

Living Redeemed under Suffering

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Preacher: Brady Owens

[0 : 0 0] If you would open to 1 Peter chapter 3. 1 Peter chapter 3. Peter is writing this letter to several churches, Christians that are either at the current moment experiencing suffering and persecution or they will soon.

And he's writing to them because he wants them to know certain truths. Because most of the way we live our lives is that we live off of what we believe.

We live off of what we believe is true. And sometimes we believe something true in our mind, but that truth has not made it to our heart.

And so it's not a truth that we're fully engaged and committed to. And so he stands in the gap for these Christians and he writes to them in order to equip them, train them, help them so that they are ready.

And today, as we come to this passage, and I think about this passage and where this is headed, and I think about where we're headed towards the end of our service today, we're going to ordain three men to the office of deacon.

[1 : 1 7] Having met the qualifications, having met the approval of the congregation, we're going to ordain them. And one of the things that's fascinating to me about the way God has set all of this up is that as the pastors and the elders stand in the gap with the Word of God to equip God's people to meet the spiritual needs that they have, he has ordained deacons to help meet those physical needs of the congregation that are just as important.

So often, Christians are accused of being so heavenly-minded that we're of no earthly good. But the truth of the matter is that you can't be of any earthly good if you're not heavenly-minded.

And the truth is that God saves us and wants the entirety of our person to be for him. And so it's not just someday in the sweet by and by when we die, but he's concerned about how we live every day, how we mow our yards, how we pay for our houses, how we look at the sunset, how we eat an apple, how we care for those in need.

And so because of that, we have both sides of the spectrum seen to, by the way God has established these things. And as Peter comes into this, really what we're reading today and going to deal with today is the continuation of three weeks ago.

So I'm going to read it, and then we're going to catch ourselves up to speed and then dive in, okay? So I'm going to read verses 18 through 22 of chapter 3 of 1 Peter.

[2 : 5 7] Here's the word of the Lord. Baptism, which corresponds to this, Now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God with angels, authorities, and powers, having been subjected to him.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word, and we do pray that you would help it to be clear to us. I pray, Father, that you would help me to be as clear as possible, and that, Lord, the truth that is here would do good for our souls.

Grant us your spirit, we pray in Christ's name. Amen. So where we ended last time was verse 17.

Verse 17 says, It's better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. It's better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

Now, here's the thing. What Peter has been after this whole time is that there's persecution coming, and while our context is quite different from those that he wrote to, one of the things that happens in persecution is that when somebody persecutes another person, their goal is not necessarily to destroy the person, but to get the person to recant where they're headed and join them.

[5 : 04] I mean, if you look through the history of the world and you look at the people who've done persecution, many times it's because they didn't want those people to be like that. They wanted them to be like them.

And one of the things that happens to us, even though I don't think that we are facing quite the persecution that many of our brothers and sisters throughout the world face, one of the things that we do face is the temptation to walk away from Christ because of the sin of other people.

We'll encounter it in the church. We'll encounter it in our marriages. We'll encounter it with our children. We'll encounter it in the workplace where other people sin against us, and instead of that turning us to run to Christ, it tempts us to run away.

And we need to live well under this suffering. And he says in verse 17, It's better to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

Because Peter's point is going to be, listen, if you break the law and they punish you, stop strutting about, patting yourself on the back. You got what you deserved.

[6 : 15] That's not commendable. What's commendable is if you take the punishment and you did what was right. What was right. And so it's better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

Verse 18 then answers the question, Why? Why? Why is that the case, Peter? And I think in this passage, verse 18 through 22, he gives us three things that Jesus does for us that then become the reasons why it's better for us to suffer for doing good.

Those three things are that he has reconciled us to God, he has defeated our enemies, and he has circumcised our hearts. So let's look at these three things. Number one, he has reconciled us to God.

That comes right out of verse 18. You'll notice in verse 18 it says, 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.

The center of that verse is the purpose. It's that phrase that starts with that, right? That he might bring us to God. That's a purpose of whatever else is being talked about.

[7 : 34] Whatever it is that Christ has done, the whole point of what he's done in this verse is that he might bring us to God. Being brought to God is a theological term called reconciliation, right?

Where you have enemies who have been brought together. Reconciliation begins back, and if you think about the Bible as a whole story, you'll go all the way back to the beginning, and you'll see the rebellion of Adam, who instead of listening to what God said, ate from the tree, plunged all of humanity in a rebellion, in a hostility toward God and from God.

