

FBC POWELL, 6-23-19 AM NOTES
"The Conquering Christ"
1 Peter 3:18-22
14 in Series, "Standing Firm in the True Grace of God"

I. Christ's Conquering Suffering (v. 18)

A. The Purpose of His Suffering (v. 18a)

1 Peter 2:22 (NASB) "Who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth."

The doctrine of justification is that we are **declared righteous** or **just** before a holy God through faith in Christ and having His righteousness imputed to us (put on our account).

Romans 3:10 (NASB) "There is none righteous, not even one."

Revelation 13:8b (NKJV) "...the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

Matthew 26:39 (NASB) "And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.'"

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NASB) "He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf..."

Isaiah 53:10a (NASB) "But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting *Him* to grief..."

"But how could Jesus suffer an eternity of hell in a matter of hours? Because He, being infinite, suffered in a finite period of time what we, being finite, would suffer in an infinite period of time. The sins of the world were distilled upon Jesus, and eternity was compressed upon Him."
—Adrian Rogers

B. The Provision of His Suffering (v. 18b)

Hebrews 1:3b (NASB) "... When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Hebrews 10:14 (NASB) "For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified."

John 19:30b (NASB) "It is finished!"

"The cross is not a compromise, but a substitution, not a cancellation, but a satisfaction, not a wiping off, but a wiping out in blood, and agony and death. Thus mercy does not cheat justice."
—Oswald Sanders

C. The Pleasure From His Suffering (v. 18c)

The cross was not primarily about escaping Hell; it was primarily about bringing us to God.

John 14:6 (NASB) "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."

Psalms 16:11b (NASB) "...In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever."

II. Christ's Conquering Sermon (v. 19)

Luke 23:46b (NASB) "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit..."

A. To Whom Did Jesus Preach?

2 Peter 2:4 (NASB) "For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment."

"Hell" – *Tartarus*

Jude 1:6 (NASB) "And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day."

B. What Did Jesus Preach?

Colossians 2:15 (NASB) "When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him."

III. Christ's Conquering Symbols (vv. 20-21)

A. The Ark

B. Baptism

1 Corinthians 12:13 (NASB) "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit."

1 Peter 3:21 (NKJV) "There is also an **antitype** which now saves us--baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

Antitype – "In the Bible, somebody or something considered as being foreshadowed by or having striking similarities to an earlier person or thing."

IV. Christ's Conquering Supremacy (v. 22)

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead." — Partial Apostles Creed

Sermon 14: The Conquering Christ

1 Peter 3:18-22

In this text, Peter focuses on the accomplishments of Christ's suffering on the cross. Let me warn you that this is a difficult passage – many would say that it is one of the most difficult passages in the New Testament. We will see in this passage not only the suffering of Christ, but also the glorious accomplishments of His suffering. This passage is about way more than "Christ

died for our sins.” That truth is life changing, but this passage goes deep into explaining much more that was accomplished in Christ’s death and resurrection.

I have entitled this message, *The Conquering Christ*. In this message we will see Jesus as the One who conquered sin as our substitute, overcame the Devil and his demons, and is now in Heaven at the right hand of the Father with angels and authorities and powers subject to Him! Don’t allow your mind to shut down because many of these truths are difficult. My prayer is that your capacity for worshipping the Savior will be increased as we focus on the conquering Christ.

I told you these are deep truths that require us to roll up our selves and examine these glorious truths one at a time. We must be very careful because several false teachings come out of this passage. I am convinced that if Peter could see some of the false doctrines that have come from this passage that he would be justifiably angry. Stay with me through these difficult passages and you will be blessed as your capacity for worshipping the Savior will be increased.

I. Christ’s Conquering Suffering (v. 18)

This is a verse packed with gospel dynamite. It describes what Jesus’ death on the cross and His subsequent resurrection accomplished! We learn that Jesus died an excruciating death on a Roman cross. His physical sufferings have been documented from a medical standpoint and these sufferings are beyond anything that we can imagine. I would never take anything away from His agonizing physical death, but the fact is that thousands of other people were crucified. The Romans did not hesitate to use crucifixion as a means of capital punishment for the worst of criminals who were not Roman citizens. Yet, Jesus’ suffering and death was unique. This verse spells out for us why His crucifixion was different from and infinitely worse than the thousands of others who were crucified.

A. The Purpose of His Suffering (v. 18a)

The thing that sets Jesus’ crucifixion apart from all the other crucifixions is found in those little words “*for sins*.” Whose sins? Peter has already told us concerning Jesus in 1 Peter 2:22: “who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth.” We get a clarification in 1 Peter 3:18 with the words “the just for the unjust.” Here we see clearly that Jesus’ death was a *substitution*. He was just and yet He died for, died in the place of those who were unjust. What is meant by “just” and “unjust”? In many translations it is translated “the righteous for the unrighteous” (ESV, HCSB, NIV).

