

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

1 PETER 3:13-4:14, THE BELIEVER AND SUFFERING

INTRODUCTION

- A. Introductory outline of 1 Peter
1. Greeting (1:1-2)
 2. The greatness of salvation (1:3-12)
 3. Characteristics of the Christian life (1:13-2:10)
 4. The importance of submission (2:11-3:12)
 5. The believer and suffering (3:13-5:14)
 - a. Suffering for doing good (3:13-17)
 - b. The example of Jesus Christ (3:18-22)
- B. Review of 1 Peter 3:8-12
1. Scot McKnight, . . . *this section records the general ethical principles required of believers who want to live circumspectly in a world that opposes both their lifestyle and existence.*
 2. Roger Raymer, *First Peter 3:8–9 is Peter’s exposition of Psalm 34:12–16, which he then quoted (1 Peter 3:10–12).*
 3. Warren Wiersbe, *The next time you think you are having a “bad day,” and you hate life, read Psalm 34 and you may discover you are really having a “good day” to the glory of God!*
- C. Introductory comments on 1 Peter 3:13-17
1. Roger Raymer, *Peter encouraged his readers with the fact that the right response to undeserved suffering results in blessing. He presented the principle in verses 13–17 and provided examples in verses 18–22.*
 2. Edmund Clowney, *Peter has moved to the issue that is central for the rest of the letter: the issue of Christian suffering. . . . Suffering has become an opportunity to meet evil with good and cursing with blessing.*
 3. Warren Wiersbe, *These verses . . . introduce the important spiritual principle that the fear of the Lord conquers every other fear.*

1 PETER 3:13-17, SUFFERING FOR DOING GOOD

- A. A Christian is blessed for doing good (13-14a)
1. The issue of trust despite the consequences (13), ***Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?***
 - a. *Now* directs the reader back to verse 12 where God knows what is taking place with the righteous and the evil.
 - b. Peter asks a rhetorical question which carries the response, “No one.”
 - c. Normally, people will not suffer for doing good but there will be times when that does happen.
 - d. Edmund Clowney, *Governments are instituted to commend those who do right, masters do not usually punish servants who do what they are told, spouses of pagans may win their grudging respect. No doubt there is truth in this observation.*
 - e. Peter Davids, *Our verse, then, is a transition from the idea of minimizing suffering through virtue to a renewed teaching of how to behave when one suffers anyway.*
 - f. Paul Cedar, . . . *Christians have an incredible contribution to make to the society in which they live by breaking the cycle of people returning evil for evil.*
 - g. Warren Wiersbe, *As Christians, we are faced with crises, and we are tempted to give in to our fears and make the wrong decisions. But if we “sanctify Christ as Lord” in our hearts, we need never fear men or circumstances. Our enemies might hurt us, but they cannot harm us. Only we can harm ourselves if we fail to trust God.*
 2. There will be blessing for doing what is good (14a), ***But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed.***
 - a. Roger Raymer, *Though the adversary, through physical suffering or material hardship, would distress those who were eager . . . to do good, no real harm can come to those who belong to Christ. For even if suffering should occur, Christians are blessed and thus should not be frightened.*
 - b. David Walls, *In this context, the emphasis is on right living, or living that parallels the standards of the Word of God. This kind of behavior sometimes produces a negative reaction from others. The believer is blessed in the*

- sense of being a recipient of God's favor and grace and living out another dimension of his calling (see 2:21).
- c. Edmund Clowney, *Peter writes to those who feel the mounting pressure of opposition in their society. 'Indeed, the spectacle of moral beauty does not disarm all the wicked; they are often even irritated by the radiance of a virtue that condemns them.'* Christians should therefore not think it strange that they are called to endure persecution (4:12). Yet they must understand that suffering is not the opposite of blessing.
 - d. Charles Swindoll, *How can believers count themselves blessed by God in light of unfair treatment? First, they are blessed because God uses this kind of unfair treatment as part of His plan to strengthen us and to make us more like Christ (see 2:21–3:9). Rather than marking us as outside God's will, unfair treatment for righteousness indicates that we are in God's will and plan. Second, we are blessed because we can look forward to a future reward for enduring such trials. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:10).*
 - e. William Barclay, *No one escapes suffering; but, for Christians, suffering cannot touch the things which matter most of all.*

