

**Letters From A Fisherman**  
**Week 15**  
**1 Peter 3:18-22**  
**"Suffering (Part 2) - The Victorious Christ"**

**Introduction**

**Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus.**

**Who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited.**

**Instead He emptied Himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when He had come as a man,**

**He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death— even to death on a cross.**

**For this reason God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name that is above every name,**

**so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow— in heaven and on earth and under the earth—**

**and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

**Philippians 2:5-11**

The Believer who suffers for the sake of righteousness does so to the glory of God. Peter wanted his readers to have a firm grasp of this reality as the tremendous persecution of Nero's Rome began to take its toll. Those who suffer because of wrongs they have done are simply getting their just desserts, but those who suffer simply for following Christ will be rewarded in the end. This world may well despise us, but to be loved by God is worth it all. And God will never abandon His very own.

**Be strong and courageous; don't be terrified or afraid of them. For the Lord your God is the one who will go with you; he will not leave you or abandon you."**

**Deuteronomy 31:6**

So, we must always remember that God is on our side. When temptations, trials, persecutions, and sufferings come our way, we put our complete trust in Him. In Christ, we will overcome, and our faith will insure us the victory.

**...because everyone who has been born of God conquers the world. This is the victory that has conquered the world: our faith.**

**1 John 5:4**

Peter wanted his readers to see the connection between our own suffering for the cause of righteousness and that of Christ Himself. For Our Savior suffered greatly at the hands of evil men, but because He was obedient to His Heavenly Father, He emerged victorious from His fiery trails. And because we are in Him, we too are assured the victory no matter what trials we face, as long as we remain in obedience to God's commands. The good news for us is simple: In Christ we are always winners. For He cannot be defeated!

So, as we look at this passage today, we can see for ourselves how Christ The LORD has been, and shall always be victorious in all things. We have nothing to fear from this world, for it has no power over The One Who is in us. Trials are bound to come, but we shall overcome by the power of Christ. The

resurrection is proof of this power. If Christ was able to suffer and die for our sins, and yet rose again from the grave, then we know that in Him we are unstoppable.

In this particular passage, there are three separate elements that Peter used to demonstrate the victorious power of Christ. First we see Him sent by God to come and die for sin, and yet, be raised victoriously again to life. Then we are given a glimpse into what Christ was actually doing for those three days that His body lay in the tomb. This is one of the most controversial passages in all of the Scriptures, but it is given to demonstrate that Christ Jesus is, in fact, LORD over all. This reality is in full display as we see Him descend into the abyss and declare His victory to the *"spirits imprisoned there"*. And finally, we see that just as God had promised the Name of Christ is exalted over all things as He reigns in victory at the right hand of The Father.

This is the reality of Whom we serve. He is The Almighty Everlasting God. So let us worship Him together as we see *His Victorious Mission, His Victorious Message, and His Victorious Monarchy and Mediation*. Please allow me to explain.

### **His Victorious Mission (vs. 18)**

***For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh but made alive by The Spirit...*** **1 Peter 3:18**

Do not miss the implication here. Peter is reminding us that God has every right to call us unto suffering for His glory. The reason being is that Christ Himself suffered at the hands of the ungodly... *for the ungodly*. And, those *"ungodly"* ones included us! For we too were deserving of eternal damnation for our sins, but in order to save us, Christ was willing to suffer. Just as we too must endure suffering at the hands of evildoers. Why? Because we want to see them saved as well. While it is true that they may not deserve our forgiveness and mercy, it is also true that we did not deserve the grace which we have received as well. So what does this say about us if we expect God to show us mercy, and yet, we are unwilling to extend it to others? I am reminded here of a parable that Jesus shared on this very subject.

#### **The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant**

***Then Peter approached Him and asked, "Lord, how many times must I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? As many as seven times?"***

***"I tell you, not as many as seven," Jesus replied, "but seventy times seven.***

***"For this reason, the kingdom of heaven can be compared to a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle accounts, one who owed ten thousand talents was brought before him. Since he did not have the money to pay it back, his master commanded that he, his wife, his children, and everything he had be sold to pay the debt.***

***"At this, the servant fell facedown before him and said, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you everything.' Then the master of that servant had compassion, released him, and forgave him the loan.***

***"That servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him, started choking him, and said, 'Pay what you owe!'***

