

Rev Bob Sinclair: 1 Peter 3:18 - Christ's Suffering

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Preacher: Guest Preacher

- [0 : 0 0] I would like us to turn once again to 1st Epistle of Peter chapter 3 and reading at verse 18. First Peter 3 at verse 18. For Christ also suffered once for sins. The righteous for the unrighteous that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit. For Christ also suffered once for sins. The righteous for the unrighteous that he might bring us to God. Now as we look at the Epistles of Peter we'll see in them two different emphases.
- [1 : 0 7] The first Epistle speaks mainly in regard to the first advent, to the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and what the Lord achieved by that first coming. The second Epistle majors on the second coming, the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is returned to earth after his time of glorification in heaven. So we have these two Epistles bounding the work and the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. But this verse itself declares to us his great aim for the children of men. Christ suffered once for sin. Christ has only suffered once, he will not suffer again. His suffering was a once and for all punishment. Penal suffering on account of our sins and on account of our sinfulness in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- [2 : 3 1] The Book of Isaiah chapter 59, the Lord says, my arm is not shortened, that I cannot save, neither is my ear heavy, that I cannot hear, but your sins are separated between you and your God. What Christ has achieved by coming to this earth is taken out of the way those sins which have erected a barrier between God and mankind. God's desire always was that we should have fellowship with Him, that we should be with Him. Yet, in the beginning there was a controversy originated by mankind which separated between God and mankind. God has endeavored through the giving of His Son to take out of the way that barrier, as I'm sure many of you in the generation who have heard, He removes the mountain of provocation which we have erected between God and ourselves so that we might have fellowship with Him. So Christ suffers for the ungodly. He suffers for our sins. He suffers that we might be brought back into this new and living relationship with Himself.
- [3 : 5 5] And He suffers only once. Roman Catholic Church has a mass many times, almost every day of the week. And in that mass they crucify afresh of the Lord Jesus Christ, supposing to cause them sufferings which somehow works to their good. Christ only suffered once. Suffered once for sins not on many occasions. And He suffers the righteous for the unrighteous. He's righteous, we are unrighteous that He might bring us to God.

He might take out of the way the barrier that exists between God and us. So that to us there is no condemnation.

So that to us there is redemption from the law which we all know that we have broken and stand condemned of.

[5 : 01] And so that the promise of the Spirit might be achieved through His death and be given to us.

As those of us who are Christians know very effectively not one experience, we dwell in the days of promise, the days when the Holy Spirit has been given to all who are in Christ Jesus.

And the Holy Spirit Himself is a purchased possession of the Lord Jesus Christ. If the Lord Jesus Christ had not suffered and died for our sins the Holy Spirit would not have been given.

The Holy Spirit is a purchased possession. One of the great proofs of the Lord Jesus Christ is whom He said He was. He said, I will go away but I will send you another comforter, another intercessor, another advocate.

And he will be your advocate in my place. Another day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit, the advocate did come.

[6 : 05] Again as I said one of the great proofs that the Lord Jesus Christ is who He said He was. One of the great claims that He is the Son of God.

Now as we look here at this text which talks about Christ's suffering we can ask His suffering what did it mean for Him during His time here on earth?

Well His whole life, His whole earthly existence was an existence of suffering. His life begins with suffering.

His life begins as one whose mother has been accused of an adulterous relationship.

She was a mother without being married. Even later on in his life one of the accusations that scribes and Pharisees leveled at him was that he was someone who had been born out of wedlock.

[7 : 22] He was there was suffering there also being born in a manger. He was born as one without reputation. As one who had no place, no reputation within mankind.

He was one who was outside the common good of the people amongst whom he lived. He was someone who was outside the common good of society.

And so he lives out that lifestyle in that particular way. He knows poverty. His parents when they came to baptise him they brought the meanest of offerings permissible under the Jewish code to turtle doves.

The offering does it all raise all the way from a bullock or a ram or a sheep or a goat all the way down to two turtle doves for the most poverty-stricken of that community.

And that is what Mary brought when she brought to consecrate the Lord Jesus Christ at the temple. The Lord knew also the anger and the persecution of Herod.

[8 : 43] Herod who pretends that he wants to worship this new king of the Jews and yet whose real attitude towards the Lord Jesus Christ that he wants to kill him.

And in that endeavour and that attitude he kills all the infants between two years old on the two years old throughout the whole city or the area there of Jerusalem.

