

**Christ
also hath
once
suffered
for sins ...**

**For Christ also hath once
suffered for sins, the just for the
unjust, that He might bring us
to God ... (1 Peter 3:18)**

The first Epistle of Peter, one of the near disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, was written primarily to exhort Christians who were suffering due to their acceptance of Christ: this is often the case. On a number of occasions, Peter sets before his readers the various sufferings that Christ endured, as an example to encourage them in their temporal trials, however grievous, and remind them of the glory soon to be theirs beyond this fading world. For Christ, His life on earth was one of obedience and suffering, resulting in rejection and death, but it led to resurrection, triumph and glory. This is also the path of those who enter into His victory of the cross, embracing the fullness of salvation that His sufferings achieved.

For Christ ...

The title, Christ, is one of many applied to the Son of God and speaks somewhat of His regal glory, the anointed One who was in expectancy in Peter's day being at the heart of so many prophecies of the Old Testament Scriptures and fulfilled at His first appearing. He was often identified as Jesus of Nazareth, a despised place in His day growing up in a sphere of rejection. As a young child He was taken to Egypt away from troubled Herod's murderous intents, not that exile was necessary for His safety. Later, around thirty years of age, His own people at Nazareth had sought to throw Him over the brow of a Hill, to 'destroy' Him but He simply passed through their midst on that occasion as the hour of His final rejection was not yet.

His sufferings included that common verbal abuse, being branded as a deceiver, of being mad and possessed of demons as men resisted Him in their contradiction of themselves. It was written of Him many centuries earlier in light of the service that would be entrusted to Him by God the Father: ***“They that hate Me without a cause are more than the hairs of Mine head”*** and again, ***“The reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon Me”*** (Psalm 69:4,9). Yet He never deviated from the work He came to do.

As a Man, He was of David’s line and heir to his throne, but those at Jerusalem from where He will reign in a future day as King of kings, sought more than once to stone Him as they rejected His teaching of the truth and His exposure of their sin. It was ultimately in this city via His enemies hands that His greatest sufferings were unquestionable experienced at the time of His death. It was then that He ***“endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself”*** (Hebrews 12:3) as men railed on him, spat on His face, setting Him at naught in their cruel mocking, denying ***“the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted”*** to them, to be released instead of Him, as they bayed for His death (Acts 3:14).

Also hath once suffered for sins

Yet His sufferings reached their climax in His experience at the hands of a righteous God, altogether different from the sufferings at the hands of men, as He made Himself answerable for man’s sin. He willingly submitted to this suffering as written centuries earlier: ***“He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth”*** (Isaiah 53:7).

On the cross after three hours of impenetrable darkness He cried ***“My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”*** (Mark 15:34). It was during this period of travail that His soul was made ***“an offering for sin”***, that God in ***“the day of His fierce anger”*** poured out His wrath upon Him and afflicted Him as if against sin itself.

The just for the unjust

It is this contrast that Peter emphasises to His readers, that as they were to bear patiently their unjust sufferings for doing good, how much more this was exemplified in Christ Himself. Never before or again, will such injustice be committed as was at Calvary, or such restraint be shown in the face of such hatred when one word could have destroyed His adversaries. Never before or since has such love been expressed when Christ died for His enemies. Never again will One, as Peter had testified to earlier in the epistle ***“Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth”*** (2:22) die in the interests of those who are full of sin. What a display of longsuffering is seen.

That He might bring us to God

Yet if Christ had not shown such meekness, avenging Himself on those that sought to mistreat Him there and then, He would never have suffered on the cross, He would never have died for us, and God the Father would never have been able to offer us forgiveness.

The ultimate victory of the cross opened the way for reconciliation between God and man. The apostle Paul wrote ***“We pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him (Christ) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him”*** (2Corinthians 5:20,21). It is a matter of us being declared righteous before God when we in repentance and by faith accept Christ and His sacrifice for us, the unjust ones.

But Peter also poses a query in his epistle that if God uses suffering to judge (chastise) His believing children: ***“What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?”*** (4:17). The solemn answer lies in the historical destruction of the godless cities of Sodom and Gomorrhah who ***“are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire”*** (Jude 7).