

TITLE: "Christ's Suffering and Our Salvation" (Part 3)

PASSAGE: 1 Peter 3:18c-20

THEME: *Christ suffered for a time so that we could be saved for eternity*

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{Read Passage}

I. Christ's Suffering and Our Salvation (18-22)

The path to the promised land is paved with pain and suffering; but we can persevere through whatever lies ahead because Christ traveled the same path and prevailed for us.

First part of this passage we've been looking at ==>

A. Christ's Suffering

1. *The Fact of Christ's Suffering (18a)*

2. *The Nature of Christ's Suffering (18b)*

3. *The Purpose of Christ's Suffering (18c)*

4. *The Culmination of Christ's Suffering (18d-20)*

1. The Fact of Christ's Suffering (18a)

For even Christ suffered . . .

"For" (καί) conjunction serves to connect t/thought of v. 18 w/that of vv. 12-17 {review 12-17}

2. The Nature of Christ's Suffering (18b)

Specifically ==>

a. **His Suffering was Unique and Unrepeatable**

For even Christ suffered once for all concerning sin . . .

(1) The phrase that's used here: **περὶ (concerning) ἁμαρτιῶν (sin/sins)** indicates that Peter is referring to a sin offering

b. His Suffering was Vicarious

(1) "Vicarious" is a Latin term that means "in the place of" or "a substitute"

This is t/crux of the Gospel - the substitutionary atonement of JC.

. . . **the just for the unjust...** (or "the righteous" for the unrighteous")

(a) This is the great exchange

Vicarious; substitutionary atonement.

3. The Purpose of Christ's Suffering (18c)

a. Christ's Suffering Reconciles us to God the Father

. . . **in order to reconcile us to God-**

(1) "In order to" points to the fact that this is what is called a result or purpose clause (*ὅτι* clause w/the subjunctive)

The reason He suffered was to reconcile us to God. There's a definite article here, literally "the God" - that is "God the Father."

His vicarious suffering that was in our place. It was all so that we could be reconciled. We who were enemies! We who were under His wrath, destined for hell! By His grace we were redeemed out of fallen humanity, purchased with Christ's blood, reconciled to God the Father.

"The Cross was the cup of eternal wrath, distilled from the anger that had been building up since the sin of Adam, concentrated into one terrible drink. The Son drank the cup of wrath, so that we could drink the cup of salvation. And when he had finished his cup, there was not even one drop left for us who gratefully receive the benefit of his death." [Michael Horton, We Believe, 102]

4. The Culmination of Christ's Suffering (18d)

a. His Suffering Ended With His Death

Note the last line of verse 18 ==>

He who was put to death in the flesh, but made alive by the Spirit.

"Put to death in the flesh" = His actual death. "flesh" = σαρκί = the physical body of JC. His humanity. He was put to death in the flesh. Grammatically, t/emphasis is on t/nature of his death.

Fact that He suffered a very real, painful death - a death on a cross.

(1) Turn to Philippians 2

What commentators refer to as a "descent theme." From starting point of His pos. as t/SOG, at right hand of T/Father, Jesus is portrayed as taking steps downward, steps that ended w/His crucif.

(a) First Step Down (6): Humility

who, although He existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

Starting point ==>

...although He existed in the form of God...

“form” = μορφή - “Essential being” - “inner, abiding nature of someone or something.” Inward reality, not just outward appearance.

Another Gk. word sometimes translated “form” σχημα (Cf. Scamatic). σχημα refers to an outward appearance that may change. μορφή refers to an inner abiding nature that doesn't. Ontological immutable essential.

...He existed in the form of God...

Very imp. That's the starting point “pre-incarnation” JC, eternal 2d person of Trinity existed in very form (μορφή) of God. No equivocation here; JC was, is, God.