***"At this, his fellow servant fell down and began begging him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' But he wasn't willing. Instead, he went and threw him into prison until he could pay what was owed. When the other servants saw what had***

**taken place. they were deeply distressed and went and reported to their master everything that had happened. Then, after he had summoned him, his master said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Shouldn't you also have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And because he was angry, his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured until he could pay everything that was owed. So also my heavenly Father will do to you unless every one of you forgives his brother or sister from your heart.'**

**Matthew 18:21-35**

So, how can we endure such harsh and undeserved cruelty without defending ourselves or seeking retribution? It is because we can look to Christ's own example. God exalted Him for His obedience, so He will honor us as well! While it is true that Christ suffered at the hands of cruel and ungodly men, He emerged victorious in the end. He rose, so we are guaranteed to rise!

The resurrection is the most powerful witness that God is able to do all things. It was the resurrection that emboldened Peter and his counterparts to proclaim the gospel of Christ. If you recall, these men all scattered when Jesus was arrested and crucified. Peter was so frightened that he wouldn't even admit to a young servant girl that he knew Jesus! Can you imagine that? What was that little girl going to do to a burly fisherman like Peter? And yet, he was terrified to answer her.

But when he saw Christ emerged from the tomb in victory, Peter lost all his fear. For if God could do this, then nothing was impossible for God to do. If God could raise Christ, then He can be trusted to preserve us as well. This is what the victorious mission of Jesus has done for the Believer. It has given us the boldness and the calm assurance that **all things truly do work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28)**. The death, burial, and especially the resurrection, show us that God is firmly in control and no amount of persecution will ever bring us to lasting harm. As the Apostle Paul has reminded us:

**No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our LORD.**

**Romans 8:37-39**

Christ's victory over death and the grave, *His Victorious Mission* to suffer in order to redeem us, is all the evidence we need to trust that we have victory in Him!

### **His Victorious Message (vs. 19-20)**

**...in which He also went and made proclamation to the spirits in prison who in the past were disobedient, when God patiently waited in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared. In it a few — that is, eight people — were saved through water.**

**1 Peter 3:19-20**

Now, on to the controversial section! This is one of the most disputed passages in all of Scripture, if not *the* most, definitely top ten. It speaks of what Christ was actually doing by the power of The Spirit during His time in the grave. For you see, even though His human body was quite dead, His eternal Spirit lived on and was actually quite active during those three days. And while many *Bible* scholars have argued over the meaning of this particular passage for centuries, to my way of thinking there can only be one reasonable interpretation.

One cannot help but wonder how Peter became privy to this particular piece of information. I have to believe that he heard it directly from the resurrected Christ Himself. I would have loved to have been there to hear that conversation, when Jesus pulled Peter aside and told him all that He did while His body lay in the grave! It gives me chills just to think about it.

So first of all, let's look at this passage and determine what it cannot be referring to. The word that Peter used for "*spirits*" is never used to describe the souls of actual people in The Scriptures. So therefore, we can assume that those to whom Jesus "preached" were not people, but rather demonic spirits who are for some reason incarcerated to keep them from wreaking havoc upon the earth. We can gain a bit of insight into this by reading the cries of the demonic host possessing the two men of Gadara as they pleaded with Jesus not to send them into the abyss (***Luke 8:31***). So, by this Scripture, we can discern that there are indeed demons who have been placed into that abyss. And according to Peter, for some reason, Jesus descended there to "*preach*" to them while His body lay in the grave.

Second of all, He did not go there to preach the gospel to them. For the word that Peter used is "*kerysso*", rather than "*euangelion*" (which means the *good news*). The CSB translates *kerysso* as a proclamation, which is a good translation of the intended meaning. So Jesus didn't go to the abyss to preach a message of grace, but rather to proclaim His victory to these fallen angels.

So what was it that these angelic beings did during the days of Noah that was so bad that God decided to confine them for all eternity? The answer can be found in ***Genesis Chapter 6***.

