

## 1 Peter 3:17-22

### When God's Will Is Unfair

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The theme of suffering is woven throughout the book of 1 Peter and when we come to 1 Peter 3:17-22, we find it once again. In this passage, we are told directly that it is better to suffer unfairly than to suffer fairly. That is not an easy truth to accept when you are receiving unfair treatment. To help us understand that benefit of unfair treatment, we are reminded of what Jesus did for us.

#### I. The \_\_\_\_\_ of God (1 Peter 3:17-18)

- The gospel is the ultimate example of \_\_\_\_\_ suffering. (1 Peter 2:20-21)
- Jesus took our punishment so that we could be \_\_\_\_\_ to God. (Ezekiel 18:4  
1 John 3:5; 2 Corinthians 5:20-21)
- The same Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead dwells in every believer, \_\_\_\_\_ eternal life. (Romans 8:11)

#### II. The \_\_\_\_\_ of God (1 Peter 3:19-20)

- The “spirits in prison” are the souls of men who were alive when Noah was building the ark. Peter’s point is to say that Christ \_\_\_\_\_ to them through the Holy Spirit working through Noah. (Genesis 6:3; 2 Peter 2:5; 1 Peter 1:11)
- For more than 100 years, while Noah was preparing the ark, wicked man had the chance to \_\_\_\_\_ and be saved from the flood. (2 Peter 3:9)
- Christ suffered so that all those who believe might be saved, but all those who reject the salvation that God offers will face the \_\_\_\_\_ of their choice.

#### III. The \_\_\_\_\_ of Baptism (1 Peter 3:21)

- Noah and his family were not saved by the water, they were saved by the \_\_\_\_\_.
- Salvation does not come by being immersed in water (or having it sprinkled or poured on your head), but by placing your \_\_\_\_\_ in God.
- Just like the waters of the flood in Noah’s day served to demonstrate that Noah and his family were safe in the ark, water baptism today is only a \_\_\_\_\_ that we are safe in Jesus. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

#### IV. Our \_\_\_\_\_ Savior (1 Peter 3:22)

- The \_\_\_\_\_ is what we call the event when Jesus physically went up in the air, through the clouds and then back to heaven. (Acts 1:9-11)
- The right hand of a king’s throne was the position of \_\_\_\_\_. Jesus is in that position next to the highest throne, the throne of God. (Mark 16:19; Ephesians 1:20; Hebrews 1:3)
- While Jesus sits at the right hand of God, He \_\_\_\_\_ for us. (Romans 8:34)
- The end result of Jesus’ ultimate \_\_\_\_\_ through unfair suffering is His total exaltation above everyone and everything. (Ephesians 1:21)

#### Conclusion

Sometimes God’s will is going to seem unfair to you. You will be confused by it, and because you don’t understand it, you will be tempted to doubt whether it is truly the best. Remember that God’s will is always best, and the gospel proves it. Believe that God’s will is best, even if it seems \_\_\_\_\_.

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### When God's Will Is Unfair

“Life isn’t fair.” No doubt, you have heard those words many times and probably even said them yourself. When we hear those words, we usually want to respond by saying, “Well, it should be!” Something in us bristles when we are the subject of unfair treatment, at least when that unfair treatment makes life harder. We don’t usually mind a little unfairness when we benefit from it. The truth is that life is not fair and we should not want it to be, because if life were always fair, by our definition, we would be doomed to hell.

The theme of suffering is woven throughout the book of 1 Peter and when we come to 1 Peter 3:17-22, we find it once again. In this passage, we are told directly that it is better to suffer unfairly than to suffer fairly. Suffering fairly means you have done something wrong and deserve to suffer. Suffering unfairly means that you did not do anything wrong to deserve it. But if that suffering is God’s will, then it is the best thing for you.

That is not an easy truth to accept when you are receiving unfair treatment. To help us understand that benefit of unfair treatment, we are reminded of what Jesus did for us. It was God’s will that He suffer for our sin. Was that fair? No, but it was God’s will, and so it was right. The next time you find yourself in the position where God’s will seems unfair to you, remember what Christ suffered for your sake, and follow His example of patiently enduring unfair treatment.

#### I. The Will of God

*1 Peter 3:17-18 For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. [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:*

The gospel is the ultimate example of unfair suffering. Never has someone deserved to be treated better than Jesus, and never has anyone been treated worse. Jesus had total power to avoid suffering and yet He chose to endure unfair abuse.

*1 Peter 2:20-21 For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. [21] For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:*

Peter says that the just suffered for the unjust. We are the unjust. We are sinners and deserve to be punished for our sin.

*Ezekiel 18:4 Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.*

Jesus is the Just One. He is sinless. He is perfectly righteous.

*1 John 3:5 And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.*

Yet, he suffered for us so that he might “bring us to God.” We were the sheep who had wandered astray. We were alienated from God by our sin. But Jesus took our punishment so that we could be reconciled to God.

*2 Corinthians 5:20-21 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. [21] For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

It was not fair for Jesus to suffer for our sins, but that is the message of the gospel. However, the suffering of Jesus is only the first half of the story. He was “put to death in the flesh, but

quicken by the Spirit.” “Quickened” means to be made alive and it is referring to the resurrection of Jesus. Peter emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in the resurrection in contrast to the human flesh of Jesus. His flesh died, but the Spirit is more powerful than the flesh, and it was through the Spirit that Jesus rose from the grave. The same Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead dwells in every believer, guaranteeing eternal life.

