

1 Peter 3:13-22

In our outline we now move into **Section Two (1 Peter 3:13-5:11)**. And to begin with we are to learn **Some of the benefits of suffering as Christians (3:13-4:19)**. The first of these is **It gives opportunities to witness to the world (3:13-17)**.

After exhorting servants at the end of chapter 2 (vv. 18-25) as to how they are to live under trying circumstances, and then wives in 3:1-6, followed by his instruction to husbands in 3:7, Peter addressed all of the saints in a united way concerning how they should live in those difficult times. They were to be “of one mind” as to how they were to live, meaning that they were to be guided by Scripture. The Bible gives us the guidance we need for a holy life, and it gives us all of the guidance that we need. It is not the Bible *plus* the philosophies of men, nor that which would be considered acceptable in an ungodly community. That which is legal is not always pleasing to God. You can get an abortion in our country if you want to, but you can’t get an abortion if your purpose in life is to please God. I was reading an article in the Oregonian the other day about what a problem driving beyond the speed limit has become. Our police are arresting people, mainly men, who are driving their cars over 100 miles an hour. One man was stopped for driving his motorcycle over 100 miles an hour. And the suggestion was made that all of this has become a great problem *because there are not enough police officers to catch everybody who is doing it*. So people do it because they think that the chances are good that they will not be caught. But a Christian knows, as we learned in the last verse (12) that “the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous.” And if he wants to please God, he is not going to drive his car in such a reckless and dangerous *and illegal* way. Besides, if a Christian want to have people in the world believe that he is a Christian, wanting to please God, that is another reason why he needs to be guided by the Word. Such verses as 8 through 12 here in 1 Peter 3, are verses that we ought to read frequently, and perhaps memorize them. *Peter believed (and we should too) that you can have good days when you are living in bad times*. But we can only have good days if we live according to God’s Word.

3:13 Now in this verse Peter asked a question. (Read it.) Now our first response probably is, there are plenty of people who will “harm” us if we do good. After all, isn’t that the whole point of this epistle? They were suffering, and why? Because they were the Lord’s people. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy in his final epistle, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). So what did Peter mean with this question. Was he talking about of both sides of his mouth?

Well, if you believe that the Bible is the Word of God, and that those who wrote the Bible were “men” who, in Peter’s own words in 2 Peter, were “moved,” or *carried along*, “by the Holy Spirit, then you can’t believe that he would say one thing at one time, and the very opposite at another time. It might appear that that is what he was doing, but that is when we need to pay closer attention to what he was saying.

Peter, like all of the other writers of Scripture, was very conscious of God. They were men who knew God, and men who believed, as Peter told us in verse 12, that God was seeing everything that was going on. And even though it seems at time that God has His face turned in another direction, yet the truth is that that is never true. God always sees everything, and He is always in control. We call this the sovereignty of God! And so what Peter means is that if there is anything that will make an unbeliever take it easy on a believer, it is because of the way the believer seeks always to do good. Even the worst of men know the difference between good and bad, or even good and evil.

But let us make sure that we understand the verse. The verb that Peter used which is translated “harm” is the verse from which the word “evil” which Peter has been using is formed. The word that Peter has been using for “evil” is κακός; the verb for harm is κακῶω. So what Peter was asking was, Who is going to do bad things to you if you are seeking to do what is right, or good, before God? Robert Leighton, whose dates are 1611 to 1684, and who was an Archbishop in the Church of Scotland, explained what I am trying to say in this way:

There is something about a meek, upright, holy carriage that is apt, in part, to free a man from many evils to which the ungodly are exposed. Your pure and harmless deportment will bind the hands of your enemies and sometimes somewhat allay and cool the malice of their hearts, so that they cannot rage against you as they might otherwise (p. 148).

