

Triumph in the Suffering of Christ

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[0 : 00] We're going to be in 1 Peter chapter 3, verses 18-22.

! And the question actually forms the title of our lesson. It's pretty simple for us.

Is there triumph in the suffering of Christ? Of course, if there's anyone here tonight that either doesn't know the answer to that or is hesitant to say there was, you really need to go back to the beginning and examine your relationship.

We should do that periodically. The Apostle Paul actually commanded that in 2 Corinthians chapter 13.

He said, Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you unless indeed you fail to meet the test?

[1 : 27] Then Paul went on and said, I hope you will find out that we have not failed the test. So examining yourselves is intended to be an affirming experience and we should all engage in that activity periodically.

But what does Peter have to say to us tonight? And tonight we will wrap up chapter 3 and finish out the year, not the calendar year, but the spring year in chapters 4 and 5 of 1 Peter.

But this is at the conclusion of 1 Peter chapter 3, beginning in verse 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, in which He went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is eight persons, were brought safely through the water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for the good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to Him.

There is much mystery in some of these words, as well as amazing truths concerning the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus.

[3 : 49] For instance, we know definitively that Christ was totally and completely righteous.

There was no stain, not even a hint of sin. There was never an instance on earth that Jesus sinned. He never even formed a sin in His mind. We also know that Jesus died for people that were utterly and hopelessly unrighteous, of whom I'm chief.

Those for whom Christ died were devoid of hope without His help. There was nothing they could do to move themselves in the direction of salvation.

All Christians were granted a grace that was and is based on unmerited favor.

[5 : 07] I'm going to inject something here that came to my mind while I was writing all this. There has been this struggle for centuries whether or not there is this doctrine of predestination.

We hear that from time to time. We ought to try to deal with that sometime. It's in the Bible, in the New Testament, 37 times. But one thing that can never be argued is the fact that Christ was predestined to suffer and die.

So we have predestination there. And that was established before the foundation of the world. In fact, we have the first prophecy concerning the suffering of Christ in the third chapter of Genesis.

The Bible hadn't gotten very far when we come across the first prophecy in Genesis 3.15. The Holy Spirit, who wrote the book, speaking, says, I will put enmity between you, and he's talking to Satan, between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring.

He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel. So it tells us there that Christ is going to have his heel bruise.

[6 : 45] It's a painful thing. I've done that. But it's not fatal. But Satan's head is going to be beat to a pulp. It was predetermined that Christ would suffer and die.

It was also predetermined that myriads of people would be redeemed by the same Christ. And the great mystery, of course, in all this is that God is absolutely sovereign in providing salvation through the suffering and death of His Son, yet at the same time, that in no way voids human responsibility. you can grow weak and frail trying to wrap your mind around that fact. Spurgeon preached on that and said, you know, sovereignty and human responsibility go hand in hand.

And someone in his congregation said, I thought they were at war with each other. He said, they're not at war with each other. They complement each other. And the bottom line on that is God's got that all figured out.

And I don't. So this evening, we're going to look at four truths central to the triumph of Christ.

[8 : 19] And the four are as follows. There was triumph in Christ as the suffering sin bearer. He bore our sins on the cross.

There was triumph of Christ through proclamation, through preaching. We'll look at the triumph of Christ through His provision of salvation.

And we'll close with a few words on the triumph of Christ through His sovereign supremacy. And first we will look at the triumph of Christ as the sin bearer.

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God.

I was always on weak ground when I had to comment on any level of mathematics or anything to do with English grammar.

[9 : 29] I was terrible in that. But in the passage, we see two conjunctions, whatever they are, the words also and for.

Employing these words takes us back to our previous passage of 1 Peter 3, verse 13-17, which we studied last week.

It was there we saw the sufferings of Christ in the perspective of triumph. Now in this world, there are many martyrs that die in service to Christ.

I've actually met some men that were later put to death for their faith overseas through the auspices of Voice of the Martyrs. We have out there the Martyr's Wall.

You ought to go out there and see it if you've never done that. It's outside. Every name up there, they were put to death. Some last year, some 2,000 years ago.

[10 : 38] But they're all gone. But in this world, there are many martyrs that die in service to Christ.

But in every case, they are experiencing what the Holy Spirit promised through the writings of the Apostle Paul. Why did they die? Same reason we're going to die.

if the Lord doesn't come back soon. Even so, come quickly. For the wages of sin is death. That's the wage we earn.

That's Romans 6.23. Only in the death of Christ do we see the death of a man totally innocent.

Totally innocent. They couldn't bring a charge against Him. They tried. All other men deserve to die. Jesus did not deserve to die.

