**1 Peter: The Glorious Outcome of Christ’s Sufferings, Pt 3**

1 Peter 3:18-22

**Context**

**1 Peter 3:18-22**—*For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so 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****Corresponding to that, baptism now saves 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.*

Peter wants these beloved of God to understand the blessings of the finished work of Christ and that His suffering gives them hope as they suffer.

It was in Christ’s darkest hour of death that He experienced His greatest triumph.  The point for them and us is that we face unjust suffering (even in extremes), God can provide a glorious outcome as He accomplishes His holy purpose in our lives.

**The Suffering of Christ accomplished our Salvation**

1. **It was crucial**

***18****For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit*

1. **It was for sin**

***18****For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit*

1. **It was once for all**

***18****For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit*

1. **It was vicarious**

***18a****For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God*

1. **It was proclaimed**

***18b****…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,****20a****who once were disobedient*

1. Christ did experience death
2. Although dead in the flesh, He was alive in the spirit
   1. His eternal spirit has always been alive
   2. While His physical body lay in the tomb, His living spirit was busy
3. *He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison*
   1. Jesus purposefully went to an actual place to make a triumphant announcement to captive beings before He arose on the third day[[1]](#footnote-2)
   2. He preached or heralded His triumph over sin
      1. Victory over sin

**Romans 5:18-19***;* **Romans 6:5-6**

* + 1. Victory over death

**Romans 6:9-10***;* **1 Corinthians 15:54-55**

* + 1. Victory over Satan

**Genesis 3:15***;* **Colossians 2:15***;* **Hebrews 2:14***;* **1 John 3:8**

* 1. The message was to *the spirits*
     1. Not to humans but to fallen angels
     2. Since the fall of Satan and the demons, there has been an ongoing conflict

(Cf. **Job 1-2; Daniel 10:13**)

**Zechariah 3:1**—Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him

**Ephesians 6:11**—Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

**Revelation 16:12-14**—The sixth *angel* poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east. **13**And I saw *coming* out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; **14**for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.

* + 1. There were repeated attempts by Satan to assault God and attempt to thwart His plan
       1. He inducing Adam and Eve in the garden to fall into sin (**Gen 3:1-7; Rom 5:12-14**)
       2. His demons cohabitated with women so as to corrupt the human race (**Gen 6:1-4**)
       3. He attempted genocide of the Jews during the time of Esther (**Est 3:1-4:3**)
       4. He attempted to destroy the Messianic line in the time of Joash (**2 Chron 22:10-12**)
       5. Killing all the male children two years and under in an attempt to kill the Messiah through Herod (**Matt 2:16-18**)
       6. He enticed Christ to abandon His mission through the temptations (**Matt 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13**)
       7. He incited the Jewish leaders and the mob to cry for the blood of Jesus (**Matt 27:22**)
    2. If the demons were celebrating their victory over Christ’s death and burial, it would have been short lived
    3. The profound and permanent disappointment for them that they had fully and completely defeated

1. The spirits who received the message were *in prison*
   1. This is an actual place of incarceration; not merely a condition
   2. There are free to roam demons and bound demons
   3. Under our current situation, we deal with unbound demonic forces

**Ephesians 6:12**—*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

* + 1. Those forces are controlled by their ruler—Satan
    2. They are actively and freely doing their dastardly deeds on earth
  1. The recipients of Christ’s message was not to unbound spirits but to those bound in prison
     1. Referred to as the bottomless pit or “the pit of the abyss”

**Revelation 9:1-2***—Then the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him.****2****He opened the bottomless pit, and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit.*

* + 1. In Revelation, it is referenced seven times and always referring to the abode of incarcerated demons
    2. Satan himself will be bound there for 1000 years

**Revelation 20:1-3**—*Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand.****2****And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;****3****and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.*

* + 1. God has sovereignly chosen to place certain evil spirits in this place

**2 Peter 2:4**—*For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment*

* + 1. These are the worst of the worst

Because of the heinousness of their sin, God has imprisoned certain fallen angels in such a place of severest torment and isolation. They remain in that place, awaiting their sentencing to final punishment in the eternal lake of fire.[[2]](#footnote-3)

