



**MATT BLACK**, Sun, Jan 14, 2018  
Living as Lights series

# 18 | 1 PETER 3:13-22

## BE READY TO GIVE AN ANSWER FOR JESUS

### **Outline**

My Friend Ralph

#### **1. Be Ready to Suffer (3:13-14)**

You are Persecuted

You are Immortal till God is Finished

You Are Blessed!

Suffering is Often a Sign of Coming Reward

Don't be Controlled by Fear, Instead Zeal

#### **2. Be Ready to Speak (3:15-18)**

Have a Right Heart

Have a Ready Answer

Have a Caring Heart

Have the Right Attitude

Have a Good Conscience/Integrity

Have the Right Message

Christ Suffered Hell for Us

#### **3. Be Ready to See Christ's Victory (3:19-22)**

Christ Announces His Victory to His Enemies

Victory in Noah's Day

Victory in Our Day

Christ Victorious Over All!

**H**ow do I give an answer to those who don't know Christ? Some people think you have to be an evangelist in order to point someone to Christ. The truth is, the marching orders for the church that Jesus gave us is to "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation" (Mk 16:15). Jesus said, "If I be lifted up I will draw all men unto me." He wants to use you to give an answer for him.

We find out how we can share the Gospel effectively in 1 Peter 3:13-22. This is Peter's Noah sermon. It's really powerful because we live in a day like the days of Noah. Yet the Gospel is powerful. Jesus is mighty to save! Let's stand as we read God's holy sufficient Word.

*Let's listen to God's Word. **1 Peter 3:13-22**, "Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, 15 but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, 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, 16 having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. 17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. 18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, 19 in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, 20 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. 21 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, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him."*

*This is God's Word.*

## MY FRIEND RALPH

A healthy church has a heart for the lost. We need to always be ready to give an answer to the world around us. This passage is Peter's soul winning lesson to us. Do you love souls, and want to win them for Jesus? The Bible says, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he who wins souls is wise" (Pro 11:30, NKJV).

**Story of Ralph.** You don't need to be a theologian to win souls. I can remember as a new believer of a couple of months, I had a deep burden for my best friend, Ralph John. He was my back yard neighbor. His dad would work nights, and he would shout from his backyard deck to my backyard deck, "Hey Matt the Rat!" Ha! I've been called worse! But Ralph Sr. was a very big and loving man. One day his son, Ralph Jr. called me after I was saved and told me his dad had Leukemia. He was going to die.

I prayed day and night for his soul, but I was never able to visit him. When I found out he died, I didn't know what I would tell Ralph Jr. where his dad was in eternity if he had asked. I would have to tell him I didn't know. Had I had the opportunity I would have told his dad.

At the funeral, Ralph Jr. introduced me to his Uncle Lee. I listened as Uncle Lee told me how he had given the Gospel to Ralph Sr. in the last three months of his life. I jumped and shouted like a Pentecostal!

Our God is mighty to save! We just need to open our mouths. “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?” (Rom 10:14).

Peter is about to tell us that we need to be ready to give an answer for Christ, no matter what the cost. And there is always a cost. As we go into all the world and preach the Gospel, it is not always going to be well received. Often we will suffer for the Gospel’s sake.

Remember Peter’s theme of this entire book is that we are not at home here in this world. We are “elect exiles” (1:1). We “are called” out of “darkness” to shine and reflect his “marvelous light” (2:9). If you are salt and light to this world, you need to be ready to suffer.

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## 1. BE READY TO SUFFER (3:13-14)

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**1 Peter 3:13-14**, “Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, **you will be blessed**. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled.” The argument of this verse is simply this: you are suffering now because of your faith in Christ, but one day in the future [at Judgment Day] you will be blessed. No persecution can steal your ultimate blessing in Christ.

### YOU ARE PERSECUTED

What is very apparent is that Peter assumes that his Christian hearers are going to be persecuted for righteousness’ sake. When holiness takes hold of your life, and the Spirit begins to anoint you, the world will begin to hate you. Jesus says, don’t be surprised if the world hates you, “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you” (Jn 15:18). This was a major theme in Jesus’ teaching. There will always be persecution of believers.