And because we were enemies of God, we couldn't be with him. But Christ came, the Lord Jesus Christ came, and his death upon the cross was the means by which he then reconciles us and brings us back together to God.

And we can't soften the blow of the implication of this. And that implication is that just in our natural state, we are born enemies of God.

It says that the righteous suffered for the unrighteous. See, in our culture, in our mindset, somebody, we want to do something nice and kind and help someone who kind of deserves it or who's on the outs or who's the underdog.

[9 : 08] Never would we think to ourselves, let's go grab the scoundrel and let's do something for him. But that's exactly what the Lord Jesus Christ has done. He's given his life for the unrighteous, for the scoundrel, for the wicked.

Peter's point is that we have been brought to God, that God's wrath has been moved out of the way because Christ took it for us, so we've been brought back into the good graces of the Lord.

Now, how did Jesus do this? It says that he suffered for sins. So he was a sacrifice for sins. It tells us that he was a sacrifice for the unrighteous.

In other words, the innocent gave its life for the guilty, which is the whole Old Testament system, right? You took an innocent lamb and you confessed your sins upon that lamb and that innocent lamb died in your place.

That's the whole point with Christ is that he is the innocent, the righteous one who died for the unrighteous. And so he put to death in the flesh, but he was made alive together in the spirit of God.

[10 : 14] In other words, not only did he die for our reconciliation, but he was raised from the dead for our reconciliation. Without the resurrection of Christ, we could not have been brought to God.

Now, why is that? Because if all he did was die for us in order to come back to God, then he's just the Passover lamb. But we know Christ is more than the Passover lamb, right? He's the high priest.

So how does the blood come into the tabernacle? The lamb doesn't bring it. The high priest does. So Christ, as our lamb dies for us, but as our high priest comes into the presence of God with the blood and washes us clean.

So we are reconciled by both his death and his resurrection. Maybe to put it in a different kind of analogy, we have been set free from the prison of God's wrath, and it is time to go live in the palace of God's grace.

Now, here's the question. Why is this a good reason? It's better to suffer for doing good because you've been reconciled by the death of Christ and belong to God.

[11 : 33] You're in perfect harmony with him if you're in Christ. But when suffering comes, when persecution comes, and difficulties and trials, what good is that?

Like, I don't know about you, but what I would like to have happen in suffering, I mean, like if I were God, I get the chance to choose, it would be like zero suffering. Okay?

We're just gonna take it all away. No more phone calls about the terrible thing and the terrible news. No more phone call after phone call, doctor visit after doctor visit, and trouble after trouble.

I would just wipe it all away. I'm not God. God has his reasons. And one of the things he gives us in the middle of this is to remember that he's reconciled us.

How does it help me to remember that I am reconciled while I'm going through suffering? And I think a couple of things. Number one, because when I'm...

[12 : 38] Hang on. Because if we're in Christ and we go through suffering, we are tempted to believe God's punishing us.

But if we have been reconciled, there is therefore now no condemnation left. And so the suffering that you and I as Christians are going through has nothing to do with punishment at all.

Second thing I think is that this reconciliation means that we have an eternal relationship with God that can never be shaken.

Listen to Romans as Paul makes the same point. Romans 8.35. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Shall tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, sword, all kinds of words for suffering?

[13 : 55] He says, can any of that separate us from the love of Christ? And the expected answer in the way the Greek is written is no.

It cannot separate us. The relationship that we have with God means that as I go through any kind of suffering that I'm going through, whether it is persecution and facing the sin of someone else or it's something that happens in life that I just...

It's not really somebody else's sin, but any kind of suffering that I'm going through, reconciliation reminds me I am not alone. Christ is with me.

My wife and I, we've been through a significant number of trials and distresses and sufferings. I know some of you in talking to you, you have been through there, but I just think about Michelle and I and I think to myself, wouldn't have made it without her.

But I would have because I have Jesus. You know what I'm saying? As much joy and comfort as it gives me to have my wife with me as we go through things, how much more that I have the eternal reconciled relationship with God Almighty.

[15 : 15] Wherever I am, He is there. So Christians, I just want to encourage you that what we need to do before we start going through suffering is we've got to remember what Christ has done for us.