[11 : 47] Now the Bible tells us that on the cross, the Lord became sin. Now He doesn't say He became a sinner. He was never a sinner.

Not one single sin. But He became sin. How's that possible? Well, He never sinned, but He took on Himself every sin ever committed by His people.

by anyone being saved. You've got to do something with your sins. You've got to get rid of them.

And you can't, and I can't, but He can. And the operative verse there is 2 Corinthians 5.21.

For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

The author of the book of Hebrews gave us this wonderful passage. Hebrews 9.28 So Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time.

[12 : 59] not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him. That phrase offered once is the word in Greek hapex or hapex.

It means perpetual validity, not requiring repetition. It was good for all time, one time. It was offered once.

He didn't have to offer it a second time. And the death of Christ, the Father's righteous judgment, was completely satisfied.

Even today, the Father sees the blood and He's satisfied. Now we teach and we believe that Christ died a substitutionary death on the cross.

Just what does that mean? That means He took our place on the cross. He was the substitute. I deserve to be up there.

[14:14] Others of us, all of us did. But He took our place up there. He was the just and He suffered for the unjust.

He was the righteous and He suffered for the unrighteous as we just read in 1 Peter 3.18. So what is the triumph of Christ spoken here?

It is found in the words of verse 18. This is powerful.

Christ died so that He might bring us to God the Father. How else were we going to get there? He had to bring us. And that path to God was opened by the death of Christ.

That's when it opened. This was symbolized in Scripture by the tearing of the veil of the temple. You remember that?

[15:30] At the moment Christ died, the veil in the temple tore in half from top to bottom. Well, if it started up at the top, who tore it?

God did. God reached down. You know, I read something on that one time that said that veil, if you could have figured out how to hook up two locomotives and go in opposite directions, they could not have torn that veil.

They would have just spun in the tracks. It was so strong. But God treated it like a piece of paper. He just tore it open. And the veil was torn in the temple at the moment of Christ's death.

From top to bottom, what did that do? By that act, the Father guaranteed that all who believe, trust in, put their faith in, His Son will now have direct access to the Father.

That's just amazing. We can go to the Father day or night, when you wake up at three in the morning and things are crushing in on you, take it to the Father.

[16:59] He doesn't sleep or slumber. He's on duty. But we're all guaranteed access to the Father.

Why? The veil's been torn. Before then, only the high priest could go back there once a year, the Day of Atonement. only one day a year. And if every now and then a priest for whatever reason, maybe he had too much wine to drink or maybe senility, wandered back there, he would have been instantly consumed.

That's the presence of God back there. Picture this in your minds. Right now, the Father is seated in the Holy of Holies in heaven.

The veil was rent in the Holy of Holies on earth. But the Father is in the Holy of Holies in heaven. To his right, seated next to the Father, is the Lord Jesus Christ.

and he's sitting there as our triumphant Savior.

[18:19] And he's doing a lot of things there, but one thing he is doing for sure, he's interceding for us because Satan is interceding against us. Well, you know, that Tom Holland is despicable and Satan didn't lie.

Yeah, he is. And the Father looks at the Son, the Son says, he's one of mine. He said, I'm satisfied. That's how that works, guys. If you're in Christ, the Father is satisfied.

But we all have direct access in the Holy of Holies to the throne of grace. We are even now called royal priests.

And therefore, all believers are welcome into God's presence. Priests can go into the presence of God. And we're royal priests, every believer. Well, next title to be examined is the triumph of Christ through proclamation.

And by that, I mean a sermon. He proclaimed the Word. being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit, in which He went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison because they formerly did not obey.

[19:49] Now, I discovered something when I was working on this lesson, when I got here, I don't understand that.

And I'm sorry. I worked at it as long as I could and I made a pledge. I'm going to do more research. That's a difficult passage.

I've got a lot of Old Testament commentaries and I've got a lot of New Testament commentaries and I looked at them and those guys don't know. They all disagree. One believes this, one believes that.

And it's almost unimaginable that there are even in certain churches and denominations that reject the idea that Christ died on the cross.

Well, He didn't die on the cross. He can't die. How does that start out? Being put to death in the flesh. Jesus died.

[20 : 57] His flesh was dead. Verse 18, the second part of verse 18 settles all doubt as the Holy Spirit, the author of the Bible tells us that Christ was put to death in the flesh.

It also says that when He died, He was made alive in the Spirit. There's something interesting here. His eternal inner being, that's the Spirit. Note that the word Spirit here, though, is not capitalized. This refers to the fact that Christ was spiritually alive at death.

death. That did not cease. His earthly body was dead. His Spirit has always been alive. And we should also realize that Christ did experience a form of spiritual death on our behalf.

