

Because of Christ's Suffering

By David Harrell

Bible Text: 1 Peter 3:18-22

Preached on: Sunday, April 5, 2015

On this resurrection Sunday morning, I would like to focus our attention on Christ's humiliation which led to his exaltation, that is, to focus on his sufferings that led to his glorification. To be sure, the one must precede the other, even in our own life. So if you will, take your Bibles and turn to 1 Peter 3.

As sin continues to metastasize into every fiber of our culture, the true church of Jesus Christ continues to experience mounting hostility and persecution. The current firestorm over religious liberty versus the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender community and the discrimination that they believe that they are enduring is a perfect example of this. Unless you fully embrace society's beliefs, you are a hate-mongering bigot that should not be allowed to own or even operate a business. So as we see the social progressives are trying to write laws that will coerce Christians to comply with the values of the culture and, sadly, many Christians find themselves cowering in fear at this kind of pressure. It's very easy for us to fear man more than God and I know that there are a number of you who are experiencing various forms of persecution, certainly we don't experience it nearly like many of our listeners do that I hear from in other parts of the world, some who fear for their life even this day. In fact, we've had several of our faithful listeners martyred for their faith over the last several years.

Unfortunately, all of this is going to get worse according to Scripture. Sin is like cancer, it's never content. It has an insatiable appetite. It always wants more. Moreover, Satan is never content. He will never be satisfied with the current level of evil. He will continue to raise up men and women who, according to the Apostle Paul, are evil and imposters. They will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. Indeed, Satan will not stop until he has taken every man and woman captive and rules upon the messianic throne that he continues to endeavor to usurp. Satan knows that his time is short and he has a plan; he's working that plan. He foolishly believes that he can thwart the purposes of God so he's escalating his efforts to do that through his diabolical deceptions and through his Christ-hating stratagems. Said simply: Satan wants to destroy Christ and he wants to destroy everyone who belongs to Christ and he wants to continue to blind the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the glory of Christ in the Gospel.

So, the question before us this morning, this resurrection morning is: what must we do as believers? How then shall we live? Wherein do we find our comfort and our understanding to know how to deal with all of the issues that are before us in these final days before our Lord returns? I'm very burdened to answer this question for you so therefore I must take you into the word of God and I thought that Peter's words would be

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most helpful because he lived in an age and a culture that was, frankly, even further gone than ours and certainly one that provides for us an example of where we are heading.

Let me give you the context of when 1 Peter was written as well as 2 Peter. Peter's first epistle was written in about A.D. 64 or 65 at the end of his life, probably while he was staying in the imperial city of Rome which was codenamed Babylon in order to protect them and the Christians in the letters that were being sent from Rome knowing where they lived and also codenamed because of the incredible wickedness and idolatry that existed there. And although Christians at this time were only an obscure religious sect, they were already despised and ridiculed throughout the Roman empire because they were perceived to be an offshoot of Judaism and, of course, the people hated the Jews. Moreover, they hated Christians because their teaching and their lives confronted the culture rather than conforming to it.

On July 18, A.D. 64, the city of Rome caught on fire and it burned for 6 days and 7 nights before it was finally brought under control. Only 4 of Rome's 14 districts escaped damage. Three were utterly destroyed, the other 7 were reduced to just a handful of scorched buildings, in fact, 70% of the city was left in smoldering ruins. Many died. Many people were injured. Many more were left helpless and homeless. The psychological impact on the Romans was equally devastating in that most of their great temples and shrines and even their household idols were now in ashes causing them to wonder why they are deities were unable to save them and save themselves, for that matter.

