

The just for the unjust

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[0 : 0 0] Will you turn with me again please to 1st Peter chapter 3. 1st Peter and chapter 3 in the text for our study this evening is found in verse 18 of that chapter. 1st Peter 3 verse 18.

We may read from verse 17.

We are just going to deal with the first half of that verse down to bringing us to God. So that the subject of our study is again the sufferings of Christ.

And as you know we have already seen the sufferings of Christ in this letter of Peter. You remember that he speaks of Christ's death as the basis and the foundation for holiness.

In chapter 1 and also how we saw in chapter 2 how the death of Christ or rather the suffering of Christ is set up for us as an example.

[1 : 3 0] In the way that we are to patiently endure suffering. But here when we come to look at the suffering of Christ in this context it isn't by way of an example that it's set before us.

Because what he is taking us into is the nature of the sufferings of Christ. So much so that they are of such uniqueness that they cannot possibly have a parallel in anything in our lives.

It is not as an example that it is setting out for us. It is not as an example to follow in our sufferings.

But rather that we may see that there is a connection. He is saying to them the kind of suffering that you must endure is suffering for well doing rather than for evil doing.

Suffering when you are doing well and enduring it patiently as we have seen. That is what is acceptable to God. And now he says in that particular sense and that sense only there is an affinity with the death of Christ and with the sufferings of Christ.

[2 : 5 0] Because it is suffering as the just one suffering unjustly. He is suffering as one who doesn't in himself deserve to suffer.

And in that way there is a parallel between him and the kind of suffering that is found in his people as they are written to hear by Peter.

And as we look at this particular text, Peter takes us into the nature, into the very heart of the sufferings of the Lord. Into the very heart of the gospel.

Christ has also once suffered all sins. The just for the unjust that he might bring us to God.

There are three things that we want to look at in that particular half of the text. There is first of all, and all three of these things are related to his sufferings.

[3 : 5 2] They were first of all sacrificial sufferings. They were secondly vicarious sufferings. And they were thirdly redemptive sufferings.

And we'll try and explain these terms as we go through them one by one. They are first of all sacrificial sufferings.

He is talking about suffering in terms of being a sacrifice. We find that in these words, for sins.

Because they're words that are used in this particular way in respect to offering up a sacrifice. Offering up something in respect to sins.

But you'll notice how he introduces the term Christ. He brings it in abruptly and significantly and tellingly.

[4 : 55] He says, The Christ also suffered once for sins. He's introducing the whole thing by saying, This is something that is true of the Christ.

Christ. And of course we know that that term is the official designation for the Lord. That that is something that teaches us of his messianic office.

That it means the anointed one. That it means the one set apart. That it means the one that is officially put into the work of mediation. Mediation.

We saw in chapter 2 how as the foundation stone he is elect precious. He has from eternity been set aside. He has been chosen by the Godhead as the one that would come in this specific task of being the sacrifice for sins.

It is the Christ that has come. It is the Christ that is brought before us. The anointed one. The set apart one. How much there is of value.

[6 : 11] And of substance in the term the Christ. You remember that John makes it a test. Of truly being a Christian.

When he is saying in chapter 5 of his first epistle. Those who believe that Jesus is the Christ. Are born of God.

He is saying take the historical Jesus. Separate him off from the Christ. Do what modern theology is doing in our day. And you've got no basis for being born again.

Those who take the Jesus of history and say. That is not the Christ of theology. They are separating what God has put together. And he is making a test of being children of God.

The fact that we must accept that Jesus is the Christ. That he is the anointed one. That he is moving among men as we read of him in the gospels.

[7 : 08] As the one that is anointed by God. Into the office of the Messiah and the mediator. And you know we are living in days as we mentioned this morning.

When it is seen as an offence. To publish things that say things against Mohammed. There are calls for the extermination of an author who produced such a book.

We are not saying the book is accepted. What we are saying is. Notice the contrast. Between the outrage.

Over the abuse of the name Mohammed. And the fact that the name of the Christ. Is trampled day after day.

And the world doesn't blink an eye at it. It rolls off millions of tongues. Spattered and cursing. The Christ.

[8 : 11] The Christ who suffers. The anointed one. Surely he is more for us. Than us wayward.

Surely he means far more. Than something that is to be abused. The Christ. Has suffered once for sins.

He is taking the whole. Of his atoning sufferings together. And he is saying. He is done it once. He is putting the whole thing together. And he is saying. That is what the Christ has done.