We need to rehearse it, review it, relish it. We need to sing the songs of rock of ages, cleft for me. Let me hide myself in thee. You know, we need to think about what it is that He is the solid rock.

My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. And rehearse again and again and again these glorious truths and remind you, remind yourself that you've been reconciled by the blood of Christ.

But now, if you are not in Christ, then you have no such promise that He's with you. And that makes me fear for you.

And would you today turn from being the boss of your own life and turn to Christ? That's the easy one.

[16 : 29] The next two points, I just have to admit to you, if you read the text, it's weird. Okay? We're talking about spirits in prison. We're talking about the ark and baptism now saves and as Baptists, if anybody says baptism saves, we all break out in hives.

Right? I mean, it's just two weird verses and sections back to back. So, hang with me. I'm going to try to get us through it without a lot of gobbledy gook and see if we can get this.

Okay? But the truths that this brings forth are glorious. The second reason that suffering for good is the thing is because Christ has defeated our enemy.

Look at verse, let's just start, let's start back at verse 18. He says, 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, that's his death, and made alive in the spirit.

That is, he was resurrected by the spirit of God. And then he says, in which or in whom, it could be either one, in whom, in the spirit, by the spirit, he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison because they formerly did not obey when God's patience waited in the days of Noah.

[17 : 43] Now we could just probably stop right there. Isn't that strange? Let me summarize what I think it's saying and then walk you through why I say that.

I think what it's saying is that after the resurrection of Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ went to a spiritual realm and he proclaimed victory over spirits that are in prison.

Obviously, a spiritual prison. That's what Christ did. In other words, think of it like the king who announces his victory over the enemy. This is a moment that Christ announced his victory over the enemy.

Now let me tell you why I say that. First of all, it seems to be that this is happening after the resurrection because that's the only time stamp we have in the verse. It says, in which he went, talking about the resurrection, verse 18, and then now the Holy Spirit is taking him to this place.

So this is not something that happens while he's in the tomb, but something that happens after he is resurrected. Secondly, it says that Christ went.

[18 : 53] Christ went. It's an interesting little word. You wouldn't think anything of it in English, but it's a little bit different than normal words that you get in typically, and it occurs again in verse 22.

And in verse 22, it's that he's gone into the heavens. So there's a connection between this type of going and the spiritual or supernatural realm.

So he goes to the supernatural realm in heaven, so he went to where these spirits are in prison, again, going to a supernatural or spiritual location.

So he's going to this prison where these people are. He went and proclaimed. The word here, proclaimed, is not the typical word for like preaching the gospel or anything like that.

It's the heralding kind of thing. It's the newsy on the street corner going extra, extra, read all about it. Or it's the herald about to blow the trumpet in the court and the king is about to come through.

[19 : 49] It is this idea of heralding out news and victory. Right? So Christ goes to claim his own victory. That's why it's after the resurrection as well. Right? Then he says he made proclamation to spirits in prison.

Okay. Who are these spirits in prison? Well, it's a spiritual thing. Right? As Christians, we believe in both the natural and supernatural that both exist simultaneously. Right?

So it says in verse 20 that at one time they did not obey. So whoever these spirits are, they're disobedient spirits. And it says that they were disobedient at the time of the building of the ark.

So we're left with really one option. Genesis chapter 6. Genesis chapter 6 beginning of verse 1 says that when man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were attractive and they took as their wives any they chose.

Then the Lord said, My spirit shall not abide in man forever for he is flesh. His days shall be a hundred and twenty years. The Nephilim or the giants were on the earth in those days and also afterward when the sons of God came into the daughters of man and they bore children to them.

[21 : 10] These were the mighty men or the giants who were of old the men of renown. What happened at that time is that sons of God, these are angels who left their abode, joined up with human wives and they had offspring.

That offspring were the giants. I know it sounds fantastic, doesn't it? You're kind of going like, what are you talking about? I didn't know we were going to talk about Jack and the giant beanstalk. Anyway.

But here's the thing. They were disobedient not doing what it was that God had created them to do and because of that these giants came upon the earth and if you'll read through the Old Testament you will see time and time again the giants plaguing the nation of Israel Israel.

And you will also see that any time that God has told Israel to wipe out everybody of a particular race it was one of these giant races that led people off into idolatry, witchcraft, and all manner of evil.