And so his whole infancy is as such one who was suffering, one who was being persecuted, one whose parents were seen as outcasts from society when there was no room for them in the inn and when the Lord Jesus Christ himself was born in a manger.

And so it goes on. He has to flee from Herod and be estranged in Egypt. He has to return from Egypt and go to Nazareth again to escape the persecution of Herod's son and there he goes up to be in Nazarene.

Now the Nazarenes were reckoned very much in a similar vein as the Samaritans. They weren't, should we say, in the line of their true Judaism.

[10 : 08] The northern tribes from Samaria northwards who had been exiled by the invading armies that had come and invaded the northern tribes and taken them away and displaced them and brought their own people and had them settled in these lands, both in Samaria and in Nazarene.

And so Nazareth was the place which was looked down on and the people from Nazareth were people who were looked on as not being pure Jews.

And even Nathaniel, the one in whom there is no guile, says when he's told that they found Jesus of Nazareth in Messiah, can any good thing come out of Nazareth?

So we have this whole aspect of him being declared as a Nazarene, as being one who is outside the scope of polite society, someone who because of his birthplace and the narrative of his birth has no reputation at all.

And so he's suffering in that respect. He has this emotional suffering. He has this being persecution of being put outside the normal aspect of Jewish life.

[11 : 32] And after he grew up and after he began his ministry, we find there also that his life there continues being a life of temptation.

Remember, all this temptation is part of the suffering that he has to undergo. He is a man of sorrows. He's acquainted with grief.

He is someone who is persecuted. He is one who is ostracized, who is one who is put outside for us. In heaven, he's adored. He's worshiped by angels.

But no, he comes to earth for us and for our salvation. He comes here so that we might live, so that we might be God's children.

We might be part of the family that Christ himself is part of. As soon as the Lord appears on the scene of his gospel ministry, he is there as someone who is to be tempted, someone who is to be brought under the control almost of the devil.

[12 : 51] As he begins his ministry there in Galilee, the Holy Spirit descends on him. The Holy Spirit drives him into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

Then for 40 days and 40 nights he is in the desert, being tempted continuously. In the gospels, we're told of three of the temptations that the devil levels at the Lord Jesus Christ.

But as much more than just that, we're just given a small section of the great temptations the Lord had to undergo. He had to undergo his ability to be able to do anything he wanted, create any medical he wanted to do.

He had to forego the privilege of being able to prove that he's the Son of God. And so again and again the Lord knowing his ministry, knowing what is mission for us here on earth, he has to face these temptations.

And I said, not just on these three occasions, but throughout those 40 days and 40 nights, the devils, the devil and all those who were with them were no doubt trying to make them succumb to their distractions and temptations.

[14 : 02] And so give up on the mission that he himself had consented to undergo. And so for all that time he was facing the temptations of the devil.

Now he was tempted to the uttermost. You and I, if we're tempted, very often fail or fall at the first hurdle.

Whereas the Lord Jesus Christ goes on again and again, temptation after temptation. He kept the law and made it honorable.

He kept the law showing that if we're determined to face up to temptation, we can honor the law and honor God in keeping that law for him.

The whole of the law is one whereby we honor God. He has given us almost anything and everything in this world that we want, much like Adam and Eve in the garden.

[14 : 59] You cannot have anything you want, but that one tree you must not touch it. And so like us, the one thing we're not allowed to touch, that's what we want.

That's what we want to do. Sin is very much in that same vein. There are so many things in this life we can do. So many aspects and trajectories of life we can engage in.

But we want to turn aside and do that which we know is dubious. We want to turn aside and do that which we know is against God's law and will for us.

And why do we do it? Well, because we are fallen human creatures. We are falling received in this nature in ourselves that we cannot, even with the utmost power in our hearts, keep God's will.

Martin Luther wrote a book called The Bondage of the Will. And in that book he talks about the fact that our will is under bondage, not to do good, but to do evil.

[16 : 08] And his first creation was created with the will designed to do good. If it continued in that vein, if it continued to reject Satan's temptation, he would have received a will where it would have been impossible for him to sin.

He would have been always keeping God's commands in the same ways the Lord Jesus Christ. But how he succumbed to the temptation that the devil leveled at him.

He then finds himself with a fallen human nature whereby it's impossible for him not to sin. And so that's the way we are.

The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but also his posterity, all mankind since it, him and fell with him.

