

*The Hero of Our Afflictions*

1 Peter 3:18-22

Reading:

Bethany Baptist Church

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(7/31/05 am; Bethel in Lancaster)

He was *opposed* by jealous rivals, protecting their power-base.

*Betrayed* by one of His closest associates.

*Turned on* by a fickle following that became a hostile mob.

*Indicted* by a kangaroo court.

*Handed-over* to be tortured: *mocking & spitting & beating & scourging & derision & blasphemy.*

Led off to a shameful *criminal's death*, crucified on a cross between *two common thieves.*

His gloating enemies mocking Him to the *bitter end.*  
While His *confused & heart-broken* loved ones *watched & mourned...*

**Turn w/ me to 1 Peter 3:13-22 (tonight we jump back in at v.18).**

This is the **second** time Peter used the example of Jesus to encourage us to *stand firm.*

The previous section of his letter marched us through several *tough relationships* while telling to do the right thing: to be *submissive & faithful* (*society, workplace, marriage*). And Peter reminded us that Jesus *submitted* to God's will even when it was tough – as in, *crucifixion tough...*

Now the apostle has just told us to *do the right thing*, but then turns right around & warns us that our neighbors might not appreciate us – we might even *suffer for the sake of righteousness!*

Time for more *encouragement....* Time for *another example...*

Here is *just the fuel* these *weary pilgrims* need: Jesus *suffered*, He *endured*, He *conquered!* And by God's grace, *so will you!*

*Four events in Jesus' temporary suffering & ultimate victory:*

1. *Crucifixion: The purpose for Christ's suffering (18). \**
2. *Death: The proclamation of Christ's victory (19-20). \**
3. *Resurrection: The foundation of Christ's salvation (21).*
4. *Ascension: The culmination of Christ's victory (22).*

*\* This evening.*

Here is Peter's point:

Jesus *did the right thing & suffered* for it. That *wasn't* a mistake, it was God's *path* to Jesus' *victory*.

Remember Jesus, and *keep doing the right thing*.

**Jesus' suffering wasn't *pointless*, it was *planned*.**

1. Peter links your suffering to Jesus suffering, all of which ultimately led His *death* by crucifixion (like some *common criminal*).
  - a. Peter's first *two* words here are "*because also*" bind **vv.13-17** to our text. When you are called to suffer according to God's will (14, **17**), don't forget that so did Jesus:
    - i. ***Because also*** *Christ once for sins died...*
    - ii. Peter's point is that as you *suffer* as a result of *your* righteousness, you can be *fortified* by Christ's example & *encouraged* by His victory.
2. Christ's suffered *according to the will of God*. His *crucifixion* was *ordained* to address a very specific problem: *your sin*.
  - a. **V.18** could simply stand alone as a *powerful* summarization of the Gospel, ...

*but don't miss the main point:*

- b. *Our insight & encouragement!* They're found in those little words (17) *according to the will of God*. We all know that God's plan was for Jesus to suffer for us, i.e. according to *God's will*.
- c. **So the conclusion here is: when you suffer for *doing right*, according to the *will of God* (17), God has a *reason*.**

3. And now let's *go ahead & unpack* Peter's gospel summary: Christ's sufferings were *unique*; the Lamb of God would need to be offered up for sins only *once*.
  - a. As we also see in *Hebrews*, Jesus' single & final offering stood in stark contrast to the requirements of the **OT** sacrificials.
  - b. The book of Leviticus had established God's requirements for: *Burnt Offering, Peace Offerings, Sin Offering, & Guilt Offerings*. Down thru the centuries, *millions* of animals had been offered.
  - c. The Jewish historian *Josephus* recorded that during a *single* annual Passover Festival,  $\frac{1}{4}$  million sheep might be sacrificed.
4. But in *prophetic contrast*, John the Baptist had pointed his followers to Christ with these words (1Jn 1:29): "*Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*"
  - a. Now Peter says that, *Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust...*
  - b. And *God would never require all those sacrifices again!*
5. Christ's sufferings were for the purpose of securing this incredible *blessing* for you & me (**18b**): *in order that He might bring us to God*.
  - a. Peter's vocabulary draws upon the imagery of ANE *royal courts*.
  - b. The expression "*might bring near*" suggests an entrance into *the audience chamber* of a king. Court officials would *precede* a guest into the chamber & *announce* his coming to the king.
  - c. So the Apostle reminds us that our *introduction & daily fellowship* with God was made possible by the *sufferings* of the sinless Christ. It is for our good that the *Lamb of God* suffered to take away sin!

