

1 Peter 3:18
Christ's Suffering for Our Sins

¹⁷ For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered^a once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,

a. 1 Peter 3:18 Some manuscripts *died*

Prayer:

Gracious heavenly Father, thank you for the Christian faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. We thank you for your Holy Spirit who inspired and instructed the apostles of the Lord Jesus to write the divine truths of the Gospel which we can read with our own eyes and meditate on in our own minds. Thank you that these sacred words are your words and your truth given for the divine victory over death and evil. Grant us now the guidance of your Spirit that the truths in this passage might come alive to us, that Jesus might come alive to us, and our understanding of our faith be cemented, and our joy increased as we lay open the sacred text. In Jesus' unmatched name we pray. Amen.

Christ's suffering was Sufficient

Christ's suffering Was Substitutionary

Christ's Suffering Was Effectual

Because it was a Physical death

Because the Holy Spirit brought Jesus out of death to life.

As we have been traveling through this first letter of Peter it is becoming evident to us that certain themes are repeated by Peter. He had certain concerns for the people of God, and certain truths he wanted them and us to understand. One of the evident themes in 1 Peter is that of suffering.

But we are learning that the sufferings we go through are not accident, but they are divinely ordained for several reasons. Some sufferings come to us normal aspects of living in a sin-damaged world and we have to suffer the from the effects of sin all around us. We also are learning that suffering can come to us because we belong to Jesus Christ and just as the enemies of the kingdom of God persecuted him, so they may persecute us. And we also have been learning that suffer can result from our own sins, our own neglect, our own law-breaking – in other words, we may reap what we sow when we demonstrate bad or illegal behavior.

But Peter's main concern seems to be for his fellow believers who are suffering for their faith in Jesus, who are suffering because they are living lives of righteousness and good works, and yet are being mistreated and maligned.

And Peter always tries to help these believers put their sufferings into perspective by calling to their attentions the Lord Jesus Christ – the supreme example of a righteous man who suffered unjustly. He committed no sin; there was no deceit in his mouth; yet he suffered from his fellow countrymen who were offended by him, or jealous of him, or who just hated him because he was holy and made them uncomfortable in their cherished sins. They were in darkness and he was light; they wanted him to stay away, to go away.

In the previous passage we read in 1 Peter 3:17 - ¹⁷ **For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.**

Now, in our passage today, in verse 18, Peter tells us why it is better to suffer for going good, than doing evil. It's because that's exactly what the Lord Jesus did: he suffered for doing good. He had done no evil, only good. Yet he suffered. He suffered at the hands of sinners and evil powers. He was the innocent one who suffered, though he had done nothing wrong.

So let's look at Christ's suffering today. We want to understand why he suffered, how he suffered, and what were the results of his suffering.

It is true that we have a lovely Savior, but he was a suffering Savior. We should never forget that although he was the God-man – fully God and fully man in one person, his deity did not lessen his suffering as a man.

Because he had a human body and human emotions just like you and me, he still felt the sharp pain of rejection by his townspeople and his own family, he still felt the ravaging pains of hunger as his body went without food for one week, then two weeks, then 40 days. His deity did not lessen the excruciating difficulty of surviving in the wilderness with no food for 40 days.

Nor did his divinity, that is, his divine nature, lessen one bit the sting of the whip that tore the flesh off his back when the Roman governor Pilate ordered him to be flogged. His human frame suffered all the torments of his pierced hands and feet that attached him to the Roman cross of execution, and the weight of his body pulling on the nails – his nearly suffocating from being unable to breathe. Meanwhile the thieves on either side of him and some of the population passing in front of his cross scorned him and hurled insults at him.

Jesus suffered greatly as a man, but his worst suffering came as he hung on the cross and God his heavenly Father poured out his white-hot anger, his wrath against the sins of his people, he poured out his anger towards us on his Son Jesus Christ. Jesus the sinless and innocent one came under the burden of all the sins of all his people from all ages; all these sins were laid on Jesus and God's unmitigated, full-powered wrath against human sin was poured out upon Jesus. No wonder he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Our text today teaches us several crucial truths about Christ's suffering. We read...

18 For Christ also ^(S)suffered^[a] once for sins,

The first thing we want to note is that...

