

DELIVERANCE THROUGH SUFFERING

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TEXT: 1 PETER 3:17-22 NIV

INTRODUCTION

Many people discredit their sufferings by speaking so much of their sufferings that others pay little attention to their claims. This is not the case with the sufferings of Jesus Christ. The sufferings of Christ were all a means to an end. Consider the *results* produced through Christ's sufferings.

I. THROUGH HIS SUFFERING, CHRIST SETS FREE ALL WHO WOULD BELIEVE (vv.17-18).

17 For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. **18** For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit.

A. CHRIST'S SUFFERING WAS THE WILL OF GOD (v.17).

B. CHRIST'S SUFFERING OPENS THE DOOR TO COME TO GOD (v.18).

II. THROUGH HIS DEATH, CHRIST SAVES ALL WHO BELIEVE (vv.19-21).

19 After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits— **20** to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, **21** and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

A. CHRIST'S DEATH OPENED THE DOOR FOR THE IMPRISONED SPIRITS (v.19).

B. BAPTISM IS A REMINDER OF THE VICTORY FOUND IN THE DEATH, BURIAL, AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST (vv.20-21).

III. THROUGH HIS RESURRECTION, CHRIST BRINGS VICTORY TO ALL WHO BELIEVE.

22 who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

A. JESUS IS NOW SEATED IN A PLACE OF ULTIMATE AUTHORITY AND POWER.

B. ALL THINGS ARE SUBJECT TO HIS RULE.

Hebrews 7:24-26 (NIV) 24 but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. **25** Therefore he is able to save completely[a] those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. **26** Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

CONCLUSION

John Donne, a 17th century poet, experienced great pain. Because he married the daughter of a disapproving lord, he was fired from his job as assistant to the Lord Chancellor, yanked from his wife, and locked in a dungeon. (This is when he wrote that succinct line of despair, "John Donne/ Anne Donne/ Undone.") Later, he endured a long illness which sapped his strength almost to the point of death. In the midst of this illness, Donne wrote a series of devotions on suffering which rank among the most poignant meditations on the subject. In one of these, he considers a parallel: The sickness which keeps him in bed forces him to think about his spiritual condition. Suffering gets our attention; it forces us to look to God, when otherwise we would just as well ignored Him. -Adapted from Philip Yancey, [Where is God When it Hurts?](#) p. 58.

Being mindful to not discredit our sufferings by speaking so much of them is important. It is not our suffering, but our triumph over suffering through the power of God that the world needs to see. This is the message of Jesus Christ. Through the power of God, we have an opportunity to show similar **results** of trusting God in times of suffering.

Commentary Notes:

Asbury Commentary

This passage, one of the most difficult in the Bible, recounts a series of events in Christ's redemptive ministry: death, resurrection, proclamation to imprisoned spirits, exaltation, and lordship over all powers. This ministry, Peter insists, assures victory for Christians who suffer as Christ did. The fundamental statement comes first: Christ's suffering is wholly sufficient to bring suffering Christians safely to God. That fact is certain because Christ's suffering signaled two victories of crucial significance for Christians who suffer. The first victory is over sin and death, its chief consequence. Christians who suffer as Christ did have victory over sin (see [4:1](#)), which indicates that even physical death cannot harm them ultimately. Therefore, they need not fear even in the presence of mortal danger; the tyranny of death has ended.

The second victory signaled by Christ's suffering is victory over the demonic spirits that inspire the evil adversaries of suffering Christians. This victory is the theme of [3:19-21](#). In the first century, Jews and Christians liked to speculate on obscure portions of Scripture and little-known biblical characters. One such passage was the story of the "sons of God" who married "the daughters of men" (see [Ge 6:1-3](#)), and one such character was Enoch (see [Ge 5:21-24](#)). It was widely believed that the disobedient spirits of [Ge 6](#) had led to the corruption of the world and eventually to the Flood. According to this belief, God punished these spirits who continue to inspire evil on earth by imprisoning them until Judgment Day (see [2Pe 2:4-5](#); [Jude 6](#)). It was also widely believed that Enoch was a prophet of God who had been sent to these disobedient spirits to announce their condemnation. Peter draws on these widely held beliefs in order to say that *Christ* did, in fact, what had been ascribed to Enoch.

