

1 Peter 3:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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:

Analysis

This verse magnificently summarizes the gospel's essence and Christ's saving work. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins" (hoti kai Christos hapax peri hamartiōn epathen, ὅτι καὶ Χριστὸς ἅπαξ περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν ἔπαθεν) employs hapax (once for all) emphasizing the finished, unrepeatable nature of Christ's atoning sacrifice—no further offering needed (Hebrews 9:26-28). He suffered "for sins" (peri hamartiōn, περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν), the preposition indicating purpose: His suffering dealt with sin's penalty. The phrase "the just for the unjust" (dikaios hyper adikōn, δίκαιος ὑπὲρ ἀδίκων) captures substitution's heart—the righteous One exchanged places with unrighteous ones, satisfying divine justice while extending mercy. The purpose clause "that he might bring us to God" (hina hymas prosagagē tō theō, ἵνα ὑμᾶς προσαγάγῃ τῷ θεῷ) reveals atonement's ultimate goal: not merely forgiveness but reconciliation, restored relationship, access to God's presence. The paradoxical statement "being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (thanatōtheis men sarki zōopoiētheis de pneumatī, θανατωθεὶς μὲν σαρκὶ ζωοποιηθεὶς δὲ πνεύματι) affirms both Christ's genuine death and supernatural resurrection—killed physically, made alive spiritually, vindicating His claims and conquering death.

Historical Context

Peter writes to suffering Christians tempted to question whether their faith is worth the cost. This verse grounds Christian suffering in Christ's redemptive

suffering, providing both example and encouragement. In Roman persecution, believers faced torture and execution—Peter assures them that Christ's prior suffering secured their salvation and His resurrection guarantees their vindication. The phrase "bring us to God" would resonate powerfully with first-century readers familiar with court protocol: only authorized persons could approach rulers, while common people were kept at distance. Christ's work grants believers bold access to God's throne (Hebrews 4:16). The emphasis on Christ's once-for-all suffering counters any notion that Christians earn salvation or merit God's favor through their suffering—Christ's finished work is complete and sufficient. Peter's detailed treatment of Christ's death and resurrection reflects early apostolic preaching (kerygma) central to Christian proclamation.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does understanding Christ's substitutionary death as 'the just for the unjust' deepen your wonder at the gospel and security in salvation?
2. What does it mean practically that Christ's purpose was to 'bring you to God,' and how does this access change your prayer life and relationship with the Father?

Interlinear Text

ὅτι	καὶ	Χριστὸς	ἅπαξ	περὶ	ἁμαρτιῶν	ἔπαθεν	δίκαιος
For	also	Christ	hath once	for	sins	suffered	the just
G3754	G2532	G5547	G530	G4012	G266	G3958	G1342
ὑπὲρ	ἀδίκων	ἵνα	ἡμᾶς	προσαγάγῃ	τῷ	θεῷ	
for	the unjust	that	us	he might bring	G3588	to God	
G5228	G94	G2443	G2248	G4317		G2316	
θανατωθεὶς	μὲν	σαρκὶ	ζωοποιηθεὶς	δὲ	τῷ	πνεύματι·	
being put to death	G3303	in the flesh	quickened	but	G3588	by the Spirit	
G2289		G4561	G2227	G1161		G4151	

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 9:28 (Sin): So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Hebrews 9:26 (Sin): For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (Righteousness): 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.

1 Peter 4:6 (Spirit): For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

Titus 2:14 (Sin): Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

1 John 1:9 (Righteousness): If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Romans 4:25 (Righteousness): Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

Romans 8:3 (Sin): For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

1 Peter 4:1 (Sin): Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;

Galatians 3:13 (References Christ): Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: