

Jesus Suffered and Died

1 Peter 3:18

Introduction (see 1 Peter)

Why would anyone desire to be a Christian if what we could offer them was...

- ? The possibility of being put out of social circles (1:1)
- ? The inevitability of being grieved by various trials (1:6)
- ? The certainty of involvement in a severe war (1:13)
- ? The necessity to serve others in the church earnestly (1:22)
- ? The constant commitment to a holy life (1:15)

Why would anyone desire to be a Christian if what we could offer them was...

- ? The assurance of being spoken against (2:12)
- ? The requirement to submit to government (2:13)
- ? The requirement to submit to unjust employers (2:18)
- ? The need to endure sorrows without retaliation (2:21)
- ? The requirement to submit to unbelieving husbands (3:1)



Why would anyone desire to be a Christian if what we could offer them was...

- ? The requirement to lovingly serve wives (3:7)
- ? The obligation to be helpful to those who are hurtful (3:9)
- ? The need to speak the gospel to unfriendly unbelievers (3:15)
- ? The certainty of suffering for doing good (3:17)
- ? The inescapability of being misunderstood (4:4)



Why would anyone desire to be a Christian if what we could offer them was...

- ? The charge to rejoice when suffering (4:13)
- ? The necessity of being under the leadership of elders (5:5)
- ? The certainty of being hated by Satan (5:8)
- ? The assurance that life will be hard (5:10)



Become a follower of Jesus Christ and you can have the range of radical change this list represents.

Now I ask you the obvious question. Why would anyone want this? In a culture which promotes convenience and comfort; safety and security as the height of value, what would prompt anyone to travel down this road? What does Peter offer in his first letter that would compel you to gladly embrace Christ if indeed the one who embraces Christ can expect this assortment of adversity? Why, in other words, would anyone become a Christian if what we could offer them was opportunities to suffer for the sake of others?

Tonight I desire to complete a series we've been presenting titled *Jesus suffered and died*.



Recap

Two weeks ago we looked at a paragraph in the book of Romans 3:21-26. In this paragraph the writer made the case that **Jesus suffered and died to**



satisfy the justice of God. We looked at the problem of how a just God could acquit the guilty simply by having faith in Him. Apart from working to appease Him or impress Him, God's way of declaring people innocent was to put His Son on the Cross to absorb His just wrath against sin. Those who put their faith in Jesus are declared righteous. They are set free from the guilt and punishment and bondage of sin.



Last week we attempted to make clear another reason why Jesus suffered and died. We saw in another paragraph found in Colossians that Jesus suffered and died to reconcile enemies of God. In this text, the writer labored to demonstrate that the basic problem with everyone was not merely doing bad things and thinking bad thoughts. He focused on the primary problem; alienation from God due to sin. Sin creates separation from God. Separation from God means we are in this world without God and without hope. We have the very anger of God upon us. And there is nothing inside us nor anything coming from us that can be used to bridge the rift. We need God's intervention. And we saw in Col.1:21-23 that it was precisely here that God provided the solution. **Jesus suffered and died to reconcile God's enemies.** Those who notice that God is for them in Jesus Christ rejoice in God. This joy in God is the evidence that people have understood the real gift of reconciliation; the gift of receiving God (cf. Rom.5:10-11)!

From this series, these were the two reasons we noticed why Jesus suffered and died. 1) to satisfy the justice of God 2) to reconcile enemies to God.

Tonight we conclude our series by noticing one more reason for his death. The passage for tonight will make clear why anyone would desire to follow Jesus knowing the hardship for doing so. Tonight's text if believed will give each of us strength to speak and suffer for the cause of Christ.



The third reason for why Jesus suffered and died is seen in 1Peter 3:18.

1Peter 3:18

For Christ also suffered 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.