That is what has happened to the Christ. It is a once for all. A unique thing. He has suffered once. For sins. Now we are saying that that word.

These words for sins mean. It is a sacrificial suffering. What we mean by that is firstly. That he answers to and fulfills. All the sacrifices of the Old Testament system.

- [9 : 11] All the ritual of the Old Testament way. Of worship and approach to God. Christ is the fulfillment. Of all these. In all the details.
- Whatever one of these sacrifices we take. He fulfills it. The sin offering. The burnt offering. The scapegoat offering.
- The offering of the Day of Atonement. The Passover Lamb. All of these find their fulfillment in him. And to the very last detail. Even to be without spot.
- And without blemish. But then. There is something else. We have to make sure.
- That we have things the right way around. What is the relation. Of the sacrifice of Calvary. To the sacrifices of the Old Testament. And the relation is this.
- [10 : 11] That the sacrifice of Christ. Is the real sacrifice. The real sacrifice of substance. The archetype if you like.
- The complete. And the sacrifice of sacrifices. It isn't that Calvary. Calvary is based upon. What we find in the Old Testament.
- It's that what was in the Old Testament. Is based upon. What is happening in the case of Christ. He is the foundation. His sacrifice is the sacrifice.
- And every other sacrifice. Is a shadow. Of the substance. It's a sacrificial. The sacrificial suffering.
- But then cast your minds back. To the Old Testament. Shadows. And the types. And cast your mind. Back to the details.
- [11 : 10] And cast your mind. Back to the awesomeness. Of the details. Where you see. The commandments. Of God. In so. Ordering. The details.
- Of all these sacrifices. In their minuteness. And think of all the commandments. That bound. The sacrificial system. And think of all the penalties.
- That are laid. Against transgressing. In any detail. And it's an awesome thing. When we think of it. When we read through it. When it had to be so exact.
- And remember. That the sons of Aaron. Were punished by death. By not keeping.
- To the letter. The command of God. And that applies. To the sacrifice of Christ. Look at Calvary.
- [12 : 09] And look at all. That is happening. In Christ's suffering. Sacrificially. Who has arranged. The details. Who has arranged. The moment.
- Who has arranged. The place. Who has arranged. The circumstances. Who has arranged. The person. Who has arranged. The nature. Of the sufferings. Who has spelt out.
- All the details. Of Calvary. It is the Lord. This is the doing. Of the Lord. And it's wondrous. In our eyes. To the very most. Exact detail.
- It is the work. It is the work of God. Everything that happens. In the sacrifice. Of Christ. Is the work of God. The God arranged.
- Sacrificial suffering. Isn't that what Peter. This writer is saying. In his sermon. In the book of Acts. Where after Pentecost. He's preaching.
- [13 : 07] On. In witnessing. To Jesus. In his death. And resurrection. And he says. To those. That are listening. To him. This Jesus. Of Nazareth.
- This historical person. This man. Accepted. By God. Who in the determined. Counsel. And for. Knowledge.
- Of God. You took him. And by wicked hands. You crucified him. Pilate gave the orders.

He was instigated. By the people. They arranged the time. They arranged the place. They set up the cross. They nailed him to it. They lifted it up.

They had all these things. Ordered. As far as they were capable of. But there's another one. Who's looking in.

[14 : 04] There is another one. Who has ordered. Their ordering. There is another mind. Behind Calvary. It is the mind. Of the Lord himself.

He has done it. And it is sacrificially. Arranged. By God. The awesomeness.

Of Calvary's details. And nothing. Is out of place. It is a sacrificial.

Suffering. He is suffering. As the Lamb of God. Who is taking away. The sin. Of the world. Christ.

He says. The Christ. The anointed one. Has once. Also suffered. For sins. And the sin. But then. He says.

[15 : 02] It's not just. Sacrificial. Suffering. It's also. Vicarious. Suffering. And it's taking us. A little deeper. Into the subject. Because he's going on. To speak about.

The just. Or the unjust. It is something. That is related. To those. That he is dying for. There is a specific.

Relation. Between. The one. Who is suffering. And those. For whom. He is suffering. And that specific. Relation. Is brought out.

By being. The just. For. The unjust. When we use the word. Vicarious. It's a word.

Which. Contains. Within itself. That specific. Relationship. Of Christ. In his suffering. To his people. That he saves. Vicarious.