**Revelation 20:10**—*And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*

**Jude 6-7**—*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,****7****just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.*

1. *Spirits now in prison…who once were disobedient…in the days of Noah*
   1. These are demons who cohabitated with human women
   2. There is still fear of demons being sent to this place

**Luke 8:26-33**—*Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee.****27****And when He came out onto the land, He was met by a man from the city who was possessed with demons; and who had not put on any clothing for a long time, and was not living in a house, but in the tombs.****28****Seeing Jesus, he cried out and fell before Him, and said in a loud voice, “What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me.”****29****For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had seized him many times; and he was bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard, and yet he would break his bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.****30****And Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Legion”; for many demons had entered him.****31****They were imploring Him not to command them to go away into the abyss.****32****Now there was a herd of many swine feeding there on the mountain; and the demons implored Him to permit them to enter the swine. And He gave them permission.****33****And the demons came out of the man and entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.*

* 1. The reason they were bound was because of their actions during the time of Noah
     1. Peter does not give further explanation, which likely implies that the reader would have understood and known the story

**Genesis 6:1-4**—*Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them,****2****that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose.****3****Then the Lord said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.”****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.*

* + 1. God had given his requirements for marriage (v**1**)
    2. The demons assaulted His plan by attempting to corrupt marriage and had a wicked influence on following generations
    3. Which in part is why God judged the entire world by wiping out the whole of humanity less 8 persons

**Genesis 6:5-7**—*Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.****6****The Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.****7****The Lord said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them.”*

**Genesis 6:11-13***—Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence.****12****God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.* ***13****Then God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.*

1. **It was salvific**

**20b**…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**Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ

1. God was patient in the days of Noah

**Genesis 6:5**—*Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

* 1. Demonstrated by 120 years of waiting
  2. The construction of the ark was an object lesson not to be ignored—only revealing man’s wickedness and deception
  3. It was a period of grace even in the face of gross sinfulness

**Genesis 6:3**—*Then the Lord said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.”*

* 1. God is grieved and determines that He will blot out man whom He created
  2. Noah was a preacher of righteousness

**2 Peter 2:5**—*and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly*

* + 1. He was obedient to God in building the ark
    2. He preached a message of righteousness
    3. He spoke of a coming judgment through a worldwide flood
    4. And offered a way of deliverance
  1. It was only Noah’s family (Noah, his wife, 3 boys, and their wives) who were spared and *brought safely through the water*

1. Corresponding to that baptism now saves you
   1. Corresponding to that is used to indicate a symbol or analogy of a spiritual truth

**Hebrews 8:3 5a**—*For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; so it is necessary that this high priest also have something to offer…****5a****who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things…*

* + 1. The ark serves as an analogy on God’s provision of salvation
    2. God preserved Noah and his family while the rest of mankind perished
    3. Those who believe God and act on it are safely brought through God’s judgment of sinners
  1. *Baptism now saves you*
     1. Some have misinterpreted this to refer to spiritual salvation by water baptism (baptismal regeneration)
     2. That would be completely incongruent with the rest of scripture
     3. *Baptism* (baptisma)—immersion, submersion[[3]](#footnote-4)

Peter here uses baptism to refer to a figurative immersion into Christ as the ark of safety that will sail over the holocaust of judgment on the wicked.[[4]](#footnote-5)

* + 1. They were not only immersed in a flood, but in the divine judgment that came upon the whole earth
    2. All the while protecting them through it
    3. Analogous to what Christ does for those who trust Him

**2 Peter 3:10-13**—*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.* ***11****Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,****12****looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!****13****But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.*

1. Not the removal of dirt from the flesh
   1. Peter wants the reader to understand that he’s not talking about water baptism
   2. He additionally makes that clear with the rest of the passage
2. *An appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ*
   1. It is a dry baptism that saves, not a wet one
   2. Dead to our sin, but alive to God through the resurrection (down and up)