***When mankind began to multiply on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of mankind were beautiful, and they took any they chose as wives for themselves. And the Lord said, "My Spirit will not remain with mankind forever, because they are corrupt. Their days will be 120 years." The Nephilim were on the earth both in those days and afterward, when the sons of God came to the daughters of mankind, who bore children to them. They were the powerful men of old, the famous men.*** ***Genesis 6:1-4***

Satan, being the wicked deceiver that he is, came up with a scheme in which he had hoped to defeat God in His plan to redeem fallen mankind. The devil intended to create a race of men that was irredeemable as he and his fallen angels themselves. So he instructed some of his demonic host to leave their proper abode (***Jude 6***) and to mix themselves with humankind. Thus producing a race of men that would take over the world and could never receive the grace that God wished to provide. We know this, because the term "*Sons of God*" (*ben Elohim*) in *The Old Testament* always refers to the angelic hosts, rather than the children of men.

Whether this diabolical scheme was enacted by demon possession of human men or simply by the angels themselves transitioning to men, *The Scriptures* do not elaborate, but suffice to say, this was done in an attempt to defeat God's purpose to send His Son to die on a cross to pay for the sins of mankind. God, in great patience, allowed these wicked offspring of the fallen angels to live for 120 years. It was during this 120 year span that Noah was building the ark. Noah preached the coming judgment to any humankind that would listen, but no one did. And after the 120 years were ended and the ark was finally prepared, God sent a flood to destroy all rebellious humanity along with the wicked Nephilim. So Satan's great plan was literally washed away by the flood waters. And those fallen angel's spirits were sent into the abyss to await their final judgment.

When Christ died upon the cross, he descended into the abyss to proclaim His great victory. Those angels, who had been deceived by Satan into thinking that they had a chance to overcome the plans of God, were handed a stunning defeat upon Calvary's cross. Mankind would indeed be provided a means of redemption, and the Redeemer Himself ascended into the abyss to deliver the message personally! What a dark day it must have been for His audience, when He showed up in power and victory, establishing Himself as The LORD of all!

## **His Victorious Monarchy and Mediation (vs. 21-22)**

**Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you (not as the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of a good conscience toward God) through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God with angels, authorities, and powers subject to Him.** **1 Peter 3:21-22**

Not only was Christ victorious in His death, burial, and resurrection, and not only did He preach that very message of victory to the fallen angels in the abyss, but also, God has established Him as LORD over all creation. His victory is now complete as He reigns in power and intercedes for us at the right hand of God. And because He lives, we too shall live with Him forever. Therefore, we have nothing to fear.

Peter reminds us that just as Noah and his family were safe and secure in the ark, we are safe and secure in Christ. When he speaks of the ark corresponding with baptism (**vs. 21**), many have mistakenly believed that he is referring to salvation by “water baptism”. This is why many Christian denominations erroneously teach that water baptism actually saves. It does not. Baptism is merely a visual symbolic act of what has taken place in us, when we accept Christ as Savior. Water cannot wash away sin, only Jesus’ blood can wash away sin.

Peter makes it clear that he is not speaking of “water baptism”, but rather a baptism of a spiritual kind. For you see, to be saved is to become immersed into Christ; Christ in us and us in Him. It is the inseparable bond that is wrought in us spiritually, when we believe. And here is how this relates to Noah’s ark: Just as they were saved by being inside the ark, we are saved for we are now baptized *into* Christ. The ark is a typology of Christ Himself. To be in Him is to be eternally secure (**Romans 8:1**).

And to know this is to have the calm assurance that no matter what we face, we cannot be defeated. For we are in Christ and Christ cannot be defeated. Just ask those angels who are chained in the abyss, and they will reluctantly tell you this is the case. (I was only speaking metaphorically here, please don’t actually try to communicate with those demons, nor any other!)

So, now Jesus reigns victoriously in heaven. Everything is subject to Him, and He is an advocate or *mediator*, Who speaks on our behalf. And our victory is assured, for our High Priest is ever on the job:

**Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens — Jesus the Son of God — let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin. Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need.** **Hebrews 4:14-16**

So there you have it. We most certainly can endure persecution and suffering for God’s glory. *We most certainly can return beauty in the face of evil.* Why? Because our High Priest and King was, and ever shall be, victorious! And we are baptized irrevocably into Him. Where He goes, we go; as He does, we do. And as a result we most assuredly will overcome anything this world throws at us. Satan has already lost this war. So we must live as if the victory has already been won, for in fact... it has!

**Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say, The salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have now come, because the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been thrown down. They conquered him by the blood of The Lamb and by the word of their testimony; for they did not love their lives to the point of death. Therefore rejoice, you heavens, and you who dwell in them!** **Revelation 12:10-12a**

**Truth, Hallelujah, and Amen!!**