

Christians' Need For Encouragement And Hope In Times Of Suffering Unjustly

Anthony Kim

Will you please turn to First Peter chapter 3 and we'll be starting with verse 18 in tonight's sermon.

First Peter chapter 3 beginning with verse 18. I want to give an introduction before we start in verse 18. There's much talk about faith in the sense of blind faith. We hear that term quite often. I want us to really think about that when it comes to understanding suffering because God wants us to know exactly what we're going to go through in our suffering. There is nothing blind whatsoever about that.

And you know Christians are the most prepared not only for eternity but in this present world specifically when it comes to suffering. Christians are to be known by suffering. Well and sometimes in it is God's will that we suffer for doing what is right. And this is not an easy thing to hear by no means. It is not easy. We need help with this and we need help all the time.

Not only do we need help, but we need to understand and we need to be encouraged and be found hopefilled if God is going to will us to suffer for doing what is right. I want you to think for a moment about evangelism in a context where you couldn't make any promises to people that things would go better for them on earth, but that if they believed what you offered as a Christian, they would be risking their lives.

Now that is not how most evangelistic messages are said. Is it that's not usually the method by telling people you're going to suffer actually more you're going to actually run into things that are even more riskier. Are you willing? Are you willing? Because you see what I just stated was normal in the context of what Peter was doing with his letter. That was normal. And we today, well, in the Western world, particularly in America, normal is safety, comfort, just staying on the sidelines as it were.

But you know, I don't want us just focus on America. And I did give a message about somewhat very briefly like I am right now about what's happening in America. But you know what? There are suffering Christians today. And I did some study in preparation for this sermon in respect to who are the ones that are suffering right now as Christians? Where do we go in this world to find that out? I actually found an article. This was dated back in May of this year, and it stated that there's five examples of Christian persecution happening today. Now, there's more than five, but I

want to just focus on the five that this article pointed out to. The first one that they call out is Nigeria.

Here you're going to find extremist groups that are acting out in violence and death. They won't even talk with you. They will go straight to violence. Have you not seen that recently in America? They will go straight to death. There's no conversation. There's no evangelism. You die if you're a Christian. And today, as of May 2025, Nigeria is the deadliest country in the world for Christians. The deadliest. Second one is North Korea. North Korea. This is one of the most oppressive regimes for Christians today. Here just owning a Bible or gathering for worship again results in immediate death. Immediate. India. That's number three. Rising attacks from Hindu nationalist groups.

Here they introduced in many of the states what's called anti-conversion laws that make it dangerous for believers to share their faith. Just sharing their faith. Number four, China. Here government crackdowns are happening all the time. Christian worship here. There are surveillance cameras everywhere. And by 2050, they're saying that it's going to be over all of China. Imagine that being watched everywhere you go on the streets.

And so they know exactly where you're going in and where you're coming out from. And here pastors are detained and sent to prison without any conversation. Again, nothing of some sort. No plea. Straight to prison. Fifth is Pakistan. Here there's blasphemy laws against Christians. And here Christians struggle with social and economic discrimination.

They are having hard times finding jobs. So you know what the Christians do? They do what they did like in book of Acts. They just give of their possessions. The churches gather their possessions here. Just have this, have that, have this, have that. You're my brother. You're my sister. And so that's what's going on throughout the world right now.

So these are just a few examples of Christians suffering unjustly. You see Jesus said this in Matthew 24:9. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted and shall kill you and you shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. But you know what? Their suffering is not forgotten by God. Not forgotten by our Christ and their faith continues to shine as a light in the darkness.

Now going back to what Peter is addressing here in our letter. He points to Christ not only as our example but as our ultimate hope. Our ultimate hope. Christ is not calling you and I as brothers and sisters in Christ to do anything that he wasn't willing to do himself. See, he's already been there. Whatever the suffering you are experiencing right now, he's been there. You just are following after the way he walked and he's already suffered. Now, it helps us to be willing to suffer when we remember the Lord Jesus Christ who was willing to suffer for us, but also helps us when we see not only what he suffered for us, but the value that's in the suffering. Often we glance over the value of his suffering. But, you know, in the midst of all the pain and the suffering and evils of the world, but there are plenty of that, isn't there? Christ has overcome it all. The evil, the suffering, and all the pain. That is our hope. Amen. That's what we constantly set our minds and our heart affections toward. Christ himself.