Solomon expressed it this way: “When a man’s ways please the Lord, He maketh his enemies to be at peace with him (Prov. 16:7). Whenever you see this happen, know that God our Keeper is at work. I believe that this is why Potiphar didn’t kill Joseph when his wife accused Joseph of making advances toward her. He could have had Joseph killed, but he didn’t. Why? Probably because he couldn’t believe that Joseph would ever do such a thing. The same thing was true when King Darius put Daniel in the lions’ den, but then he couldn’t sleep at all that night. He wouldn’t let the musicians try to soothe him. And the Bible tells us that “very early” the next morning he “went in haste unto the den of lions” and “with a lamentable voice” cried out to Daniel, “O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?” Cf. Dan. 6:18-20. King Darius knew what kind of a man Daniel was, and even though Daniel had refused to worship him even once, he was very unhappy with himself for signing such a degree, and was in great agony of soul until he knew that Daniel was alive and safe. But, you see, this was God Who spared Daniel.

This is a great truth of Scripture that we all need to keep in mind. Special grace is extended toward those who seek day by day and in every way to do what pleases God. Peter himself was delivered from death even though the Apostle James was not spared. So it doesn’t happen all of the time, but it happens enough for us to know that this is a basis upon which God works.

On the word “followers,” some MSS say *imitators*; others says *those who eagerly aspire after that which is good*, or pleasing to God. It doesn’t make much difference, if any, which is the right word. The word “be” should be translated *become*. None of us by nature, by birth, is concerned about pleasing God. But when we experience the grace of God in salvation, the Holy Spirit gives that intense desire to please the Lord, and often we are helped along the way if we have the godly example of some other believer to follow. Of course, the greatest of all examples is our Lord Jesus Christ Who could say, “I do always those things that please Him,” speaking of His relationship with His Father in John 8:29).

3:14 But if such is not the case, if you do “suffer for righteousness’ sake,” there is still an immediate reward, or blessing. It is *happiness!* “Happy are ye.” Peter used the word translated “happy” which our Lord used over and over again as He gave the multitudes in the presence of His disciples (and so Peter was there) those wonderful Beatitudes. And you will probably remember how the Lord concluded the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:10-12:

10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

You see, the Lord wanted His disciples to be looking forward to the time we would be with Him in heaven.

The Apostle Paul suffered a great deal because of the Gospel. Before he was saved many believe that he was the most, at least one of the most, promising young rabbis of the day. But when the Lord saved Him, then his fellow-Jews wanted to kill him.

In writing to the church at Corinth, this is what he had to say about persecution and suffering. You will find these words in 2 Cor 4:15-5:2:

15 For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ;

18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

And then he followed in chapter 5 with these words:

5:1 For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.

The Christian life is basically a happy life, a life in which we can rejoice always in all things. But sometimes the clouds gather, and sometimes they stay longer than we want them to. Peter actually introduced this paradoxical character of the Christian life in chapter one. (Read 1:3-7.)

The last part of verse 14 is a quotation from Isaiah 8:12 and 13. This is what we read in those verses, and you will see how verse 14 here in 1 Peter 3 flows into verse 15:

12 Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid.

13 Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread (Isa. 8:12-13).

Even in times of persecution and of trials we are not to fear and be afraid like it is normal for us to do. Instead, we are to fear the Lord and to be careful that we do not displease Him. And it is obvious that sanctifying the Lord in our hearts, is the cure of all fear. *But what does it mean to sanctify the Lord in our hearts?* Let us see as we go on to verse 15 in our text.

3:15 Instead of fearing and being afraid, we are to sanctify the Lord in our hearts. So our peace is not dependent upon what is going on outside of us in our circumstances, but inside, inside of our hearts.

Dr. Edmond Hiebert in his commentary on 1 Peter says that the negatives at the end of verse 14, from Isaiah 8, prepare the way for the positive exhortation at the beginning of verse 15. It is quite common in Scripture for us to be exhorted not to do this, but to do this other thing. And that is what the Lord did in speaking to Isaiah, and it is what the Holy Spirit did when using the words of Isaiah through Peter to give us the guidance that we need in times of trouble. We are inclined to fear something that takes us by surprise, and/or something that is obviously too big for us to be able to handle. And it doesn't have to be very big to strike fear in our hearts.

The better reading of the beginning of this verse seems to be, "But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts." Now our Lord does not need to be sanctified in the sense of making Him holy, and certainly not by us. The basic idea in the word "sanctify" is *to set apart*. And so this expression has to do with our relationship to Christ when we are faced with trials.