And so we are because of Adam's covenant headship. We follow in his line and we become liable to the nature of that he received.

[17 : 18] Now in Christ that nature is transposed. In Adam all die, in Christ all are made alive.

Christ becomes the new covenant head. If we, he becomes our covenant head, if we place our trust in him and we commit our life to him, he becomes our surety.

He becomes the one who stands in our room and in our place, bringing us into a living and true relationship with our Father who is in heaven.

And so throughout the Lord Jesus Christ's life. We have this aspect of temptation and suffering and of being ostracized and being outcast by the society in which he lived.

Even after the temptation in the wilderness, the Lord is also a man of sorrows and equities with grief as he sees all the suffering that surrounds him caused by sin.

[18 : 23] All the blasphemy against his heavenly Father, the way that the church that is supposed to lead in righteousness is a fallen church and engages only in its own prosperity and in its own well being.

And throughout that life he knows that suffering. He knows that aspect of being an outcast from society in which he lives. He is God's only Son, the Son in whom God is well pleased and he's well pleasing to his heavenly Father because he keeps God's law, because he walks in the light as God is in the light, because he keeps the commandments, because his whole life is characterized by sinlessness and there is no spot or blemish in him.

And because of that particular lifestyle, he is different to everyone else. His own brothers no doubt knew that he was different.

The places that he grew up in knew that he was different because he demonstrated a totally different lifestyle. He demonstrated a lifestyle which was godly and holy and harmless and undefiled.

And so because of that no doubt he experienced criticism, he experienced persecution. The same would appear for anyone in this life who lived the life of holiness, a life of godliness whose life was without impurity.

[19 : 57] If someone like that lived in the world today they would know the same sort of persecution, the same sort of separation from their fellows because they couldn't endure such a lifestyle.

Very often we wonder why those who are spiritual, those who cannot endure blasphemy or engaging in practices which the world wants to engage in, how often they seem to be not wanted as friends or part of society which will live.

And it's because such a life is an accusation of the lives that they are leading.

And there's almost a fear in them that the person who is leading such a life is an accuser against their way and their understanding of what life should be.

And so as we go on and through the Lord's life we see him in Gethsemane where he is suffering there with sweat and strong crying and tears.

[21 : 10] As one who is betrayed and by one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, as one who is falsely accused as one who is spitefully treated, one who is bruised and one who is scourged all along this whole road to the cross, the Via de la Rosa, we find there this whole aspect of suffering continuing through Herod's palace, through the accusation of Sanhedrin to the high priest, through the soldiers smiting him and putting on him a crown of thorns, the ridicule of the cloak that was put on him.

All these aspects of the life, the Lord's experience, declare to us the suffering and the intimidation and the aggravation of the hurt that he must be enduring during his whole time.

What more or what better way could we put it than when it says Christ has once suffered for our sins.

But as we go on to the whole experience of the Lord Jesus Christ's suffering, we can ask when did he suffer?

We say he suffered during his whole lifetime, yes, but we ask on what occasions did he suffer during his lifetime? When Christ was on earth, was there anything in his experience that he did not suffer?

[22 : 54] When did he suffer? He suffered on all occasions, on every occasion that he interacted with humanity during that time.

It doesn't say Christ suffered on the cross or Christ suffered in the garden, Christ suffered throughout his whole lifetime.

He was a man of sorrows. He was acquainted with grief. He was one who had a whole life of suffering, a real representation of the Lamb who was burying away the sin of the world.

Remember what John says in the Gospel of his Gospel in the first chapter, Behold the Lamb of God who bears away the sin of the world. The Lamb of God is the one whom God is going to accept as the sacrifice for man's disobedience.

Well here's Jesus Christ, there's that Lamb of God burying away the sin of the world. His whole life he was to sin better. No wonder when people saw him, he was as a man of sorrows.

[24 : 12] They saw him as a man of who was there acquainted with grief. A man who is burying the sin of the world, surely he has borne our griefs.

He's carried our sorrows. We esteemed him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions. But because of who he was, he was God's sinless only begotten Son.

There was no spot or blemish or any such thing in him. He was wounded for our transgressions because of what we are even today. He is wounded.

He is wounded for our lifestyles, for our blasphemies. He is wounded for our disobedience.

But what did Christ suffer? Did he suffer physically? Did he suffer spiritually? Did he suffer emotionally?