Peter wasn’t saying believers won’t suffer. He was saying no eternal harm will come to any believer. Indeed suffering stalks the believer until this present evil age comes to an end.<sup>1</sup> Paul said, “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim 3:12).

Of course the world is going to be offended by the Christian’s life. Christians are salt and light. The life of the Christian ought to be one that at times feels like a bright flashlight has been shined into the face of a sleeping person.

The joy we have (based on our union with Christ) is in stark contrast to the roller coaster happiness that jerks the world back and forth.

Peter’s point is that the world is going to stand against you. It’s offensive for the world to hear that they are in sin and need a Savior.

### YOU ARE IMMORTAL TILL GOD IS FINISHED

So Peter begins with this question, **1 Peter 3:13**, “Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?” He’s saying, no one can ultimately harm you or condemn you. There is no reason for you to fear ultimate harm if you “zealous” in pursuit of “what is good” (3:13). Live out the Christian life. Be zealous and ardent for life in the

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, vol. 37, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 170.

Spirit. There's nothing better than surrender to the Spirit. Let the Spirit settle your soul about these things.

So because "there is no condemnation for those in Christ" (Rom 8:1) here's the thing: Don't fear. Don't be troubled. "Have no fear of them, nor be troubled" (3:14b). You have no need to fear because no real harm can ultimately be done to you. You are safe in Christ. "Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?" (3:13). Peter's is quoting Isaiah 50:9, "It is the Sovereign LORD who helps me. Who will condemn me?" "Who is there to harm or ultimately damn my soul" is the idea. If you are zealous for what is good, zealous for God, a true believer, then who can ultimately harm you? No one has the power to ultimately damn you. You are forgiven in Christ. Any other suffering is superficial.

You are going to suffer, but no eternal harm will touch you. Paul said, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Rom 8:18). Paul goes on to say (Rom 8:31), "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?..." Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ (8:35). Paul concludes, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (8:37).

Peter is saying, "*You are immortal until God is finished with you.*" No one can hurt you if you truly have the zeal of the Spirit in you, unless they have God's permission. Peter goes on to explain that "But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled" (3:14).

### **YOU ARE BLESSED!**

"But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled" (3:14). The idea is that you will, in the future, when Jesus comes, be blessed beyond measure. He's not saying you are going to get out of persecution. He's saying you shouldn't fear persecution. Even if you suffer in this life, don't be disturbed! Jesus wins in the end.

He was almost certainly drawing on the Jesus tradition here, for Jesus himself taught in Matthew 5:10–12 (cf Lk 6:22–23) that those who suffer are blessed because of the eschatological reward they will receive.<sup>2</sup> When you are persecuted you are to "rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven" (Mt 5:12).

None can do real harm to the Lord's people; they may persecute them, but he will make all things work together for their good.<sup>3</sup> You are blessed no matter what, so rejoice. Replace any fear of living in total surrender to God with zeal and joy.

Even if all of hell's minions descend on you like they did with Job, God is going to work it out for good in the end. Do despair.

<sup>2</sup> Leonhard Goppelt. Trans, John E. Alsup and Ferdinand Hahn. *A Commentary on 1 Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1993), 241.

<sup>3</sup> H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *1 Peter*, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 131.

## SUFFERING IS OFTEN A SIGN OF COMING REWARD

Rejoice and be zealous instead of being filled with fear. Indeed, even present suffering is not a sign of punishment but of God's blessing both now and especially in the future, in the day when he rewards his people with eternal life.<sup>4</sup>

## DON'T BE CONTROLLED BY FEAR, INSTEAD ZEAL

Peter's conclusion is: Have no fear of them, nor be troubled" (3:14). Don't be **controlled by fear**. Yes, we all have fear. It can cripple us at times. But don't be controlled or troubled by any persecution. Be zealous for Christ. You will "suffer for righteousness" here on earth, but at the end of the world, you will be blessed. So don't fear anyone who would stand against you because of Christ.

Yet it's not enough to be willing and ready to suffer. You need to be ready to speak the Gospel to the world around you.

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## 2. BE READY TO SPEAK (3:15-18)

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**1 Peter 3:15**, "but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, 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."