In recent years there has been a controversy among evangelicals themselves as to the Lordship of Christ, and basically there have been two sides to this dispute. Some say that when we are saved, Christ becomes our Savior, but not necessarily our Lord. They hold that we can deal with that question of His Lordship in our lives later, but it is necessarily the case that just because the Lord is our Savior, that He is our Lord also. Others believe that there is no division here that when we are saved, Christ becomes our Savior and our Lord. I hold

that position. It does not mean that everybody who is saved treat the Lord as the Lord of their lives, but He is our Lord nevertheless. I believe that Romans 10: 9 and 10 teaches that:

Rom 10:9-10

9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

I believe that here the translation in the NASB is to be preferred:

9 That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved;

10 For with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

The point is that when we trust the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, we trust Him also as our Lord. Now that does not mean that we always recognize His Lordship in our lives. It seems that we easily forget that because He is God, He is also absolutely sovereign in our lives. He is Lord over all. But Peter's exhortation here is an indication that there can be many circumstances in our lives, trials of various kinds, testings of our faith, when we need to stop and recognize that our Savior is Lord over us and also over that trial. We set Him apart in our hearts (where it really makes a difference), and instead of fearing our circumstances with anxious thoughts, we fear the Lord, trusting Him, recognizing His sovereignty in our lives, and that He has a good purpose for whatever that trial might be. And His purpose is always good, as Romans 8:28 says, because His purpose is to conform us more in our hearts to Christ. That is really why we have been saved. Not just to forgive our sins (although that is the glorious result of our salvation). Nor to get us to heaven (although that is our assured hope). But it is to make us more like the Savior.

But how do we sanctify Him in our hearts? Listen to Robert Leighton again. He said,

We sanctify Him by acknowledging His greatness and power and goodness, and (which is here especially intended) we do this by a holy fear of Him and faith in Him. These emotions within us confess His greatness and power and goodness (p. 152).

Wayne Grudem says that is means to treat Christ as holy and to regard Him reverently (p. 152). Sanctifying the Lord surely means what the writer of Hebrews meant when He said that Moses left Egypt and facing all of the trials of that journey through the desert, "endured as seeing Him Who is invisible." To sanctify the Lord means that we are continually "looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith; Who for the joy . . ." (Heb. 12:2). King David was sanctifying the Lord when he did what he said he did in Psalm 16:8, "I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." It can be what we do when we are facing trials, but it is better if it becomes our way of life.

Now when we live like this, Peter went on to indicate that we are not going to be asking people to listen to us, but people are going to be asking us to tell them "a reason of the hope that is in us." Maybe Peter was suggesting here was that the reason we don't make a greater impression on the world of unbelievers, is because they don't see in us much of a difference from their own lives. That is something for us to think about.

What is "the hope that is in us"? It is the hope of ultimate perfection. It is the ultimate goal and purpose of our salvation, and we should love to tell others about it. We aren't there yet, but we know that it is in our future. How do we know it? By the Word of the Lord. When will it be? When we see the Lord. "We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John 3:2b-3).

"Be ready" means *be prepared*. Archbishop Leighton says, and I believe, very wisely, that to be ready, or to be prepared, includes three things: knowledge, affection, and courage. We don't have to be theologians, prepared

to discuss any aspect of Biblical truth (although we all should constantly be seeking to know the truth of God more accurately and thoroughly), but it means knowing the Gospel, being able to explain the grace of God in salvation. Affection means that we have a love for the message that we give. And this will come the more we sanctify the Lord in our hearts. The habit of sanctifying the Lord, will result in a growing love for the Lord and for the truth of the Gospel. Leighton says that it is love that inspires us for the work. But then we need the courage to present the truth which we know is unacceptable to people until the Spirit of God opens the hearts to the Gospel. Paul was talking about courage when he said in 1 Corinthians 9:16:

16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me ; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

And so to be ready, or prepared, means knowledge, affection, and courage. And these all come from the Lord as we continue to sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts and in our lives.