B. Trust the Lord by proclaiming His grace with a good conscience and right motives (14b-15)

1. Rest in the Lord (14b), ***Have no fear of them, nor be troubled,***

- a. Isaiah 8:12-13, *Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.*
- b. John 14:27, *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.*
- c. Wayne Grudem, *Peter makes specific reference to the persecutors when he says, 'Have no fear of them.'*
- d. Peter Davids, *Christians are not to fear their persecutors . . . they are to take a longer-range perspective and fear God.*
- e. Edmund Clowney, *Christians must exchange the fear of men for the fear of the Lord.*
- f. Roger Raymer, *Christians are not to be afraid of what men can do to them (cf. Matt. 10:28). Consequently 1 Peter 3:14 concludes with a quotation from Isaiah 8:12 which, in context, is part of an exhortation to fear God rather than men.*
- g. David Walls, *In the midst of suffering for doing what is right, believers are sometimes intimidated into running from their belief system or running from their circumstances. Peter's counsel was that they should not allow this to happen.*
- h. Charles Swindoll, *The Greek verb for "fear" is phobeo, from which we get our word "phobia." It implies fleeing or avoiding something. The word "trouble" refers to stirring up, unsettling, or intimidating somebody. Jesus uses it in John 14:1, when He tells the disciples, "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me."*
- i. Alexander Maclaren, *Only he who can say, 'The Lord is the strength of my life' can go on to say, 'Of whom shall I be afraid?'*

2. Honor Christ as holy (15a), ***but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy,***

- a. Peter Davids, *. . . Jesus is to be honored, revered, and obeyed as Lord . . . for he takes a passage definitely speaking about God in the OT and refers it to Christ, making clear by his addition that that is the sense in which he is taking "Lord."*
- b. David Walls, *When our lives are centered on Christ, who is in control of the universe, then we are able to respond properly to the uncertainties and inconsistencies of life.*
- c. Edmund Clowney, *He does not hesitate to identify the Lord of hosts with Jesus Christ. More than that, he does so in a passage that calls for our total devotion to the Lord in his transcendent deity . . . He is explicitly identifying the One who slept in the stern of his fishing-boat with the almighty Creator of heaven and earth.*
- d. Warren Wiersbe, *What does it mean to "sanctify Christ as Lord" in our hearts? It means to turn everything over to Him, and to live only to please Him and glorify Him. It means to fear displeasing Him rather than fear what men might do to us. How wonderfully this approach simplifies our lives! It is Matthew 6:33 and Romans 12:1–2 combined into a daily attitude of faith that obeys God's Word in spite of consequences. It means being satisfied with nothing less than the will of God in our lives (John 4:31–34).*
- e. Scot McKnight, *Instead of fear, believers are to honor the Lord Christ by being ready to speak boldly about their hope. That is, they are to acknowledge as holy the Lord himself and refuse to profane his name or breach his covenant with them by fearing someone else more than him.*