[15 : 58] And there are three things. That we must always remember. Within this. Vicariousness. And these three things. Make up the meaning.

Of the word. Vicarious. And the three things. Are. Identification. Representation.

And substitution. He is instead of his people.

His identification. Is seen. In his coming. In his incarnation. In his entering. Into their situation.

In his being. The savior. Who has gone into. All the experiences. Of those. That he is going to save. He has come. And he has taken their nature. He has taken the utmost.

[17 : 11] Humiliation. To himself. In that. He is fully identified. With them. With them. He is also. Representative.

To them. He acts. On their behalf. He goes through. All the work. Of his atonement. For them. As their representative.

Acting. For them. On their behalf. He is there. Representing. He represents them. Also.

In his advocacy. In his intercession. For them. In the heavenly sanctuary. He is there. As their representative. He is with them.

He is for them. But he is also. Instead of them. And that is the one. That really. So many people stumble.

[18 : 05] Over. Because many theologians. Will accept. Today. The identification. And the representation. But not the substitution. Because the substitution.

Goes further. Than the other two. Because the substitution. Involves. His being punished. In the place. Of his people. The substitution.

Means that he is taken. And that he is placed. Where they should be. And that he suffers. What they deserve. To suffer. As the just one.

Now if you think of it. For a moment. In terms of sacrifice. A sacrifice. Can never be. A representative thing.

The sacrifices. In the Old Testament. Were not representative things. They were substitutionary things. It is a sacrifice. In the burnt offering.

[19 : 04] For example. That is burnt up. It is consumed. It is an entire holocaust. It is something that is given. In the place of.

Those that are offering it. And it is given. With that specific design. That God accepts it. In the place of them. In the place of them. We cannot think of sacrifice.

As represented. It is a substitutionary thing. It is a sacrifice. Instead of.

Someone else. And that equally applies. To the suffering. And to the death of Christ. It is a sacrifice. That is vicarious.

Including substitution. He is indeed. Instead of his people. As well as. On their behalf. And with them.

[20 : 03] And as a sacrifice. He gives himself. As a sacrifice. He is given by the Father. As a sacrifice. He is consumed. On the altar. As a sacrifice.

He is entirely given. For them. And he is given. For them. And he is consumed. For them. In their stead. In their place. Instead of them. The just.

For the unjust. The just one. In the place. Of the unjust. Now we might ask.

What then lies. At the centre. Of the substitution. Why is it. That the Lord. In his sufferings.

Suffers. In the way. That he does. Why does he. Experience. The kind of death. That he does. Why does he experience. Being forsaken. By God.

[21 : 00] Why does he. Truly bear. In himself. The agonies. Of an endless hell. What we have to say. In respect to that. Is.

Contained in the word. Imputation. and imputation means that he is there in his sufferings with the sins of others upon him.

His sufferings are not due to his own sins, he has none, he is the just one. God has made him to be sin who knew no sin.

It is sin that is imputed to him, as long ago as Isaiah it was brought out in the suffering servant. The Lord has laid on him the iniquities of us all with this chastisement of our peace.

The chastisement of our peace. The sufferings of the Lamb of God are the sufferings of one to whom God himself has imputed the sins of his people.

[22 : 15] That is the reason that he suffers in the way he does. That is what is meant within the phrase the just for the unjust, for the sufferings that are contained in that description, for the limitless and the unfathomable sufferings of the Lord on the cross and in bearing the sins of his people.

It is an imputed sin, it is a suffering in respect to the imputation of such suffering. And that is what is at the very heart of vicarious sufferings.

The vicariousness that is with us, that is for us, that is instead of us. Because he has our sins imputed.

And that really is the problem if there is no substitution, isn't it? Because if we deny substitution and imputation, we're left with a question, and it's not just a question, it's a dilemma.

What is happening to us? What has happened to our sins? If they're not imputed to the Lord, if the wrath of God is not endured by him, as the one who endures these things imputed to him, what has happened to our sins?

[23 : 32] Well, what has happened to them is that they're still on our shoulders. As Luther put it, except our sins become Christ's own sins, we perish eternally.

If there is no imputation, our sins are still on us. And we can say just as surely of the doctrine of substitution as we can of the doctrine of the resurrection.

If Christ be not risen, you are yet in your sins. If Christ be not a substitute, you are yet in your sins. There is no such thing as a representation only that will remove sins.