Why? Question begs, why? Why are we so focused on Christ? This is where Peter wants us to go to focus on him to set our hearts on him in the midst of all of our suffering. So where do we go to

see Christ? Let's go to the scriptures. Amen. Let's go to the scriptures for their reasons. Verse 18. Verse 18. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the spirit. This must capture our hearts as Christians. This part of this text. It is the thing that should compel us to go amen to this. He is our substitute, the substitute for our sins. We were wandering far far away from we didn't go after him yet he came after us.

This is the very heart of why we believe what we believe. This is why we have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ because Christ died for the ungodly. His death was substitutionary. Meaning he took my place. He took your place, brothers and sisters. He stood under the wrath of Almighty God. And he was what? He fell on him all the penalty of our sin. All of it that we deserve, but he bore it for me and for you. His death, by the way, was utterly, utterly innocent. He didn't deserve it. He was what? Perfect, sinless son of God. So, it was for all of us, all of our sins. And so what this talks about is the sufficiency of Christ. Under the banner of sufficiency of Christ, he suffered and died once for our sins. I love that part. I underlined it. Once for all.

Once for all. That is it. His death was final. All sufficient to accomplish the forgiveness of the sins of ours that believe in him which believe in him. And so there does not have to be any more sacrifices. It was finished. For the believers to understand this was life-changing because remember this is the first time they got to hear this from Peter. They remember all the sacrifices that were done in the Old Testament and now it's finished. It's done with. It's gone away with. There's no more of this to be necessary for them. It was all taken away. All the guilt of sin, the debt paid in full.

So Christ absorbed all of our God's wrath for his people. All of this to what? Bring us to God. The only way. That was the only way that created that gulf, that wide gulf that nothing that we could do could even bring one inch closer to Christ. But this, the Lord Jesus Christ in one instant brought us near to the Lord, to God Almighty. It's amazing. It's incredible the value also that this suffering Christ did for us. Now, why did Peter talk about this? Yes, he wants us to base the foundation as it were for our salvation, but he wants to give us some hope in hearing this because it's for us right now in this moment when we're going through suffering. That was also in the spirit's guiding for us to be encouraged and to be hopefilled. That's what he's pointing to because he's saying at a lesser scale he says be willing to live like Christ.

He's going to say that later on. Be willing to live for Christ. To speak for Christ, to explain this life that he has given you and me even if it means suffering because God can use the suffering to bring others to him. Think about the times when someone that was a Christian and you saw them before you were before you became a Christian, man, they know how to suffer well. What makes them suffer that way with peace, with love for the one that's persecuting them? You see, it's in the suffering. That's why in the persecuted countries, there's so many people being saved because it's at a greater scale over there, isn't it? A much larger scale. And God is using that to bring many many to salvation to the Lord Jesus Christ. So you see the tremendous value in our suffering, tremendous power that we suffer. Well, that's one of the things that believers will look at in our lives. That's the one thing they go, how how are they suffering? How can they suffer like this? They don't question, oh, when they're when we're blessed and happy and all that stuff, but it's when we're suffering that they take notice and take careful attention. So just for us as Christians,

just be noticed of that. But you see, we shouldn't be afraid because he gives us the power to suffer through when we're suffering for unjustly.

And so, how we handle this interaction with others, unbelievers, as they're watching us, is to suffer well. That in the midst, we are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ because there's contentment in him. That's he's all that we need. He's all that we need to get through the suffering from the beginning all the way to the end. There's also joy and peace in the midst of suffering. Can you see that's where the believers are looking for? They're looking for peace. They're looking for real joy in the midst of suffering. And our life preaches that incredibly powerful sermon. If you're not someone that preaches sermons, that's your life. Because it's not just our words, but it's our conduct, isn't it? That Christlike character preaches a powerful sermon as well.

