

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

The Triumph of Christ's Sufferings
1 Peter 3:18-22
Part Two

Let us open our Bibles once more to **1 Pet. 3:18-22**. Peter is writing this section of scripture in order to dramatically demonstrate for us the fact that **“It is better if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.”**

He accomplishes this by sharing with us the experience of Christ. He does this by pointing out to his readers the triumph of Christ's suffering.

Let us read **1 Pet. 3:18-22**, **“For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit. (19) in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison. (20) who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. (21) And corresponding to that, baptism now save you -- not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience--through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (22) who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.”**

How do we see the triumph of Christ's suffering in this passage? First of all we have seen the triumph of Christ suffering in sin bearing. Through Christ's suffering on the cross He made it possible for us to be brought to God.

Let us look at **V. 18**, **“For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God.”** As we looked at Christ's sin bearing as it was described here we noted the following features.

Christ's sin bearing was ultimate, **“For Christ also died”**

Christ's sin bearing was for sins not his own, **“ For Christ also died for sins”**

Christ's sin bearing was unique, **“Christ also died for sins once for all”**

Christ's sin bearing was vicarious, **“Christ also died for sins once for all the just for the unjust”**

Christ's sin bearing was purposeful, **“Christ also died for sins once for all the just for the unjust in order that He might bring us to God.”**

Christ suffered but His suffering accomplished a wonderfully glorious thing. Through His suffering He brought us to God. How could we, who have benefited so greatly from Christ's suffering, ever question the statement **“For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.”** We should not question it but rather commit ourselves no matter what the personal price might be to our lives to pursue the path of righteousness.

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This morning we will continue on in our study looking to see what other ways the triumph of Christ's suffering is seen in this passage. Not only do we see triumphant sin bearing in this passage but we also see a triumphant sermon.

TRIUMPHANT SERMON

There has been some great messages preached in the past which I am sure we would have wished we could have been there to hear. Messages by Spurgeon, Moody, the Apostle Paul, or even Peter. But there could not be any more extraordinary message than the message given by Christ that is referred to here in the passage that is before us this morning.

Let us read **VV. 18-19, “For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; (19) in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison.”**

This message by Christ was not delivered during His public ministry prior to the cross or during His post-resurrection ministry prior to his ascension but rather it was delivered during the time period between His death on the cross and His resurrection three days later while His body was still in the tomb.

Let us pick up the verse where we left off last week. In **V. 18** it said, **“For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God”** and now we read **“having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.”** When Jesus died for our sins, as we read in the very first part of this verse, He did not die of natural causes, such as from a stroke or arteriosclerosis. No! The verse goes on to say that He was **“put to death.”** He died a violent death. And the violent death that He died on the cross was **“in the flesh.”** Peter's point is that He was no phantom or ghost, as some were saying, who only appeared to have a human body. No the death that He died was a violent death and the death that He experienced was in the flesh.

This is very straight forward and there is not very much controversy about this particular truth. But now we go to the next phrase. **“Having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.”** What does this phrase mean, that He was **“made alive in the spirit?”** If you have the KJV or NIV, it does not read **“in the spirit”** but rather **“by the Spirit.”** Which of these translations would be preferred? I believe that the answer is the NAS translation **“in the spirit.”** Grudem makes the following statement **“It would be somewhat unusual to expect readers to see exactly the same grammatical structure in the Greek, in parallel parts of the same sentence, and yet to know that Peter wanted the two parts understood differently (such as, put to death in the flesh and made alive by the spirit). Grammatically it makes much better sense to translate this passage exactly as the NAS has translated it, which is **“having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.”**”**

Now with this understanding let us try to make some sense of this phrase. What does it mean that Jesus though put to death in the flesh was made alive in the spirit? It means simply this. That though Christ's fleshly body was put to death and placed in a tomb, His spirit was experiencing a much more positive phenomenon. And what was that? His spirit was made alive.

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What is the spirit referring to? It is referring to the immaterial part of Christ. When Christ suffered for our sins He not only died physically, He died how? Spiritually. Physical death is when our spirit is separated from our fleshly body and spiritual death is when our spirit is separated from God. In some very real but hard to understand sense a separation occurred between God the Father and God the Son.