What does that mean? He did not cease to exist spiritually, but He became separated from God. That's what spiritual death, that's how we define spiritual death.

[22 : 22] You're separated from the Father, and I would suggest, and the Spirit, because of sin. so He did experience a form of spiritual death, because He became separated from God.

He was temporarily alienated from the Father, and the proof that we have of this is when the Lord cried out, by quoting the first verse from Psalm 22, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And I looked at that one time, and I don't have very many original thoughts, but I looked at it and said, My God, the Father, and my God, the Spirit, why have you forsaken me?

Then I read John McCarthy, said, that's not what that means, and ten years later, I read a thing by John McCarthy, says, I've rethought that, that's what that means. I think he stole my notes. If he did, he'd probably sue me in court.

That verse, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? That is the temporary alienation Jesus experienced from the Father.

[23 : 42] Something happened to the Lord Jesus while his body lay dead in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. And our verse, that is covered by the words, two little words, in which.

He said he was put to death in the flesh, made alive in the spirit, in which. That's important. And the next word tells us what happened, and he, that is Jesus, and where he went.

Because we're told he went. So he went somewhere, and his body was in the tomb. So it had to be spiritual. And he went.

Those two words, he went, is one Greek word. It means Jesus went from one place to another. So why did Jesus go?

Well, he went to make proclamation to the spirits, now in prison. Jesus actually went to a place, and once there, he made a triumphant announcement to captive beings.

[25 : 06] This occurred before his bodily resurrection on the third day. His body's in the tomb. So what did Jesus do there? He made proclamation, meaning he preached, or better, he heralded his triumph.

He preached a triumphant sermon to the spirits that were being held there. Peter used the Greek word karuso, and the primary meaning is one acting as a herald.

Now, we can be certain that Jesus did not evangelize the prisoners, or the Greek word evangelizo would have been used, and that word means to evangelize.

Instead, Christ went and proclaimed his victory by announcing his triumph over sin, death, hell, demons, and Satan himself.

It was a package deal. He triumphed over all those things. Now, here's where we really got to work on this.

[26 : 24] to whom was Christ proclaiming these great truths. Well, the passage says it was to the spirits.

Apparently, it was not directed at humans, although I grew up being told it went to hell and preached down there, but that word doesn't appear. if it was directed at humans, I'm told the Greek language would have been totally different.

Well, here's the bottom line, and it's refreshing that I can be honest with my brothers. I don't know what that means. And I've looked at these commentaries, and I'm going to keep reading and studying, and one thing I discovered on commentaries, they all tend to disagree.

on this point. Let me give it my best shot. When Satan fell, he was cast out of heaven.

It was Lucifer. Remember, he was the highest created being in heaven or in the universe.

[27 : 52] God and sometimes people kind of bristle and they say, no, no, no, that's Jesus. No, Jesus wasn't created. He's eternal. He's always existed. Second person of the Trinity.

created the highest being and, boy, he messed up. And he gets cast out of heaven and with him, myriads of demons were cast out because they threw in with Satan.

we don't know how many, but they're in the billions, if not more. And he's cast out and an angelic conflict broke out which continues to this day.

The Bible at one point even says there was war in heaven. That's inconceivable but, and it was not like the war that we on earth have fought because they don't die up there, but they fight.

There's a war. The battle or war was between righteous angels and evil angels that are now known as demons.

[29 : 15] Now, we have some righteous angels, more than we can count. We know a couple of them, Michael and Gabriel. but the war has been between righteous angels and evil angels, now referred to as demons.

You know, I'd be careful if I was an evil angel because God sent one righteous angel and he killed 185,000 soldiers in one night that were opposing God.

In one night. That was a long night. I wonder if he went to sleep the next day. I offer this as a possible explanation found in Genesis chapter 6.

When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive and they took as their wives any they chose.

And then the Lord said, My spirit shall not abide in man forever for he is flesh and his days shall be 120 years. The Nephilim were on the earth in those days and also afterward when the sons of God came into the daughters of man and they bore They bore children to them.

[30 : 45] These were the mighty men of old, the men of renown. Now, John MacArthur, by the way, I saw him on a tape this week.

It was entitled, I'm in my last lap. And he hadn't been in church in a year. Frail, lost 75 or 100 pounds, weak voice, but excited about going to heaven.

John MacArthur believes these spirits were the evil angels that had been banned from heaven, kicked out. The Genesis 6 account would be then the most heinous demonic attack on the human race, on God's divine order of things.

These sons of God were directly created by God, but rebelled and were banished to the earth. They tried then to procreate, this was John MacArthur, to procreate with human women.

Had they been successful, they would have created a third race, not a human male, nor a human female, but fallen angels and human women, and Christ did not die for them.