### HAVE A RIGHT HEART

The alternative to fear is to focus attention on someone else.<sup>5</sup> "But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy" (3:15a). Anyone who meets the living God will have a holy dread. Peter is quoting **Isaiah 8:13**, 'But the LORD of hosts, him you shall regard as holy; let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.' Literally **1 Peter 3:15a** reads, "Honor the Lord (YHWH) as holy, namely Christ."

Treat Christ as holy, set apart from all else as the Covenant God of his people. Let him be your dread. This says something important. Peter believed in the **deity of Christ**. He's using Greek, but he's calling Jesus YHWH, Jehovah.<sup>6</sup>

Regard Christ as Almighty God, **the God revealed to Isaiah**, where the angels cried out, "Holy, holy, holy" (**Isa 6:1-3**). Holy evangelistic zeal comes from a heart and life surrendered to Christ as holy Lord of your life. Do you want to honor him? Be done with lesser things. Be done with anything **questionable**. Be done with half hearted prayers or a totally dead prayer life. You have to sanctify Christ in your heart as holy.

We surrender to Christ as holy, set apart and exalted above all... where? "In your heart." The heart is the origin of human behavior (cf. 1:22; 3:4), and from it flows everything people do. "Guard your **heart** above all else, for it determines the course of your life" (**Pro 4:23**, NLT).

God will use a clean vessel to pour out his Spirit. Are you a clean vessel? God can use a donkey, but he's not going to use a dirty vessel.

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<sup>4</sup> Schreiner. *1 Peter*, 171.

<sup>5</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *1 Peter: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 17, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 160.

<sup>6</sup> Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 173, says, "The move from Yahweh to Christ is common in the New Testament, reflecting the conviction that Jesus the Messiah deserves the same honor as Yahweh."

## HAVE A READY ANSWER

“Always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (3:15b). If someone has a brightness in their eyes or a spring in their step, you might ask them, what’s going on with you? You are going to ask them what’s the reason? What’s up? Why are you so happy? Maybe they’ve fallen in love or have a new job. For the Christian, your new birth has given you new life in a living hope. You are born again! A normal Christian life will provoke questions.

The ESV says, “make a defense.” The word is *apologia*. We get our apologetics or debate ministries from this verse. But this is really not a verse for professional Bible debaters only. It’s really for every Christian. It means to give an answer often in a private setting. To make a defense of the faith.

**Ponderosa.** When I was sixteen and a brand-new believer, I worked at Ponderosa Steakhouse in Oak Forest, Illinois. I was the grill cook. Sometimes I had a fry cook. And that little kitchen was like a little church house to me. I was so new in the faith I didn’t know much of the Bible, but I knew the Roman’s road to salvation. And I would “give an answer of the hope that was in me.” I would tell them of Christ.

I’d get one 30-minute break a day. That was my soul-winning time. My booth was like the Ponderosa Counseling booth. Remember I know almost nothing about the Bible, but I know Christ. I know a handful of verses in Romans. I would open my Bible and just start reading and almost always one or two or three people would give me an audience. I sincerely shared our need of Christ and the “hope” that was in me with gentleness and reverence.

## HAVE A CARING HEART

**Jesus Said “Go!”** Who should we talk to? “Always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you” (3:15). The stance of Christians toward unbelievers must never be merely passive or neutral. We can’t just be focused on our own lives and forget the world lost in darkness. It’s not an option for a Christian. We need to be ready to answer anyone! Not every Christian will be a skilled apologist for the faith. It does mean that every believer should grasp the essentials of the faith and should have the ability to explain to others why Christ is Lord and Savior.

Remember, the last command of our Lord Jesus is to “Go!” Teach and make disciples. Go to everyone! All creation.

**Mark 16:15**, Jesus says, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.”

**Matthew 28:18–20**, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.... behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

**Luke 24:46–49**, Jesus “said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.... Stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.’”

**John 20:21**, “... As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”

**Acts 1:8**, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

The moment God saved you, he prepared you. He gave you his Holy Spirit. He gave you a heart to obey his command: “Go!” Be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks.

### HAVE THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

How should you answer the lost? “Do it with gentleness and respect.” We ought to have “gentleness” toward the lost, and respect of literally “fear” toward God.