But if by the grace of God, our lives under testing attracts the attention of those who do not know the Lord so that ask us to tell them why and how we can live like we do, we must answer them “with meekness and fear.” Meekness is another word for humility. But, as Archbishop Trench has explained it in his *Synonyms of the New Testament*, it is a word which describes “that temper of spirit in which we accept His [God’s] dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting . . .” It is “first of all a meekness before God,” but “is also such in the face of men, even of evil men, out of a sense that these with the insults and injuries which they may inflict, are permitted and employed by Him for the chastening and purifying of His elect (pp. 152, 153).

On meekness, see also v. 4, “a meek and quiet spirit,” required for women, but commended also for men.

And then Trench used David’s attitude toward Shimei in 2 Samuel 16:11 as an illustration of meekness, that God had sent Shimei to do what he did.

“And fear” certainly must point to the fear of God, the fear of displeasing God in what he says, the fear of misrepresenting God, but in all there is that reverence for God which lays all of the glory at the feet of God and of Christ. On the fear of God, cf. 1:17, 2:17, 18; 3:2.

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To “sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts,” is to remember that He is our Lord, and to submit ourselves to Him as Lord, and to trust Him to help us that His will may be done in our lives. When trials come upon us, especially when they come unexpectedly, but also when they go on and on and seem never to end, we must continually turn our hearts to Him, and remember that He is Lord, not just Lord over us, but Lord over our circumstances, but Lord also over those who, humanly speaking, are responsible for the trial that we are experiencing.

3:16 “Having” is a present participle, and could be translated, *always having*. That is probably why the NASB translates it, “and keep a good conscience.” We had this word in 2:19, and Peter used it again in 3:21. This is an important NT word, used 31 times in all. Paul taught in Romans 2:15 that every person has a conscience. The Greek word is *συνείδησις*. Man is born with a consciousness that there is a God, and this, in turn, gives him an awareness that there is such a thing as right and wrong, or, to state it another way, of what is true and what is false. So there are no true atheists. Even the most primitive of people know that there is a God, and they have some sense of right and wrong. The conscience not only makes us aware of God, and what is right and wrong in His sight, but it carries with it a strong inclination toward that which is good. For example, our consciences tell us that it is wrong to lie, or to murder, or to commit adultery. The conscience fully approves of the ten commandments.

But the Apostle Paul spoke of people whose consciences were “seared with a hot iron.” See 1 Timothy 4:2. That kind of a conscience is no longer operating as God intended that it should, and that is because it has been violated time and time again so that a person will engage in the grossest sins without any awareness of guilt or shame. I am afraid that there are many in our generation who have reached that point. For us as Christians, we are to obey our consciences, which are made even more sensitive to what is right in God’s sight, and what is wrong. This consciousness is to the work of the Holy Spirit as He uses the Word of God in our hearts. And so we are to work at “having (at all times) a good conscience,” being and doing that which is right in God’s sight, and avoiding that which is bad.

The people of the world have a natural animosity toward those of us who know the Lord, and are always looking for reasons to criticize us. “They speak evil of you, as of evildoers.” That is one reason we need to have “a good conscience toward God.” In order that “they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your (our) god conversation in Christ.”

3:17 In spite of sanctifying the Lord in our hearts, and even though we seek to have a good conscience before the Lord, there may still be suffering. Yet, as this verse declares, “it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye (we) suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.”

We trust that suffering will be kept at a minimum, but even seeking to please the Lord does not assure us that we will escape trials and persecutions. There are many proofs of this, but the greatest example of living to please God, and yet suffering in spite of it, is the suffering of Christ, as Peter went on to say in the next verse.

3:18 This is one of the many great Gospel verses in the NT, and explains what Peter had been saying, that you can do the will of God, and yet suffer for it. Both verses 17 and 18 begin with “For” in the English, and they are good translations of the Greek, but the word in verse 17 is γάρ; the word in verse 18 is ὅτι.