*Romans 8:11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*

Since Christ suffered unfairly for us, we should be willing to suffer unfairly for Him, if that is God’s will for us. We should not go looking for suffering. We should not seek persecution. But if it should come to us, we should not be surprised and we should not get angry. We should accept it as God’s will and rejoice that we can suffer a little for Him who suffered much for us.

## II. The Waiting of God

*1 Peter 3:19-20 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; [20] 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.*

Peter is building one of his theological pyramids, where he begins with a single point and spreads out from there to other related truths. Having stated that Jesus was raised from the dead by the Holy Spirit, he now reveals that Jesus also preached to souls in the Old Testament through that same Holy Spirit.

The question might be asked, “Who are the spirits in prison?” There are various opinions about this, but the immediate context sheds helpful light on the subject. It is clear from the following verse that Peter is referring to “the days of Noah.” The “spirits in prison” at the time that Peter wrote those words are the souls of men who were alive when Noah was building the ark. Peter’s point is to say that Christ preached to them through the Holy Spirit working through Noah. It is clear from the record in Genesis 6 that God the Holy Spirit was working to bring mankind to repentance in Noah’s Day.

*Genesis 6:3 And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.*

Noah played an important role in that process because he was called by God to proclaim righteousness. While he was building the ark, he was also warning people that judgment was coming and they needed to get right with God.

*2 Peter 2:5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;*

The Spirit that moved Noah to proclaim that message was the same Holy Spirit that raised Christ from the dead and is called “the Spirit of Christ” in 1 Peter 1:11

*1 Peter 1:11 Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.*

One commentator summarizes it this way: “They were men in the flesh when Christ preached to them by his Spirit speaking in Noah; but after they were dead, their spirits were shut up in the infernal prison, detained, like the fallen angels.”

For more than 100 years, while Noah was preparing the ark, wicked men had the chance to repent and be saved from the flood. God is very “longsuffering” because He does not want anyone to go to hell.

*2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

But in contrast to the vast majority of mankind that rejected the message of righteousness, there were only eight souls who believed, entered the ark at God's invitation, and thus were saved from the flood. Everyone had a chance, but not everyone believed. Only those who had faith were saved, the rest were sent to that eternal prison called hell because they rejected God's gift of salvation.

God is a God of patience and mercy, but He is also a God of justice and holiness. Christ suffered so that all those who believe might be saved, but all those who reject the salvation that God offers will face the consequences of their choice. God will wait only so long for them to repent, and then judgment will come.

### **III. The Water of Baptism**

*1 Peter 3:21 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:*

1 Peter 3:21 is often used to try to prove that going through the ritual of baptism is what saves a person from their sins. But a simple look at the context shows that to be the opposite of what the Bible is saying.

First of all, keeping this verse in context, were Noah and his family saved by means of water? No, they were saved by means of the ark. The ark did the saving. As they passed through the water, they had already been saved by being placed in the ark.

Second, the verse clearly states that the baptism being referred to here is not merely a physical baptism. It is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God" that saves us. Salvation does not come by being immersed in water (or having it sprinkled or poured on your head), but by placing your faith in God. Having faith in the Gospel saves you, and that should be followed by physical baptism that makes public your personal faith in Christ.

Just like the waters of the flood in Noah's day served to demonstrate that Noah and his family were safe in the ark, water baptism today is only a demonstration that we are safe in Jesus. It pictures the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus for our sins and is meant to be a public declaration that you have placed your faith in Jesus. Salvation does not come through a physical ritual. It is received by grace through faith in the gospel. Baptism is just the "figure," the gospel is the real thing.

*Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: [9] Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

### **IV. Our Wonderful Savior**

*1 Peter 3:22 Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.*

Peter concludes this section by reminding the believer that the resurrection is not the end of the story either. After Jesus rose from the grave, He ascended back to heaven where He retains His sovereign authority.

The ascension is what we call the event when Jesus physically went up in the air, through the clouds and then back to heaven. It is an important part of the story because of its connection with the second coming of Christ.

*Acts 1:9-11 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. [10] And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; [11] Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*

Jesus went up in the clouds and He will come back again, first in the clouds and then to the earth. But what happened after Jesus ascended and what is Jesus doing right now? Peter tells us that Jesus sat down on the right hand of God. The right hand of a king's throne was the position of honor. Jesus is in that position next to the highest throne, the throne of God.

*Mark 16:19 So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.*

*Ephesians 1:20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,*

*Hebrews 1:3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;*

Jesus being at the right hand of God has special meaning for those of us who are saved. While He sits at the right hand of God, He intercedes for us.

*Romans 8:34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*

Jesus being at the right hand of God also means that He is sovereignly ruling over everything. He is "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. (Ephesians 1:21) The end result of Jesus' ultimate humiliation through unfair suffering is His total exaltation above everyone and everything.

## **Conclusion**

Sometimes God's will is going to seem unfair to you. You will be confused by it, and because you don't understand it, you will be tempted to doubt whether it is truly the best. Remember that God's will is always best, and the gospel proves it. Believe that God's will is best, even if it seems unfair.