Very quickly, rumors began to spread among the embittered and desperate survivors that accused the Emperor Nero of deliberately setting the fire so that he could rebuild the city and thus satisfy his insatiable lust for beauty, beautiful edifices, that would bring glory to himself. Nero knew that he needed a scapegoat so he blamed the Christians. Naturally, persecution against our early brothers and sisters in Christ began to spread as rapidly as the fire they were falsely accused of setting and so to appease the masses, Nero began to round up Christians like you, like me, in that day. He brought them to one of the city's remaining great amphitheaters for a giant spectacle where he would feed them to lions. The persecution spread throughout the Roman empire and it affected virtually every believer. It's for this reason, by the way, that Peter calls believers exiles. Most of them were Gentile believers who had come to faith through the ministry of the Apostle Paul. These beleaguered saints, persecuted saints, needed encouragement. They needed strength to endure and obviously God saw all of this and so the Holy Spirit inspired Peter to write this letter to them and to every believer who is in need of the same encouragement today and I know some that will be hearing this particular discourse fall into that category and my heart goes out to you.

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Friends, given the moral freefall in our country that we've experienced, my goodness, just over the last decade, combined with the apostasy and the compromise of the so-called church, I believe there is a high probability that in the very near future we will begin to experience similar kinds of persecution so we need to run to a place of safety today, a place of refuge. We need to run to our sovereign omnipotent God knowing that the angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, the psalmist says, and he rescues them. So let's allow him to speak to us from his word where we can find great comfort in our affliction and great courage.

Notice in 1 Peter 3, beginning in verse 14. Peter says this,

14 But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, 15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; 16 and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. 17 For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.

Then beginning in verse 18 through verse 22, we have a section that I want to focus on this morning. Peter went on to say this,

18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; 19 in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, 20 who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. 21 Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you - not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience - through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

Despite Peter's weaknesses, Peter was clearly the leader of the apostles during Christ's earthly ministry and given the profound brokenness that he experienced and repentance after he had denied the Lord, combined with the knowledge that he was going to be

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crucified at the end of his life given the fact that the Lord himself had told him that, I believe therefore that Peter felt the sufferings of Christ perhaps the most acutely and as we come to his 2 epistles, we can see that the emphasis of 1 Peter was on the sufferings of Christ and his great work of redemption where as 2 Peter focuses more on the second Advent, the second coming of Christ. So folks, we have a special privilege here in this text to hear the heart of this beloved apostle that we will meet someday, a man who is speaking just in the final months of his life. Jesus was the song of his soul, the one that he loved and the one that he served and I can only hope that in my final days, Christ will be equally exalted.

In the text before us, we see that because of Christ's sufferings, he accomplished 4 magnificent realities that brought great comfort and great encouragement and strength to those beleaguered saints and, likewise, to each of us. 1. We will see that he through Christ's sufferings, he brought us to God. Secondly, he triumphed over Satan. Thirdly, he rescued us from judgment. And now finally, he reigns in unassailable sovereignty. I pray that this will be helpful to each of you, especially those of you that are being persecuted for your faith.

So, first we see that through his suffering, 1. He brought us to God. Notice verse 18, "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God." Now, bear in mind that prior to the transformation of our nature that occurs at salvation, prior to being born again, sinful man is alienated from God. Paul said that we are separated from the life of God. He also said that although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, you were engaged in evil deeds and this describes people apart from Christ. The evil deeds that Paul refers to are described in, for example, John 3:19 where we read of men who love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil and indeed, darkness is the defining characteristic of the unregenerate. They live apart from God who is light and in him there is no darkness. In 1 Peter 2:9, we read that he has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

So as we look at Scripture, we see that man is sinful by nature. Apart from regenerating grace, all that he is, all that he does is fundamentally offensive to God. The very essence of man's fallen nature is that he cannot conform to the moral character and desires of God, thus he is alienated from him and man's state of alienation from God is marked by spiritual and moral blindness, by hostility toward God. Unsaved man is a slave to his lusts, to his passions.

Man's alienation began in the garden when Adam and Eve's sin caused them to be separated from the very presence of God. Likewise, we saw it pictured in the strict prohibitions God gave Israel against approaching, even getting near, Mount Sinai at the

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giving of the law. In 1 Samuel we can read about it again when we saw it with the men at Beth-shemesh when they violated the sanctity of the Ark of the Covenant by looking inside of it after they had recovered it from the Philistines causing a "great slaughter" among the men and in horror they cried out in 1 Samuel 6:20, "Who is able to stand before Yahweh, the holy God?" The point is: no one apart from God's grace. We saw it in the veil in the tabernacle in the temple that separated sinful man from the Holy of Holies, a perpetual reminder of the barrier of sin.