In many respects Peter writes as he expected those to whom he was writing to handle the truth. In verse 15 he had told them to “be ready (prepared) to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you. The word for “answer” is ἀπολογία, from which we get our English word *apology*. It is a verbal defense. It is not an excuse, but a reasoned presentation of the truth. We don’t debate the Gospel; we preach the Gospel. But we need to be ready (prepared) to present what we believe, and why we believe it. People may have trouble understanding how the death of one person could atone salvation for an innumerable company of people, and that is the reason that they need to understand Who Jesus Christ is.

That is probably the reason that Peter called our Lord, Christ, in this verse. He was the Messiah, Deity, the Son of God. He lived a perfect life. He was the personification of holiness. He was not just another man, or even another prophet. He was Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ. No one could convict Him of sin because He never sinned! Therefore, He alone could qualify to die as a Substitute for others, which He did.

Robert Leighton says that Peter had two reasons for mentioning the suffering of Christ here:

- 1) For the encouragement of Christians who were suffering. And we could add, for the encouragement of Christians who would suffer for the Gospel in all future times. So it is here for us.
- 2) As the central point of their faith upon which their future hope was to be realized.

The word “also” seems to relate the sufferings of Christ to the sufferings of the believers to whom Peter was writing. It would mean to them that Christ knew what they were experiencing because, as the writer of the book of Hebrews said, He “was touched with the feeling of our infirmities . . . , yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). Therefore, we can “come boldly (confidently) unto the throne of grace . . .” (Heb. 4:16).

His sufferings were “once,” ἅπαξ, *once for all time, never to be repeated*. In His death He “suffered for sins,” but they were not His sins. He suffered “the Just for the unjust,” the Righteous for the unrighteous. He died so that His people would not have to die eternally. And He did this “that He might bring us to God.” And this means that He brought them with His own righteousness into the total and eternal favor of God. When the Apostle John wrote later that, “if we confess our sins, He (God) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,” the Apostle John meant that God would be faithful and just to His Son to forgive us and to cleanse us. God is obligated to save us eternally, not because we deserve to be saved, but because His Son came in obedience to His will, the Father’s will, and died taking the penalty upon Himself which should have fallen upon us. To secure our salvation, Christ was put to death in the flesh, in His body, but resurrected by the Spirit. The word “spirit” as it appears in the KJV should have been capitalized because it refers to the Holy Spirit.

Note that all three Persons of the Godhead have been, and are, involved in our salvation. Hiebert quotes a writer by the name of Ross who said that the words of this verse “have aptly been characterized as ‘one of the shortest and simplest, and yet one of the richest, summaries give in the New Testament for the meaning of the Cross of Jesus’” (p. 235).

Leighton, whom I have quoted before, made this statement about our Lord’s sufferings as they relate to us: It is a comfort to the mind in any distress to look at examples of other people in distress, both in the past and in the present. This diverts the eye from continual concentration on our own suffering, which, when we return to view it again, seems less of a weight to bear. Public, spiritual troubles are lessened, and particularly the sufferings and temptations of the godly, by the consideration of it as their common lot, not new to anyone. “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man” (1 Corinthians 10:13). If we follow the lives of the most eminent saints, will we not find that every notable step is marked with a new cross, one trouble following another, as the waves do in incessant succession? Is this not clear in the life of Abraham and Jacob and the rest of God’s followers in the Scriptures? And does this not make it unreasonable to imagine that we can be the exception to this? Do you want a new path cut for you that is free of thorns and flowers? Do you expect to meet with no contradictions and not hard times from the world? This can never be the situation. It is a universal conclusion that “Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12). This is the path that leads to the kingdom, along which all of the children of God, heirs of the kingdom, have traveled. It is the road that even Christ trod. As Augustine said, “One Son without sin, but not one without suffering” (pp. 159, 160).