Did Christ's fleshly body die on the cross? Yes. Did Christ's spirit die on the cross? Yes. When did this happen? It happened when our sin and the sin of the entire world was being laid upon Him. At that moment in time fellowship between God the Father and God the Son was broken in some way. We see this broken fellowship expressed by Jesus in **Matt. 27:46** when he cries out, **“My God, My God why hast Thou forsaken me.”**

Just as his physical body needed to be made alive again so also His spirit, when was his body made alive? It was made alive after three days, on the day of the resurrection. When was his spirit made alive? His spirit was made alive even before He was taken down from the cross! How do we know this? We know this by Christ's last statement from the cross. And what was that? **Luke 23:46** when Christ again cries out from the cross, but this time exclaims, **“Father, into thy hands I commit My spirit.”** Clearly fellowship between the Father and the Son had been restored. Or in other words his spirit had been what? **“Made alive.”** And it was in this condition while His body was still dead that it tells us that He went and made proclamation in His spirit which had been made alive.

Let us look at **V. 19**. It says, **“In which also He went (not in his flesh but rather in his spirit) and made proclamation.”**

Jesus went and made a proclamation and He made this proclamation in His spirit. We do not know Christ's full itinerary during this period of time when He was in this spiritual state just described while His body was still in the tomb but we do know this. He delivered a message or a proclamation to a certain very special group. **WHAT WAS THE NATURE OF THIS MESSAGE OR PROCLAMATION THAT HE DELIVERED?**

The word for “proclamation” is not the word “EUANGELIZO” which always is used of the proclamation of the gospel, but rather the word “KERUSSO” which means to “herald.” The clear emphasis of His message was not therefore one of salvation but of something else.

What might that something else be? In order to answer this question we need to figure out who Jesus was speaking to. I believe that it is very clear from the passage before us that Jesus was speaking to a certain group of fallen angels or demons.

Let us again look at the passage and this time let us look at the rest of **V. 19** and **V. 20**. **“in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, (20) who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah.”**

When NT refers to “spirits” without a qualifying genitive it always uses the term to refer to “angels.” And this is exactly what we have here. But what angels? It tells us that Christ delivered His message to the spirits or angels in prison. What in the world is Peter talking about?

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When we speak of angels we need to understand that there are two kinds of angels. There are the Holy angels and the fallen angels. Of the fallen angels there are two kinds, the loosed and the bound. The loosed fallen angels are those who have been at Satan's disposal to do his bidding sense he initially rebelled against God to this very time. Do you mean that there really are demons?! And the answer is of course there are. We see them very prominent during the time of Christ in the gospel record and even into the time of the Apostles.

But there is another group who also fell with Satan who along the way became imprisoned. They crossed the line that the Lord had drawn in the sand and they paid the price of their rebellion. These certainly are those being referred to here by Peter as being in **“prison.”**

When did this take place? Again let us look at the verse, **“who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah.”** There is a prison which is filled with fallen demons or angels that have been there since the days of Noah.

In days of Noah the world was filled with wickedness. And it would appear that there was never a time when demonic activity was any more intense. In **Gen. 6** we read these words, **“Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose.”** Who are the **“Sons of God”** that are referred to here? It would appear that the **“Sons of God”** in fact refers to those who exist by the direct creative act of God which would identify this group as angels in contrast with the daughters of men who would apparently refer to women who were in fact the offspring of human parents. The result of this union was something right out of a horror movie. It says in **Gen. 6:4**, **“The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.”** The offspring of those referred to as the **“sons of God”** which we are identifying to be angels and the daughters of men was a SUPER RACE.

How did God respond to these actions on the part of these particular angels? **Jude 6** **“And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day.”** Another way of saying this is that He put them in what? PRISON.

Why would these angels who would have been under the control of Satan attempt such a thing? It would appear that the reason was for the purpose of reproduction. It appears that this behavior was orchestrated by Satan in order to create a demon race which would not have been redeemable.

Certainly the judgment of the flood came to destroy the human race for its exceedingly great wickedness but not only were those born of the daughters of men destroyed but also those born of the Sons of God were destroyed.

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CONCLUSION

Jesus in His spirit, which had been made alive while still on the cross, went to the place where those angels who had attempted to corrupt the human race were being kept in prison, and preached a message.

Message of victory. I HAVE GIVEN MY BODY AND SHED MY BLOOD AS AN OFFERING FOR SIN. MY FATHER HAS ACCEPTED THAT OFFERING AND THE POWER OF SIN HAS BEEN BROKEN. I AM SHORTLY GOING TO LEAVE YOU AND RETURN BACK TO MY FATHER. AND FROM THERE I WILL SEND OUT MY CHURCH INTO THE WORLD AND THE GATES OF HADES ITSELF WILL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST HER.

KNOW THIS THAT YOUR DOOM WHICH HAS ALREADY BEEN SEALED IS SURE!!

Is it better to suffer for doing what is right rather than for what is wrong? And the answer is of course, Yes! Peter in attempting to prove this to us points us to the triumph of Christ in the midst of His suffering. First of all let us see His triumphant sin-bearing and now His triumphant message.