[25 : 18] Yes, he suffered in every aspect of human emotions. He suffered. The text gives no hint of any limit to the suffering that the Lord Jesus Christ endured.

We can ask what did he not suffer in body, in mind, in spirit, in every aspect of his life he suffered.

The pain, the shame and the loss of his own humanity, the hatred and also the division which he suffered.

Because of the doctrine he proclaimed, because of the lifestyle that he declared, the whole of humanity seemed to turn against him.

As long as he was doing miracles, as long as he was filling the bellies of those who supported him, people wanted to follow him. They heard him gladly because it was suddenly a novelty as to the way he was speaking and what he was teaching.

[26 : 34] They thought, this is different. We want to see what he does. He was doing miracles. They marveled at the miracles he was doing. But when suddenly he started talking about the deeper aspects of following him or believing in God or worshiping God only and not pursuing their own lifestyle, suddenly it turned against him.

The Lord says to his disciples, will you also go away? Only those who the Lord has revealed himself to, says to whom else?

Whom else shall we go? You alone have the words of eternal life. That's what leaves us today in such dwindling numbers.

You know, throughout the world, not just here, but throughout the world, the Christian church is diminishing numerically.

I read recently about a man who did a questionnaire.

[27 : 45] He looked at the outcome of a number of people who didn't look at Christianity unfavourably.

And if you go back to possibly 1995, 80, 85% of the population were not unfavourable towards Christianity or had some sort of link to Christianity.

Today, 20 years later, that number has dropped to almost 15%. Today we're living in a very, very small nucleus of those who want to know Christ and want to worship Christ.

We see it among ourselves. In every congregation, there are very few congregations, even in Lewis, who have numbers and three figures on a Sunday, either servers.

And so we left with this situation where our numbers are reducing. And the only thing that's going to make any difference is the Lord coming again in power and great revival power.

[28 : 56] We can engage in all sorts of schemes, all sorts of out-treaters, but we are totally dependent upon the Lord's working among us. And that's what we need to do.

We need to pray to the Lord of the Harvest, not only that he will send out labourers into the harvest, but he would also endow those labourers with great power and great commitment and great ideals to proclaim the God without the fear or the favour of man, so that God's name would be glorified.

And pray also that his Holy Spirit would come in power and bring great glory to God's name.

And so the Lord suffered in every aspect of his life. He suffered from the powers of darkness. He suffered from the priests.

He suffered scribes, the Pharisees, the soldiers and the scourging. He suffered in every aspect of that crossfading and that day that he went to the cross.

[30 : 11] And Christ suffered whenever he was brought into conflict with Satan and his devices. He suffered in the wilderness. He suffered in the garden.

He suffered in the Sanhedrin. Europe peoples were supposed to be declaring God's word to the people and what they were doing, they were hiding it. They were proclaiming that their own doctrines and their own tennis.

He suffered before Pilate. He suffered on the cross. So almost everywhere in Christ's experience, they were suffering and they were Spain. He suffered once for sins.

That is no longer the case with him now. He is no longer the suffering servant. That chapter we read there in Isaiah 53, it's the chapter of the suffering servant.

All that he endured there was prophesied before the Lord Jesus Christ came to earth. And there is no closer summary of what the Lord experienced on earth than what we read there in Isaiah 53.

[31 : 12] That's why it's read so often, especially during communion seasons. Because it's there in the suffering of the Lord that we see what he achieved for us and for our salvation.

For whom then did the Lord suffer? He suffered for you and he suffered for me.

He suffered from the people of his own day, from those who were wickedly accusing him, for those who were slandering him, from good men who were deserting him, and even the best of his disciples.

Even the devils tempted him to the utmost. And from heaven his heavenly Father caught him to suffer.

He made him an offering for sin. He put him to grief. He made his soul an offering for our sin.

[32 : 20] And I begin to ask is that it? Is that all that he had to suffer? And we have to say no, he thought only the beginnings of his sufferings.

His sufferings, a multitude, his sufferings were without limit, his sufferings were without human language to express them.

You know the term he gave his back to the smithers? Well, the spiritual importance in that particular phrase he gave his back to the smithers, he didn't defend himself.

He allowed himself to be snitten. He allowed himself to be persecuted. He allowed himself to be put to grief. He didn't defend himself.

He was as a lamb going to the slaughter, not uttering a word in his defence, because he knew what he had to accomplish was for you and for me.

[33 : 29] The idea of not going on to the Lord Jesus Christ was something that never entered his mind, even in the garden.

