

## **Christ's suffering brought us to God, be guided by the will of God (I Pet 3:18-22, 4:1-2)**

### **Introduction**

Today we are discussing 7 verses, four of which are very difficult to understand, and one which is generally known as one of the most difficult verses in the Bible. It's one of the advantages of working through a Bible book from beginning to end - you cannot just dwell on the popular parts of the Bible and skip the difficult parts.

So, what do we do when we come across such difficult text passages? The first thing we do is we pray.

### **Prayer**

O God, the Father, we come to You today in humble dependence and ask, that You will show us Your will in this passage.

O God the Son, show us again today what Your redemptive work means to us.

O God, the Holy Spirit, show us Your power today. Yes, the power by which You raised our Saviour from the dead. Open our eyes and enlighten our minds as we work through this text. We are not theologians and scholars who can make difficult arguments about such difficult passages, but You have promised that even little children can understand Your Word. Therefore, we ask in childlike dependence: Help us not to get caught up in the detail of the difficult parts, but guide us, through Your Word, to see what You want to teach us here.

Help everyone who reads or listens that they might be enlightened, everyone for the circumstances in which they are today, because Lord we know that You have ordained it that whoever is listening or reading now, should hear this message today. Lord, even if I do not point out certain things, but You want to pass it on to them, that they will see it for themselves if they read through the passage and think about it later.

Now change our hearts of stone to hearts that carry out the will You God, the Trinity. We pray this in the Name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

Amen.

### **Scripture**

#### ***1. What are we doing with this difficult part?***

So, what do we do with such a difficult part? Different people handle it differently. But maybe it will help you if I share with you how I deal with it:

Well, first I pray about it. Many times, over many days, as I read the passage over and over and think about it for a few days. In the next few days, I will roughly follow the following steps:

1. I try to determine the structure of the passage so that I can understand what the most important point is, that the author is making and try to focus to understand that.
2. Then I see if the verses just before, or just after the main passage gives me more clarity.
3. Then I look to see if the author quotes from other passages and go read it to see how it helps.
4. Then I search if the author touches on the subject elsewhere in the same book.
5. Then I look at what the same author says about it elsewhere in the Bible.
6. And lastly, I will delve into what other Bible texts say about the passage.

All these steps were necessary here. You will see it as we go through it, and of course it is not possible to cover one of the most difficult parts of the Bible in a short video. We are therefore going to do it in two days. Even that is not enough, but we are working on an overview of I Peter, so we cannot get caught up in too much detail.

Today, we are going to look at the structure and what is clear and what the core message is to us. Tomorrow we will then work through the difficult parts and ask ourselves: How do these difficult parts enlighten our core message even further. Why were they put in there?

## **2. Christ... suffered for our sins ... so that He could bring you to God.**

If we first take out the difficult parts and the parts that is there to further describe the core message, so that we can get the structure of the passage, then it reads as follows:

*Have no **fe**ar of them, nor be troubled,*

*15 **but in your hearts honour Christ the Lord as holy,***

*18 **For Christ also suffered... for sins,***

*that **he might bring us to God,***

*being **put to death in the flesh***

***but made alive in the spirit,***

[difficult part about appearing spirits and the baptism that saves...]

***through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,***

*22 **who has... gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.***

*1 **Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh,***

***arm yourselves...** [difficult part about sin]*

*2 **so as to live for the rest of the time...for the will of God.***

Remember, I Peter 1:13-3:12 was mainly about holiness. Peter has just started teaching us about suffering.

Yesterday we finished with

*Have no **fe**ar of them, nor be troubled,*

*15 **but in your hearts honour Christ the Lord as holy,***

*18 **For...***

Peter now joins in when he starts with "for"

We did not point this out yesterday, but verse 15 actually comes from Isaiah 8:

*12 "Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread.*

*13 But the Lord of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.*

*14 And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling (Isaiah 8:11-14)*

Isaiah writes shortly before the exile. The people are also afraid just like Paul's readers. The answer to them in this situation is: Recognize God as holy, fear Him and not people.

