



Unit 2: The Whole Truth and Nothing but the Truth
Sermon Series Title: Trust His Word
Sermon 1: What Jesus Did to Bring You to God
Bible Passage: 1 Peter 3:18

Background/Context

A friend of mine describes some church members as “CEOs.” They come to church on “Christmas and Easter Only.” Celebrating Easter without understanding the events that led to it is like reading only the last chapter of a book or seeing only the final scene of a movie. The ending cannot be rightly understood when separated from all that goes before it. Easter must not be separated from all that precedes it, especially the cross. We cannot understand the victory that Jesus won for us on Easter morning unless we recognize the spiritual battle that He fought for us on the cross.

In 1 Peter 3:18, we see the purpose of the cross, the purpose that was completed by the resurrection of Jesus. He suffered and died on the cross “that He might bring you to God.” While none of us will ever fully understand what Jesus endured for us, this one verse tells us several powerful truths about the suffering and death of Jesus. The more clearly we see the meaning of the cross, the better prepared we are to experience the joy and victory of Christ’s resurrection.

A. He Suffered for Your Sins, Once for All (1 Pet. 3:18)

In the Old Testament, the people of Israel were made right with God by making sacrifices to Him. Sacrifices were made on special days of worship, in gratitude for harvest, in celebration of a birth, to atone for sin, and to celebrate healing. The worshipper placed his hand upon the sacrifice to identify with it, to designate the animal to stand in the worshipper’s place, giving its life to restore a right relationship with God.

The problem with the sacrificial system is that the need for a sacrifice never ended. Every time the Old Testament law or your heart called upon you to make a sacrifice, you were obligated to return to the Temple and repeat the ritual. Into this endless struggle to be right with God, Jesus came and “suffered for sins, once for all.” As the sinless Son of God, He was the perfect sacrifice who could atone for our sins and restore a right relationship with God eternally. When Jesus shouted “It is finished” from the cross (John 19:30), He declared that He had made the only sacrifice that would ever be needed. Those who trust in Him can be forgiven, once for all.

Application Point: Are you haunted by sin from your past? Do you return to God again and again, asking Him to forgive you for the same mistake? Write down the sin you committed, and then write across it, in big letters, “Once for all.” Thank God that Jesus’ death on the cross is enough to cleanse you from that sin.

B. He, the Righteous One, Suffered for Your Unrighteousness (1 Pet. 3:18)

Psychologists tell us that, by human nature, we believe that most people get what they deserve. We know, sometimes very personally and painfully, the connection between what we do and the consequences we face. The Bible tells us that we are sinners and that the result of our sin will be death (see Rom. 6:23). The cross is the turning point of history because, through the suffering and death of Jesus, we can be freed from the death sentence we deserve. Jesus endured suffering He did not deserve so that those who trust Him might receive what they do not deserve—forgiveness and the promise of eternal life. Jesus, the righteous Son of God, was the only one who could take the sins of the world upon Himself. His amazing love is seen most clearly on the cross, for there, the Righteous One, chose to suffer for us, the unrighteous (see Rom. 5:7-8).

Application Point: Do you complain that you don't get the good things that you believe you deserve? What, as a sinner, do you really deserve? Spend a few moments thanking Jesus that He took what you deserve upon Himself so that you, through faith in Him, might receive the salvation that you don't deserve.

C. He Died and Rose Again (1 Pet. 3:18)

Jesus' death was real. His body, torn by the whip, stuck with thorns, pierced by Roman spikes, and stabbed by a spear, endured for as long as necessary and then, "He breathed His last" (Luke 23:46). His death was real because sin is real, because the wages of sin are real, because the destiny of sinners is real. Had He not died beneath the weight of our sins, we might not be convinced that we would die beneath the weight of our sins.

Though the Romans put Jesus to death "in the flesh," they could not stop God's spiritual purpose. After three days, "made alive by the spirit," Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus' resurrection was real. His resurrection declared, once and for all, that grace really is greater than sin, that light really is greater than darkness, and that life really is greater than death. Jesus died and rose again for a reason—to bring you to God.

Application Point: Just as worshippers in the Temple placed their hands upon their chosen sacrifice to allow that animal to give its life in their place, we must reach out to Jesus and place our trust in Him, claiming the life that He gave to bring us to God. Knowing that Jesus died and rose again is not enough. Salvation comes when you say, "Jesus died and rose again for me."