I. Christ's Suffering Was Sufficient to Bring us to God.

Heb. 9:26 - *But as it is, ^(A)he has appeared ^(B)once for all ^(C)at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*

Notice that the text tells us how Christ "put away sin" – that is, how he destroyed it, erased it, eliminated it – he did it by the sacrifice of himself.

Nothing else was needed to put away sin because of the nature of the one who put it away. Jesus was the incarnated God, he was God who had taken to himself our humanity. His sacrifice, his giving up of his own life, was sufficient to remove sins because of the power and glory and divinity of the sacrifice – the very Son of God himself.

Under the old Covenant, the Mosaic covenant, animals were used as a provisional, that is a temporary sacrifice for human sin, but they could never actually remove any of the slightest of human sin. But the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ was a completely different story because he was an entirely different being than a sheep or cow or goat. He was a human being, but not just an ordinary human being, he was the very Son of God himself, he who had lived eternally at the Father's side, he had been in the bosom of the Father. He was the infinite God, unlimited in all his power and glory and majesty, therefore he had the power and ability to bear the sins of millions of his people in his own body, bear their sins, and pay the debt to God for them. A goat could not remove the sin and guilt of the simplest little white lie, but Jesus' sacrifice of himself could fully pay, eradicate, and cast as far as the east is from the west every sin of every one of his people who ever lived in any age in any place.

It was the person of Jesus which made all the difference. Jesus' offering of himself was a better sacrifice, an effective sacrifice – a sacrifice which accomplished the goal of paying for, of atoning for human sin – of absorbing the full wrath of God for his people's sin: for their lack of love for their creator, their failure of giving him thanks, their neglect of his worship, their rebellion and disobedience to him, their selfish behavior before God and other people, their self-centeredness and self-glorifying behavior, their wickedness and cruelty – their hatred and lust and greed and envy and every other sin in the book. Jesus paid for all these sins of all his people – he could only do it because of who he was. He was the "Word made flesh" who had come to live among those whom he had created – yet they did not recognize him and instead persecuted him and had him put to death.

So Christ' suffering was sufficient because of the nature of his person, of his being. Only the eternal God become man could do such a miracle. It was the greatest miracle that has ever happened. One man could bear the sins of many. This is the work of God himself and it is marvelous in our sight.

Christ's work was **sufficient** for closing the insurmountable gap between the holy God and sinful people. Reconciliation, the bringing together of the two warring parties, was impossible because God was too holy and he would not and could not lower his standards in order to have fellowship with humanity. And humanity, on the other hand, was too immersed and captivated by sin, to be able to even make the slightest move toward God. Humanity was paralyzed by sin, yeah, even more than paralyzed, humanity was absolutely and totally dead spiritually.

An outside force was needed in order to move humanity toward God. A fire of life would have to be lit within the breast of humanity, where there only burned the fire of sin. The fire of sin would have to be extinguished and another fire, the fire of life, would have to be ignited. And this is what happened. We read about it in Ephesians 2:4-5:

⁴ But^(A) God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

How do you explain the way that God saves sinners? Why would God even bother to save rebels and totally self-absorbed people who care nothing for him, in fact, who are running away from him. It says it right here in Ephesians 2:4: it was because of his mercy and love.

If God were strictly just and did not have mercy and love, he would be perfectly right to send the whole human race to hell – to be done with us – and maybe create another universe and start over with the human race. But no, he did not abandon his people, he did not give up on us. His mercy and love were sufficient to bridge the canyon between his holiness and our sin.

Christ's sacrifice was **sufficient**, abundantly sufficient, to close the gap between God the Father and us. It was the will of God to save his people through the sacrifice of his Son.

Heb. 10:10 - ¹⁰ And by that will ^(A)we have been sanctified through the offering of ^(B)the body of Jesus Christ ^(C)once for all.

One sacrifice given for all time. Only one was sufficient because it was the sacrifice of the very Son of God. No less than God incarnate was sent to rescue his people. The divine rescue was accomplished when Christ died on the cross, rose again, and ascended back to the Father. It was done. It was finished. The payment for sin was sufficient. Christ's work was sufficient. His people were now reconciled to God.