And so the only spirits that we have would be these sons of God who are in prison and they wanted to take over the world.

[22 : 28] there's some other things we could get into that we won't. I'm again not trying to get into all the gobbledygook here. Christ comes now as the second Adam having been victorious over death and proclaims to all of his enemies his victory.

Now before I move to what this means for us the question I have is Brady is there anything that confirms that maybe this is true what you're saying and I say yes.

First Peter chapter 3 verse 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God with angels authorities and powers having been subjected to him.

These angels authorities and powers were already subjected to him before he ascended back to his father. So after his resurrection they are now subjected to him.

So what does this mean? Well it means that when we're persecuted the suffering for doing what is right it's a good thing because Christ has conquered the enemies and we see that like in Colossians where he has disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame triumphing over them.

[23 : 46] We see in Hebrews where he says that he took on flesh so that through death he might destroy the one who had the power of death that is the devil and we see that in like John 1st John chapter 3 that the reason that the son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

When he came he came to defeat the enemy and he has conquered the enemy as the resurrection proves. So all Peter is saying here is that you need to understand that suffering for what is good being the will of God is something you should be after because Christ has defeated the enemy.

Christ has defeated the enemy. As Paul says in Romans he says that no in all these things we're more than conquerors through him who loved us for I'm sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height or depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul is telling us that even angels rulers and powers cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus because one of the things that happens when we go through suffering and suffering for what is doing what's right we have a tendency to think in a defeated way.

We have a tendency to think that the enemy is winning and the enemy is conquering and the enemy is getting his way and we give far more credence to his power than we ever should because he is defeated.

[25 : 23] Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. So when we're in that moment of suffering and we're someone sinning against us and that suffering is tempting us to run away from God one of the things we need to remember is that the greater enemy of my soul is not the person in front of me sinning against me.

Do you hear what I'm saying? See oftentimes when someone sins against us or we're suffering at somebody else's hands we often look at one another as the enemy. But you're not the enemy.

The greater enemy of my soul Satan and all of his his horde they're the greater enemy of my soul and they are already defeated. So when you maybe sin against me and it tempts me to run away from Christ I've got to remember it's already been won.

It's already been defeated. This person's not the enemy. The real enemy is defeated. He is already subjected and he's waiting for his final destruction.

So I can stand before my persecutors knowing the victory is already won. And if persecutors come and they say to you recant and run from Christ my question to you would be and to where would you run but that which is already defeated.

[26 : 56] It's just the truth we need to believe recognizing that Christ has already won. And if you're not in Christ the thing that you have to understand and I'm sorry to say this but you need to know it is that if you're not in Christ you're not a Christian then you're still in the enemy's camp.

And you need to turn. You need to turn from your sin and you need to turn to Christ to save you. The third reason or the third thing that Christ has done for us is he's changed our hearts.

Again a difficult passage but I think if we just read it slowly we'll get it. As he's talked about this idea of Noah he comes in the middle of verse 20.

He says when God's presence waited in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared in which a few that is eight persons were brought safely through water. Baptism which corresponds to this now saves you not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

So Peter starts with an analogy or a shadow. Okay. Now y'all heard me talk about shadows before right. The Old Testament is always pointing forward to the coming of the New Testament and of Christ in the gospel age.

[28 : 14] All of the sacrifices all of the prophecies and all of the shadows pointed forward to the real and to the substance. So Peter is saying that the ark is a shadow pointing forward.

Now what was the lesson of the ark? Eight people were brought safely through water on the ark. They went through the water. They came out of the water and everything was different afterwards.

They went through the water. They came out of the water and everything was different afterwards.

And now Peter just says this and this is where the hives come in so loosen your collar for a second. He says baptism corresponds to this because baptism now saves. Okay.

When he says baptism corresponds to this, that word corresponds is the technical Greek term for the idea of shadow and substance.

[29 : 19] There's two Greek words and this is one of them and this is the substance. Baptism is now the substance. It's the real thing. But here's the interesting thing. This lesson of the flood is that as eight people were saved through the flood, that should have pointed towards the same reality that the baptism points to.

But we know that as he talks about baptism, Peter is not talking about water baptism. He's not talking, I know it sounds weird, there's water all over this passage.

Why would it not be water baptism? Because he says it's not the removal of dirt from the body. It's not getting wet. It's not having your body wet. That is not what I'm talking about, he says.