- f. Charles Swindoll, When Christ is Lord and God over all aspects of our lives, we need not fear the opposition of enemies.
 - g. H. D. M. Spence, *The holy fear of God will lift you above the fear of man.*
3. Be able to defend the Gospel to others respectfully (15b), ***always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,***
- a. *always being prepared to make a defense to anyone . . .*
 - 1) Edmund Clowney, *Peter would prepare the church, not simply to endure persecution, but to find in persecution an opportunity for witness.*
 - 2) Warren Wiersbe, *One evidence that Jesus Christ is Lord in our lives is the readiness with which we witness to others about Him and seek to win them to Christ . . . When Jesus Christ is Lord of our lives, each crisis becomes an opportunity for witness . . . A crisis creates the opportunity for witness when a believer behaves with faith and hope, because the unbelievers will then sit up and take notice . . . We must also be sure that our lives back up our defense.*
 - 3) Wayne Grudem, *To reverence Christ as Lord means really to believe that Christ, not one's human opponents, is truly in control of events. To have such reverence in your hearts is to maintain continually a deep-seated inward confidence in Christ as reigning Lord and King, who even now has 'angels, authorities, and powers subject to him' (3:22).*
 - 4) Scot McKnight, . . . *to set apart the Lord is a dimension of Peter's exhortation to holy living (1:2, 13, 22; 2:1-2, 5, 24; 4:1-6). This implies a constant willingness to speak up for him, to confess one's allegiance to him, and to witness fearlessly to his saving grace.*
 - 5) J. Ramsey Michaels, *The task of a holy people is to make known to the world the Holy One who called them (1:15-16; cf. 2:9b).*
 - 6) Peter Davids, *Rather than fear the unbelievers around them, Christians, out of reverence to Christ, should be prepared to respond fully to their often hostile questions about the faith . . . In a time in which the Christians were likely experiencing rejection and suffering from their fellow-countrymen, their hope would indeed be the mark of a faith that was triumphing over their circumstances.*
 - b. *do it with gentleness and respect*
 - 1) Warren Wiersbe, *Peter did not suggest that Christians argue with lost people, but rather that we present to the unsaved an account of what we believe and why we believe it, in a loving manner. The purpose is not to win an argument but to win lost souls to Christ.*
 - 2) Thomas Constable, *We should give this answer with a gentle spirit to those asking and in a reverent spirit toward God.*
 - 3) David Walls, *Christian hope is to be so real and distinctive that non-Christians will be puzzled by it and ask for an explanation. We should seize the opportunities of witness presented in these kinds of situations. Our response should be characterized not by smugness or vindictiveness but by gentleness and respect.*
 - 4) Wayne Grudem, *Such witness must be given . . . not attempting to overpower the person with the force of human personality or aggressiveness, but trusting the Holy Spirit himself to quietly persuade the listener.*
 - 5) Edmund Clowney, *The gentleness or humility that we are to show is far more than politeness of manner. It reflects the fear of the Lord in which the gospel is presented . . . Peter is teaching us that it is our fear of the Lord that enables us to bear witness in humility.*
 - 6) William Barclay, *The case for Christianity must be presented in an attractive manner and with love, and with that wise tolerance which realizes that it is not given to anyone to possess the whole truth.*
 - 7) H. D. M. Spence, *We should fear lest we injure our own souls by arrogant and angry controversy; we should seek the spiritual good of our opponents; and we should entertain a solemn awe of the presence of God, with a trembling anxiety to think and to say only what is acceptable unto him.*
- C. Accept suffering for doing good instead of doing evil (16-17)
- 1. Always pursue what is right so slanderers can't justify their accusations (16), ***having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.***
 - a. Warren Wiersbe, *A 'good conscience' is one that accuses when we think or do wrong and approves when we do right . . . Conscience is a safe guide only when the Word of God is the teacher . . . A strong conscience is the result of obedience based on knowledge, and a strong conscience makes for a strong Christian witness to the lost. It also gives us strength in times of persecution and difficulty.*
 - b. Thomas Constable, *A good conscience is possible when we know our suffering is in spite of good behavior, not because of bad behavior (cf. 2:19; 3:4, 6). A simple explanation of our good conduct may take the wind out of the sails of our critics.*

- c. Roger Raymer, *Christians who suffer unjustly and keep a clear conscience put to shame those who slander their good behavior in Christ. Once again Peter encouraged his readers with the fact that good behavior is their best defense against unjust punishment and persecution.*
 - d. David Walls, . . . *we should live in such a way that we won't have to keep looking over our shoulder, hoping that the wrong we have done isn't about to catch up to us . . . By operating this way, our behavior and words will speak volumes to those who come against us.*
 - e. Edmund Clowney, *In this passage Peter is speaking of our clear conscience as obedient saints rather than simply as forgiven sinners. The clear conscience of a justified sinner indeed frees him for witness, but the impact of his witness will require the outward evidence of a consistent life. By maintaining a clear conscience before God we will be able to show a godly life to others.*
 - f. Peter Davids, *Peter's meaning is quite simply that good conduct flows out of and is determined by the Christian's relationship to Christ, that is, his or her union with Christ. Christ, then, defines what is good conduct, and Christ is the power and motivation for good conduct in even the most provoking situations . . . Peter's stress on the coming judgment of Christ means that his primary focus is surely on their shame when they must give an account of their behavior before a Judge who knows the full truth. Here is the ultimate security of the Christian.*
2. Do what is right despite the consequences (17), ***For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.***
 - a. Thomas Constable, *If it is God's will for us to suffer misunderstanding, abuse, or bullying, it is better that that suffering be for good conduct than for bad (cf. Rom. 8:28). Peter probably meant these words as assurance rather than as admonition.*
 - b. Roger Raymer, *First Peter 3:17 is an effective summary of the content of 2:15, 19–20.*
 - c. Peter Davids, *Suffering may come, and if it does be sure it comes for your righteous deeds and know that it comes under the control of the God who only desires your good.*
 - d. Edmund Clowney, *Suffering for provocative acts in the name of Christ is not to be commended, but rather suffering that follows our Lord's example in doing good.*
 - e. J. Vernon McGee, *If you suffer for Christ's sake, you can rejoice in that; but if you are suffering because you have played the fool, because you have gotten into trouble and into sin, then that is a different story altogether.*