**Toward the Lost.** We approach God’s people with a sweet **gentleness** and **humility**. We are to model the fruit of the Spirit, be salt and light to this dark world. I’ve heard Christians share the Gospel in an angry, proud way. That does not befit the sweetness of the Gospel. We have gentleness and respect. We share the Gospel like a heart surgeon, not a butcher.

**Toward God.** We are to evangelize the lost with “**respect**” or “**reverence**” toward God. We need to remember that we are ambassadors, representatives of the Most High God. We must not be taken up with the fear of man. We need to magnify the Lord and see him as bigger than any rejection or persecution we may face by opening our mouths.

But let me pivot back to “gentleness.” Sometimes when we are rejected for the Gospel, we can take it personally and become defensive. That’s one thing Peter is likely warning against. Have confidence in God, but gentleness – a humble love for the lost.

### HAVE A GOOD CONSCIENCE/INTEGRITY

**1 Peter 3:16-17**, “having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. 17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.”

We must have a good conscience when we evangelize. We cannot trick our hearers into heaven. When Peter spoke of a “clear conscience,” he’s referring to the relationship of believers to God.<sup>7</sup>

We live in the presence of God as Christians – his face shines upon us – so we cannot resort to **anger**, **tricks**, twisting or **manipulation** when we share the Gospel. No one is going to get tricked into heaven. There is an integrity in the true Christian. He’s not going to manipulate people. We must never do that.

For **example**, there are some Christians when they meet a Muslim, they will say “Allah” and the Trinity are the same. They are not the same. The one true and living God has revealed himself to us by his Son Jesus Christ. Christ is the exact nature and imprint of our loving Father. All other religions that see Christ as a mere man or creation are false. We cannot use syncretism to add to our pews. We must preach with a good conscience. We must at all costs preach the God revealed to us by divine revelation in the 66 books of the Christian Bible.

**Shame on Judgment Day.** Now Peter says in 3:16, you need to be faithful to give the Gospel even to those who are hostile, remembering that “those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame” (3:16). Peter has been talking in 3:12 about the day when the “righteous” are rewarded, and “the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” This is Judgment Day, when those who do not trust in Christ will see how blessed all believers really have been.

<sup>7</sup> Schreiner. *1 Peter*, 176.

Some unbelievers refuse to acknowledge the **goodness of the lives of believers**. On the last day, however, they will be put to shame by God himself and will be compelled to acknowledge that believers lived righteously.<sup>8</sup> On that final day, unbelievers will not wish they were in the dance club drunk out of their mind for just one more day. They will envy the followers of Christ and acknowledge that though they were not perfect, believers alone on the earth live the “good life.” We live life the way God designed it!

### HAVE THE RIGHT MESSAGE

**1 Peter 3:18**, “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.” This verse gives one of the Bible’s shortest, simplest, and richest summaries of the meaning of the cross of Jesus Christ.<sup>9</sup> Verse 15 asks, what is the logic or the story behind the cross? What is the cross all about? Here we have it in verse 18. It explains penal substitution. Christ “once suffered for sins.” It was a unique death. The once has the idea of unique. Peter up to this point is saying we all suffer and submit in many ways – as elect exiles in a fallen world, but Christ’s suffering is unique. His death is substitutionary – “the righteous for the unrighteous that he might bring us to God.”

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.<sup>10</sup>

“Always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a **reason** for the hope that is in you” (3:15b). The word “reason” is “logos.” People who know Christ sometimes sound like fools with **no logic** to this world. “The natural [unregenerate] person does not accept the things of the **Spirit of God**, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned” (**2 Cor 2:14**). The world asks, “What’s the reason, the logic behind your hope in Christ?” We must have the right message and give people the reason of our hope – Christ redeems! Jesus saves. The **logic** behind the Cross is that we are all wretched sinners. Christ loves us in our sin. He died for us, “the Just for the unjust that he might bring us to God.”

People often say they are saved, and they don’t know the Gospel. They don’t have a clear trust in the blood of Jesus. They don’t understand his death and resurrection. Listen, Jesus died vicariously for us. That means, “in my place.” I should receive hell, but he got hell for me. Anyone who trusts in him is completely forgiven. No sins. No condemnation.