When he prays to his heavenly Father, Father if it be possible let this cup pass from me.

He also, what is the word, if this cup will not pass from me except I drink it, let your will be done. And he commits himself to drinking dry the dregs the cup his Father had given to him.

He is committed wholeheartedly to finishing the work that his Father had given him to do. He wasn't shying away from the work.

He sets his face as a flint to go to Jerusalem and there to suffer and there to die for you and for me. His suffering is intense.

[34 : 26] His suffering has been prophesied so he knows what's in front of him. And he goes forward to empty the cup of suffering that his Father had given him to drink.

He stands before Pilate. He is there falsely accused and condemned by Pilate. His enemies smite him on the face and on the head.

They put a crown of thorns on him. He's buffeted. He's spat on. He was reviled and he's reviled not again.

You see here again and again the Lord Jesus Christ holy, harmless and undefiled as a lamb going to the slaughter of the sheep before a sheer is done so he opens not his mouth.

He did all this willingly and gladly for you and for me. That's the great offer of salvation and as we preach the gospel we sometimes wonder how people can leave a church building, how they are brought to see themselves and their sins in the face of the cross and leave the church not recognizing what order of men and women we really are.

[35 : 57] As the Apostle James talks about in this epistle, you look into the mirror of life and turn away not knowing what sort of people you are.

Well that's how often we do it. Almost every time we come before the word we turn away from it, find ourselves guilty and yet go away and do exactly the same things in exactly the same way.

And then just briefly as the time has gone here, there was nothing whatsoever to alleviate his suffering or his agony.

In Christ's case there were no comforters, since comforters found I know.

No wine on the cross to deaden the pain. He experienced all of that without anything to deaden the pain that was before him.

[37 : 02] No answer to his cry on the cross, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? He cries into a void on the cross and there is no answer.

One of the aspects about the Lord's suffering is that it could at any time have stopped it. All of us need to die at one time or another.

In the Lord's case the Lord never needed to die in him and there was life and life eternal. He never needed to die.

But he went forward in the way of death so that we might live. So that although we die physically in this life, the spiritual life that he gives to us is something that will continue time, time without end.

He says we are bound to die sooner or later but for Christ there is no such need. At any moment the Lord Jesus Christ could have come down off the cross.

[38 : 19] That's what they were challenging him with. The people in the scribes and Pharisees were saying if you are the Son of God come down off the cross and prove to us who you claim to be.

He could have done it at any moment. He could have asked twelve legions of angels to come and support him and to defeat all his enemies. But then where would your salvation and mind be?

The work would not have been completed. He would not have finished the work that his Father had given him to do to become a sacrifice for divine justice.

And so he had to go through this covenant he had with his Father. The covenant he made with the Father and before the world was.

This covenant of grace, the covenant of redemption that he agreed with his Father before the world came into being. He was going to complete it and do everything in his power, everything in his own understanding that this is the way it was going to happen exactly as the Father had required him to do.

[39 : 32] If we suffer, we suffer less than we deserve. Christ did nothing to deserve any suffering.

In Christ there was no sin, suffering not for his own sins, but for yours and mine. We want to go and look at ourselves, examine our lives and to see ourselves in the light of scripture and to see how far short we fall and thought word indeed of all that is required of us by God.

And Christ pays for those sins. He covers those sins with his own blood that chill on the cross.

So we wear as a cloak his righteousness and that he works out for us. His righteousness, he wants to offer it to us for time and for eternity so that we might be with him throughout the endless ages of glory.

Remember what we read there in Isaiah, bruised for our iniquity, chastised with our chastisement with his stripes, we are healed.

[41 : 01] It's all for us, never for himself. And so just finally and briefly, Christ has once suffered for sins, never again.

The first occasion of the Lord's advent, he came as a despised Nazarene. He was one who was a man of sorrows, one who was acquainted with grief.

In his second advent, he will bear all the insignia of the Godhead, all the majesty, all the power, all the glory.

They're all his. There was never a time when they were not his, but for a short space of time, he laid them aside.

There are words which contained in a particular hymn, which has seeped from his head his hands as feet. Sorrows and love flow mingled down.

[42 : 01] Did air, such love and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so great a crown? Were the whole realm of nature mine?

That were an offering far too small, love so amazing, so divine, demands my love, my life, my all.

May the Lord then bless these thoughts to us this evening.