Instead, I'm talking about an appeal to God for a good conscience. An appeal is something else. So here's the two things we have. We have water baptism and we have a spiritual baptism.

Are you with me? Okay, this has got a little gobbledygook, okay? Just a little. So just hang on with me. This appeal to God for a good conscience.

[30 : 31] What he is saying is that this spiritual baptism is much like the eight on the ark. That this spiritual baptism is going through something, coming out the other side of it and being changed.

Now we can see in water baptism even the symbol of that, right? You can even see in baptism, water baptism, the symbol of that is a person goes down, comes up, and now we even say, walk in newness of life.

But we don't ever baptize someone in order for that to somehow magically or spiritually to transform in the waters. Otherwise, you know, we're all getting saved when we're taking showers or we're taking baths or we go dunk in the river or something, right?

As long as maybe somebody's blessed it or something. That's not what he's talking about, but it does point to this reality. The thing is, is that we go through water baptism because we've had a spirit baptism in the sense that we have been taken from death to life.

And in the Old Testament and the New Testament, the way that this all comes together is because of the idea of circumcision. Circumcision in the Old Testament as an external right began to be said, listen, you need to have your heart circumcised.

[31 : 52] Not just your flesh. You need an internal heart change. Well, in the New Covenant in Ezekiel chapter 36, God has promised some things of the New Covenant.

He says in verse 25, I will sprinkle clean water on you. We get water. And you shall be clean from all of your uncleanness and from all of your idols. I will cleanse you. And I will give you, look at this, a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you.

And I will remove the what? The heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will circumcise your heart so that you're no longer hard, but you're tender towards the Lord.

I will take out the heart of stone, put in a heart of flesh, and I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

So the analogy of the ark is pointing to the lesson that people go through, come out, and are changed. And spiritual baptism is when the Lord Jesus Christ takes out our heart of stone, puts in a heart of flesh, and we're changed.

[33 : 15] In other words, it's the moment of conversion. It's the moment in which we let go of the world of sin and being our own boss, and we commit ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's that moment that you felt the call of God and you felt the whatever in that call to say, no, I've got to trust Christ, and maybe you walked to an aisle, or maybe it was at a revival, or maybe you were sitting on the tailgate of your truck at the lake, like I was, when you heard the call of God and he says, it's time today, and so you turn from your sin and you turn to Christ.

In that moment, he took out my heart of stone and put in a heart of flesh. He circumcised my heart. He baptized me in the spirit. And so Peter is saying, this is a reality of what Christ has done for us.

Now, just like with all of these, these realities, Christ has reconciled us. He's defeated our enemies. He's changed our hearts or circumcised our hearts. How does that help me in suffering?

How does it help me to have a changed heart when I go through suffering?

[34 : 34] Because there's a lot of people who are not believers, not Christians, maybe even, they might even be atheists, that go through suffering, and we find ourselves sometimes looking at the way they go through it, and we think to ourselves, well, that's sort of commendable.

I mean, they're not really, you know, they don't seem to be freaking out. They don't seem to be, you know, causing trouble for other people. How is it that somebody might be able to go through that? And I say to you, yeah, that's true that maybe that's the case, but here's the thing.

God is not calling us to go through suffering in order to be commendable to the world around us. He calls us to go through suffering so that Christ is glorified.

He calls us to go through suffering so that the name of Christ, go back through 1 Peter, you'll see it. We're to suffer properly and properly means for his glory, for his namesake, for keeping our faith in him.

See, here's the thing. If I go through suffering with the old heart that I had, I'm absolutely running away from Christ. But if I go through suffering with a changed heart, then I'm not running from Christ.

[35 : 46] But here's the other thing. Even in that, even in that, when you go through suffering, you and I both know sometimes we think and say things we wish we hadn't.

A changed heart means that we feel the conviction of that and we run back to the Lord and we say, please forgive me.

Please forgive me. That heart that's changed doesn't lean upon its own strength, but instead leans upon the strength of the Lord. So here we are.

Things that Christ has done for us that help us, empower us, strengthen us to do that which he's called us to do to suffer for doing what is right. And as a Christian, as a Christian, as somebody who is in Christ, the call for you is to remember, rehearse, and relish these truths before suffering starts so that when suffering comes, you can walk through it in such a way that is good for you and glorifying to him.

Let's pray. Let's pray.