So, what Peter is saying here is first of all, he says Jesus was willing to suffer even though he was innocent. And Jesus was willing to suffer because he understood that his suffering had tremendous value. And that is to help us. When we see that our suffering, if we handle it correctly, if we continue to live according to God's will and purpose in the suffering, to trust him, and we continue to hold on to the peace that he gives to us, that does an incredible thing where unbelievers will look at and they're going to go, "What's the difference?" And then you can immediately say, "Jesus, he makes the difference. He's the only one that you need to think about. Don't think about me. Think about Jesus. He's the one that makes a difference in my life, in your life, and that can open the hearts of those that God is working on more than anything else. God will use that in the salvation of others many times over." Isn't that what we desire, Christian? Isn't that the most encouraging thing when we're suffering? That should bring us the greatest amount of hope. So we pray, Lord, use us in that way.

Lord, use us in that way to not kick against the pricks as it were to resist God in the temptation or in the trials of life and the persecution, but to go head on and going, I'm going to go through it. Lord, help me through it just like Christ did as my example. And we'll get through it. We will get through it. Don't try to focus on getting rid of the pain. Focus on Christ getting you through it. That's where your target should be in your heart, in your mind. And then when you never stop doing this, by the way, you're going to see opportunity after opportunity for the glory of Christ. Let them see through your pain that you're not doing this for yourself.

You're doing it for them. You're doing it for them. The ones that are watching you, you know, it's a great encourager, isn't it? When they can see that there's pain, but there's something deep within, something spiritual, and then you can have that spiritual conversation. It's no longer about the physical anymore, but the spiritual reality that is happening with you and the Lord Jesus Christ that surpasses all understanding.

That's how we should approach suffering because that is what our brothers and sisters in Christ are doing right now. They are doing that right now. So don't ask the Lord to take this away from me. Whatever that is, don't say it that way. Say, "Lord, help me to use this because I believe you are using this for your glory." Don't miss the opportunity that's presented to you. You may be able to reach a lost person in ways that you've been trying to do with other ways, but it hasn't worked, has it? See what God does with this.

I believe he will use you mightily and he will be greatly encouraged and hopefilled when you do this because a lost and dying world needs it. But there's more. Another thing to remember is the triumph of Jesus suffering. It's a triumph of Jesus suffering. Remember Jesus suffered for doing good. We saw that in verse 17. That verse there where it says that you suffer for well doing than for evil doing. Who was the one that did this perfectly? The Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. And so he is the one to remember when doing good. We don't have nothing good in us. It's only because Christ gives us a new heart, gives us new abilities to do good that pleases him. And so the value in the triumph of Jesus suffering, look at what Paul says in Philippians 3:10.

Okay? He says this, "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection." And then here it is. And the fellowship of his sufferings in his sufferings. And then in Hebrews puts it like this in 13:12-13. Wherefore Jesus also that he might sanctify the people with his own blood suffered without the gate. Verse 13, let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp bearing his reproach, meaning taking on the reproach that he did. Let's do the same. And then Mark 8:34, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Bearing a cross. Bearing a cross. We all will bear a cross in this life. That is the call to discipleship. This is what Christ wants us to learn.

That when we deny ourselves that we don't say, "I want I don't want this pain." But you say, "I'm going to just receive. I'm going to receive whatever evil is put upon me. Whatever suffering that I have to experience, I'm going to deny myself and take up my cross and follow Jesus." That's an encouragement that there's triumph in this suffering for suffering unjustly. And when we die to ourselves and be quickened by the spirit, this kind of suffering brings us to God to be used by God.

Someone in this room might ask this question. Why would anyone become a Christian if what you could offer them was that things in this world would probably go worse for them and that their lives would be at risk. I mentioned this in the introduction, but you might have that question right now. It's like why?

Let me answer it in another way than I haven't already in this way. The greatest human need is not just to live a long life on this earth. I hope you know that it's not just to live a long life on the earth or just to be settled with being comfortable. Okay. The biggest human need, what is it? Is this how to have our sins forgiven and what? To overcome the separation from God. That is it.