CONCLUSION

- Warren Wiersbe, *As times of difficulty come to the church, we must cultivate Christian love; for we will need one another's help and encouragement as never before. We must also maintain a good conscience, because a good conscience makes for a strong backbone and a courageous witness. The secret is to practice the lordship of Jesus Christ. If we fear God, we need not fear men.*
- J. Ramsey Michaels, *At this point . . . the means and manner of their vindication, is not specified. Their confidence is simply that in some way Christ will put them in the right and their enemies in the wrong.*
- Charles Swindoll, *Only when we suffer unjustly on behalf of Christ and as a testimony to others can we claim to be truly walking after the pattern of our Lord, who suffered and died for our sakes (3:18).*

1 PETER 3:18-22, THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST

- A. Introductory comments on 1 Peter 3:18-22
 1. Roger Raymer, *In verses 18–22 Peter illustrated the principles given in verses 13–17. Once again Christ provided the perfect example.*
 2. Thomas Constable, *Peter now reminded his readers of the consequences of Jesus' response to unjustified persecution. He did so to strengthen their resolve to rededicate themselves to follow God's will wholeheartedly and confidently. He also wanted to assure them of their ultimate triumph in Christ.*
 3. David Walls, *This paragraph interrupts the pain of the persecuted readers just long enough to remind them of the pain that Jesus Christ experienced and of the spiritual significance that Christ's pain and death has for them.*
 4. Edmund Clowney, *Again Peter returns to the cross. Our willingness to suffer for the sake of Christ is grounded in the wonder of Christ's willingness to suffer death for our sake.*
 5. Warren Wiersbe, *When Peter wrote this section of his letter, he had no idea that it would be classified as one of the most difficult portions of the New Testament. Good and godly interpreters have wrestled with these verses, debated and disagreed, and have not always left behind a great deal of spiritual help. We may not be able to solve all the problems found in this section, but we do want to get the practical help that Peter gave to encourage Christians in difficult days.*

B. Peter's examples from the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (18-22)

1. His death (18)

a. What He did through His death (18a), ***For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous,***

1) Notes

- a) J. M. E. Ross on verse 18, *one of the shortest and simplest, and yet one of the richest summaries given in the New Testament of the meaning of the Cross of Jesus.*
- b) Charles Swindoll, *Here we have a clear and concise statement of the gospel . . . Christ died for sins . . . Christ died once for all . . . Christ died in place of sinners, "the just for the unjust" . . . Christ died to bring us to God.*
- c) Thomas Constable, *"For" connects verses 18–22 with 13–17, but "For Christ also" recalls and resumes the example of Jesus Christ that Peter cited in 2:21–25. Peter used the same phrase to introduce Jesus Christ as an example of suffering there. Suffering for doing good is the point of comparison in both passages.*
- d) Some Greek manuscripts have *died* instead of *suffered*. The use of *suffered* implies *died* but strengthens the tie to Peter's intent found in 1 Peter 2:21, *For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.*
- d) Charles Spurgeon on *suffered*, . . . *that fastening to the wood—that uplifting of the cross, the wounds, the cruel fever, the direful thirst, the mockery, the scorn, the desertion of His Father when He must at last yield Himself up to death itself. . .*

2) *once for sins*

- a) This stresses the sufficiency of Jesus' *once for all sacrifice* in contrast to the continual sacrifices in the earthly sanctuary and later, the temple, Hebrews 7:27, *He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.* Note Hebrews 6:10, 9:12, 26, 28 and 10:10.
- b) Roger Raymer, *The phrase "for sins" (peri hamartion) is used in the Septuagint in regard to the sin offering for atonement. However, once for all (cf. Rom. 6:10; Heb. 9:26, 28; 10:10) is clearly a contrast with the Old Testament yearly sacrifice on the Day of Atonement and declares the complete sufficiency of Christ's death.*
- c) David Walls, *Christ's death served as a perfect sin-offering for the sins of others because Christ himself was sinless (1:19; 2:22). In the Old Testament, sacrifices for sin were made repeatedly, but Christ died once for all.*
- d) Edmund Clowney, *Christ's saving victory flows from the fact that his sacrifice was perfect, final, and therefore not to be repeated in history or in symbol.*