And the Lord Jesus has succeeded in doing what He came to do, according this glorious verse. *He brought us to God! And He has brought thousands of others to God, from every kingdom and tribe and nation. He is still bringing people to God. And there hasn’t been a single person, including all of us, who deserved to be brought. We deserved to be cast forever from His presence. But instead Christ came to bring us to God because we would never have come if He had not brought us. And even if we had wanted to come, we couldn’t have done it.*

Before I leave this verse, I want to read to you also a quotation about the love of God which was written by F. B. Meyer. He was an English Baptist, and ministered to several churches in Britain. He was born in 1847 and died in 1929. When he was 80 years old he made his twelfth preaching tour to America, preaching almost every night while he traveled over 15,000 miles! He has written many books, some were biographies of men of the Bible, like Abraham, Joseph, and Moses. But he always gives you something for your heart. In his commentary on 1 Peter, to which he gave the title, *Tried by Fire*, he made this statement about the love of God which I want to pass on to you this morning. He said,

Let us beware of representing God as loving men only in consequence of Christ’s death. This is as

illogical as it is unscriptural. For it is one of the postulates of all true thinking – that God is; that God is the same; that God is the same Infinite Being, the I AM, the same in the yesterday of the past, and in the tomorrow of the future, as in the today of the present. But if the death of Christ be represented as having pacified an inexorable and avenging Deity, causing Him to love those who else must have withered under His relentless hate, it makes Him other than He was, and the Divine nature must have suffered a change, which is unthinkable and inadmissible.

The death of Christ is due to the love of God. God gave his Son because He so loved the world. The cross is the expression of a love which is older than the oldest star; more ancient than the most venerable elder who stands in the zenith light of heaven; long as eternity, vast as infinity, deep as the being of God. In this was manifested the love of God, that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world (pp. 121, 122).

3:19 As we come to this passage, which has rightly been classed among the most difficult in all of Scripture, it is necessary for us to remember that the Apostle Peter has been dealing with the suffering of the saints to whom this letter was addressed. And he has been showing that our trials are designed to reap for us eternal benefits, as, for example, Peter expressed in 1 Peter 1:6-9. (Read.) They produce present benefits too. We see how insufficient we are in ourselves to deal with our trials, but, at the same time, we learn to rejoice in the midst of our trials as we experience the sufficiency of the Lord. We have what the Apostle Paul called, “the peace that passeth understanding” which “keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:7). When we bring our problems and anxieties to God, He gives us His peace to stand guard over our hearts and minds so that we will not despair, or go to pieces.

It was for the encouragement of the saints that Peter wrote these words to show that even in the sufferings of Christ, through His death and all of the sufferings connected with it, the Lord reaped eternal benefits. And what Peter started in verse 19 leads right up to verse 22 where we read of Christ, “Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him” (1 Peter 3:22). Trials deepen us in our walk with the Lord, and often open doors of ministry to others that we would not have had if it had not been that we were prepared for them by the trials we have had.

We need to relate this passage to what Peter said in verse 17, and even before that. We need to be very careful that our sufferings are not deserved. If we do wrong things, God is not pleased, neither should we be surprised if we suffer for it. We ought to. We deserve it. But when we do good and suffer for it, that is when it is especially hard to take. And yet that is exactly what happened to our Lord. He did good when He went to the Cross. He did not deserve to die. We are the ones who deserved to die. But He died for us, “the just for the unjust.” And His purpose was the best that it ever could have been: “that He might bring us to God.” But to do that He was “put to death in the flesh.” However, He did not remain dead. He was “quickened by the Spirit.” This speaks of the part the Holy Spirit had in the resurrection of Christ, which was one of the most glorious benefits of our Lord’s death. *And then Peter, in verse 19, began to tell us at least a part of what happened after the death of Christ, and before His resurrection.*

From a human point of view, it looked like the enemies of our Lord had at last gained the upper hand with the Lord, when they succeeded not only in arresting Him, but in having Him put to death. But out of that seeming defeat came the greatest of all victories, and from them Christ has reaped a harvest, and still is to receive even more.

As preparation for our study of these verses, the last four verses of chapter 3, I would remind you of what the Apostle Paul said about our Lord in Ephesians 4:8-10. This obviously had to do with after our Lord’s resurrection because Paul was speaking of His ascension. Verse 8 is a quotation from Psalm 68:18, and verses

9 and 10 are an elaboration on verse 8. Psalm 68:18 says,

18 Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them.