### CHRIST SUFFERED HELL FOR US

Hell came to Calvary on the day Jesus died. He experienced all the dimensions of hell on the cross.

- The crucifixion of Jesus lasted for 6 agonizing hours.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> David Walls and Max Anders, *I & II Peter, I, II & III John, Jude*, vol. 11, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 55.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 56.

- The trial and scourging of Jesus took place early in the day, and he was crucified at 9 o'clock in the morning. Many things happened during the next three hours.
- The crowd taunted him.
- Religious leaders mocked his claims.
- Thieves who were crucified beside him hurled abuse.
- Then, at midday, God stepped in. Darkness covered the whole land. This was not an eclipse. Jesus was crucified at Passover when there was a full moon, and besides, an eclipse does not last for three hours. The darkness at Calvary could only be explained by a direct intervention of God.

Jesus' suffering during these three awful hours of darkness is indescribable. Peter has already told us that Jesus "bore our sins in his body on the tree" (2:24). That is what was happening in the darkness.

- He carried the weight of the **accumulated guilt and shame** of the world.
- The **wrath of God** was poured out on Him.
- He was **cut off** from the comfort and love of God the Father.
- Throughout this suffering he was in a **conscious agony** of body and soul.

That is hell, and Jesus tasted every dimension of its pain on the cross. Jesus' descent into hell was not a disembodied visit for preaching between his death and resurrection. It was the heart of his suffering as he bore the penalty of your sin on the cross. He entered hell so that you should never know what hell is like. Take a moment to pause and worship.

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### 3. BE READY TO SEE CHRIST'S VICTORY (3:19-22)

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In 1 Peter 3:19ff, Peter now gives an example of someone who gave an answer in his day. He speaks of Noah. Now these verses may seem to be confusing at first, but if you take them in a simple way, they are deeply encouraging.

Peter wants us to see that whenever we give a defense and an answer for our hope, Christ within us, the victory is already guaranteed. He gives us three examples of victory here.

#### **CHRIST ANNOUNCES HIS VICTORY TO HIS ENEMIES**

**1 Peter 3:19-20**, "in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, 20 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."

***Preaching to the spirits in Prison.*** Peter brings us to a day when it seemed impossible to defend the faith – in the days of Noah when the entire earth perished in their sins except eight people. And one of the first things Jesus did after his victorious death, it says is he "proclaimed [his victory] to the spirits in the days of Noah." Who were

these spirits? Most theologians believe that these are fallen angels. The term “spirits” almost always refers to angelic beings.<sup>11</sup>

Jude 1:6 tells us a little more about these fallen angelic beings. “And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day” (Jude 1:6).

So get this point Peter is making. The fallen angels, even though they were chained, must have felt victorious in Noah’s day. *Ha! We’ve deceived the whole world*, they must have said. But then at the Cross, it seemed they had a greater victory and would finally go free. Some of these that God chained in darkness must have thought they defeated the Son of God at the Cross.

But after Jesus’ death on the cross “he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison” – **The hordes of hell thought they had won!** I can just hear them. *Ha! We killed the Son of God! The earth is now ours. We will soon be released. What? Who is this? The victorious Son of God?!!*

### VICTORY IN NOAH’S DAY

What then was happening? Peter says in 3:19-20 that Jesus “went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, 20 because they formerly did not obey, when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah.”

***Fallen Angels Chained in Noah’s Day.*** Angels are supposed to be God’s “ministering spirits” – but those chained in the darkness of the underworld were not ministering spirits. They were not helping the lost to come to Christ. They were chained there because “they formerly did not obey.” I’m not completely sure what that means, but possibly in the days of Noah, God further restricted a group of fallen angels to chains or confinement in Hades.

***God’s Patience in Noah’s Day.*** So Peter says, it was during this time that God has so much patience with the sinners of Noah’s Day. Peter says: “God’s patience waited in the days of Noah” (3:20). At this time Noah becomes “a herald of righteousness” (2 Pet 2:5, 9). God could have brought immediate judgment. But day after day for many decades, maybe up to a hundred years, Noah’s family preached the truth and built the ark. **Hebrews 11:7, “By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.”** It seems Noah preached.