3) *the righteous for the unrighteous*

- a) The righteous one (Jesus) made payment for the sins of the unrighteous (us).
- b) Isaiah 53:11, *Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.* Note 1Peter 2:24 and Romans 5:8-9.
- c) Roger Raymer, *The substitutionary nature of Christ's death is indicated by the phrase the righteous for the unrighteous . . .*
- d) David Walls, *In essence Peter said, "Jesus Christ, the sinless one, died once and for all for those who are not sinless, for all of humankind."*
- e) Wayne Grudem, *Precisely because Christ had no guilt of his own to pay for (he was 'righteous'), he could be the substitute who died in our place, bearing the punishment we deserved.*
- f) William Barclay, *The suffering of Christ was for us; and the mystery is that he who deserved no suffering bore that suffering for us who deserved to suffer.*

b. Why He died (18b), ***that he might bring us to God,***

- 1) Thomas Constable, *The purpose of Jesus Christ's death was to bring us into fellowship with God.*
- 2) Peter Davids, . . . *no other NT writer has this active picture of Jesus leading the Christian to God. But it fits with Peter's usual conception of the Christian life as an active close following of Jesus (2:21; 4:13).*
- 3) Roger Raymer, *The divine purpose for Christ's sacrificial death was man's reconciliation, to bring people to God.*
- 4) David Walls, *Jesus died to reach across the gulf between God and humanity. Taking our hand, he leads us across the territory of the enemy into the presence of God the Father. Jesus Christ opens the way and introduces us to God the Father. By removing sin as the cause of our separation from God, Jesus Christ provides access to God and makes us acceptable in his sight.*

- 5) Warren Wiersbe, *Because of the work of Christ on the cross, we now have an open access to God (Eph. 2:18; 3:12). We may come boldly to His throne! (Heb. 10:19ff) We also have access to His marvelous grace to meet our daily needs (Rom. 5:2). When the veil of the temple was torn, it symbolized the new and open way to God through Jesus Christ.*
- 6) William Barclay, *Sin is that which interrupts the relationship which should exist between God and all humanity. The object of sacrifice is to restore that lost relationship. The death of Christ upon the cross, however we explain it, restores the lost relationship between God and human beings.*
- 7) H. D. M. Spence, *St. Peter opens out one of the deeper aspects of the death of Christ. The veil that the Holiest was then rent in twain, and believers were invited and encouraged to draw near into the immediate presence of God.*

c. A result of His death (18c), ***being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,***

- 1) J. Ramsey Michaels, *The statement that Christ was ‘made alive in the Spirit,’ therefore, means simply that he was raised from the dead, not as a spirit, but bodily (as resurrection always is in the NT), and in a sphere in which the Spirit and power of God are displayed without hindrance or human limitation (cf. 1:21).*
- 2) David Walls, *Peter added the exclamation point to this verse: He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit. The saving action of Jesus Christ lies not simply in his death, but also in his resurrection. The resurrection secures and guarantees the results of his death. Christ’s death on the cross initiated the path for salvation; his resurrection guaranteed this salvation.*
- 3) Peter Davids, *He was put to death with respect to the flesh, but he was made alive with respect to the spirit . . . Peter contrasts the death of Christ with his resurrection, the one happening with respect to the natural fallen human condition, the flesh, and the other with respect to God and relationship to him, the spirit. In other words, Peter is not contrasting two parts of the nature of Christ, body and soul, a Greek distinction . . . But he died as a whole person, not simply as a body . . . therefore he was made alive with respect to the spirit, the mode of existence of the regenerate or those pleasing to God.*
- 4) Warren Wiersbe, . . . *on the cross, our Lord suffered and died. His body was put to death, and His spirit died when He was made sin. But His spirit was made alive and He yielded it to the Father.*
- 5) Wayne Grudem, *The contrast put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit fits in with the whole letter’s emphasis on the relative unimportance of temporary suffering in this world compared to the enjoying of an eternal inheritance in the next (cf. 1:6–7, 8, 11, 13, 23; 2:11; 3:3–4, 14; 4:1–2, 6, 13, 14, 16, 19; 5:1, 4, 10).*
- 6) H. D. M. Spence, *In his flesh he was put to death in the flesh, but, but in his spirit he was quickened. When the Lord had said, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit;” when he bowed his head, and gave up the spirit,—then that spirit passed into a new life . . . Christ, being delivered from the burden of that suffering flesh which he had graciously taken for our salvation, was quickened in his holy human spirit—quickened to new energies, new and blessed activities. So it shall be with those who suffer for well-doing; they may even be put to death “if we die with him, we shall also live with him.”*