That's what we are to live for. That's where we are supposed to find our happiness in. Because if you don't, if you don't now, you will live forever in misery in hell and into the eternal lake of fire. So the great triumph of suffering is because Jesus died once for all for sin, I do not have to die in my sins. That's another way of putting it. I do not have to die in my sins. There is forgiveness in the cross. That is why people will believe on Jesus even if it cost them their own lives because the most important thing has been taken care of. You see that's more important than living a long life on earth living comfortably because that's not it. This is not our life. This is not it.

You see the martyrs the comfort is my sins are forgiven. My sins are forgiven. I am no longer separated from God. So that's what's constantly comforting the martyrs as they're suffering all around the world. All around the world. Because the worst enemy, what is it? Who's the worst enemy? Is sin. Sin. That's your worst enemy. And Jesus defeated that great enemy, your sin. And

Jesus had made sure that we would be brought home saved. That is what it means to be brought to God. He's the one that brings us safely to God.

So how does again this help us to suffer? You see because one of the things that the devil loves to tempt this is one of the things he loves to tempt in our suffering is to make us think this one thing and you'll know what I mean when I say this that God has forsaken you. You're suffering and God has forsaken you. Have you ever had those thoughts before? That's one of the devil's tricks to make you think, "Oh, don't suffer now. Look, look at you're suffering. Look at Job, right?"

But don't let that stop you. Don't let that stop you. Don't let him try to fool you. He's tried to do that many, many times. Many people have fallen into that. But let us not be those kind of people." Amen. Suffering is no sign that God has forsaken us and turned against us. Christ has carried our sin. He completely absorbed the wrath that we deserved. He's not angry with us.

He loves us. He loves us in our suffering unjustly. That's verse 18. Let's go to verse 19 and 20 by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. 1 Peter 1:11 brought out this part. I'm just going to read it. It's I'm going to start with verse 10. Says this, "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, searching what or what manner of time? The spirit of Christ." This is where I want to emphasize the spirit of Christ. The spirit of Christ was I preached this a while back in the Old Testament prophets and they predicted his coming.

So the spirit of Christ was also in Noah. It was in Noah and he was preaching to who? Disobedient people during Noah's day. There was plenty of them. And these are the ones that are now in prison. Another way of putting it is they are in hell. That's what it means. I love how pastor Walrip put it. He says that in place of torment is right now is considered hell that's awaiting the final judgment. I probably didn't say it the best way that he did it, but he's saying that hell is temporary and the eternal final judgment is in the lake of fire. So, prison is another way. You're locked up. You're not getting out of this. You're going to be in hell and the next step is the lake of fire. And so just like in Noah's day and today, those that reject preaching of the gospel are now in prison awaiting final judgment.

You see, they thought it was foolish to heed the call of Noah when he was preaching as a preacher of righteousness for 120 years. They thought it was foolish. So they stayed comfortable. So they went on just pleasing themselves and eating and drinking and getting married. And then they thought, "Oh, nothing's going to happen." And then once the rain started, as soon as one drop fell, that was it. That was it. It's too late.

How is it no different today? How is that no different today? In fact, that's what it says in other parts of the text that just like in Noah's day, it's going to be like that in the last days, isn't it? So, it's actually a very dangerous place to be a Christian in this sense of comfort here in America.

But, you know, this is referring back to this text. This is another reason why people can be converted with a message that calls for suffering. Why? To keep them out of eternal judgment. Eternal judgment. And verse 20, let's read verse 20 again. Which sometime were disobedient

when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah while the ark was preparing wherein few that is eight souls were saved by water. So we see here a small minority of people in the vast number of the population only eight and those eight people were called out foolish I'm sure many many times but you know what they were hopefilled and that means they were they knew for certain what God instructed to Noah that there was going to be judgment coming. And because they were certain about that, Noah built the ark. He was preparing himself. That's where it says you see that a preparing, he was preparing it. Preparing it diligently.

Being called foolish doesn't matter. Being ridiculed doesn't matter. Being called out foolish didn't matter. Because see, we don't wait on our timing. We wait on God's timing. Amen. That he's going to flip the tables around and it is going to be him that ultimately shuts the opportunity down just like it was with the door and the ark once closed going to be closed. There's no turning back.