Remember, Peter also quoted this passage about the stone when we dealt with growing in faith. There we saw either we are stumbling over Him, or He is precious to us. Peter now uses it here and applies it to Christ: *in your hearts honour Christ the Lord*

In our grouping of Bible books, I Peter comes in bundle W, which deals with suffering and affliction. The other book in the bundle is Hebrews. We are going to use Hebrews 9 and 10 today and tomorrow to help us through the passage. Just look at how relevant their circumstances were:

*32 But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, 33 sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. 34 For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. (Hebrews 10:32)*

The core message for this passage is in verse 18. None of the difficult passages appear in it:

*18 For Christ also suffered... for sins,*

Christ's suffering is a very strong theme in the letter. In addition to the two times it appears in today's passage, he also teaches us:

*1:10,11 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about...sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.*

*1:19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.*

*2:21 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.*

*4:13 But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.*

*5:1 fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ*

So suffering was foretold, it redeemed us, it gives us footsteps to follow, it takes away our sin, it makes us rejoice in suffering. And Peter was an eyewitness to all of this: It is true. Even if we do not understand anything more from today's passage, the core message is precious because listen to the reason why He suffered:

*that he might bring us to God,*

It's wonderful that our sins are forgiven, it's even more wonderful that we are going to live forever in our inheritance, but the most wonderful thing is that we can be with God. We will be in His presence forever. But note Peter uses the past tense: might bring. The relationship has already been restored. Our book that helps us to understand, Hebrews clarifies it like this:

19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter *the holy places by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,* (Hebrews 10:19-20)

God is not a God who is far away, we can talk to him directly. Do you still have the courage to enter that sanctuary with prayer in your times of trouble? Do you still realize that the only reason you can do this, is because Jesus Christ tore the veil to the Most Holy through his death?

The pieces in between now shed further light on this for us: "Once". Christ suffered once and its impact lasts forever. It is also illuminated in Hebrews.:

10 And by *that will* we *have been sanctified* through the *offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.* (Hebrews 10:10)

And he did it for *the sake of the unrighteous.* People who do not deserve it at all - me and you! Hebrews help us in this way:

24 For Christ has entered, not into *holy places made with hands,* which are copies of the true things, but into *heaven itself,* now to appear in the presence of God *on our behalf.* 25 Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly... But as it is, he has appeared *once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.* (Hebrews 9:24-26)

That was the only way the unrighteous man's sin could be set aside was by substituting a righteous one.

*He, the Righteous, for the sake of the unrighteous*

15 For we do not have a *high priest* who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, *yet without sin.* 16 *Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.* (Hebrews 4:14-16, ESV)

### **3. He who was resurrected**

Peter has now explained to us why Christ had to suffer, now he discusses the resurrection:

*being put to death in the flesh*

*but made alive in the spirit,*

[difficult part about appearing spirits and the baptism that saves...]

*through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,*

22 *who has... gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.*

1 *Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh,*

*arm yourselves...* [difficult part about sin]

2 *so as to live for the rest of the time...for the will of God.*

Tomorrow we will look at what the resurrection means by looking at the first difficult part.

Verse 22 tells us more about him who has gone to heaven.

22 *who has gone into heaven*

*and is at the right hand of God,  
with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him. (1 Pet 3:22 ESV)*

The One **who died** for our sins **has risen** and is now reigning from heaven. His work as substitute has now reconciled us to God and we also now have access to God. It's the one who has risen. It's your Saviour!

Now chapter 3 turns into chapter 4.

He then discusses a further implication of **Christ's suffering** with another difficult part that we will still get to.

This message about Christ's suffering and resurrection then flows **into a new life:**

**2 So as to live  
no longer for human passions  
but for the will of God.**

And this from today till the day you die.

The passage began with the command not to be afraid of people who cause suffering, but to fear God by revering Jesus Christ. We are no longer afraid of people who persecute or insult us because our hearts have been changed. Its foundation is the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. We now let ourselves be led by the will of God. How do we do that? Hebrews also helps us with this:

*15 And the Holy Spirit also **bears witness** to us; for after saying, 16 "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put **my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,**" 17 then he adds, "I will **remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.**" (Heb 10:15-17)*

Peter pointed out earlier in the book that we have been resurrected, we are born again. As new people we see this redemptive work of Jesus Christ, and we no longer fall over the stone, but He has become a precious Cornerstone to us. That is why we are part of the new covenant with the two wonderful promises:

1. The forgiveness of sin
2. The dwelling and working of the Holy Spirit.

## **Conclusion**

This whole passage is about why we should not be afraid or upset **in suffering**

We must rather fear God because:

He suffered for our sins so **He could bring us to God.**

**He's resurrection** remind us of **His salvation.** He is the one who rules.

Therefore we are done with sin **and are being led through the will of God**

Therefore our theme for today:

Christ's suffering

brought us to God

allow yourself to be led by the will of God

#### ***4. Reflection***

Although this passage has many difficult parts, the overarching message is very clear. We learned a lot about the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the passage. Write down what you have learned.

#### ***5. Thanksgiving***

The passage has a clear call to a changed life, through what God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have done in your life. What does the Spirit lead you to, in your own circumstances, today? Write down at least one thing that you are going to do differently today.

#### ***6. Prayer***

Close this session in prayer as the Spirit leads you.

Peace to you