

Christ's Triumphant Suffering

1 Peter 3:18-22

Pastor John Miller

Let's read the entire passage, and then we'll come back and break it up. Peter says, beginning in 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, by which..."—that is, by the Spirit—"...He went and preached unto the spirits that were in prison, which sometime were disobedient; when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth now also save us (but 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."

Peter's writing to Christians who are suffering. Peter told them we stand in God's grace in our salvation, the grace of God by which we stand in our submission, and by the grace of God, we stand in our suffering. Those are the themes through the book of 1 Peter. God's grace gives us the ability to stand in our salvation, in submission and now in suffering. Suffering takes up the better part of this letter. It begins in chapter 3, verse 13, and it runs to the end of the book.

Now why were these Christians who Peter was writing to suffering? Well, they weren't suffering because of their sin. They weren't suffering because of their sinful behavior or disobedience. They hadn't been sowing to the flesh and reaping what they'd sown. They were suffering for a very particular reason. And I believe it is applicable for us today. They were suffering for their faith. They were suffering because they had chosen to follow Jesus Christ in a culture that was going in the opposite direction. They had chosen to believe in Jesus, and live for Jesus and to follow Jesus. And they were living in a culture that was the antithesis of righteousness; they were very unrighteous. We live in the same kind of culture today. The darker the world gets, the more the opposition will come to the individual believer for your faith in Jesus Christ. The Bible says, "All that desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." And I believe that applies to us today. And I believe in America, if the Lord doesn't come soon, we will soon see the day when there will be open hatred and hostility and opposition to our Christian faith.

But they were suffering because they were living righteously. Let me point that out to you in a couple of examples. In verse 14 of chapter 3, Peter says, "But and if you suffer for righteousness' sake..."—notice that; you're suffering "for righteousness' sake"—"...happy are you." Then again in verse 17—we got it last Sunday—"For it is better, if the will of God be so, that you suffer for well doing than for evil doing."

Now notice that he says that it's God's will that you may suffer, and you're suffering for well doing. So they were suffering in the will of God, and they were suffering for doing the will of God, for doing well. So Peter is writing to encourage them as he writes to us, through the Holy Spirit, and wants to encourage us, as well. These words, penned by Peter, were intended to

encourage suffering, persecuted Christians, and I believe they were intended to encourage us, as well.

So Peter sets forth the triumphant suffering of Christ, in this text, as our example to show us that, like Christ, our suffering will lead to triumph. That's a summary of our text. Peter's saying to these suffering Christians, "Even as Jesus, our example of one who suffered righteously and suffered because He was righteous, was triumphant in His suffering, and because we are in Christ, we will also be triumphant, as well."

Now this is a real kind of easy note-taking sermon, because what I want to do is I want to give you five ways that Christ triumphed in His suffering. Write them down. Number one, Christ triumphed in His crucifixion. Christ was triumphant, even though He was crucified. Look at it with me in verse 18. "For Christ also hath once suffered..."—some translations have "died." And that's what the translation is trying to convey. "Christ once died for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh..."—another reference to His death by crucifixion—"...but He was quickened by the Spirit." Now I'll talk in a minute what that means, "quickened by the Spirit."

Now, again, if you're taking notes, I want to point out this heading. I want to point out four ways that Christ triumphed in His crucifixion. Number one, He triumphed in His crucifixion in that it was sufficient. It speaks of the sufficiency of His suffering or death. Notice in verse 18, "For Christ also has once suffered..."—or "died." Now "For Christ also" indicates that like they were suffering, Christ suffered. But Christ's suffering was in an all-together- different category. Jesus, as we see, was going to suffer for our sins, and He was going to atone for them. So His suffering was unique in that it was voluntary, and we're going to see was vicarious; He took our place. But we get some great, great references to the death of Jesus Christ.

Number one, it was sufficient. "Once suffered." Don't miss that statement. I have taken the word "once," and I have highlighted it. I have underlined it. I've circled it. And I put "awesome" on the side. Now you don't have to do that, but it is awesome. You say, "So, what's so awesome about that?" It means that it is finished. It's done. It's sufficient. It's complete. He didn't have to be crucified again and again and again and again. When you do something and it doesn't work, you do it over. When you do something and it's not sufficient, you do it again.