2. His proclamation (19-20), ***in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.***

a. Notes

- 1) David Walls, *At least eighteen major theories have been suggested to explain these verses . . .*
- 2) The following points have more than one theory which I believe should be presented.

b. Jesus made proclamation to the spirits in prison.

- 1) Some believe Jesus descended into hell between his death and resurrection to offer those who lived before the Flood another opportunity to receive salvation. There is no second chance to respond to God’s grace after physical death, Hebrews 9:27, *And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment . . .*
- 2) Others believe Jesus proclaimed His victory to fallen angels referred to in 2 Peter 2:4-5.
- 3) Peter Davids, . . . *it seems likely that this passage in 1 Peter refers to a proclamation of judgment by the resurrected Christ to the imprisoned spirits, that is, the fallen angels, sealing their doom as he triumphed over sin and death and hell, redeeming human beings.*
- 4) David Walls, *After his resurrection and before his ascension into heaven, Jesus Christ went to the place where disobedient supernatural powers are imprisoned. There he proclaimed to them his victory over death and God’s ultimate and final judgment on those evil spirits. Christ’s proclamation to them is of his victory and of their doom, now sealed because of Christ’s death and resurrection. In doing this, Christ reaffirmed that he is superior to all powers. These evil powers cannot separate the believer from Jesus Christ, so the eternal benefits of his salvation are assured.*

- c. The Spirit of Christ preached through Noah.
- 1) It is best to consider the recipients of Jesus' proclamation to be humans who had rejected Noah's testimony and died in the Flood and are awaiting the final judgment of God at the end of the age.
 - 2) Roger Raymer, *Peter's explanation of the resurrection of Christ (3:18) "by the Spirit" brought to mind that the preincarnate Christ was actually in Noah, ministering through him, by means of the Holy Spirit. Peter (1:11) referred to the "Spirit of Christ" in the Old Testament prophets. Later he described Noah as "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5).*
 - 3) Peter emphasized that their judgment was just because they had the opportunity to repent.
 - 4) Thomas Constable, *One could say that Jesus proclaimed a message to Noah's unbelieving contemporaries in His spirit (i.e., His spiritual state of life before the Incarnation) through Noah. Noah was preaching a message that God had given him, and in this sense Jesus Christ spoke through him (cf. 2 Cor. 5:20). Just so, Jesus Christ was speaking through Peter's readers to their unbelieving persecutors as they bore witness for Him in a hostile world. Noah faced the same type of opposition in his day that Peter's original readers did in theirs.*
 - 5) Gleason Archer, Jr., *This verse means, then, that Christ through the Holy Spirit solemnly warned Noah's contemporaries by the mouth of Noah himself (described in 2 Peter 2:5 as "a preacher of righteousness." . . . It seems quite evident, therefore, that the passage under discussion assures us that even back in Noah's day, in His pre-incarnate state, God the Son was concerned with the salvation of sinners . . . In both cases only those who by faith take refuge in God's means of salvation can be rescued from destruction.*
 - 6) Edmund Clowney, *It is the proclamation of God's righteousness, and therefore of the need for repentance. That message was addressed through Noah to those disobedient sinners during their lifetime. The passage describes no second chance for repentance after death. Even less does it promise universal salvation.*
 - 7) Wayne Grudem, *In the unseen 'spiritual' realm Christ preached through Noah to unbelievers around him. By saying this Peter can remind his readers of the reality of Christ's work in the unseen spiritual realm and the fact that Christ is also in them, empowering their witness and making it spiritually effective (cf. 1:8, 11, 12, 25; 2:4). Therefore, they should not fear (v. 14) but in their hearts should 'revere Christ as Lord' and should 'always be prepared' to tell of the hope that is in them (v. 15).*
 - 8) J. Vernon McGee, *In Christ's day, the spirits of those men to whom Noah had preached were in prison, for they had rejected the message of Noah. They had gone into sheol. They were waiting for judgment; they were lost. But Christ did not go down and preach to them after He died on the cross. He preached through Noah "when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah." For 120 years Noah had preached the Word of God. He saved his family but no one else. It was the Spirit of Christ who spoke through Noah in Noah's day.*
- d. Noah illustrates faithfulness in the midst of persecution.
- 1) Thomas Constable, *Noah faced the same type of opposition in his day that Peter's original readers did in theirs . . . God would bring Peter's readers safely through their trial just as He had brought Noah safely through his trials into a whole new world. God had done this for Noah even though he and his family were a small minority in their day. Furthermore as God judged the mockers in Noah's day, so will He judge those who persecuted Peter's readers.*
 - 2) Roger Raymer, *Noah is presented as an example of one who committed himself to a course of action for the sake of a clear conscience before God, though it meant enduring harsh ridicule. Noah did not fear men but obeyed God and proclaimed His message.*
 - 3) Edmund Clowney, . . . *Noah and his family were delivered from that evil age by the judgment, the waters of the flood. Yet the judgment of the flood was only provisional, and the deliverance of Noah but a prefiguring, or 'type', of the final and full salvation of Jesus Christ. The doom of death in the flood pictures the doom that Christ suffered for us. He was put to death in the flesh. But he was made alive in the power of the Spirit. It was in that power that he preached through Noah to those whose disobedience brought eternal condemnation. It is in that same power that he now saves us.*
- e. God's faithfulness in delivering those He has called to Himself.
- 1) Roger Raymer, *Noah's reward for keeping a clear conscience in unjust suffering was the salvation of himself and his family, who were saved through water, being brought safely through the Flood.*
 - 2) Thomas Constable, *God is so patient that he waited for 120 years before sending the Flood in Noah's day (Gen. 6:3). Today He also waits, so patiently that some people conclude that He will never judge (cf. 2 Pet. 3:3-4). Few will escape God's coming judgment just as only eight escaped His former judgment. The rest will die.*