**Romans 10:9-10**—*that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;****10****for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.*

1. Additional analogy
   1. Noah and his family died to the old world from which they came
   2. They entered a post-flood world—a new life
   3. That is not unlike the newness we have in Christ after regeneration
      1. We have died to our old selves—our old world
      2. We are made alive in God and enter the body of Christ

**Romans 7:4-6**—*Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.****5****For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.****6****But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.*

(Cf. **Galatians 2:19-20; Ephesians 4:20-24**)

**Romans 6:3-4**—*Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?****4****Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.*

1. *…but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ*
   1. Appeal—an enquiry, a question, a demand; earnestly seeking, craving[[5]](#footnote-6)
   2. One must make an appeal to God to meet His divine requirements as a condition of God placing one safely on the ark
   3. There is a craving for a good (cleansed) conscience
   4. That craving includes repentance and faith

**Romans 2:4-5**—*Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?****5****But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God*

* 1. This is the heart of the gospel: craving for spiritual cleansing that comes through the shed blood of our savior—the Lord Jesus Christ.
     1. Repentance of sin
     2. A plea for God’s forgiveness
     3. The removal of the guilt and shame
     4. Trusting in His finished work
     5. The Holy Spirit baptizing us into Christ
     6. The sinner being brought safely into our eternal home

1. This is a pledge of victory for the Christian in the face of persecution
2. **It was victorious**

**22**who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

1. Christ is seated at the right hand of God
   1. Preeminence
   2. Authoritative
   3. Place of honor

**Philippians 2:9-11**—*For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,****10****so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,****11****and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

**Hebrews 1:3-6**—*And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,****4****having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.* ***5****For to which of the angels did He ever say, “You are My Son, Today I have begotten You”? And again, “I will be a Father to Him And He shall be a Son to Me”?* ***6****And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, “And let all the angels of God worship Him.”*

(Cf. **Acts 5:31; 7:55-56; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 10:12; 12:2**).

1. He is in heaven

**Acts 1:9-11**—*And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.****10****And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them.****11****They also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”*

1. He is a merciful High Priest on our behalf

**Hebrews 6:20***—where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.*

**Hebrews 7:25***—Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.*

**Hebrews 9:24***—For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.*

1. His authority is over angels and powers
   1. Satan and demons

**Genesis 19:1***—Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground.*

**Romans 8:38***—For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers* ***39****nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**Ephesians 3:10***—so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.*

**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,*

* 1. They are subject to Him as a result of the cross

**Ephesians 1:19-21**—*and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might****20****which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,****21****far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.*

* 1. *Subjected* (hypotassō)—to arrange under, to subordinate; to subject, put in subjection[[6]](#footnote-7)
  2. He is supreme overall, including all spiritual beings

1. The death He died for sinners was an act of grace

**Acts 15:11***— But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.*

**Romans 5:15***—But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.*

**Ephesians 1:7***—In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace*

**Titus 2:11***—For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men*

* 1. The salvation provided does not apply to fallen angels
  2. They could only listen in dismay
  3. Even holy angels can only marvel but never fully understand

**1 Peter 1:12**—*It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.*

**Conclusion**

Through God’s providential sovereign hand working, He uses even persecution to bring about His perfect plan to those who are His.

**2 Corinthians 2:14***—But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.*

**Source**

Most of the message and notes come from:

Richard W. DeHaan, Good News for Bad Times: 1 Peter

R.C.H. Lenski, The Interpretation of I and II Epistles of Peter, the three Epistles of John, and the Epistle of Jude

John MacArthur, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, 1 Peter

John MacArthur, The Triumph of Christ’s Suffering, Pt 2, 1 Peter 3:18-20, Oct 15, 1989, gty.org

Jerome H Smith, The New Treasure of Scripture Knowledge

[www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org)

**NOTES**

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1. Ibid, 209. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Ibid, 211. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Strong’s G908 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. MacArthur,,207. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Strong’s G1906 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Strong’s G5293 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)