Now this is in contrast to the Old Testament when every year, year after year on the Day of Atonement, they had to bring a blood animal sacrifice. They had to bring an animal, and they had to kill it and the blood had to be shed. Now here's the point. In the repetition of bringing, every year, another lamb, it was indicating that their sins weren't done away with. If their sins were dealt with once and for all, then why did it have to be repeated every year? The answer is simple: because their sins were simply covered temporarily. They weren't done away with.

Now this is intended to be a contrast; "Christ once and for all," the writer of Hebrews tells us in several places of his epistle. Christ suffered once, never having to be repeated. Why? Because what He did on the cross was complete. You remember when Jesus hung on the

cross He uttered seven statements? One of which was, "It is..."—what?—"...finished." That is the Greek word "tetelistai" that He uttered. "It is finished." Tetelistai. It is the word that was stamped on a bill when you paid the last payment or installment. If you bought something and you made payments on it, when you made your last payment—like your mortgage—they would actually stamp, you know, "tetelistai" on that statement. And you would have that as proof you've paid in full. That's what the death of Jesus Christ was. "It is finished"; it's done.

When an artist was painting a picture and the artist would put the finishing touches on the canvas and laid down his or her brush and stepped back and looked at the painting, you know what they would say? "Tetelistai; it is finished." It's done.

When a farmer was working in the fields and he was plowing with his ox, and he came to the end of a long day of plowing and working in the fields and he would unhook the ox from its plow, he would say, "Tetelistai; it is finished." He would finish his plowing. He would finish his work.

So when Jesus died on the cross and He cried, "Tetelistai," He was actually saying, "Paid in full" or "It is done" or "It is finished." So Jesus died once because it indicates His death was successful. Or theologians refer to it as efficacious, meaning it is effective. What Jesus did on the cross was effective, done and complete.

But secondly, Jesus triumphed in His cross because it was satisfactory. Not only was it sufficient, but it was satisfactory. Notice in verse 18. It says, "died for sins." "Christ hath also once died..."—why did He die?—"...for sins." He didn't just die to give us an example. He didn't die just to show us an example of sacrifice and love. He was actually dying—and in the Greek it could be translated "concerning sins" or "as it pertains to sin." Jesus died to pay sin's penalty. Jesus died to pay the penalty for sins. What we're going to see in the next statement is that He had no sin. "The just for the unjust." So Jesus, pure and holy Son of God, gave His life voluntarily as a substitute. Why? To pay a penalty. For what? Our sins.

Now, again, another theological term—and I don't throw these out to try to, you know, say I know theological terms, but I think it's important to understand them. This is what's called "propitiation." Propitiation. And that's the death of Christ Godward. You know, when we think of Jesus dying on the cross, we think that He died for sinners, and that's true. But did you know that when Jesus died on the cross, He also died for the Father? You say, "In what sense did He die for the Father?" God's law had been broken, and Jesus died to satisfy it. He died to pay it. That's propitiation. So He died Godward. He died to satisfy.

If you are caught speeding, and the fine is \$1,000 and you pay your speeding ticket, then the law has been paid, the court is satisfied and it's a done deal. So, in a sense, that's propitiation. But this is satisfying by fulfilling the demands of God's holy, righteous law. And He did it in two ways: He did it by living it out perfectly in His life and by paying for it in His death. Propitiation. So Christ's death on the cross was victorious because of its sufficiency and because it was satisfactory.

And I want you to write this third subpoint down. It was substitutionary. Notice in verse 18. “The just for the...”—what?—“...unjust.” Who is the just? Jesus. Who is the unjust? We are. Jesus was just, or righteous. Someone said, “The righteous for the unrighteous, the holy for the unholy, the pure for the impure, the strong for the weak, the innocent for the guilty, the king for the subject, the prince for the pauper, the shepherd for the sheep.” And the list could go on. A holy God dying in the place of sinful man. I can’t fathom or understand that. Why would God come down to earth, take on humanity and go to a cross and die in my place and give His life and take my sin and pay the penalty? Only one explanation: that’s God’s love. “And God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” And Jesus came because of love. He came to redeem us. But His death was satisfactory and substitutionary. “The just for the unjust.”