- 3) Peter Davids, . . . *in contrast to the spirits, eight people were saved (Noah, his three sons, and their wives). Although they were only “a few,” they formed the righteous remnant of the time. And these were saved “through water,” which captures the image of the ark passing through the water of the flood . . . Like Noah these Christians are a small, persecuted minority surrounded by a majority that is disobedient to God . . . But Christ’s triumphant proclamation and the citation of the narrative of the deluge remind them that they will be the delivered minority just as Noah and his family were, which is surely comforting in a time of suffering.*
- 4) Edmund Clowney, *Those who reject the gospel put themselves under the judgment that will come when Christ comes. But those who are united to Christ are saved by the same promise that delivered Noah and his family.*
- 5) Wayne Grudem, *At the time of Noah, God was patiently awaiting repentance from unbelievers, before he brought judgment. So it is in the situation of Peter’s readers: God is patiently awaiting repentance from unbelievers (cf. 2 Pet, 3:9) before bringing judgment on the world (cf. 2 Pet. 3:10) . . . Noah was finally saved, with ‘a few’ others. Peter thus encourages his readers that, though perhaps few, they too will finally be saved, for Christ has triumphed and has all things subject to him (3:22; 4:13, 19; 5:10; 2 Pet. 2:9).*

f. Comments

- 1) Scot McKnight, *Few passages have so many themes and different ideas intertwined. It is no wonder that commentators have shaken their heads in despair! But the main point is not complex. Just as Jesus suffered as a righteous man and was vindicated, so too if the churches of Peter live righteously (as he has exhorted them to do), they will be vindicated and sit with Jesus in the presence of God. Such an understanding of this passage is a typical way of putting this section into focus with the previous verses (3:13–17).*
- 2) Charles Spurgeon, *This passage nobody understands, though some think they do. It is for our good to be made to feel that we do not know everything. The point that is clear is that as Jesus suffered though innocent, we also must be willing to suffer at the hands of the ungodly.*

TO BE CONTINUED, LORD WILLING

3. His resurrection (21a), *Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience,*
4. His ascension and authority (21c-22), *through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.*