And Paul said in Ephesians 4:8-10:

8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

Note from verse 9 that before He ascended, “He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth.” So, when we ask, what happened to our Lord between the time when the Lord died and the time that He rose from the dead on the third day? The answer appears to be here in 1 Peter 3:19. “He went and preached unto the spirits in prison.”

Let us look also at 2 Peter where Peter again mentioned Noah as he did also here in 1 Peter 3. In 2 Peter 2:4-5 we read:

4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;

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 words, “cast them down into hell,” are the translation of one word, a verb. The verb is *ταρταρώσας*. This is the verb from which we get the word Tartarus which does not appear in the Bible, but it does appear in the apocryphal book of Enoch. It is cited by many Greek scholars as “the place of the punishment of fallen angels” (Robertson, A. T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. VI, p. 162). It may be the Abyss to which the demons referred in Luke 8:31 when the Lord was preparing to cast the demons out of the demon-possessed man. Their name was Legion, you will remember, because there were so many of them. This Abyss may in turn be the bottomless pit referred to in Rev. 9:1, 2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3.

There is another reference to this incident in the Epistle of Jude. Cf. Jude 6-8 where we read:

6 And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

7 Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

8 Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.

So there seems to be a close connection between 1 Peter 3, 2 Peter 2, and Jude. But those verses also refer to Noah and the judgment of the flood, as well as God’s judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah.

Kenneth Wuest, who for many years was the teacher of NT Greek at the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, has a lengthy section in his commentary on 1 Peter in which, from the standpoint of the Greek grammar as well as the use of certain words in the OT, makes a very interesting and, it would seem, true account of what all of this is about. His book is called, *1 Peter in the Greek New Testament*.

It seems that what Peter was referring to here in verse 19 is the same to which Paul referred in Ephesians 4. So we conclude that between our Lord’s death and His resurrection, He descended into Tartarus, the place where certain beings are chained, awaiting their judgment. And we are told that there He “preached unto the spirits in prison.” Now I have never studied out what I am about to say, but I have it on good authority that human beings are never called “spirits” in the Bible. We all have a spirit, but we are not called “spirits.” So we must assume that the Lord went to preach to spirit beings, demons, fallen angels, whom Peter said in 2 Peter 2, are in

chains, “reserved unto judgment.” But why are they singled out for special judgment.

Wuest pointed out that the mention of Noah and the judgment of the flood takes us back to Genesis 6. There we read “daughters were born” when men began to multiply on the earth. And we also read that “the sons of God saw” them, and took them as wives. Dr. Wuest quotes, or refers frequently to, a book by the former President of MBI, James M. Gray, who wrote a book called, *Spiritism and the Fallen Angels*. But he also cites other authorities. There is general agreement among the authorities that he cited that the term here in Genesis 6, “the sons of God, which is found only three other times in the OT, and all in the book of Job which is probably the oldest book of the Bible, and all three of those times refers to angels.

The idea is that this union between human women and angels probably fallen angels, produced the giants that are mentioned in verse 4 of Genesis 6. It was a situation of widespread fornication, and, if allowed to continue, would have threatened the whole human family into which the Lord Jesus Christ was to be born. But evidently it was so widespread that God had to take action to preserve the human family, and so He killed by drowning the whole human family except for Noah and his wife, and their sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and their wives who were not affected by what the fallen angels were doing to the human family. Every man, woman, and child on the whole earth died in the flood, and the fallen angels (who are demons) were cast into the abyss, chained so that they could not escape, and are yet to face the final judgment of God.

Now we know that there is no reproduction among angels. How could spirit beings have sexual relationships with physical human beings? There is much about angels that we do not know. We do know that two good angels appeared at Abraham’s tent with the Lord, and they appeared as men. We know also that they ate the food which Sarah had prepared for them. We also know that Satan appeared to Eve in the form of a servant. The Devil himself can appear as “an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14). It would seem that it would have had to be a major sin of tremendous consequences for the Lord to destroy all but eight people in the human family. If it had been allowed to continue eventually there would not have been a single person on earth who was not a mixture of the human and the super human. Thinking of the doctrine of election, what happened seems to indicate that there were only eight elect people on the earth at the time that the flood came, and after Noah had preached for 120 years while he built the ark.