In 2 Corinthians 5:21, Paul says, “For He has made Him to be sin for us.” I would say that “He has made Him” as God the Father has made God the Son “sin for us, Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

Now the fourth and final is that His death was reconciliatory. His death was a reconciliation. I want you to notice it in verse 18. “That He...”—that is, Jesus—“...might bring us to...”—who? —“...God.” The idea is that He is the One Who introduces us to God or brings us to God or He is our access to God. Why would Jesus give His life as a substitution on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins? There’s the reason right there. To bring us to God. Jesus said, “I am the way, I am the truth and I am the life. And no one comes to the Father except through...”—what? —“...Me.”

Did you know that if you’re wrong about Jesus you’re wrong about God? You can’t be wrong about Jesus and right about God. Did you know you can’t have God without Jesus? And to thoroughly blow your mind, Jesus is God. (Put that in your pipe and smoke it. But just not in the sanctuary right now; okay?)

Now there’s some mind-blowing text that we’re going to cover today. But the whole focus is on the victorious suffering of Christ. And let’s keep the context and the theme in mind; he’s writing to suffering saints. And he’s writing to encourage them in their suffering. You say, “Well, how does this doctrine encourage them in their suffering?” Knowing that Jesus suffered righteously and that Jesus suffered triumphantly and that we are in Christ, we can and will do the same by the grace of God; amen? That’s what Peter is saying. He’s saying that when you are suffering—and this is a good application point—fix your focus on Jesus. Don’t look at your circumstances. Don’t look at yourself. Look at Jesus Christ, Who suffered righteously and conquered victoriously. So whenever you’re going through a time of suffering, Jesus is to be our focus, that His death was a reconciliation. He gives us access to God.

Remember when Jesus died on the cross? (You’re supposed to say “yes.” Thank you very much.) And there were several miracles that took place. The rocks ripped and cracked, and there was an earthquake and there was darkness over all the earth. Those were like miraculous interventions in creation. And the graves of some of the saints were opened, and they were seen walking around the city.

You know, there was another forgotten miracle that happened when Jesus died on the cross. The veil of the temple was ripped or torn into two pieces, from the top to the bottom. Not the bottom to the top. God reached down and went [ripping sound] and ripped the veil. Now what was this veil? This veil was this beautiful curtain, thick curtain with gold entwined in it and so forth. This beautiful curtain that separated two inner compartments of the temple. It separated the holy place from the holy of holies. And this veil was a separation that only a high priest could pass through once a year, and not without blood sacrifice.

And when he would enter into this holy of holies, there was one article of furniture there known as the Ark of the Covenant. Now if you haven't read your Bible, at least you saw the movie *The Raiders of the Lost Ark*; right? So you're all theologians. It was an acacia-wood box, and it was covered with gold and had a top on it. On the top was what's called the mercy seat. And at two sides of this box were two angels facing each other, carved out of gold, and their wings touched—these two cherubs as they faced each other, the angels. And over this mercy seat where the priest once a year would sprinkle the blood of atonement, was the very presence of God. It's known as the shekinah glory of God. God dwelt in that very holy place.

Now when Jesus died on the cross, that veil of the temple was torn in two. That was a very significant thing that happened, because what God was actually saying through that is that the access to God is now accessible and available and made through the torn flesh of Jesus on the cross. That access to God is now available to anyone. Do you know, you don't need an earthly priest to bring you into the presence of God? Or to intercede for you to God? Or some saint who has died years ago? Do you know that Jesus takes you right into the Father's presence? Everyone of us has access. We as individual Christians are priests, and we can have boldness to come with confidence into the presence of God and we can talk to Him.