So indeed, sinful man is utterly separated from God but this spiritual alienation is perhaps most vividly pictured in the word of God when Jesus drank the wrath of God to the very dregs while hanging on the cross and there he was separated on our behalf. He was alienated from the Father as our substitute, causing him to say, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" What a graphic illustration of sinners who live their entire lives alienated from God, spiritually dead and eventually they die physically only to experience the wrath of God eternally unlike the Lord Jesus Christ who lived his entire life in perfect fellowship with God, his Father, spiritually alive, who then died physically but was exalted to the right hand of the Father.

Child of God, do not miss this: what Peter is telling us is that through the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ, he brought us to God. Through him, we can be reconciled to God. Again, the Apostle Paul tells us in Colossians 1:21, "And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds," he goes on to say in verse 22, "yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach." Beloved, this is the reconciliation that Peter is talking about here. Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust in order that he might bring us to God. Paul says in Ephesians 2:13, "in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

Beloved, because of this, the veil in the temple was torn asunder once Jesus' atoning work was finished upon the cross. Matthew tells us that Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and he yielded up his spirit and behold the veil of the temple was torn in 2 from top to bottom. May I remind you that this wasn't some mere curtain like we see on our windows. This elaborate tapestry, beautiful tapestry, was 60 feet tall and 30 feet wide and it was 4 inches thick. It took approximately 300 men to move it once a year for it to be cleaned.

Obviously, this astounded the worshipers because suddenly they were exposed to the very presence of Jehovah God. They were terrified but they didn't understand what had just happened out on the cross. You see, what was once a symbol of separation was suddenly one of invitation. With the law there was judgment and alienation but with grace, there is

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forgiveness, there is fellowship. In Hebrews 10:19, we have a description of the effects of how this should impact us in our pattern of worship. There the writer says, "Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, let us therefore draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith." So because of Christ, because of his suffering, we have a new and living way to enter in behind the veil, enter into the presence of God. The term "new" is interesting in the original language. It means "freshly slaughtered." It also has the meaning of something that cannot grow old. So in the context here, Jesus was the freshly slaughtered Lamb of God whose atoning work would never need to be repeated. It would never grow old. It would never be outdated.

Then the living way that is described is, once again, this divine paradox that we see in Scripture that only death can conquer death. An amazing thought. Christ had to die in order that we might live and his flesh was like the veil in the temple, Peter is telling us. It had to be torn. It had to be rent because only a crucified Savior could bridge that infinite gulf between a sinful man and a holy God and be reconciled to him. Therefore Peter encourages the saints and encourages all of us by saying that he was the one that brought us to God. Because Christ is risen, isn't it interesting that now we have access into that veil and Jesus is the one that is actually behind the veil. Hebrews 6:19 tells us, "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters the presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus." Amazing, amazing truths. So Peter reminds all the suffering saints of that day and of this day that it was Christ who died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust so that he might bring us to God having been put to death in the flesh.

Now, as an important note: Peter continues his theme that began in verses 13 through 17 of the importance of having the proper attitude and manifesting a Christ-like character when we're called upon to suffer for his sake. So here he underscores a very important principle. He's saying in essence: if the sinless Savior would suffer and die for the unrighteous, how much more should we who were once sinners be willing to suffer and die for the sake of righteousness? And to help us understand this, Peter reminds us that Jesus died as our substitute. Notice he says "the just for the unjust." In other words, the righteous for the unrighteous, the sinless for the sinner. We know that God "made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf," referring to the Lord Jesus, "so that we might become the righteousness of God in him."