. . . although [shows contrast] He existed in the form of God [He] did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, [humility]

Result? ==>

(b) Second Step down (7) - Incarnation

but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, being made in the likeness of men.

i. Key doctrine in Christology ==> "The Kenosis"

Taken from word “emptied” in v. 7 = Gk. vb. κενωω. "kenosis" is defined as "The self-emptying of JC at His incarnation." He emptied himself. He wasn't emptied (by outside influence). Voluntary not coerced.

Some have put it this way: “JC emptied himself of t/rights that were his as God.” The incarnation itself was an act of great humility.

For the Son who was Himself very much God to condescend to the world of sinful men is amazing.

God t/Son who had 1 single nature took on humanity & forever more has 2 natures, t/Hypostatic Union, fully & completely God & fully & completely man. Reason He came was to die

That's ==>

(3) Third Step Down (8) - Death

And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

...being found in appearance as a man...

(a) There's the word σχημα

An outward appearance that's transient, that changes w/time. The baby became a boy who became a man.

...being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself [How? How did He humble Himself?]

...by becoming obedient to the point of death...

JC not only took on limitations of humanity; JC not only became a willing servant; JC not only submitted Himself to shameful spittle & scorn of sinful men. HE ALSO SUBMITTED TO DEATH!

AND not just any death. Remember we said that Peter is emphasizing the kind of death & that kind is described here ==>

...even death on a cross. [He was crucified]

Listen - it wasn't enough that He died. It would not have been enough for him to be put to death in some painless, sterile way - like a modern day lethal injection.

(b) He was crucified

Most feared means of death ever devised by man.

It was said by the ancients that a man who is crucified dies 1000 deaths. Roman statesman Cicero considered it the death of a lowly slave. He wrote: "Let the very name of the cross be far removed from the body of a Roman citizen, and even from his thoughts, his eyes, his ears."

It was an undescribably horrible death! Death of agony & shame. For t/Jew it marked curse of God acc. to Deut. 21.

Crucifixion in itself wasn't anything unique. 1000's of men died t/same agonizing death. It was common. Some, like X, even died for crimes they didn't commit. But He was t/only one who took upon himself t/terrifying agony of sin. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf that we might become t/righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor. 5:21).

(c) That's not the end

JC didn't come to earth to humble Himself, die an undeserved death END OF STORY. If that's all there was then as Paul says in **1 Cor. 15** ==> "If we have hoped in Christ in this life only we are of all men most to be pitied."

Just as there were steps down, there were steps back up. From humiliation to exaltation

Therefore also God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Word Lord is Gk. noun κυριος (could be transl. "master, owner, ruler, sovereign"). That's not all. This word is used over 6000x in T/LXX in place of T/Hebrew sacred name for God (YHWH). This is what it means here: JC is Lord/JC is God.

We know that this is certainly what Paul meant when we cf. **Isa. 45:21-23**
"Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the LORD? And there is no other God besides Me, A righteous God and a Savior; There is none except Me. 22 "Turn to Me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other.23 "I have sworn by Myself, The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness And will not turn back, That to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance.

Back to 1 Peter

4. The Culmination of Christ's Suffering (18d)

a. His Suffering Ended With His Death

He who was put to death in the flesh . . .

b. His Suffering was Vindicated by His Resurrection

. . . but made alive by the Spirit.

(1) This could be translated at least two different ways

1) made alive in the spirit; 2) made alive by the Spirit. Ancient MSS didn't have capitalization. Would have been all capitals (uncials) or all lower case (miniscules). Interpretive issue.

Contrast is between his death and His resurrection. And we know that t/H.S. was an agent of His resurrection.

He was resurrected "according to the Spirit of holiness" (Rom. 1:4).

Romans 8:11 talks about "the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead."

Therefore, the idea is that he was made alive by the Holy Spirit resulting in His resurrection from the dead.

1 Timothy 3:16 And by common confession great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit

...

("flesh" = body, as here, and "Spirit" refers to the Holy Spirit, as here).

He who was put to death in the flesh, but made alive [resurrected] by the Spirit [Holy Spirit].