I cannot get in to see the President of the United States. Not sure I'd want to, but.... There's a lot of executives. "John Miller's here." "I don't know John Miller. He can't come in." You know, kings and queens had a person who would actually bring them in. They would announce them, and they would bring them in. You couldn't just come bursting through the door and talk to a king or queen. You had to have someone who gives you entrance and introduces you. Well, think about that; you're coming into the presence of the God of all the universe. And how do we gain access into the presence of God? Through Jesus Christ; amen? That's what you call triumphant in His death. That His death was reconciliatory. That it brought sinful man back into relationship with a holy, righteous God. In Ephesians 2:18, Paul says, "For through Him we both..."—that is, Jew and Gentile—"...have access by one Spirit unto the Father." So Jesus was triumphant in His crucifixion.

And secondly, I move to my second main point. Jesus was triumphant in His proclamation. Now this is the text that I have to be honest with you that I dreaded preaching on this morning. I honestly did. This is probably one of just literally two or three verses in the whole Bible that if I could, I'd skip over. Pray for me. And the reason being is because I solemnly confess, I'm not sure how to interpret them. And I'm just being honest with you. You say, "Then why am I sitting here listening to you right now?" I think if anybody tells you he understands everything, you got

problems. Now when I was a young pastor, I understood everything. And I felt like I always had to have an answer for everything. Even if not, I just made it up on the spot. I felt so intimidated if I couldn't answer someone's question. The older I get, the more I say, "I don't know." Really. In another few years, I won't know anything. Seriously. It's scary.

But I want to read this, this triumphant in His proclamation. Go back with me to verse 19, and you'll get a taste of what I'm talking about. He says, "by which." Now at the end of verse 18, "by the Spirit." And what I didn't mention is that at the end of verse 18 where it says, "being put to death in the flesh, quickened by the Spirit," the articles are absent in the Greek. There's no "the flesh," "the Spirit." It's just "being put to death in flesh, quickened by Spirit." And one of the problems interpreting verses 19 to 21, we're not even sure if "the Spirit" at the end of verse 18 is the Holy Spirit, thus it should be capitalized, or if it's His human spirit, which is possible, or if it's talking about the sphere of His resurrection. And this is a good interpretation, because it would be in contrast with the flesh. He was crucified in the flesh, but He was resurrected in the spirit or to a spiritual sphere. And that's another possibility. But again, I don't know if "the Spirit" in verse 18 is the Holy Spirit or Christ's human spirit. But it's "By which He went and He preached to the spirits that are in prison."

Now let me tell you what I do know. I'll tell you what I do know it isn't. Okay? You got that? Here's a little principle of interpreting the Bible. When you do not understand something, step back and stand on what you do know. When you're reading a verse and it doesn't make sense and you've studied it, put it in a file and wait for further information. On this text, I've been waiting for over 40 years. But what I do is I step back, and I take a stand on what I know the Bible clearly teaches. Thus we're on safe ground.

So two things: this passage is not teaching that there's a second chance after death. When Jesus, by which the Spirit, when He preached to the spirits which were in prison, He's not giving sinners a second chance to be saved. That would be contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture. The Bible says, "It's appointed to every man once to die, and after this, the judgment." There is no teaching in the Bible that after you die you can go to purgatory, and you can be prayed for or purged or purchased out of a state and then elevated later on up into a state of paradise. That's not taught in the Bible. With all due respect to my Roman Catholic friends, purgatory is not in the Bible. It's created by the church as a safety net for people who miss heaven. But it's not in the Bible. Jesus described—and it ties into this whole passage, and I've got to be careful going into too much detail, because it makes it almost harder to understand.

But in Luke 16, Jesus tells a story. I don't believe it's a parable. I believe it's a story about a rich man and a guy named Lazarus. No parable ever names an individual. This one does; his name was Lazarus. But the other guy was just a rich dude, and he didn't believe in God. He didn't trust the Lord. He wasn't saved. But the poor man was saved. And then they both died. Do you know that money can't save you from the grave? You can be the richest person in all the world, and you're going to die like the person laying in the gutter. Your money can't save you from that grave. And the Bible says, "It's appointed every man once to die, and then the

judgment.”