So first, because of Christ's suffering, he brought us to God. Secondly, he triumphed over Satan. Notice there in verse 18 he says, "having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient." Now, let's look at this closely. Having been put to

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death in the flesh, this is a reference to Jesus' physical death on the cross. Remember, the Incarnate Christ was fully God but also fully man in the flesh. But notice we read that he was made alive in the spirit. The Greek grammar helps us see an interesting contrast here between his flesh, in other words, his physical body and his spirit which never died; his spirit which was reunited with his glorified body 3 days later at the bodily physical resurrection of Christ.

So, verse 18, he was "put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit," and then notice he says, "in which also He went," in other words, while his body lay in the tomb, his spirit went "and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient." This is an amazing text. What in the world is going on here? What is Peter trying to communicate under the inspiration of the Spirit? We get some fascinating insight as we look into this text and others that help us understand it. When you don't understand a text, you look closely at it and you look at other passages because the Bible will interpret itself. Notice he says that he "made proclamation," the term *kerysso*, it means "to proclaim; to herald; to announce." Well, what did he announce? His victory over sin, Satan and death. To whom? Well, the spirits now in prison literally in the pit of the abyss or the bottomless pit. This is described 7 times in the book of Revelation. This was a place where the most vile and loathsome of all the demons had been bound. We get further insight into this in 2 Peter 2:4, there we read that, "God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment."

Now, who were these demons? Well, they were the ones who once were disobedient the text says. They were once disobedient in the days of Noah. This was when Satan and his minions conspired to somehow corrupt the human race. If we go back to Genesis, we read in Genesis 6 about the Nephilim, a term that transliterates a Hebrew term that means "to fall." So these were those with great power that fell on others to overpower them and in that context it speaks of demons that entered into man, possessed them and then cohabitated with human females, Genesis 6:2, the daughters of men.

Now, we are uncertain all that went on there, what their ultimate goal really was but I believe as I have studied this that perhaps what they were trying to do is produce a mongrel progeny that would not be totally human and thus destroy the human line, the seed of the woman that was promised in Genesis 3:15, that seed from which Christ would one day come. A mongrel race both demon and human, an attempt to so corrupt the human strain as to therefore prevent the possibility of the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ and thus thwart the possibility of man dying for man. A plot that was so diabolical as to potentially prevent the atonement, prevent our salvation and rob God of his glory. Well, whatever it was, God would have none of it. It's important to note that the children

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of these unions were fully human though profoundly influenced by demons because 120 years later they were all drowned and in Genesis 6:3, they were described as people of flesh.

So this was a wickedness so heinous that God permanently bound these demons in chains of darkness to be reserved for judgment, 2 Peter 2:4, because according to Jude 6, they did not keep their proper domain but abandoned their proper abode. You see, the exploits of these wicked demons was so vile, their sexual perversion so wicked that they were paralleled with the sin of homosexuality. In Jude 6 we read of these sexual perversions likened to that of "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." The text goes on to say that they were therefore "exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire."

So God would have none of this. Well finally, if we go back to Genesis 6:5 we read, "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Grieved over their sin, he was grieved over their sin and in verse 7 he says, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them." It's really amazing when you think about it: 1,656 years after God created Adam, he destroyed the entire world, every one that lived in it except for 8 people. Conservative estimates believe that there were approximately 7 billion people on the planet at the time of the flood. By the way, if you haven't been to the Creation Museum, if you haven't taken your kids there, you need to take them there. They have some amazing graphics to help you understand the immensity of the flood judgment.

So Adam saw the world into its 9th generation. He died one generation before the flood. Don't you know he longed for righteousness to reign. How would you like to see wickedness like that for 900 years? I'm ready to check out and I'm in my early 60s. Don't you know he longed to see Satan defeated? He longed for God to fulfill his promise to Eve that he would give her a seed that would crush Satan's head.

So in the context of all of this, now Christ has triumphed over his foe and while his body awaits resurrection, his eternal Spirit now appears to these wretched, loathsome serpents and declares his victory. Colossians 2:15 describes the scene as, "When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him."

