



*“The men who have done the most for God in this world have been early on their knees. He who fritters away the early morning, its opportunity and freshness, in other pursuits than seeking God will make poor headway seeking Him the rest of the day. If God is not first in our thoughts and efforts in the morning, He will be in the last place the remainder of the day,”*

**E.M. Bounds**

**Old Testament Reading – Genesis 6:1-22 – New Testament Reading –  
Ephesians 4:1-16**

## **How Should We Then Live “Success Through Suffering” 1 Peter 3:18-22**

**Wayne J. Edwards, Pastor**

The purpose of Peter’s letter was to encourage those 1<sup>st</sup> Century Christians who were suffering persecution for their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior by challenging them to consider how Jesus handled the suffering He endured to achieve their eternal salvation.

- 1 Peter 2:21 – *“For to this you were called, because Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow in His steps.”*

Christians of every generation should expect to suffer some level of persecution: 2 Timothy 3:12

- Not to question our faith, but to confirm it!

- Not to weaken our faith, but to strengthen it!
- Not to destroy our faith, but to settle it!

Therefore, when faced with persecution, Christians are to stand before their persecutors as a mirror of Christ.

- 1 Peter 2:23 – *“When He was reviled, He did not revile in return. When He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.”*

Jesus suffered, and Jesus died! But it was through His suffering and His death that He achieved our victory over sin, death, and the grave.

- Jesus triumphed through suffering, and He called His followers to do the same. Therefore, when facing persecution for our faith, Christians must choose between two kinds of suffering:
- If we obey God, we can expect suffering from the hands of men. 2 Corinthians 12:10
- If we disobey God, we can expect suffering from the hand of God. Hebrews 12:6

Peter gave two examples of how Christ triumphed through suffering.

## **1. Christ Triumphed Through His Physical Crucifixion – 1 Peter 3:18 – “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.”**

If we are called to suffer at the hands of a hostile world, we can trust God to vindicate us in His way, in His time, and for His glory.

- Christ suffered for those who would believe He came to be our Savior. This describes the foundational doctrine of the substitutionary death of Christ for our sins.
- The Just – the righteous redeemer, the sinless Savior.
- For the unjust – the unrighteous sinner, the unrepentant lost.

The time may come when we, the saved, may suffer at the hands of the unsaved, as a witness for Christ to the unsaved.

- While we may not deserve the suffering we will endure at that moment; certainly we cannot say we are without sin and undeserving of any punishment at all. Romans 3:23
- We continue to violate the Ten Commandments by our actions and our attitudes.
- None of us could measure up to the standard the Lord Jesus set forth in His Sermon on the Mount.
- Even though we have been saved, we are being saved, and we will be saved; we are still sinners saved by grace, and apart from that grace, we deserve nothing less than eternal hell.
- However, because of His love for us, God took the wages of our sin and placed them upon Jesus – He endured the sufferings we deserved in order to bring us to God.
- Because Jesus was totally man, He could die a physical death.

- Because Jesus was totally God, His death was sufficient to pay for the sins of all mankind and for all time.
- Christ suffered for those who believed in the promise of His coming to be their Savior.
  - In the Old Testament, Sheol is the place of the souls of the dead, both righteous and wicked.
  - In the New Testament, Hades is the place under the earth, with gates and bars and darkness, where no one praises God.
  - In Luke 16:19-31, Hades is described as a place with two compartments:
    - Abraham's bosom – where the angels carried Lazarus.
    - A Place of suffering – where the rich man was tormented in the flames.
    - All the Old Testament souls went to Sheol.
      - The righteous went to the bosom of Abraham.
      - The unrighteous went to the place of eternal torment.
  - According to Luke 16:19-32, and Ephesians 4:8-10, during the three days and three nights Jesus was in the grave:
    - He descended into the bosom of Abraham and preached the gospel to those who had expressed their faith in the promise of His coming, and when He ascended, He took them with Him to Heaven.
    - He descended into the lower part of the earth to show the demon spirits, as well as those who died in unbelief, while He had triumphed over sin, death, and the grave, there was no second chance for them to be saved.
  - When a person dies today:
    - Their bodies are returned to the dust from whence they came. Ecclesiastes 3:20, Psalm 90:3
    - The soul of the believer is immediately transported into the presence of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 5:8
    - The soul of the unbeliever remains in Hades until the last judgment day, and after being judged, it is thrown into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:11-15

**2. Christ Triumphed Through His Physical Resurrection – Vs. 20-21 – “In the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us: baptism, (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good**

## **conscience toward God,) through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”**

- Noah and his family suffered physical and emotional suffering as they witnessed to an evil, wicked, hostile world for 120-years.
- God vindicated them by delivering them through the same waters that destroyed those who, in their unbelief, had persecuted them.
- God did not deliver Noah and his family *from* His judgment, but *through* it!
- Peter said this was an “antitype” of our salvation, for just as those who were “in the Ark” were carried safely through the waters of God’s judgment, so are those who are “immersed” in Christ – not the waters of a ritual of baptism, but the complete submission of our lives to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Romans 6:3ff.
  - Since Christ died for us, we die to the world and we live our lives for Him.
  - Since Christ was buried for us, we bury ourselves in Him.
  - Since Christ was resurrected from the grave, we can now live in the promise of everlasting life.
  - Like Noah and his family when they landed on Mount Ararat, when we were born again, we left the old world of sin behind, and we began to walk in the newness of life.
- Like Noah and his family in their day, and like those Christians in Peter’s day, as true believers in Christ, we are a small minority surrounded by a godless culture that is becoming increasingly hostile toward God and toward those who believe in Christ.
- Just as God vindicated Noah and his family in their day, and just as God vindicated Christ in His day, God will also vindicate those who truly believe in Him, even if we are martyred for our faith.

### **3. Christ Triumphed Through His Physical Resurrection and Ascension – Vs. 22 – “Who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.”**

- As predicted in 2 Peter 3:3, the scoffers are questioning the promise of the Lord Jesus to return to this earth, while others are wondering why He doesn’t come and deliver us from evil.
- As promised in Acts 1:11, in the fullness of time, *“This same Jesus will come again in the same way you have watched Him go to heaven.”*
- Until He comes, believers need to practice these four disciplines each day:
  - Saturate our minds in the Scriptures – 2 Timothy 2:15-16
  - Bathe our spirits in intercessory prayer – James 5:16
  - Determine to live a godly life – 1 Peter 1:14-15
  - Prepare to share our testimony – 1 Peter 3:15-16