This leads right into verses 19 and 20 ==>

5. The Triumph of Christ's Suffering (19-20)

By which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits in prison.

"By which" goes back to the word "Spirit" in verse 18. IOW

By which [Spirit] also He went and made proclamation to the spirits in prison.

a. What in the world is that about?

I love what Luther said about this passage: "A wonderful text is this, and a more obscure passage perhaps than any other in the New Testament, so that I do not know for a certainty just what Peter means." [cited in Schreiner, 184]

There are probably 5 or 6 views on this, but in my mind you can really boil it down to 2 of them. I've given you a chart where you can see 4 of t/views compared, w/strengths and weaknesses for each. The first 3 are orthodox & those are the 3 that have largely been adopted by t/CH t/o history.

(1) The three main views are:

- 1) that between his death and resurrection, Jesus preached to the dead in Hades, the realm of the dead (the view of many church fathers);
- 2) that Christ preached through Noah to people in Noah's day (the view of many Reformers);
- 3) that before or (more likely after) his resurrection, Jesus proclaimed triumph over the fallen angels (the view of most scholars today).

Which view is right? It's t/one I'm going to give you!

b. Note again v. 19

By which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits in prison

(1) Note that it says that He went and preached

(a) The verb πορευομαι means to travel somewhere

If He was spiritually preaching through Noah, he wouldn't have had to travel anywhere. He would have simply been spiritually at work within Noah, much like we saw how he was spiritually at work within the OT prophets in chapter 1:11.

(2) Second, the word "spirits" in the plural is almost always used of angels or demons

Only one exception in the NT and that's when it's used with a Genitive as in Heb. 12:23. Every other occurrence is of angels or demons, and there are legions of them (pardon the pun).

(a) This is a problem for any view that makes this preaching to men

Remember that was t/view of many early church fathers. They believed that Christ's went bodily into hades where he preached to the spirits imprisoned there. An appeal is often made to 4:6 {read}. But this is talking about Christian martyrs who were put to death in the flesh (even as Jesus was, 18c), but they will nonetheless live forevermore according to God's will.

If this was a proclamation made to the spirits of men, Peter would have used the word ψυχαι (souls) as he does in v. 20.

BTW - the word used in 4:6 of preaching the Gospel in evangelism is not the same word used here. This is X declaring His victory, not X proclaiming the Gospel.

c. Someone might ask, "Does this have anything to do with the Apostle's Creed where it says that He descended into Hell?"

That's what the creed says, "He was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into Hell." And, after all, if it is the creed of the Apostles, it must be true, right?

Problem is, the Apostle's Creed was not written by any of the Apostles. Further, the A.C. was not the product of any church council. It developed/evolved over time from AD 200 to AD 750. "Descended into hell" clause was not found in any of the early versions of the creed.

Not until AD 650 was there any attempt to say that Christ actually descended into hell. So that's not relevant here.

5. *The Triumph of Christ's Suffering (19-20)*

So, if this verse means that JC went somewhere and proclaimed victory over spirits whom we know aren't men, but demons, where did He go and who were these spirits?

**d. First of all, you might notice that they are imprisoned
... the spirits in prison**

These are imprisoned angels. Demons.

(1) You can categorize angelic beings into two basic categories

(a) Holy elect angels (1 Tim. 2:4) -

these are those angels whom God created in a state of confirmed holiness. They did not join t/rebellion of Satan.

(b) Evil, fallen angels (demons)

Demons are either bound or loosed. IOW - they are either imprisoned or they are free (under t/sov. control of God, but free).

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 Peter 5:8 {cite}

Bound or imprisoned (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 9:1, 11:7, 17:8).

(2) These are imprisoned demons that Peter is talking about here

(a) Question is, why? Who are they and why are they imprisoned?

Answered in the next verse ==>

who formerly were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, while the ark was being built . . .

e. This brings us back to the time of Noah, before the Great Flood

This is the same group that Peter refers to in 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude in v. 6.