Sin has to be visited with the wrath of God. Sin has to be visited with the wrath of God. And the answer to it is found in the substitute. I have found a ransom.

The just for the unjust. We have to go one step further. We're saying that the substitution justifies the representation and the identification.

[25 : 00] He acts on their behalf and he acts as their representative because he is their substitute. He is justified in acting in that way because of the imputation that has taken place.

But the question and the stumbling block to many is what will justify the substitution.

Can you see what we mean? If we're saying that his acting on their behalf and his suffering like that is justified by being the substitute of his people.

What is it that justifies his being made the substitute? In other words, if we can put it so bluntly, how can it be right for God to make the just suffer as the substitute of the unjust?

And that takes us into the very foundation of the whole salvation of God. The eternal covenant between the Father and the Son.

[26 : 15] Something the details of which are hidden from us in the wisdom of God. It is something that has existed in the mind of God from all eternity.

And you remember how the Lord himself, especially as we find it, the gospel according to John brings that out for us. For example, in that great prayer in chapter 17, where the Lord praying to the Father says, O righteous Father, thine beware, and thou gavest them to me.

They are committed into the keeping of the eternal Son. And he says in the same prayer, I have kept them. In thy name, I have lost none of those that thou hast given me.

The Son of perdition is lost, but he was never in their doubt. It is within that that the answer to the whole dilemma lies.

Why has God made his own Son the substitute? Why has he made the just to suffer for the unjust?

[27 : 33] Because in his wisdom, he covenanted from eternity in that particular way to save his people.

The answer lies in the mystery of the divine mind. the just for the unjust suffering for sins.

But let us never overlook the fact that he well and truly died. That the sufferings were the sufferings of death and that the death was no less than the death that is the wages of sin.

the suffering of being in the land that is not inhabited where God himself has hidden his face from him. Where in his hanging and his loneliness on the cross he is enduring a suffering that is an endless eternity of suffering that he is swallowing up in his own soul.

Best friends, he died. And he died the death of the unjust. And he died it enduringly.

[28 : 52] And there is the mystery of Calvary, the awesome mystery of the cross, that it is the just one who is looked at as a curse, that it is the just one who is made sin, that it is the just one who is visited with the wrath of God, that it is the just one who is regarded as being unjust.

And yet he remains the just one who can know of what happened at Calvary.

Sacrificial suffering, vicarious suffering, and finally it is redemptive suffering. for Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.

It is with us specific purples that these sufferings are endured, that he might bring us, he says, to God. You remember that we saw recently from Hebrews 10 how when Christ pours out his blood, when he offers himself as a sacrifice, even in himself he's bringing his people to God.

Atonement, as we saw, is made in heaven. Its historical dimensions are at Calvary, in the place that is geographically located in this world, on this earth, but the place of atonement, the transaction of atonement, the working of atonement, is in the sanctuary of heaven.

[30 : 40] It is there between the Son of God and the Father. And in the blood, his own blood that he brings into the holy place, he presents his people.

He says, behold, I and the children God has given. He brings them near to God. God has given us to be in the world.

But then our nearness and being brought near must include more than that. Because it includes the fact of being brought near in our experience.

It includes in his atonement all that is necessary to bring us to God personally and individually and really and actually and in experience in repentance, in faith, in holiness, in trust, in all these things and sanctification that is being brought near to God and that is the design of the sufferings of the Lord.

He died that he might bring us to God. Now we spoke of imputation. The imputation of our sins to him.

[31 : 56] when we're speaking about being brought near to God we also have to speak of imputation or rather of counter imputation.

Because when we're coming near to God or brought near in him we have his righteousness imputed to us.

and the imputation and the counter imputation are complete and entire on both sides. Our sins are imputed to him entirely and completely.

The imputation is complete. The guilt and the suffering and the punishment and all that is entailed in the imputing of sins has been imputed to him.

it's a complete imputation and it's equally complete on our side.

[32 : 55] His righteousness and all that that means of the favour of God of acceptance with God of being acceptable to God of being found in God's presence and being able to stand there acquitted his righteousness.

All that his righteousness is it's imputed to those that are God's name. It's a righteousness that must be in keeping with the righteousness of God.

When God wants us to stand in his presence we cannot stand in his presence except in a righteousness that conforms to the righteousness of God.

And the righteousness of God requires that he himself requires such righteousness of us. God cannot go against his own nature.