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Now, we have to come back and ask the question: what does this have to do with Peter's encouragement to the suffering saints? Beloved, it has everything to do with it. You must understand what he's telling them and telling us is this: because Christ has triumphed over Satan and his minions, our battle against those powers and principalities has already been won. We are just awaiting the triumph Jesus suffered in the flesh but he triumphed in the spirit and so must we as we trust in him, as we wait upon him and persevere.

So because of Christ's sufferings, he brought us to God and he triumphed over Satan but thirdly, he rescued us from judgment. Again notice he says that, "He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient," verse 20. Then he says, "when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark." Here we have a graphic picture of this divine rescue. For one generation, the Lord's long-suffering grace was extended to these wicked people as Noah preached to them as he built the ark, as he warned of an impending judgment, of their need for a righteousness that was not their own. You see, the Gospel goes all the way back to the beginning, in fact, Peter described Noah as a "preacher of righteousness," 2 Peter 2:5. Well, eventually God caused the waters of judgment to rise just as he had promised, flooding the entire world, preventing any possibility of escape and yet he preserved a remnant of the faithful by providing for them a means of salvation which was pictured in the ark, the end of verse 20, "in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water."

Oh child of God, don't you see this? What a marvelous picture of salvation for all who will repent and plead for a righteousness that they do not have. In Hebrews 11:7, we read, "By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household." Folks, today as a minister of the Gospel, I am warning you of things that you have not yet seen and you had better be ready and the only way you can be ready is through faith in Christ. The writer went on to say, "in reverence he prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith."

But will you notice, verse 21, Peter says something very interesting here. He says, "Corresponding to that," referring to the ark that saves, "Corresponding to that, antitypon in the original language, we get the word "antitype" from that. It means "a copy or a counterpart." It was a term used to connote the exactness of correspondence between a stamp and the die. So he's speaking here of something that resembles something else: a type, a model. Again, the theological concept of an anti-type is derived from this term, literally meaning "answering to the type or the counterpart." For example in Hebrews 9:24 we read of the sanctuary of the holy place of the tabernacle being a counterpart or a

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copy of the true tabernacle in heaven. So the point here is that an antitype is an analogy or a symbol of some spiritual truth.

So what is Peter saying? He says, "And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you." Oh my goodness, some people begin to panic and they think, "I didn't think baptism saved you." There certainly are many that argue that it does. Is that what he's saying here? Absolutely not. He's simply saying that baptism which simply is a word that means "to immerse." Don't think of the ceremony of water baptism here. That is nowhere to be found. Baptism is a counterpart, he's saying. It is an analogy. It is a symbol. In other words, being immersed into Christ at salvation is a counterpart, it is a symbol of Noah's ark that God used to save those who trusted in him so that they could be rescued from the waters of divine judgment. Beloved, don't miss this: no one can be saved from divine judgment apart from faith in Christ, apart from being baptized, that is, immersed into Christ Jesus who alone is the ark of salvation.

Notice Peter goes on to make certain that no one confuses spiritual immersion into Christ with water baptism. Notice what he adds, he says, "not the removal of dirt from the flesh." You see, that's what is pictured in water baptism and the ceremony of water baptism. Salvation doesn't come by mere application of water, by some religious ceremony. There is no works in salvation. If I can put it this way: the only baptism that saves is dry. In other words, that spiritual immersion into the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Only those who plead to God to place them into the spiritual ark of salvation will be saved. So Peter is saying, "not the removal of dirt from the flesh," which is pictured in water baptism, "but an appeal to God for a good conscience - through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." You see, no one can enter the ark of salvation apart from appealing to God in repentant faith to be united to Christ and it is the Holy Spirit of God that brings this conviction to the sinner's heart. He is the one alone who causes our conscience to condemn us because of our sin and he is the one who immerses us or baptizes us into the union and the fellowship of the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is solely by faith, "With the heart man believes resulting in righteousness and with the mouth he confesses resulting in salvation."