That's what I want us to think about in this two texts. But let's go to verse 21 and 22. 21 says this. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us not the putting away of the filth of the flesh but the answer of a good conscience toward God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ who is gone into heaven and is on the right hand of God angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him. See Peter describes here the ultimate meaning of baptism. The ultimate meaning.

Look at verse 18 where it says, "Bring us to God." Baptism is this expression of what? An outward expression of a spiritual inward appeal of God. That's the way it's defined. And what does that do? What does God do there? Water does have the effect, okay, of removing dirt from the body. That is true. Water does clean the dirt of the body. But he is not about that. He's not saying that part. He's not talking about the water part of baptism. What does he say? It's deeper. It's the ultimate meaning of baptism is this. That what? That it works on your conscience. You see that? It gives you a what? A clean conscience or a good conscience towards God.

What is that? That is being immersed into Christ. Into Christ. And we see that as a picture of the ark. That's why he brings up Noah. It's a picture of that of Christ. It is being in Christ. That is what makes us ultimately safe. If water was the case, if he's talking about water here, then the man on the cross would have been in big trouble, wouldn't he? He would be having big problems if it was that he had to be baptized. But the clear ultimate thing is that you have a good conscience towards God. That's a cleansing work of what baptism looks like on the outside. Romans 6:3 puts it this way. Knowing not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ there it is baptized into his death into Christ united in him identified with him that is what it is talking about here so the symbolism is very clear in verse 20 and 21 and it's very important for us to know this truth

Because there are many people that did not obey when God's patience waited in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared in which only a few in numbers eight here and we know that were brought safely through water and that's what baptism corresponds with.

I'm not going to be able to go through all of this tonight, but I want us to go and understand again just briefly a little bit more than what I would have wanted to say about it is it's going back to the outward expression of the inward appeal. We come through the water of baptism. We have

passed through death and judgment. We have been buried with Christ and we have been risen with him. And then what do we pass from death to life? Judgment is passed. The suffering we are experiencing cannot be condemnation of God. That's the reality.

When you're in Christ, condemnation of God is no longer exist in your life. Should be a constant reminder for ourselves. Verse 22. One last part that Peter wants us to be encouraged in the midst of our suffering. He shows us that Christ is at the right hand of God the Father and he's ruling actual individuals here. We see it in the text. He's ruling over angels and authorities and powers and they're all subject unto him. This is a great encouragement because he has ultimate authority over all these things. He is the all powerful. Even angels submit to him. One of the highest beings that God has created in this universe. They're all subject unto him. You know, the devil must be disappointed in this way.

And that when he's causing suffering to a Christian that's doing it unjustly that it may look evil to the Christian right now, but Romans 8:28 says, "All things work together for good." To them that love God are called according to his purpose. That somehow that devil was trying to do God in the end will make it good. How many times over and over again the devil just feels foolish. He's the one that's foolish over and over again.

So that's comforting. One theologian puts it that this way is that the devil is held onto a leash by God. He can only go so far, right? You remember that in Job, you can only go this far, Satan. You can't go any further without my authority. So that should be very encouraging to us Christians that whatever evil is upon you, whatever pain and suffering you are experiencing unjustly, know this. It's all going to work out for good. Amen. For Christ and his glory. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for this time. Thank you for your word. Thank you for all the encouragement, Lord, that you give to us. Not just one or two, but tonight five. And I just pray, Lord, that wherever my brothers and sisters are in right now, Lord, in their suffering and pain and all the evil that's being put upon them, Lord, just keep them encouraged, Father, by your word. And in Christ, may they have the courage to step one step closer to the end of it all. To know that it is for all Christ's glory and for his honor and to his praise. Then in the midst of it, we can have the love and the joy and the peace that surpasses all understanding. And that the lost around, my brothers and sisters, will take notice. And that it will be your work Lord that is doing the work that you want to show your love to show your mercy and grace to someone who is lost be found in Christ. I pray that for our church who are those that are in midst of us that are lost to be the same as well. Bless to this end father and we'll thank you in Jesus name. Amen.