Christ's death and resurrection signal an absolute victory over these disobedient spirits and all the hostility they inspire against God's people. As it was in the time of Noah, so it is for Peter's readers. Just as God saved a few persons through flood waters despite the activity of demonic spirits, so now their new life signaled by baptismal waters also signals the final salvation of Peter's readers, despite the activity of those same spirits. Christ's death assures absolute victory over all evil spirits for Christians who suffer as Christ did. By virtue of Christ's victories over sin, death, and the demonic, Christians may follow his example and be confident of future victory.

Matthew Henry

Verses 21-22

Noah's salvation in the ark upon the water prefigured the salvation of all good Christians in the church by baptism; that temporal salvation by the ark was a type, the antitype whereunto is the eternal salvation of believers by baptism, to prevent mistakes about which the apostle,

I. Declares what he means by saving baptism; not the outward ceremony of washing with water, which, in itself, does no more than put away the filth of the flesh, but it is that baptism wherein there is a faithful answer or restipulation of a resolved good conscience, engaging to believe in, and be entirely devoted to, God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, renouncing at the same time the flesh, the world, and the devil. The baptismal covenant, made and kept, will certainly save us. Washing is the visible sign; this is the thing signified.

II. The apostle shows that the efficacy of baptism to salvation depends not upon the work done, but upon the resurrection of Christ, which supposes his death, and is the foundation of our faith and hope, to which we are rendered conformable by dying to sin, and rising again to holiness and newness of life. Learn, 1. The sacrament of baptism, rightly received, is a means and a pledge of salvation. *Baptism now saveth us.* God is pleased to convey his blessings to us in and by his ordinances, [Acts 2:38](#); [22:16](#). 2. The external participation of baptism will save no man without an answerable good conscience and conversation. There must be the answer of a good conscience towards God.—*Obj.* Infants cannot make such an answer, and therefore ought not to be baptized.—*Answer,* the true circumcision was that of the heart and of the spirit ([Rom. 2:29](#)), which children were

no more capable of then than our infants are capable of making this answer now; yet they were allowed circumcision at eight days old. The infants of the Christian church therefore may be admitted to the ordinance with as much reason as the infants of the Jewish, unless they are barred from it by some express prohibition of Christ.

III. The apostle, having mentioned the death and resurrection of Christ, proceeds to speak of his ascension, and sitting at the right hand of the Father, as a subject fit to be considered by these believers for their comfort in their suffering condition, [1 Pet. 3:22](#). If the advancement of Christ was so glorious after his deep humiliation, let not his followers despair, but expect that after these short distresses they shall be advanced to transcendent joy and glory. Learn, 1. Jesus Christ, after he had finished his labours and his sufferings upon earth, ascended triumphantly into heaven, of which see [Acts 1:9-11](#); [Mark 16:19](#). He went to heaven to receive his own acquired crown and glory ([John 17:5](#)), to finish that part of his mediatorial work which could not be done on earth, and make intercession for his people, to demonstrate the fulness of his satisfaction, to take possession of heaven for his people, to prepare mansions for them, and to send down the Comforter, which was to be the first-fruits of his intercession, [John 16:7](#). 2. Upon his ascension into heaven, Christ is enthroned at the right hand of the Father. His being said to *sit* there imports absolute rest and cessation from all further troubles and sufferings, and an advancement to the highest personal dignity and sovereign power. 3. Angels, authorities, and powers, are all made subject to Christ Jesus: *all power in heaven and earth*, to command, to give law, issue orders, and pronounce a final sentence, is committed to Jesus, God-man, which his enemies will find to their everlasting sorrow and confusion, but his servants to their eternal joy and satisfaction.