Now, we have no power to do this alone, especially through getting dunked into some water which is merely a public sign or symbol of that which has taken place within the heart. So we appeal, as Peter says to God, for a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In other words, we place our faith in the ark of Christ's death and his resurrection. You say, "Why his resurrection?" Because his resurrection demonstrated God's acceptance of Christ's substitutionary atonement and therein is our hope and this glorious reality is what brings such profound encouragement to suffering saints. You see friends, through Christ's sufferings, he has rescued us from sin, rescued us from judgment

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so that we can dwell safely in the ark of salvation. Oh, what safety and surety is ours in Christ.

Finally, because of his suffering, 4. He reigns in unassailable sovereignty. Verse 22, he is described as the one "who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him." Folks, herein is the great and glorious triumph of Christ's resurrection. At his Ascension, Christ returned to his eternal throne to reign supreme over all of his creation, over all angels, over all authorities, over Satan and all of his minions, all of which, the text says, had been subjected to him. "Subjected to him" is a term that is interesting. It means "to be forced to line up or rank yourself under a superior." And to think that God's sovereign grace has brought us into this ark of salvation when we deserve judgment.

Oh dear friends, I hope you will never lose the sense of the wonder of it all of what Christ has done. I think of Charles Wesley's great hymn, "And Can It Be?" That's all you can say, isn't it? One of those verses says,

"'Tis mystery all: th'Immortal dies:
Who can explore His strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine.
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,
Let angel minds inquire no more."

And certainly the angels inquired of this. So friends, take comfort in this: the one that the world mocks is the one that has conquered death, has risen. Paul says in Ephesians 1 that "in accordance with the working of the strength of God's might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come."

My friend, if you're here today and you are hidden in Christ because you've placed your faith in him, yes, you must share in his sufferings on earth but make no mistake, you will also share in his glory in heaven. Because our spiritual head has ascended to the right hand of the Father, he now rules in unassailable sovereignty. He has dominion over all authority: every creature, all powers are made subject to him. And I want you to remember this, dear Christian, when you are persecuted, when you are on your face in agony before the Lord because it seems as though he is not near: ah, the day of rescue is coming. You've already been rescued but that triumph will soon be yours because Jesus is Lord of all. All angels and authorities and powers are subject to him and we must

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Bible Text: 1 Peter 3:18-22

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remember that none of their temptations, none of their persecutions, can touch us unless he has given them permission and even in the midst of it he will be there. Because he is Lord of all, he can send an angel to comfort you in a moment and, ah, he does so in ways that you probably never know. In fact, he can absolutely fill the air with ministering spirits because they love to do his bidding. I pray that you will remember this when you feel helpless and hopeless. Dear Christian, do not cower. Do not tremble when people make fun of you because of the Gospel, because of your faith. Know that your Lord rules and reigns. Know that he has made you priests and kings and we shall reign forever with him but first for a little while, we must suffer.

In closing, Charles Spurgeon I think summarized this so well. He said, "The history of the church is to be the history of Christ repeated. She is to be betrayed. She is to be scourged. She is to be falsely accused and spitted on. She may have her crucifixion and her death but she shall rise again. Her Master rose and like him she shall rise and receive glory. You can never kill the church until you can kill Christ and you can never defeat her until you defeat the Lord Jesus who already wears the crown of triumph."

Oh dear friends, I hope that you know my Savior. If you don't, I pray that today will be the day you ask him to save you from your sin and place you into the ark of his saving grace. And for those of us who by grace are already in that ark, may I encourage you to see the triumphs of his grace and the anguish of his sufferings and even in the anguish of your suffering and in so doing be strengthened in your trials and be comforted in your pain.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for these eternal truths that speak to our hearts. I pray that you will cause them to change us, to experience more of your presence in our lives. And Lord, especially for that person who thinks all of this is silly and they do so because they are spiritually dead, Lord, only you can cause them to be born again so I plead with you that by the power of your Gospel you would save them today. We thank you and we give you praise in Jesus' name. Amen.

We pray you have been edified by this presentation. You have been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at otcr.org.

Website: otcr.org

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