And the answer to that dilemma is an imputation. The righteousness of Christ imputed to his people.

[34 : 15] Do you remember how the catechism puts it speaking on the question of justification? Justification is an act of God's free grace wherein he pardons all our sins and accepts us as righteous in his sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone.

Christ has once suffered sacrificially for sins, vicariously the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God.

You remember how in one dynamic verse Paul writing to the Corinthians puts the whole matter for us. A verse that is limitless in its extent.

We read it together in 2 Corinthians 5:21 For he has made him who knew no sin to be sin for us.

Why? That we might be made the righteousness of God. in him. It's on that basis that Paul is basing his whole preached message.

[35 : 41] We he says in Christ's stead as ambassadors for Christ be situ be ye reconciled to God. And what basis does the message of reconciliation go out?

On what basis has it been committed to the ambassadors of Christ on the basis of Christ's suffering for he says he has made him to be sin.

The reconciliation has been completed. It is now in existence. It has been procured by the just suffering for the unjust.

we beseech you be reconciled to God by faith appropriated to yourself.

Have that righteousness and that position of being justified have it by faith by the faith that builds upon the reconciliation effect in Christ.

[36 : 52] Now we might close our thoughts by asking who are these people or rather how are they actually seen how do they demonstrate that they are the people that are spoken about that he might bring us to God.

Who is he speaking about? Well he's speaking about those who have shown that that is what belongs to them. Especially in the very fact of their coming to Christ.

It must never remain a theory of the atonement. It must never remain a theological fact in our minds. It must be worked out in our experience and in our individual and our personal lives that when we come to Christ that and that primarily is what demonstrates that we have been brought to God, that we have been within the atoning benefits of the eternal covenant.

And we can never say if we have not come to Christ that any of these benefits are ours. All that we have said hasn't removed a single element from personal responsibility.

In fact, it enhances it. And you remember how the Lord himself in John chapter six, again with one dynamic verse, puts the thing for us, both sides of the issue.

[38 : 28] John 36 verse 37, himself, all that the Father giveth me shall come to me. And him that comes to me I will in no wise, I will never, never, never cast out.

Have you ever gone to him and found that he cast you out? Have you ever knocked at his door and known his refused? Have you ever tried to come to him as your savior?

Have you ever truly come to his feet in submission and found that he didn't want to know? No. I will in no wise, cast him out.

And he goes on, for I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will who has sent me, that of all that he has given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes on him may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

[39 : 51] Now, your reaction is not going to be that of the Jews, is it? Because they said, is this not Jesus, the Son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?

They are confined to a mere human perspective. That is not your reaction, is it? He means more to you than that, does it?

Oh, surely he does, because he is the Christ. Christ, the Christ who once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us, us, wretched creatures, to the holy God.

O Lord, O gracious God, we pray thy forgiveness for our misuse of all thy gifts, and for all, O Lord, that we so mishandle concerning the gift especially of thine own son, and the gift of eternal life in him.

We bless thee that thou dost offer him yet to a sinful world, that thou, O Lord, hast laid him before us again this evening, as the only name that is given under heaven among men, whereby we must be saved.

[41 : 34] And grant that thou truly draw us by thy spirit to send forth, O Lord, the might of thy right arm, that we might see thee in thy sufferings as the one who suffered for us, that we might be able to say in a personal way, as thy servant Paul was able to say of himself, God forbid that I should glory saved in the cross by which this world is crucified to me and I unto the world.

May we, O Lord, know of that experience of this world being crucified to us. May we truly, personally, each one of us, be enabled then to know from in Christ the glories of being new creatures, to see no man thereafter after the flesh, but rather through the eyes of those that are born again.

Grant us these great mercies, and feel thy truth to our hearts, we praise thee, and send us forth into thy vineyard, as those who would labor in thy cause.

Hear us and accept us for the great and glorious name of thy Son, and thou will be glorified in him, now and all. Amen.

Our final singing is from Psalm 77. Psalm 77, and the tuneless Tiverton will sing verses 12 to 15.

[43 : 22] I also will of all thy works my meditation make, and of thy doings to discourse great pleasure I will take. O God, thy way most holy is within thy sanctuary, and what God is so great in power, as is our God most high.

These four verses to God's praise. I also will of all thy works find that your attention be, and of thy doings to discourse, the pleasure I will for my nailed free Oh