To be just or righteous means to be in right standing and to be at peace with God. Peter is referring to the doctrine of *justification*. The doctrine of justification is that we are *declared righteous* or *just* before a holy God through faith in Christ and having His righteousness imputed to us (put on our account). The fact is that only Jesus Christ was and is righteous (in good standing) on His own merits. All the rest of mankind is lumped together in the indictment of Romans 3:10: “There is none righteous, not even one.” Jesus, the righteous one suffered as a substitute for the unjust or unrighteous ones. This truth is called by theologians, “the substitutionary atonement of Christ.” Christ took my place to atone for my sin.

Let’s look at the word “died” or as in most translations “suffered”. What is the essence of the suffering and death that Jesus Christ, the just One, endured for the unjust? As I stated earlier, it was physical, but it was much more than that. The suffering started before the trial and before the flogging and before the actual nailing of Jesus to the cross. Before He was conceived in a virgin’s womb, the pre-incarnate God the Son knew that He would die as a substitute for the

unjust. Revelation 13:8b (NKJV): “...the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” The cross was planned before sin came into the world, before the creation of time – before the world was created.

What was the true suffering of Christ – a suffering that went way beyond the physical agony? It had to do with a cup that He must drink. Matthew 26:39: “And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, ‘My Father, if it is possible, let *this cup* pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.’” The most important suffering of Jesus was in drinking the contents of this cup. When on the cross, Jesus took upon Himself the sins of all who would come to and trust completely in Him. That taking of our sin is described as drinking from a cup, and the cup that He drank from was the full wrath of God without mixture of mercy that our sins required. We read in 2 Corinthians 5:21: “He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf...”

On the cross, He took the wrath of God as our substitute. Isaiah 53:10a: “But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting *Him* to grief...” That wrath of God poured upon His Son involved a separation from God the Father and that involves a mystery that we cannot comprehend, but we know it involved suffering that is beyond any suffering before or since. That is why Jesus cried out on the cross “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46).

If the wrath of God toward sin involved eternity in hell separated from God, how could Jesus Christ take our deserved wrath and yet suffer that separation for a finite period of time? I think Dr. Adrian Rogers said it best, “But how could Jesus suffer an eternity of hell in a matter of hours? Because He, being infinite, suffered in a finite period of time what we, being finite, would suffer in an infinite period of time. The sins of the world were distilled upon Jesus, and eternity was compressed upon Him.” [Adrian Rogers, *The Passion of Life and the Person of Christ* page 24-25]

The purpose of the death of Christ was that He might suffer and die as our substitute, that He might bear what we deserved.

B. The Provision of His Suffering (v. 18b)

The provision of His suffering is found in that word “once”. The Old Testament sacrifices were never finished. There was more sin and more sacrifices. Hebrews 1:3b: “...When He had made purification of sins, He *sat down* at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” That sitting down means that He was finished. There were no seats in the part of the temple where the sacrifices were offered. The Old Testament priests never sat down because they were never finished. Speaking of Jesus, we read in Hebrews 10:14: “For by *one* offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.” When Jesus died on the cross, He said in John 19:30b: “It is finished!” Dr Oswald Sanders said: “The cross is not a compromise, but a substitution, not a cancellation but a satisfaction, not a wiping off but a wiping out in blood, and agony and death. Thus mercy does not cheat justice.” [Oswald Sanders, *The Incomparable Christ*, page 153]

C. The Pleasure from His Suffering (v. 18c)

I believe that one of the key phrases in this verse that is often overlooked is the phrase “...that He might bring us to God...” The primary good news of the Gospel is that we are made right with God and thus we can now know Him and glorify him by enjoying Him forever. This is the good news! Jesus drank the cup of God’s wrath for our sins that He might bring us to God. The cross was not primarily about escaping Hell; it was primarily about bringing us to God. That word “bring” is so interesting. It means “to introduce” or “give access”. In Greek culture, powerful

kings had an “introducer”. No one could get access to the king except through the introducer. Jesus is our introducer! He said in John 14:6: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” He suffered for us that we might be brought to God to glorify Him by loving and enjoying Him forever. Psalms 16:11b: “... In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.”

II. Christ’s Conquering Sermon (v. 19)

It is amazing how many false doctrines have come out of this verse. Let’s come humbly to this passage asking for God’s guidance and asking Him to bless us by what it is teaching. The first question we have to answer is, “Who is referred to by the phrase ‘in which’? It is referring back to “the spirit” in verse 18. The word “spirit” can refer to either the Holy Spirit or the spirit of man. Whether it is capitalized or not (meaning it is the Holy Spirit) is an interpretation call of the translators.