But we are told that the Lord went to Tartarus to preach. Now we know that Christ did not die for angels. There is no salvation for angels. We know also that there are no second opportunities for anyone to be saved if they are not saved before they did. But Peter did not say that when the Lord preached unto the spirits in prison, that He preached the Gospel to them. He probably spoke of His death, but Peter did not use the word for the preaching of the Gospel in 1 Peter 2:19. That verb is *εὐαγγελίζω* which means *to preach the Gospel*. We get our words evangelism and evangelical and evangelists, from this Greek word. Peter here in 1 Peter 3:19 used the verb *κηρύσσω* which means also to preach, but more with the idea of presenting a message, or making an announcement. He preached to them, not for their salvation, but so they would know what had taken place, and that their doom was sealed. One of the results of the death of Christ was that at that time the doom of Satan and all of the demons was sealed. The Lord by His death made sure that such a thing as happened before the flood, could never happen again. The Lord said, as He anticipated His work on the Cross, that “the prince of this world is judged” (John 16:11).

Now let us go on to verse 20.

3:20 The word “sometime” means *in time past*. Those demons were disobedient, and they knew it. They were in deliberate opposition to the will of God for the human family. And this should be a warning to the homosexuals in our day. They are a threat to what God intended for the family to be. Sodom and Gomorrah were meant to be a warning to all future generations. And here Peter mentioned “the longsuffering of

God.” The demons and the women who were involved with them probably felt that if God did not do anything for a hundred years, or for a hundred and ten years, or for a hundred and nineteen years and three hundred and sixty-four days, that he was not going to do anything. They looked on Noah as a fool for preaching righteousness when God wasn’t doing anything. Maybe this was a trial to Noah too, but he never stopped preaching, and he never stopped working on that ark. All of God’s attributes are amazing, but none is more amazing than His longsuffering, His patience. But finally judgment came, just as Noah predicted that it would. And only eight in the whole world were saved. Noah and his family were the only ones who were saved. Here were four ladies who were kept safely from the wicked demons. Do you remember what Hebrews 11 tells us about Noah? Let me read it to you:

7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith (Heb. 11:7).

They were “saved by water.” They were saved in the ark with all of the animals, but the judgment was the water, and Noah and his family were saved from the judgment which took the lives of everyone else. What an amazing story this is! Our imaginations can run away with us, as we contemplate the terror that was displayed by people in that day as they scrambled to the highest mountains to escape, but there was only one way. Everybody who was not in the ark, died.

3:21 It is very clear from 1 Peter that Peter did not believe in baptismal regeneration. By the words, “the like figure,” Peter was saying that the story of Noah and the ark was a picture of salvation, and here he went on to say, in the same way baptism is a picture of salvation. He specifically said that baptism is “not the putting away of the filth of the flesh.” There is no water that can wash away our sins. It is “the answer of a good conscience toward God that saves.” And what is the answer of a good conscience? It is faith in the promise of God. The waters of baptism represent the grave, death, the judgment of God. Water baptism is a figure, a picture, an antitype, a representation, of what salvation is. It pictures our burial with Christ in His death, and our resurrection with Him “to walk in newness of life.” Baptism is only significant when the person being baptized has already received Christ as Savior. There is no saving merit in salvation, but it is “the answer of a good conscience toward God.”

3:22 He ascended into heaven, and He is “seated on the right hand of God.” Mission accomplished and accepted by the God of heaven and earth. Before you accept anyone’s doctrine of salvation, ask yourself, what does God say about it? Is it acceptable to Him? Does it meet His holy requirements? Christ at God’s right hand, gives us our answer.

And He is there as Lord over all “angels and authorities and powers.” It seems impossible to distinguish the meaning of these different terms. Surely Peter was indicating that no power on earth or in heaven, among men or among angels, can undo what the Lord Jesus accomplished by His death and His resurrection. Those suffering saints had no need to fear. Neither the world of men combined with all angelic powers can possibly take away one single blessing that we have in Christ. Christ is our sovereign Lord; we are eternally secure in Him.