Christ's suffering, his death, was not only sufficient to bring us to God but

II. His suffering Was Substitutionary

The text says ¹⁸ **For Christ also ^(S)suffered^[a] ^(T)once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous**

When Christ died and rose again a great cosmic transfer took place. Something happened that had never happened before in the history of humanity. In fact, it could not even have been imagined. For one thing, humanity was ignorant of these two great facts: the holiness of God and the utter sinfulness of humanity. Now the Jews, the descendants of Abraham through his grandson Jacob, the descendants of the 12 tribes of Jacob, had been taught, especially through the law of Moses, how holy and separate from humans God is and how sinful and far from God humanity is. So they, of all the peoples of the earth, had been given a revelation of this reality. So they were not totally ignorant – but the problem was, and it was seen over and over again, over the centuries, that they could not keep God’s holy law, they could not measure up to God’s high standard of holiness, so they fell miserably short. They remained condemned for their sins, just as much as the pagan Gentiles. So they had to cry out in the words of Paul in Romans 7:24:

Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this **body of death**?

The answer is given in the next verse: ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

The answer for the question of how can the holy Creator of heaven and earth join himself in fellowship with sinful men and women and boys and girls is that through Jesus Christ something happened. What was it? It was, as our text says, the righteous one suffered for the unrighteous ones. A great substitutionary transaction took place.

We begin to read about this, even in the OT, as in

Isa. 53:6 - ^(A)All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way;
^(B)and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

Yahweh laid on Jesus all our iniquity, all our sin. When Jesus was hung up on that cross by the Roman soldiers, the invisible hand of God laid on Jesus all the sins of his people. A cosmic transfer took place. A cosmic substitution was enacted. We read about this in 2 Cor. 5:21 - ²¹ ^(A)**For our sake he made him to be sin** ^(B)**who knew no sin, so that in him we might become** ^(C)**the righteousness of God.**

A great substitution happened: God took our sin and place it all on his Son who knew no sin. Then God took Christ’s righteousness, and laid it on us, who had known only sin. It happened on the cross, but it is experienced in history as each person called by the grace of God is born again and believes on Christ.

What happened when God did this? We read about his in...

Rom. 3:26 - It

God maintained his justice by punishing our sin, as our sins deserved, for to sin against the holy God is an act of cosmic rebellion – to raise our fist in the face of God and in essence tell him to leave us alone is a sin that deserves everlasting punishment. To ignore God, to neglect him, to fail to love and honor him – is an act of juvenile impudence, an act of ingratitude that deserves divine punishment. And our lives were filled constantly with this kind of attitude and behavior.

It may not have been overt, that is, noticeable by other humans, but God saw into the inner recesses of our hearts – he saw the lust for self-glorification and lust for independence from God – and his hand of judgment was set to fall. And it will fall.

But look – something is happening. A man has appeared and he steps between God and us and he allows himself to be lifted up on a cross outside Jerusalem, on Golgotha, the hill of the skull, and he offers himself as the righteous sacrifice for the unrighteous lives of his people.

God accepts the offering and pours out his wrath on his Son and his Son fully absorbs that wrath. When it's all over, when God's justice is satisfied, his people are declared not long guilty and condemned in heaven's court, but justified, forgiven, and free, and welcomed into God's presence. How could all this happen? It happens because of the substitutionary sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of Christ's work on the cross, God's righteousness is maintained, yet sinners can be forgiven.

The death of Jesus on the cross, we read in Rom. 3:26... ***was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.***

So what we are seeing today is that

I. Christ's suffering was Sufficient to bring us to God

II. Christ's suffering Was Substitutionary, the righteous one gave himself for the salvation of his unrighteous people.

And thirdly, we want to consider the fact that

III. Christ's Suffering Was Effectual to bring us to God.

What does the word "effectual" mean?

It means producing an effect,... having adequate power or force to produce the effect.

The means employed were effectual. ⁷ Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. Ephesians 3:7.

“Effectual” means being able to work, having the power, to accomplish a goal. So God called Paul to be his minister and worked powerfully within him to make him an effectual instrument in his hand to bring the Gospel to various people groups around the Roman empire.

So Christ’s suffering were effectual to “bring us to God.”

(U)that he might bring us to God,

Christ suffered and died for a particular purpose, for an end result: to bring us to God.

It carries the meaning (Aor. Subj. active –) “to bring about a right relationship” The word “could be used to denote the bringing of a person before a tribunal or presenting him at a royal court; it also denoted the ritual act of bringing a sacrifice to God or the consecration of persons to God’s service.” Roger & Roger p. 576.

