. As rebellious sons are brought back to their father

### III. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST BRINGS LIFE WITH GOD

- A. Christ was put to death in the flesh
1. "Put to death" – he did not die of natural causes, but was killed in a most violent and cruel manner

2. He died physically, bodily, in his human nature (Colossians 1:21-22; 1 Peter 2:24)
  3. His divine nature did not die, being eternal and not subject to death
- B. Christ was quickened by the Spirit
1. All three Persons of the Trinity are said to have raised Christ from the dead
    - a. The Father (Acts 4:10)
    - b. The Son (John 2:19-21)
    - c. The Spirit (Romans 8:11)
  2. Christ rose from the dead bodily, yet with a glorified, immortal body, not subject to corruption or death
  3. The reality of Christ's resurrection confers the same resurrection power into the believer's life
    - a. It secures our justification (Romans 4:25)
    - b. It guarantees our own resurrection (Romans 8:11; Colossians 3:4)
    - c. It raises us positionally to sit in heavenly places with Christ (Ephesians 2:6)
    - d. It enables us to walk in newness of resurrection life (Romans 6:4-5)
    - e. It manifests to the world through our conversation the life of Jesus (2 Corinthians 4:11)
    - e. It draws our affections away from earthly things unto heavenly things (Colossians 3:1-3)

## CONCLUSION

1. For the suffering Christian, there is no greater encouragement, no sweeter balm, than to meditate upon the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ
2. It has been said, "They feel not their own wounds who contemplate the wounds of Christ"
3. Those wounds are the means by which vile and helpless sinners are brought into the bosom of God the Father
4. "No soul ever ate a morsel more dainty than this one—substitution. I do think that this is the grandest truth in heaven and earth—Jesus Christ the just one died for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. It is meat to my soul. I can feed on it every day, and all the day." (Spurgeon)
5. The only way a sinner can be accepted with God is "in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:6), the Lord Jesus Christ
6. Have you come as a repentant sinner, trusting in Christ's atonement as your only hope of life and salvation?
7. Make the apostle Paul's desire your own prayer today: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (Philippians 3:10)