Its Context

To understand this verse, we must get a sense of how it functions in the context. The last major section in this letter begins in 3:13. From this point onward Peter is concerned largely with the Christians' response to actual persecution. In the Christian community and in various social relationships, Peter labors to make clear how to live well when being treated poorly. He says in vv.13-17 that there

are blessings and opportunities for those who are treated badly for righteousness sake. Be eager to do good (v.13) and be willing to suffer (v.14). Be rid of fear (Vv.14-15) and be ready to speak of Christ to those who are unfriendly and unkind in a manner of gentleness (Vv.15-16). Suffering for speaking clearly about Christ is the better way (v.17). Vv.13-17, in other words, tell the reader that there is an unusual type of joy amid suffering and serving for those who speak fearlessly about Christ. Hoping in Christ produces fearless speech about Christ.

And so, Peter is telling his readers, in vv.13-17, that *they must get ready to speak for Christ even if it will cause them suffering.*



Now look with me at the following paragraph; 4:1-6. It begins with “therefore” which tells the reader that there is an apparent relationship between the thought found in 3:18-22 with 4:1-6. As you read 4:1-6 you get the sense that there are two ways to live; the pagan way and the Christian way (as observed in vv.2-3). Those hoping in Jesus Christ will want to live for God. In doing so, this will bring about ridicule and misunderstanding and suffering (as seen in v.4). Living for God could even result in death (as seen in v.6). But all is well; for God will even the score on the Day of final judgment (as seen in v.5).

And so, Peter is telling his readers, in 4:1-6, that *they must get ready to live for God even if it should cause them suffering* (as seen in v.1).



Tonight’s text; 3:18-22, is telling us how to get ready; both to speak for Christ and to live for God knowing that it may bring about hardships. Peter does this by telling the readers why Jesus suffered and died. There are many bewildering things in these verses. Do not let this jumble Peter’s main point. Peter’s intention in this text is to help us get ready by means of strong faith to speak about Christ to intimidating unbelievers (i.e. vv.13-17) and to live for God in the midst of peer pressure (4:1-6). He is talking about in this paragraph the glories of Christ’s triumphant death and resurrection.



For our purposes tonight, we will look at verse 18. The aim is simple. If you are unclear whether or not you are a Christian, the purpose tonight is to help you see the irresistible treasure of your life found in the reason why Jesus suffered and died. When you see it tonight, you will not shrink back from following Jesus. You will tonight leave your sin behind. You will tonight desire to walk in the ways of Jesus. You will not shrink back from speaking about Christ and living for God even if it if it costs you money, time, comfort, energy, status, position, even your life.

If you are clear that you are a Christian, the purpose tonight is to help you see the irresistible treasure of your life found in the reason why Jesus suffered and died. When you see it afresh, you will not shrink back from speaking about Christ and living for God even if it costs you money, time, comfort, energy, status, position, even your life.

To this end we now turn our attention.



Jesus suffered and died...

In our verse for tonight, verse 18, Peter gives no less than four aspects to why Jesus suffered and died.

Aspect #1 -- for sins



There is but one basic problem every human faces. It is not a social or racial or educational or financial or political or cultural problem. The problem all of us face is sin. We were born into sin. We practice sin. We love sin. Even when sin turns on us and gives back unpromising circumstances, we will not release it. The Bible says that we all serve sin. And sin belittles the glory of God. And God loves His glory. Therefore, His wrath burns against anything belittling His renown. A person's fundamental problem is located here. What did Jesus do with respect to this plight?

This phrase "Jesus suffered...for sins" is found in Hebrews 10:12 and is derived from language used in the Old Testament where it refers to the effects of sacrifices. The death of Jesus is like a sacrifice in that it takes away sin and cancels its effects. Sin no longer stands between sinners and God. The sinner for whom Jesus died will not be liable to judgment. Jesus Christ was the unblemished sacrifice to lift up and take away the sins of His people.

Aspect #1: Jesus suffered and died for sins.



Aspect #2 – once for sins

Peter talks about why Jesus suffered and died by saying that He suffered "once for sins". Jesus death took place once. This does not mean merely that at one point in time Jesus died. This is true but that is not Peter's emphasis. "Once for all" denotes its uniqueness as the one act that secures forgiveness. We see this usage in Hebrews 10:10; "And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all". This act of giving himself for the cause of His people does not need repetition, unlike the annual Jewish sacrifices. Peter is underscoring the sufficiency of Jesus' death. No sin for which Jesus died needs additional payment. Adequate is the payment of Jesus' sacrifice for sins.