6. When we suffer, our Lord wants us to remember that *Christ also suffered* according to *God's will & our good*. As we remind ourselves of that *connection*, we *gain grace to persevere*.

*The first event of Christ's suffering & victory was His crucifixion. He died once to bring us to God.*

**And His death also paved the way for a fantastic proclamation of His victory over death (18-20).**

2. Christ's *death* on Golgotha's cross is *no symbol or illusion or myth*.
- a. Peter says (v. 18b) that Christ was *put to death in the flesh*.
  - b. His words suggests Paul's gospel *summary* found in **1 Cor 15:3-4 (obtw, I encourage everyone memorize this!)**:
    - i. Christ **died** for our sins according to the Scriptures
    - ii. He was **buried**
    - iii. He was **raised** on the third day according to the Scriptures

*But the gospel raises a question that Peter is about to explore:*

3. If Christ's *physical body* lay buried in the tomb until the **third day**, what do you suppose the Lord was doing in *His spirit*?
- a. **Careful!** Peter isn't referring to the *Holy Spirit*, the apostle has in mind Christ's own *spirit* as a person.
4. Our text (18b) indicates that the *moment* Christ died *physically* He departed *in His spirit* on *mission of victory* – to take a *victory lap* (19)!
- a. **Where** was Christ going?
  - b. **Who** would there?
  - c. **What** would Jesus do?

5. Let's set the *background* by **reading** some inter-related **NT & OT** texts.
- a. **Jude 6** – Jude wrote that God imprisoned *fallen angels* who transgressed the *limits* set for them after being turned out of Heaven. God placed these rebellious spiritual beings *in bonds*.
  - b. **2 Peter 2:4-5** – Peter wrote of fallen angels *imprisoned* in pits of darkness. Note the similarity to *Jude's account*, and don't miss **v. 5's** reminder of the *Flood* (just like our text here in 1 Peter 3:20).
  - c. **Genesis 6:1-5** - This intriguing passage records the *context & crimes* committed by these *incarcerated spirits*.
    - i. In the days before the *Flood*, mankind was *drowning* in a *deluge of worldwide wickedness*. In those dark days, "*the sons of God,*" (an expression for *fallen angels*), continued Satan's campaign to *corrupt mankind & disrupt God's plan* to bring forth the conquering *Seed of Eve*
    - ii. These fallen spirits *transgressed the bounds* God had set for them when He had *turned them out* of Heaven, and they entered into *physical relationships* with women.
    - iii. This evil rebellion, a *dark example* of the wickedness of Noah's day (note verse **5**), earned these demons *bondage* in the *pits of darkness*, awaiting a *final judgment*.
6. Returning to our text in **1 Pt 3:20**, we find Peter reminding us of the days of *Noah's Ark & the Great Flood of world-wide judgment*. Just like **Gen 6!**
- a. This familiar account is a reminder of both the *holy judgment & the merciful patience* of God.
  - b. Noah's *long years* of preaching, and the *emerging shape of the great Ark*, testified to God's *offer of an escape plan* → *repent!*
  - c. Yet in the end, *almost all perished*; only a *very few* were saved by God's appointed instrument of deliverance.

7. These **NT & OT** texts, in support of **vv.19&20** of our 1 Pt passage, indicate that **after** His *crucifixion (physical death)*, Christ then ...
- a. ...went in His spirit to the *darkest pits of bondage*.
  - b. There He *commanded* the attention of *fallen angels*, held in eternal bonds as punishment for *transgressing the limits* God had set for them.
  - c. In that *dark place*, and to His *defeated & incarcerated enemies*, Our Lord proclaimed that His *great victory over suffering & malice* was finally *reality*.

***Christ suffered....but Christ has conquered!***

***The first two milestones on the path of Christ's suffering & victory are...***

*First, His **crucifixion** for sinners,*

*...followed immediately by*

*His **declaration** of victory to imprisoned, fallen angels.*

His *suffering* was awful & unjust, but *because* of His *suffering* & His *victory*, we receive *forgiveness & life & hope!*

So here is Peter's *lesson*:

In the *darkest of circumstances*, **God** can bring the *greatest of victories*.

**Don't you believe ... He will *do it* for you?**

*...pray...*