***Don’t Be Discouraged by Small Results.*** Be ready to see God work in mighty ways. He worked in Noah. He’ll work through you. Don’t of course be discouraged by the day of small things. Only eight were saved on the ark.

Of all the characters in human history, God chose Noah as the model for our ministry. That is significant. Noah’s generation was the most wicked in all of human history. Corruption and violence had multiplied, and God sent the Flood on them because He saw that the thoughts of that generation were “only evil all the time” (Gen 6:5).

<sup>11</sup> Cf Mt 8:16; 10:1; 12:15; Mk 1:27; 3:11; 5:13; 6:7; Lk 4:36; 6:18; 7:21; 8:2; 10:20; 11:26; Acts 5:16; 8:7; 19:12–13; 1 Tim 4:1; Heb 1:14; 12:9; 1 Jn 4:1; Rev 16:13–14; cf. Heb 1:7.

If you have found that some of the people around you are hard to reach with the gospel, then spare a thought for Noah. God called him to speak to the most resistant people who have ever lived (**2 Pet 2:5**).

Noah didn't see great results from his preaching. In fact, at the end of his entire life of ministry, only eight people were saved. That should teach us to be cautious about how we measure results. The important thing about Noah's ministry was that Christ spoke through him. This did not mean that vast crowds of people repented and believed. But they did hear the voice of Jesus. Ministry among highly resistant people isn't easy. What matters is not the number of people you lead to Christ, but your faithfulness to Christ in the place where He has set you. And if he has set you in a tough place, don't get discouraged by small results.<sup>12</sup>

### VICTORY IN OUR DAY

**1 Peter 3:21**, "Baptism, which corresponds to this [Noah's Ark], now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ..."

Noah's ark is a wonderful picture of Jesus Christ. God told Noah to enter the ark. It must have taken an act of faith for him to do this: The ark was on dry ground, and there was no sign of rain in the sky! But Noah believed God's promise and acted on it. He gathered his family and got into the ark. Then God closed the door, and the judgment He had spoken about began. Rain fell from the heavens, and springs of water rose from the earth. The ark rose, carrying Noah and his family safely through the judgment and into a new world.

**Baptism in Christ.** Here Peter says, you can be saved by getting into the true Ark, Jesus. He refers to baptism. Not water baptism, but baptism into Christ. In Christ we die to our old life. Our old life is judged with him. But we come out of the water unscathed like Noah and his family. It's not water baptism we need but Spirit baptism – regeneration. This is what produces a "good conscience."

**Baptism is the Sign of Identifying with Jesus.** Baptism is the sign of a person identifying fully with Jesus, and it is being "in Christ" that saves you.

### CHRIST VICTORIOUS OVER ALL!

**1 Peter 3:22**, "Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him."

Christ is exalted in his ascension. The primary significance of Jesus ascension to the right hand of God the Father is that his sacrifice for sin and sinners is accepted. No hurt or harm can come to the anyone who puts their trust in Jesus. Sin is defeated. Death is dead. The devil is bound and soon to be cast into the bottomless pit.

Peter makes the point that Satan and the demonic host are completely defeated. All the fallen angels and demonic authorities and powers are now subject to Christ. There is nothing holding back Christ from saving his people from their sin. So go proclaim the Gospel. God give an answer for how God saved you. We are all called to do this. Jesus is exalted as Victor over all creation! Go preach the Gospel to every creature.

<sup>12</sup> Colin S. Smith. *10 Keys to Unlock the Christian Life* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010), 80.

### **Conclusion**

What can we say to all this? It's God who saves. It's Christ who can give eternal life to your loved ones and neighbors. Whether he saves only eight people, or eight hundred thousand people, salvation is of the Lord.

Come to Jesus! If you are here without Christ, he is mighty to save. The day may be hard like Noah's day, but Jesus can easily save you. Christian, tell the world that Jesus saves! Be ready to give an answer for Jesus!

### **Invitation**

For the unbeliever: you need to come to Christ and be saved. For the believer: you need to surrender to Christ anew. Before you can speak for Christ you must sanctify him in your heart as Almighty God. A full surrender is required for God to use you in loving and transforming the lost.

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SOLI DEO GLORIA

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