So the rich man died, and he went to, our English Bible says, “hell.” It would be “Hades” in the Greek. He went to this underworld and he was in torment. Lazarus died and his pallbearers were the angels. He was carried by angels to this place called “Abraham’s bosom.” That old Black spiritual, “Rock my soul in the bosom of Abraham.” It’s a reference to this verse. So the righteous man died, went to Abraham’s bosom, and the wicked man died and he went into hell. They were in the same area, but there was a divide between the two. Now the rich man looked up and saw Lazarus, who was the poor man and he was in paradise in Abraham’s bosom. And the rich man said, “Abraham, send Lazarus over to me that he would dip his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in these flames.”

Now I don’t know any other way to interpret that than literally. It’s not a parable. And even if it was a parable, a parable is based on historic truth. It may be a made-up story, but it’s not a fictitious kind of fairy tale, science-fiction thing. It’s based on reality. So Jesus is telling what actually happened. Two people died. One went to hell, one went to the comfort of Abraham’s bosom. But the guy in hell said, “I’m tormented in these flames. Could Lazarus come over and touch my tongue with some water?” Pretty radical. And guess what? Abraham spoke up and said, “Son, remember that you, in your lifetime, had the good things. And Lazarus, the evil things. You’re now tormented in these flames, and Lazarus is comforted in my bosom. And besides, it’s impossible for him to come to you, or you to come to us. There’s a great divide. There’s a great gulf between the two. And you cannot come to us, and we cannot come to you.”

That is an indication that once a person dies, their eternity is fixed. And this is why it’s so very important to get right with God now. Don’t wait. You’re playing with your eternal destination. You could reject Jesus Christ, leave church today, go through an intersection, someone runs a red light, you’re T-boned and you’re in eternity. You didn’t get right with God. It’s too late. You could go to sleep at night and die in your sleep and not wake up in the morning. You don’t have a lease on life. There’s not one person who can guarantee you’ll be here tomorrow. So you need to be right with God. But once you die, your eternal state is fixed. So it’s not teaching second chance.

Nor is it teaching, verse 21, that baptism can save us. Again, the clear teaching of the New Testament is we’re “saved by grace, through faith. It’s not of ourselves; it’s a gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Baptism would qualify as a work. You can’t do anything; no rite, no ritual, no religion, can get you to heaven. It’s by faith in Jesus Christ. “On Christ the solid rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand.” Amen? And we reach out and we take His hand. We don’t boast our righteousness. “I’ve been baptized. I went to church. I not only went to church, I went to Revival Christian Fellowship. And anyone who can endure those sermons from John Miller deserves to come into heaven right now. I suffered for 60 years listening to him preach.” It doesn’t work that way. Our righteousness is like “filthy rags.” Jesus saves us by His grace.

So it’s not teaching that we can be baptized. Notice it says, “Not the putting away of the filth of

the flesh, but it's the answer of a good conscience toward God." So I believe the clear teaching of Scripture is that we're saved by grace. Not by water baptism. But there's an analogy here that I think Peter's trying to draw.

Now having to say what it's not, let me give you two common, accepted views. Two basic. There's a lot more. And each of these two views have their problems, and there's questions that could be asked. And we're not here to do all that today, but here's the two most commonly accepted views or interpretations. One is that Peter is describing how Christ, between His death and resurrection, went into hell, that place described by Jesus in Luke 16 in the underworld, translated Hades, and He preached, verse 19, Greek word "kerusso," means to proclaim, the victory of His work on the cross. And that's been an accepted view by the church for many years. Paul said in Ephesians, "What is He that ascended but that He first descended into the lower parts of the earth, and He lead captivity captive."

But the questions that are unanswered are, "What did He preach? To whom exactly did He preach? And how does that all fit in with this passage and this text?" But the idea is, in Spirit Jesus descended into hell and He proclaimed. Now He wasn't preaching the Gospel that they could be saved and be given a second chance. And we don't know if He was preaching to the wicked dead, or spirits that are bound in captivity that lived in the days of Noah, or on the side of paradise that He proclaimed His finished work on the cross and that He gathered them and ascended into heaven and took them to heaven. Now, have I thoroughly confused you here? That's kind of a common view, and there's questions that we have a hard time answering.