Aspect #2: Jesus suffered and died once for sins.



Aspect #3 – the righteous for the unrighteous

To reach our hearts with hope and joy and strength, Peter stacks another characteristic upon the two aspects we've already looked at. Jesus Christ was the righteous who acted on behalf of the unrighteous. There was nothing about us that caused Him to lay down his life for us. This phrase alludes to the

substitutionary character of Christ's death. He died on behalf of the unrighteous so that the unrighteous might become righteous. His death was not for his sin; for he was righteous. The Bible puts it this way. "He who knew no sin became sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God through Him" (2Cor.5:21). The prophet Isaiah, some 700 yrs. prior to Peter's day, said it this way. "We all like sheep have gone astray, each of us to his own way. But the Lord has laid upon him the iniquity of us all" (Isa.53:6). What God achieved in sending His son to suffer and die is to create strength and confidence in His people. We gave him our unrighteousness. He gave us His righteousness. We are set free from the guilt and punishment and power of sin. The Great Exchange has occurred.

Aspect #3: Jesus suffered and died once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous.



These three characteristics of Jesus crucifixion are three of the most precious gifts ever. Our sins are taken away. We are forgiven. His death is sufficient. We have utter confidence that no sin needs more payment. He died ONCE for sins. It is finished. In Jesus' death, God deals with the sin and guilt which offends his holiness and separates man from his Creator. Jesus' substitution took our unrighteousness and gave us his righteousness. There is nothing left to do. He did it all. We are forgiven. We are guilt free. We are acquitted. We are set free!

Free for what? Jesus suffered and died to free us from the guilt and punishment and bondage of sin. As good as these are, there is more; infinitely more. Have you noticed who has been missing amid all these benefits Peter has listed? Listen for the fourth aspect of the reason why Jesus suffered and died as seen in v.18.

Aspect #4 – to bring us to God

"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God". Jesus suffered and died to clear every barrier away so that he might bring us to God. Fully and finally and forever we will be gazing upon the face of the glorious and grand God of the Universe! Jesus suffered and died to bring us to God so that we will now have bold access to Him. This is amazing as witnessed in the book of Hebrews. We are to draw near in worship and prayer because of the reality of this verse. But our sweetest moments of now worship are but a pale instance in relation to the then worship. Jesus suffered and died to bring us to God in order for us to fix our eyes uninterruptedly with full energy upon the unrivaled exquisiteness of His holiness. Why did Jesus suffer and die? He did this so that we might have pleasure forevermore – pleasure; full and forever in God and God alone!



Here is the way Jonathon Edwards put it in one of his service in 1731. "The redeemed have all their objective good in God. God Himself is the great good which they are brought to the possession and enjoyment of by redemption...The

glorious excellencies and beauty of God will be what will forever entertain the minds of the saints and the love of God will be their everlasting feast...”

Conclusion

I desire to bring this message to an end by returning to the context of this verse and the start of this message.

People unclear over their condition

If you are unclear tonight whether or not you are a Christian, I want you to reflect upon the reality of the verse on the screen. Do you see the irresistible treasure of your life found in the reason why Jesus suffered and died? Do you desire the benefits of having all your sin forever taken away from you? Do you long to experience the official pardon over your rebellion and know that Christ has paid in full forever that punishment? More than this. Can you image yourself in front of the Majesty of the Universe having no fear of judgment but rather filled with His joy? You will know whether or not you see it tonight; you will not shrink back from following Jesus starting tonight. You will tonight leave your sin behind. You will tonight desire to walk in the ways of Jesus. You will not shrink back from speaking about Christ and living for God even if it costs you money, time, comfort, energy, status, position, even your life; for you are now convinced that Jesus suffered and died for your sins to bring you to God.

People clear over their condition

If you are clear that you are a Christian, I ask you to reflect upon the reality of the verse on the screen. See the irresistible treasure of your life found in the reason why Jesus suffered and died. See it anew. Allow this renewed joy and strength to cause you will not shrink back from speaking about Christ and living for God even if it costs you money, time, comfort, energy, status, position, even your life.

Will we live overtly Christian amid risky situations? We will if we know why Jesus suffered and died.