[32 : 10] He died for men and women. humans. And their salvation would have been impossible. This whole race of half demon, half human.

Now our former pastor and our good friend Dr. Coleman disagreed with that interpretation and he makes good points. How can spirit beings have sex with human women to create a baby?

humanity. These demon spirits could only do that if they indwelt human bodies. But there are examples of that occurring in especially the Old Testament somewhat frequently.

people but we do know this. There are evil demons that even now are bound awaiting final judgment.

They're in chains, in the pit, they will be released for a period of time, I think thirty minutes. That's all it's going to take God to destroy them.

[33 : 19] Cast them into the lake of fire. fire. Now is this the right interpretation? I don't know. I intend to spend some more time this summer on it and research it further.

Well next we have the triumph of Christ through His provision of salvation. When God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is eight persons, were brought safely through water.

And then the scripture says, baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, but not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

God was patient during the construction of the ark by Noah and his sons. Well it took 120 years. I couldn't drive a nail in 120 years.

The Holy Spirit declares this time to be a triumph of salvation. What does he mean by that? You remember as Noah worked, he preached.

[34 : 50] And thousands of people were preached to for 120 years. And out of all those thousands and even millions of people, only eight humans were saved.

and all of them were members of Noah's family. Mrs. Noah, Noah, Mrs. Noah, his three sons and their three wives.

Eight people. These eight people were the only ones to heed the divine warning and were thus able to escape the universal flood.

they heeded the warning. They begged their neighbors. They preached to them. They said, God loves you.

Come into the ark. But we next have this interesting reference to baptism.

[36 : 02] The eight people saved on the ark went through a type of baptism. Peter says baptism now saves you.

The unfortunate thing is that phrase has been horribly misinterpreted and by some theological traditions. Believing that the physical act of baptism saves a person.

The Bible doesn't teach that. baptismal regeneration. This is referred to as baptismal regeneration. There are some denominations even in our town.

If we can just get you down to the baptistry and get you wet, you're going to be saved. And there are denominations that teach that. Baptism is an obedience to the commands of the Lord.

baptismal is but the word baptism in the Greek language is a simple meaning. It means to immerse. It means to put them under the water and bring them out.

[37 : 12] It is used in Scripture to talk about immersion in water but it could be immersion in some other forms. Here the eight saved people were immersed not in flood waters, they were immersed in the safety of the ark.

They were dry and there was water over the whole earth. Even the mountains were covered with water. I always remember Edmund Hillary and he got to the top and he was a Christian brother.

He got to the top and he never did say whether he or his Sherpa guide got there first. He said we went together. And he looked down and the first thing he saw was a fossil.

He saw the top, the highest mountain in the world and there's a fossil. I don't know if he picked it up and took it home or not.

But baptism means immersed. And these people were immersed in the ark itself. It was called the ark of safety.

[38 : 23] And it's called that because it sailed over the dangerous waters that covered a world under divine judgment. Peter makes this clear by telling us that this baptism did not remove dirt from the flesh.

They were still dirty. Salvation is never by some right we perform. Our ultimate baptism is very different from the stirring of the waters in the baptistry on a Sunday morning.

Here's how the Apostle Paul describes it. Romans 6 verses 3 and 4. Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ were baptized into His death?

death. We were baptized therefore with Him by baptism into death. In order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

Now if the ark was still afloat today, we would not be safe inside. We are only safe if we as sinners have been placed inside Christ.

[39 : 46] That is the elect's ark. The ark of salvation is Jesus. And that is the ultimate triumph of the suffering of Christ.

He became our ark. And lastly we have this, the triumph of Christ through His sovereign supremacy. Christ has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to Him.

1 Peter 3.22 In both the Old and New Testament, the right hand is always a position or place of prestige and power.

The right hand of God is the preeminent place of honor and authority for all eternity. The Lord Jesus went there after He finished His work of redemption.

He is there at this very moment. Listen to Paul in Philippians chapter 2 verse 9 to 11. Most of you have it memorized. Christ. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name so that the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

[41 : 27] Well, how do we know that Christ has been exalted? Because He's at the right hand of God the Father. Jesus rules supremely.

This is how the author of the book of Hebrews described it. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature.

And He upholds the universe by the word of His power. after making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name He has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

for to which of the angels did God ever say, you are my son? Today I have begotten you.

Or again, I shall be to him a father. He shall be to me a son. And again, when He brings the firstborn into the world, He says, let all God's angels worship Him.

[42 : 41] followers of Christ look to Him as the perfect example of triumph in unjust suffering.

As believers, we join with Him fully and forever in that triumph. 2 Corinthians 2.14, But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of Him everywhere.

you