The second is that Peter is describing what happened in the days of Noah, and that it was the Spirit of Christ who preached through Noah, as he preached and built his ark, to the unbelieving generation before the Flood. And that's a possible interpretation, as well.

Now a couple of things that I would say by application, though, that we can be sure of. He says only eight people were saved when Noah preached. And preached for guess what? 100 years. How would you like to build a boat in the desert, preparing for a flood, and it's never rained in history? And there's no lakes, there's no ocean, there's nothing around. You're out in the desert building a boat, and I think the first thing he built was a pulpit. And when the crowds gathered around to mock him, he would lay down his tools and step up to his pulpit and say, "God's going to send a flood, and if you don't turn to God and turn from your sins and come enter into this ark, you're all going to be destroyed." "Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. What a fanciful tale that is." And faithfully for 100 years Noah preached, and the only converts he had were his own family. Can you imagine pasturing a church for 100 years and the only people who were ever there were your wife and kids? No one else got saved. But he was faithful.

But here's the point I want to make. It's not what Peter's trying to teach, but I think it's a good point. Eight people out of the entire human race were saved. Guess what? The majority is not always right. Amen? So when you're listening to the voices of our culture and the voices of television and movies and liberal news media and all the voices of our culture around us, the majority is not always right. Only eight people. Jesus said, "The way to heaven is narrow. And

few there be who find it.” Only eight people were saved as they entered into that ark.

And then the second point I'd like to make, in verse 21, when he uses the ark as a figure, the word is “tupos” or we get our word “type.” The idea is that the ark that Noah built was a picture or a type of Jesus that we go into and we're saved. You know that the door of the ark—there was only one door. And when they entered into that door, God had to shut the door. Jesus is the way. There's no other way. And when they were in the ark, they were safe from the waters, the floods of judgment that came and took them all away. And those who were safe in the ark, a picture or a type of Jesus Christ and our salvation, were lifted above the waters. Hence that word “waters” in the context there. They were lifted above and they were saved.

Now the moment he mentions waters, Peter's mind switches to baptism. And baptism, though it doesn't save us, is a picture that we are saved. Just like the ark, which actually was built, I actually believe in a literal ark built by Noah that literally took all these animals and preserved life on planet earth. I believe that. If you're going to reject that story, then how do you know Jesus really lived and died and rose again from the dead? I think to be consistent, we need to believe that it happened and that all God's Word is true and reliable. But baptism is also a type or picture of what? Our identification with Christ in His death, in His burial and in His resurrection.

Now I'm not going to argue how you are baptized. If you want to get sprinkled, get sprinkled. But it isn't going to save you. If you want to be dunked, get dunked. I sometimes think it would be cool to throw people off the pier. I'm joking. Wouldn't it be—“In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost [throwing someone off the end of the pier]!” If you make it back to the beach, you're saved. That's how we know you're born again. “Oh, Jesus. Save me! Save me!” I've actually had people tell me, “Hold me down, pastor. I've got a lot to bury.” “Okay, I'm going to swish you around a little bit, you know.” It doesn't wash us from our sins. But it's a picture.

And this is very rarely mentioned, but I think it's an important point missed in baptism. Identification. Your baptism is a public declaration of your identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. So he pictures this as a type as they were in the ark and raised above the waters of judgment. So we go in the waters of death, and it's a picture of our salvation in Christ. Jesus is not only our ark of safety, but He died, was buried and rose again.

But let me move to my third aspect of Christ's triumph. In His resurrection. He triumphed in His resurrection. So He triumphed in His crucifixion, He triumphed in His proclamation in the underworld and then, thirdly, He triumphed in His resurrection. I want you to notice in verse 21. “Not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God...”—and then notice after the parenthetical statement, verse 21—“...by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” Now it could be at the end of verse 18 he mentions the resurrection of “quickened by the Spirit,” but he clearly mentions it here in verse 21, “by the resurrection of Jesus” from the dead.