(1) Turn to 2 Peter 2:4

2 Peter 2:4-5 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; 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;

(a) This is a direct parallel to 1 Peter 3:19 and 20

Same elements are there: Noah, t/flood, & imprisoned, disobedient spirits (clarified here as angels). Not men, but fallen angels or demons.

(b) As a result of their sin or disobedience they were cast into τάρταρος

NASB translates the word "hell" but the normal word for hell is gehenna. This word is only used here in the NT.

In the Jewish apocryphal book of Enoch, Gehenna is said to be the place of dead, apostate Jews and Tartarus of fallen angels. [22:2]

Maybe that this isn't hell, but another spaciality/dimension altogether.

(2) Turn to the book of Jude

Jude 5-7 5 Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe. 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. 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.

Couple of things you need to note here: Again we have angels, demons, who are imprisoned. Reason? They did not keep their own "domain" and they abandoned their proper "abode." Verse 7 - they ISW as S&G indulged in "gross immorality" & "went after strange flesh."

Reference to t/homosexuality that was rampant in Sodom. It's called "gross immorality" and an indulgence in "strange flesh." IOW - something that's strange or unnatural.

Peter and Jude are all drawing from the same Jewish tradition outlined in the book of Enoch. Don't go thumbing through t/OT, you won't find Enoch. Not there.

Book of Enoch was never part of the Jewish canon of Scripture. Wasn't part of the Old Testament Apocrypha. Technically, the Book of Enoch is part of the Jewish pseudepigrapha and within that class it is one of the apocalypses

Fact that Peter refers to Enoch doesn't make that book inspired. Paul quotes an Athenian poet. There are several places in Scripture where t/writer draws from an o/s source.

Among the things that t/Book of Enoch addresses are angels who abandoned their rightful place to defile themselves with women. That's t/"**gross immorality and strange flesh**" that Jude talks about.

f. That account is in the Bible - Genesis Chapter 6

Ever since the fall of Satan & there has been an ongoing cosmic battle between God & t/forces of wickedness. Not dualism; God is completely in control and for reasons known ultimately to Him, He allows evil to continue for a time.

The ultimate purpose of Satan is to counter and counterfeit the plan of God, especially as it relates to the Gospel. Goes all t/way back to the fall of men into sin. "**Has God said...**"

Genesis 3:15 - the protoevangelion. / First Gospel. "**And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.**"

Ever since that time, Satan has tried to prevent the coming of the Messiah. During t/OT he did so by means of the attempted genocide of the Jews as recorded in t/book of Esther. The attempt to destroy t/Messianic line itself during t/time of Joash.

When he couldn't prevent X from being born, he orchestrated t/events in Matt. 2 where King Herod had all t/male children in Bethlehem 2 yrs. and younger killed. Jesus escaped because an angel warned Joseph in a dream to leave Bethlehem for Egypt.

When Satan failed to have Jesus murdered as a baby, he tried to defeat Him by tempting Him to sin (Matt. 4:1-11).

(1) I believe one of those early, OT, attempts to prevent the coming of Christ is recorded in Genesis chapter 6 (turn there)

(a) This is an attempt to pollute the human race

After all, if the defeat of Satan was to come through a woman (3:15), how better to prevent that from happening than to somehow corrupt t/entire race of humans.

1 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.

(b) "Sons of God" (v. 2) = "bene elohim"

A Hebrew idiom for angels. In every place where the phrase occurs, angelic beings are to be understood. Sons of God cannot be men or they would be called "sons of men."

The "Sons of God" stand in juxtaposition w/the "daughters of men."
Contrast is between supernatural beings & human women.

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.

Jews understood this passage as referring to "Watchers" - fallen angels who left their proper place to marry human females, have children who were mighty warriors, & teach forbidden arts & practices.

These are shut way in a prison by God, awaiting their final judgement
Book of Enoch records their judgement & Enoch who was sent to these imprisoned spirits in order to announce their condemnation.

