
Day 1

Learn: Prayerfully read 1 Peter 3.13-14. Those of us who are in God's sight [v.12] because we are enthusiasts for good [v.13] know our salvation is secure because of our faith in Christ and his sacrifice for us. So nobody can truly harm us, because nobody can take away our ultimate deliverance out of the suffering in this life and into our glorious inheritance with God. It is possible to take v.13 to be generally true in this life, like a proverb: you would be far less likely to attract antagonism if you are working for good. But we can see that harm still comes [v.14], so it is more likely that Peter was saying that nobody can hurt our standing with God [v.13]; rather, we will be blessed even if we suffer for being righteous [v.14]. In this letter, we can see that while suffering might not be perpetual for believers, it can include various forms of antagonism from non-believers, including accusations, reproach, insults, foolish talk, intimidation, disparagement, and other evil [2.12, 15; 3.9, 14, 16; 4.14]. Peter said that if we suffered in these ways for being righteous, then we would be blessed [v.14]. Peter did not define here what form that blessing would take, but he later said the Holy Spirit would be reviving [or "resting on"] us [4.14]. Also, Peter's thoughts echo those of Jesus, who said, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to them" [Matthew 5.10; NET]. Suffering is a part of following Christ, not just a result of being persecuted as was Christ, but also part of following Christ's example and leadership [2.21], so if we are truly saved then we will suffer, but the ultimate outcome will be our inheritance in Heaven and resurrected life in Christ's kingdom. Thus, when the apostles were beaten for preaching in the name of Jesus, they rejoiced that God had considered them worthy of suffering for Christ [Acts 5.41]. This again is a reminder that suffering is not necessarily a sign of punishment from God, but rather a sign of blessing in the New Covenant.

Reflect: How can knowing this help you deal with times of struggle in your own life? How can this information help you comfort and encourage someone else who is suffering [what would you say to that person]?

Day 2

Learn: Prayerfully read 1 Peter 3.13-16. Peter teaches us how to react to persecution, which can result when Christian good conduct deviates from societal expectations. The problem could be that we will not do something others think is right, such as worshipping the emperor cult or accepting homosexual marriages, or that we will not do something others understand is wrong but which practically everyone does anyway, such as getting drunk or engaging in extra-marital sex. Those persecuting us can make us suffer now, but we should not fear their intimidation, because we trust in Christ's deliverance. Christ might deliver us out of our earthly problems, but at the least we know that he will deliver us through those problems and ultimately into a better situation in Heaven. That is the hope we have in us [v.15]. We are to remain faithful to Christ and trust in him [v.15], not fearing those who persecute us [v.14]. We should not let persecution dampen our faith or our expression of it, but rather be prepared not only to revere Christ in our hearts, but intellectually to defend that view to others [v.15]. We should always be ready to explain the content and reasons for our faith. When we do explain, we must do so with humility and reverence [v.16; end of v.15 in some translations]. It is unclear whether Peter's emphasis is on having humility and reverence toward God or on showing humility and respect to our antagonists. If it is toward the antagonists, the point would be to talk rightly, to let any offense be about the content of the gospel message, not about the way we discuss it. In any case, we are to keep a good conscience [v.16]: we are to walk the talk, we are to live out our faith, because we cannot explain our hope well if we are living in ways that contradict our faith. We do not withdraw or get confrontational, instead we openly share what we believe. If we can follow this guidance and thus persist in righteousness in the face of persecution, then those who persecute us will find disgrace [v.16]. They might come to see us more clearly and regret their antagonism, but at the least they surely will be disgraced when Christ returns.

Reflect: How well do you handle situations when people challenge you about faith issues? Do you treat them with courtesy? Are you able to explain what you believe and why you believe? It might help to imagine a question or situation and then write out what you will say and how you will say it. Can you see that treating your antagonists well is a part of acting righteously, and a part of witnessing to them about the power of Christ to transform us?

Day 3

Learn: Prayerfully read 1 Peter 3.13-18. Peter said it would be better to suffer in this life for doing good than to suffer at the time of judgment for doing evil, as will those who were persecuting his readers [v.17]. As Christians, we should always do what is right and trust God with the consequences. God might allow us to suffer in consequence of doing the right thing, but he will see us through that suffering and we can be sure that God will use that suffering to be constructive, part of his plan to sanctify us. We follow Christ's example of suffering for doing what is right [2.21], we suffer for his

name, because he suffered to save us. More importantly in this passage, the sinless Christ undeservedly died a substitutionary death for us on the cross, so that we could be reconciled with God, but Christ was resurrected by the Spirit [v.18]. Christ suffered even to death, but this was not a shameful defeat, rather it was a victory over sin and into resurrection which made our salvation possible [v.18]. We too might suffer even to death, but if we will follow Christ into death we can know that we also will have victory as he delivers us into our inheritance and eventual resurrection.

