

THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST

3:18-22

Read: 1 Peter 3:18-22

The paragraph consisting verses 18-22 has the most condensed, clear and simple explanation of the cross of Christ in the NT, but also contains the most perplexing and notoriously difficult passage in the NT.

We are to build our belief on the clear, direct teachings of scripture, not the ones that difficult. Interestingly cults often use these different passages for their distinctive

The underline theme of the passage thus far has been suffering for righteousness sake (3:13-17). And Christ is said to be our example in suffering (2:21). But now in verse 18 Christ suffering is seen in a different light...Peter will explain Christ ultimate purpose in His suffering and complete victory. (Read: Isaiah 53:1-6)

V.18

Here Christ's suffering is not presented as an example, but something quite unique and beyond imitation. Not about a standard of behavior in suffering, but a cause of salvation, something they cannot participate in, but only become a recipient of.

1. Christ suffered...

- a. The importance of Christ Passion (suffering & death) is close to Peter's own heart, because when Christ announce he must go to Jerusalem to suffer and die Peter actually rebuked Christ. (Matt 16:21-22)
- b. Christ "**suffered**" and "**died**" has interesting differences in old manuscripts. Since "suffer" is used 11 times in this epistle and "died" is not used in the epistle. The original most likely used "suffer" which went along with the theme and flow of the epistle.
- c. Probably it was a scribal change in light of the gospel message... Christ died for our sins according to the scripture, and did not just suffer for our sins.

2. Once for all... for sins

- a. With the use of the aorist tense used here... one time past act, Peter tells us that the uniqueness of Christ work here cannot be repeated in history or in symbols.
 - i. "**Once for all**" stands in contrast to the Jewish sacrificial system (any religion) that was continual. This system is now completed and closed (Hebrews 9:24-28; 10:12).
 - ii. Christ announced just before His death on the cross... it is finished (John 19:30).
- b. **For sins**, show that Christ suffering and death here is centered around humanity's fatal problem- sin, and that human have not ability to solve themselves.

3. Righteous for the Unrighteous... the intended use of two term to show antithetical contrast

- a. Christ was stated as "the righteous" (Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14) which stresses not His identity but his moral character- sinless, flawless. (2 Cor. 5:21)

- b. His sinless life qualified Him to be our substitute... take our place instead. On a human level this is very unusual. (Romans 5:6-8)
 - c. It should also be seen as a volunteer act, Christ offered himself willingly.
 - d. The unrighteous stress our inborn condition... in sin. Being “in sin” should not be defined by a single unrighteous only, but a condition that affects all humans.
- 4. To bring us to God...** the aim of this suffering- open a way
- a. The word “bring” is an aorist tense which portray admission or actual entry into God’s presence... like a subject before a king.
 - b. Implies that Christ knew clearly the purpose of this suffering and death. His is not a victim or puzzled why they rejected him...His suffering/death opened the way to God.
 - c. It presents our most fundamental need, and portrays our basic character as being distant from God, ignorant of Him, and at enmity with Him.
 - d. The way in which this is done provide the most powerful appeal to humans to persuade them to return to God. (2 Cor. 5:14 the love of Christ compels us...)
- 5. Having been put to death in the flesh and made alive in the spirit**
- a. **Put to death** is the aorist passive tense (done once). It was a violent act done against Him
 - b. **In the flesh** points to the reality of him being a real human being and His life here on earth. The sphere of His incarnation, and his life in flesh was terminated.
 - c. Docetism, and other religions has tried to say that Christ was Spirit that appeared to have a body, or indwelt a body and departed the body before being crucified.
 - d. **Made alive in the spirit** speaks of His resurrected sphere of life. The idea here is “in the sphere of” the flesh (Incarnation) and ... the spirit (Glorified resurrection). Not what caused him to be resurrection but that fact of him being resurrected.(Rom 1:3-4)
 - i. Sphere of the flesh= Christ in his human sphere of life as put to death
 - ii. Sphere of the spirt= Christ in his resurrected life is alive or “Realm of the Spirit”

V. 19-21

1. **In which he went...** follow the idea “in the realm of the spirit” having be made alive
Went To the spirits (WHO is this?)
 - a. Who? Humans/Souls before flood or those prior to Christ?
 - b. Fallen Angels?
 - c. Once disobedient?
2. **Made proclamation...** “Announced” is not same word in 4:6 “good news”...
 - a. Is it announcing final judgment...?
 - b. If it is not, then what...could it be He Accomplished Victory!
3. **In prison:** Where did He go?
 - a. Did he **descend** to Hades/Hell to proclaim judgment is final? Problem with word “**went**” same identical word used 22 for ascend.
 - b. He does go to a place though.

V.22

Evidently for those suffering Christians, this passage gave assurance of future victory.