Jesus triumphed over suffering, over sin, over death on His cross when He rose from the dead.

And the resurrection of Jesus Christ means that everything He claimed is true. It means that my sins can be forgiven. It means that I have His presence with me now. It means that I have His pattern: that as Jesus rose from the dead, His resurrection is a prototype of our resurrection; that as Jesus rose physically and bodily, all those who die in Christ will be transformed and resurrected from the dead.

I don't care if a shark eats you or you burn in a fire or you're cremated; it's no problem for God to put it all back together and resurrect you into a new resurrected body. Amen? Now I don't know if you're like me, but I need a new body. Some people say, "I don't want my body to come out of the grave; I've had it long enough." Don't worry; it'll be a new and improved you. And you're going to spend eternity in your body in the presence of God, but it's going to be transformed. Your corruptible body will put on incorruption. Your mortality will become immortality. It will be sown in weakness; it will be raised in power. It'll be sown in humility and it'll be raised in glory. We all go to that same dormitory, the grave, but we shall be awakened.

You know what the word "cemetery" means? The word "cemetery" means "resting place." This is why we lay our loved ones in the grave; because we're waiting for them to be awakened in the resurrection. "The dead in Christ shall rise first"; amen? We're waiting for that resurrection, and Jesus' resurrection was the forerunner or the prototype of our resurrection. And we also have His promise that He will come again.

Let me give you the fourth aspect of His triumph. Christ triumphed in His Ascension, verse 22. Notice it says, "Who..."—that is, Jesus—"...is gone into heaven." I love that. Jesus' incarnation (God-man), Jesus' crucifixion, Jesus' resurrection, and now we have Jesus' Ascension. It marked the end of His humiliation and suffering on earth. Again, intending to encourage the suffering, persecuted saints, Jesus died, Jesus was buried, Jesus rose and Jesus ascended back into heaven. You don't need to fear what man can do to you. No more will Christ ever suffer. No more will He be mocked and spit upon and crucified. He's ascended back to heaven.

Now let me give you number five and the last point. Christ triumphed in His exaltation. He triumphed in His exaltation. Notice again in verse 22, He's "gone into heaven"; that's His Ascension. And then it makes this statement. He "is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him."

There you have it. That's what you call triumph. That's what you call victory. They took a sinless man, they nailed Him to a cross, He was buried, He conquered sin and death of the grave, He ascended back into heaven and He is exalted and seated at the right hand of God the Father. I know where Jesus is right now. You know where Jesus is? He's in heaven. And He's not the lowly, peasant Galilean any longer. He's the exalted, glorified God-man; honored, all power and preeminence is now the head of the church. In Philippians 2, Paul says, because of this, "Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is..."—who?—"... Lord." He's Lord "to the glory of God the Father."

And in Revelation 1 when John, on the island of Patmos, saw Jesus as He is right now in His

post-resurrection, post-Ascension, post-exaltation, He is the “King of kings and Lord of lords.” His eyes are described as a “flame of fire.” His hair like wool. His face bright as the sun. His feet like polished brass, a metal of judgment. And out of His mouth comes a two-edged sword. This is how Jesus Christ is coming back. When He came the first time, He came as a little baby through the womb of the Virgin Mary. God contracted to a span and comprehensibly made man. Can’t understand that. And He had to be nursed and pampered and cared for and protected as He grew into manhood. God in the flesh; Emmanuel.

But when He comes back the second time, no weakness, no humiliation, no question about Who He is. He will come in power. He will come in glory. He will come in majesty. He will come in splendor. And every eye will see Him. Hallelujah! What a day that’s going to be. Amen?

And you say, “Well, John, how’s this all supposed to be helpful for suffering saints?” Jesus is not only our example of suffering triumphantly, but all who are joined to Him by faith will share in His victory and glory.

Let me read one last verse, and I’ll close with this. John 16:33. Jesus said, “These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, for...”—you know the verse?—“...I have overcome the world.” Amen?

Amen.