The great truth to be recognized here is that
Christ brought us to God; we did not bring ourselves.

We read in...

Isa. 40:11 - (Q)He will tend his flock like a shepherd;

(P)he will gather the lambs in his arms;

(Q)he will carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead those that are with young.

Eph. 2:13 - ³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were (A)far off have been brought near (B)by the blood of Christ.

How was God able to bring us near to himself? What was the means by which he did this? The text goes on to tell us how, why God was able to do this:

being put to death (V)in the flesh but made alive (W)in the spirit...

It was the death of Christ, only his death, that was the means by which God was able to bring us near to himself.

There is no other way by which we can come near to God. All the thousands of animals sacrifice under the Mosaic law could not bring any worshipper near to God in a saving way – it just made them aware of their sin.

No person can come near to God, that is, be in his fellowship, except through Christ and his death and resurrection. You cannot get to God by your own good religious works – merely going to church will not bring you near to God, in the sense of being saved. It is good to go to church and we need to, but we must have more than that. Christ himself, by his death and resurrection, by his working on our lives by his HS, can alone bring us to God.

A person cannot get to God through Mohammed or Joseph Smith of the Mormon religion or Ellen G. White of the Seventh Day Adventist religion or through any of the many Hindu gods.

There is only one way of salvation from sins and the reception of eternal life – it is through the Lord Jesus Christ, through his death and resurrection. Jesus said in John 14:6, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

He himself was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

being put to death ^(M)in the flesh

(aor. Pass. Part) “The expression refers to the reality of Christ’s physical death” R & R, Ibid

Christ left heaven to become incarnated as a full human being without losing a drop of his deity but he had to become human in order to die to save us from our sins.

Col. 1:21

²¹ ^(BB)And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, ^(BC)doing evil deeds, ²² he has now reconciled ^(BD)in his body of flesh by his death, ^(BE)in order to present you holy and blameless and ^(BF)above reproach before him

Heb. 2:9 - ⁹ But we see him ^(P)who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, ^(Q)crowned with glory and honor ^(R)because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might ^(S)taste death ^(I)for everyone.

Heb. 10:19-20 - ¹⁹ ^(A)Therefore, brothers, ^[a] since we have confidence to enter ^(B)the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by ^(C)the new and living way that he opened for us through ^(D)the curtain, that is, through his flesh

but made alive ^(W)in the spirit,

What does this expression mean? Probably the word “spirit” here does not refer to the HS, but to Christ’s spiritual nature in contrast to his physical nature.

David Wheaton (NBC) “ Once he had undergone in full God’s judgment on sin His spirit was released from the body... p. 1244

Stibbs: “...even before his R’n he was already able to move freely in the spiritual world as the victorious Man.” P. 142

The next verse lends weight to this interpretation: 1 Pet. 3:19:

¹⁹ in which[Ⓜ] he went and proclaimed[Ⓜ] to the spirits in prison,

So between Christ's death and burial and his resurrection, during that time, the scriptures indicate that in his spirit he had a particular ministry and we'll learn more about that next week when Wayne takes up the passage.

But the point to grasp here is that Christ died for our sins by means of the sacrifice of his physical body on the cross. This physical death, this sufficient and substitutionary death, paid for our sins. He had to die as a human being to be the substitutionary sacrifice for other human beings, for his own people, whom he loved from before creation and came from heaven to rescue.

Do you know today that Christ's suffering and death on the cross was totally sufficient to pay for your sins? Do you know that his death was the substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of his people, that it is the only way by which a sinner can be saved from his or her sins?

How do you respond to the great sacrifice that Christ did when he went to the cross to pay for the sins of his people? There is only one way to properly respond: It is in grateful reception of his sacrifice to your own heart, it is in humble worship, it is in devoted service to the one who loved us and gave himself for us.

If you have not done so already, will you not repent of your sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? This is the way of life and forgiveness and fellowship with God.

The Jesus way is the only way to God. Let us go that way and never turn back.

Prayer:

Holy and righteous Father, thank you that you spared not your only Son, but gave him freely for the redemption, the salvation of your people. Bring us all into your heavenly kingdom, that we may evermore fellowship with Christ and his people, in this world and the world to come. We pray in Jesus' precious name. Amen.