(c) Objection

You say, *"Now wait a minute - that's impossible. In fact, the Bible teaches that angels, fallen or otherwise, can't marry or have children."*

Interestingly, one thing that distinguishes good angels from fallen angels, or demons, is that demons will attempt to take up residence in t/bodies of men & women. No such thing as being indwelt by an angel (tho they can take on human form). But demons have indwelt and controlled men & that's what I think happened here.

These are demonic spirits who, entered into wicked men (just as Satan entered into an animal in Gen. 3). This is t/first recorded instance of demon possession. They were probably powerful rulers, empowered by demons, who took women as wives (Heb. word refers to a marriage transaction). Because materially they were men, they could procreate.

We know from passages like Ezekiel 28:11-19 and Daniel 10:13 that earthly rulers/kings can have demonic forces ruling behind them. IOW their power is demonic.

This is perhaps the most heinous effort of Satan to corrupt humanity by producing an evil, demon-controlled mongrel race.

God responded by wiping out the entire race with the exception of Noah, his wife, three children and their wives.

And t/demons involved were condemned & imprisoned awaiting final judgement.

Back to 1 Peter . . .

5. The Triumph of Christ's Suffering (19-20)

a. Proclaimed to the spirits now in prison

19 By which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits in prison. 20 who formerly were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah . . .

Sometime between X's resurrection and ascension He went to tartarus, to t/place of imprisonment, and proclaimed His victory. *"No, you were not able to thwart God's plan, either by polluting the race or murdering Me. I have triumphed over suffering and have purchased a people for my own possession by my death and resurrection."*

I say that this happened after his resurrection and before his ascension because of verse 22 {read}

g. What's the point of all this?

Why does Peter bring all this up? For one thing, he's going to make a connection to baptism in v. 21 (next time).

1) Noah and his family were a great minority. They lived among a godless, hostile society. Same w/Peter's readers & t/same for us today. We may be in t/minority, we may be like t/proverbial Salmon swimming against t/world's currents, but God is faithful.

2) Noah boldly stood out for righteousness in the midst of a wicked world. 2 Peter 2:5 calls him a preacher of righteousness. We, too, are to take a bold stand for JC in t/midst of unbelievers (cf. 2:12, 3:15-16).

3) Noah knew that judgement was in God's hands and that it was coming. Same with Peter's readers and with us (Cf. 4:5,7).

2 Peter 3:10 **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.**

4) God is very patient.

... when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, while the ark was being built . . .

God wasn't waiting for Noah to finish t/ark. His patience was w/fallen men

It took 120 years for Noah to build the Ark. Imagine the people who would come to see what this was all about. According to ancient Jewish literature, they mocked him saying, "**Old man, what is the ark for?**" (b. Sanh. 108b).

It has been estimated that the ark was about 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and over 4 stories high, with a gross tonnage of about 14,000 tons and a carrying capacity equal to that of 522 railroad boxcars.

All of t/people watching him build this thing would have thought him a fool. But he wasn't only building, he was preaching to them. Preaching about God's patience & the coming judgement.

God could have destroyed the entire world immediately, but the 120 years is a demonstration of his patience.

5) God was faithful & in spite of the judgement, Noah and his family were saved.

. . . in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water.

"The eight persons were, Noah, and his wife, and his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japhet, and their three wives.

One ancient commentator writes ==>

"By pointing out that only eight people were saved from the flood, Peter reminds us that in comparison to the large numbers of the Jews, heretics and unbelievers which there are in the world, the number of God's chosen ones is very small. As Jesus said: 'The gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.'" [Bede, On 1 Peter, cited in ACC, 109]

Matthew 24:27 - coming of X will be like the days of Noah. Seems that we are encroaching upon that time. We, even in America, are becoming a small minority who live among a great majority of godless men and women who hate what we stand for. We, like Noah, are to persevere.