Reflect: While we all want God to take away our problems, often he sees us through them instead; are you prepared to continue doing what is right even when it results in persecution? Are you confident that God will see you through these problems, so you do not fear the intimidation of your persecutors? Are you confident – not just intellectually, but in your heart – that even if you were to suffer to death, you would have victory through Christ?

Day 4

Learn: Prayerfully read 1 Peter 3.17-22. Noah is sometimes considered a “type” [i.e., foreshadowing] of Christ, in that he led his people to God and righteous living, and through God’s empowerment delivered them; when Noah was born, his father hoped he would prove to be the promised deliverer who would reverse the curse God had put on the earth [Genesis 5.28-29]. Noah and his family were a righteous minority amidst unrighteous non-believers [v.20], just as Peter’s readers were when he was writing to them. God waited patiently to bring judgment in Noah’s day [v.20], just as he is waiting patiently today until the time Christ will return. Though only a few were saved in Noah’s generation, they were truly saved, God had not lost sight of them, and he did deliver them through harder times than any of us will suffer, harder than what Peter’s readers were facing. And as God’s judgment eventually came to scoffers then, so too it will come to scoffers today when Christ returns. Jesus used the suddenness of the flood as an example of his own return to judge [Matthew 24.37-42], but Christians can escape that judgment because Christ paid their penalty on the cross. The water in the flood of Noah’s day was God’s judgment on the world, but it also served to cleanse the world of sin and deliver Noah and his family from a sinful society into a new life. Peter draws a parallel between this and baptism “now,” after the resurrection, in this New Covenant time period [v.21]. The waters of baptism symbolize our death with Christ, but we come up out of the water to be resurrected with Christ [Romans 6.3-5; Colossians 2.12]. In the early church, conversion [through an inward expression of faith] and baptism [an outward expression of faith] were so closely linked, that baptism was sometimes used to represent the entire conversion process. Peter made clear that it was not the dunking process itself that saved, but the appeal to God for cleansing from sin [v.21; note: some translations have “pledge” in this verse, but “appeal” is a better translation].

Reflect: As we look at all the evil and suffering in this world, we can have doubts, fears, and questions for God. It helps to step back and try to see the whole picture. We might never fully understand how what is happening plays into God’s plan to bring himself glory, can you be sure that God has not lost sight of his people, even when we are suffering, and that he truly has saved us and will deliver us to Heaven at death? If you have not been baptized after coming to faith, you should have that experience, but understand that it is God’s grace through your faith that saves, not being dipped in water.

Day 5

Learn: Prayerfully read 1 Peter 3.17-22. It is difficult to translate the Greek in vv.19-21 with certainty or to understand some of the references Peter made. There are several theories about the details of this passage, but none are without remaining questions. Peter specifically did not say that Christ “descended” into “Hell”; furthermore, the plural of the Greek word translated “spirits” [πνεῦμα = PNEU-muh] usually refers in the New Testament to angels or demons [fallen angels]. There was a long-standing Jewish tradition that there were demons who were confined by God for stirring up an undue amount of trouble in the time of Noah, climaxing in God sending the flood to destroy almost all of humanity. This would be similar to God in the future confining Satan during Christ’s millennial kingdom [Revelation 20.7]. Such a reference to the demons in Noah’s day is consistent with Peter’s discussion of Noah in this passage. Thus, it seems most likely that what Peter was saying is that after the resurrection the Holy Spirit transported Christ to this spiritual prison, to allow Christ to proclaim his victory over the demons and their evil. This victory is evident at the end of this passage, which provides great encouragement [v.22], that the resurrected Christ ascended into Heaven [Acts 1.9], where he sits at the right hand of God [Psalm 110.1], with everything, even the other supernatural entities such as angels and demons subject to his authority [Ephesians 1.20-21; Matthew 28.18]. Christ has the ultimate victory: victory over death and sin and evil, victory over Satan and his demons, and now he is anointed by God the Father to rule over the universe. Christ is in control and we can know that he will deliver us through our suffering and into the glorious inheritance he promised us, and that when he returns to set up his kingdom, we will be there with him in resurrected bodies.

Reflect: Is it comforting to know that Christ has power even over Satan and his demons? What else about this passage comforts or encourages you?