I agree with the translations (ESV, NASB) that do not capitalize “spirit”. I think this is referring to Jesus’ spirit and not the Holy Spirit. On the cross, Jesus said in Luke 23:46b: “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.” What happened during those three days when Jesus’ body lay dead in the grave and He was alive in the spirit? To determine what happened, we need to ask two questions.

A. To Whom Did Jesus Preach?

The answer is clear. It was to “...the spirits now in prison” (v. 19b). Who are these spirits in prison that Jesus preached to? When the New Testament refers to people, it generally calls them “souls” or “persons” (see verse 20). Generally, “spirits” refer to angels or demons (fallen angels). I think the evidence (verse 20) points to the fact that Peter is referring to a group of fallen angels (demons) that committed such horrible acts in the days before the flood that God put them in a special place of incarceration. 2 Peter 2:4: “For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment.” The word for “hell” is one used only here in the Scriptures. It is the Greek word *Tartarus* and referred to a special place of punishment. Not all demons are there because many are loose on the earth doing Satan’s bidding. However, a special group of demons are there. Listen to Jude 1:6: “And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day.” I don’t have time to get into the special sin of these fallen angels, but it had to do with trying to corrupt the seed of the woman that God promised in Genesis 3:15 would crush Satan and bring redemption. We see in verse 20 that their vile actions were a large part of the reason that God sent the flood and wiped out all humanity with the exception of Noah and his wife and his three sons and their wives. While Jesus’ body was in the tomb, He preached to demonic spirits incarcerated in a special place called *Tartarus* but often translated “hell”.

B. What Did Jesus Preach?

The subject of His preaching certainly was not an opportunity for these demon spirits to be forgiven! There are at least two words in the Greek language for preaching or proclaiming. One word is commonly used for preaching or proclaiming the gospel – the good news. The word used here simply means to announce. It was used of a herald that came to the town square to make an announcement. I think that without a doubt it was a proclamation of victory. It was probably included in what was being referred to in Colossians 2:15: “When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.”

Hell was likely having a holiday when Jesus was crucified and His body lay dead in that grave, but He wasn't going to stay there and what Satan thought was his greatest victory sealed his doom. It was a proclamation of victory over the most vile of the enemy. The Bible doesn't tell us exactly what He proclaimed but I imagine it was something like this, "Party's over! I am even now alive in the spirit and come Sunday morning the body is walking out of that grave. The sin debt is paid; death and sin and Satan are defeated! You lose!"

III. Christ's Conquering Symbols (vv. 20-21)

Having referred to Noah, Peter proceeds to use Noah and his family as an analogy of the victorious salvation in Christ.

A. The Ark

The ark is in so many ways a picture of the salvation that we have in Christ. The water was God's judgment and those in the ark – Noah and his family – were safe from the judgment of God in the ark. Even so, in Christ we are safe from God's judgment because He has taken our judgment for us. It is unfortunate that the KJV translates the last part of verse 20 "saved by water". The correct translation is "through water". Since water was the instrument of God's judgment, he was saying that we are saved through the judgment by being in our ark, Christ.

B. Baptism

Baptism, like the ark is a representation of salvation. The phrase "corresponding to that" in verse 21 ties baptism to the ark in verse 20. He is saying, "just as the ark pictures or illustrates salvation in Christ, baptism is also a symbol, an illustration, a word picture. What does baptism in water symbolize or picture? It pictures the baptism of the Holy Spirit who immerses us into the body of Christ at the time of our salvation. 1 Corinthians 12:13: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body..." Just as Noah and His family were saved by being in the ark, even so we are saved from God's judgment by being in Christ – identified with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection. Water baptism is the form, the picture, the antitype (NKJV) of the baptism by the Holy Spirit into Christ. That word "antitype" is defined in the dictionary as "in the Bible, somebody or something considered as being foreshadowed by or having striking similarities to an earlier person or thing." That's why we emphasize baptism by immersion. Baptism ought to look like what it pictures. It pictures being immersed into Christ. That immersion into Christ saves us from God's judgment.

IV. Christ's Conquering Supremacy (v. 22)

The right hand is the place of power and authority. After He proclaimed His victory to the demons in Hell, He rose from the dead bodily and is over every created thing (angels and authorities and powers). He now reigns as supreme overall.

Conclusion

One of the earliest creeds of Christianity is *The Apostles Creed*. Pay attention to the first part of this ancient creed:

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into

heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

Amen! Thank You Lord Jesus!

NASB (New American Standard Bible)

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