



1Peter - Lesson 3B

Chapter 3:17-22

814 Arion Parkway, #410
San Antonio, Texas 78216
210.319.5055

©2008. Verse By Verse Ministry International.
All rights reserved

versebyverseministry.org/lessons/1peter_lesson_3b

- Peter knows he's writing to a church under the threat of persecution
 - And he is writing to encourage perseverance, and faith in the face of that coming storm
 - And last week we ended with an exhortation
 - Even if you suffer for righteousness, you are blessed
- Another way to put it is you can't measure God's pleasure nor your blessedness on the basis of earthly bliss
 - ▪ True blessedness is measured on an eternal scale, and we are truly blessed no matter what kind of circumstances we find ourselves in during the here and now
 - And sometimes bad things happen to good people because it is God's will
 - Peter transitions out of that discussion today with verses 17-18

1Pet. 3:17 For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.

1Pet. 3:18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

- The reality of living in a sinful, fallen world where the enemy rules for a time and where men follow after their depraved hearts is one we will experience
 - Trial and sadness and disappointment
 - And we will see bad things come our way
 - But it's much better that those bad things come because we are doing what's right than if it comes because we do what's wrong
 - When we bring bad things upon ourselves by our own sin, there is no praise to be found in that circumstance
 - We merely suffer at our own hand
 - But when we suffer for righteousness sake, God can do good things through us
 - And Peter once again uses Jesus as the ultimate example of how God can use our suffering for righteousness sake as a blessing
- In verse 18 Peter says "For Christ died once for all"
 - That little word at the beginning is no accident nor inconsequential
 - The word is *hoti*, and it has the effect of connecting the prior thought to the following thought
 - In other words, Peter is about to prove the prior statement with this example
 - This is important because it gives us a pattern to use to decode his example
 - Peter's principle was that suffering for doing good was better than suffering for doing bad

- And we can now examine Christ's suffering to see how His suffering could lead to benefit
- He died once for all
 - This phrase in Greek places the emphasis on the word once and not on the phrase for all
 - This means that Peter's point was not the extent of Christ's atonement but rather the finality of it
 - He died once and for all
 - He died to put the issue of sin to rest
 - He was the righteous and he died for the unrighteous
 - His death was useful to God in the very fact that it was a sinless death
 - We call this substitutionary atonement
- Christ was sinless in His life
 - He never violated any commandment or instruction of His Father
 - This is the definition of holy, sinless
 - Because He died without cause, Jesus' death became a payment for sin that He Himself never needed to make
 - He had no sin, so He never owed the price of sin, which is death (Romans 6:23)
 - Peter says that Jesus was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit
 - You can find a variety of interpretations for this phrase, but the meaning is really very straightforward considering the context of the verse
 - Basically, it describes how Jesus took our place
 - And as a man, Jesus necessarily suffered death in the same way that you or I were doomed to experience it were we to be judged for our sin
 - He died a human, fleshly death and suffered the penalty of sin which was spiritual separation from the Father
 - But because Jesus was sinless, the Father could be just in raising Him back to life in the spirit
 - You can understand the meaning of this statement by considering its contrast with the earlier statement of the flesh
 - Jesus died as a man would die, and then He was raised as the eternal are to be raised – in the spirit or in a new eternal form never to die again
 - The phrase is best translated “in the spirit” not “by the Spirit”
 - Based on Jesus' free payment, the Father could use that payment to cover the sins of you and I
- Consider that for just a moment
 - Jesus could have resisted the Romans and the Jewish leaders who desired to kill Him
 - Like the readers in Peter's day, Jesus saw the persecution coming and He feared it

- His experience in the Garden of Gethsemane demonstrated how much Jesus experienced and suffered fear and dread over the coming persecution
- Nevertheless, Jesus modeled for the Church exactly what Peter is telling His readers to do here
 - He did good, meaning doing the Father's will
 - And Jesus suffered for doing good
 - And the good He did saved you and I
- And as ambassadors, we are called to do the same as God requires
- Where Peter goes next includes some of the most controversial verses in the New Testament epistles, simply because they are difficult to translate
 - But like so much of the Bible, a correct translation is built on a firm understanding of what has come before in the pages of the Bible
 - What Peter is going to do in the remaining verses of Chapter 3 is something akin to free association
 - One thought leads to another then another
 - Or in this case Peter is going to find a way to bring the whole circle of thought back to a common point that ties the entire chain together in an amazing sequence of Biblical events
 - What I'm saying is that Peter is going to take several loose ends present in Old Testament scripture together with the death and resurrection of Christ and tie them all together to make his point
- Let's take the next section a verse at a time beginning with verse 19

1Pet. 3:19 in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison,

- In verse 19, Peter begins to expound a little on his previous statement of how Jesus took our place in death
 - He's describing what happened to Christ as He acted as our surrogate in death
 - Only His behavior was a little different given the fact that He is God and had no sin Himself
 - So He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison
 - First thing to notice is that Jesus went somewhere
 - This is an actual physical place that is not earth itself
 - And furthermore Peter says this is a place that continues to exist as it is a place where spirits dwell even now, he says
 - Secondly, in this place there are spirits dwelling
 - This is a place they live
 - It's not a place that spirits come and go but rather it is a place that a group of spirits are living

- And more than that, they are confined
 - The place is called a prison (*phylake*)
 - This is the same Greek word Paul uses numerous times to describe his own imprisonment
- So what kind of place is this?
 - Well from what we know so far, it fits the description of Hades which is a part of Sheol
 - Throughout the Old Testament, there are references to a holding place of the dead called Sheol
 - Based on many references from Genesis through the prophets, the place of Sheol is the holding place of the dead
 - It has two parts or sections, and those sections are most clearly seen in the story Jesus tells in Luke 16 of Lazarus and the rich man
 - On one side is Abraham's bosom, the place for the departed Old Testament saints
 - They were held there in comfort awaiting the atonement of the Messiah
 - The other side of Sheol is a place the Bible calls Hades
 - This is the place we commonly call Hell
 - It holds the souls of all unbelievers held in torment
- When Jesus died He descended into this holding place of the dead
 - Since Jesus was not due punishment for His sin and since He is God, He used His time in Sheol for a unique purpose
 - According to Peter He went and made proclamation to the spirits
 - Interestingly, the Greek word for spirit here is most commonly used to describe the angelic or demonic realm
 - It is uncommon to use it in reference to a human spirit
 - And the word for proclamation (*kerusso*) can also be translated preach, but Peter never uses *kerusso* when speaking about preaching the gospel
 - Instead, Peter always uses the word *euangelizo*
 - So he doesn't mean preach in the sense of evangelize
 - He means some other kind of proclamation made to angelic or demonic spirits in Sheol
 - To understand exactly what's going on here, we need to move on to our second clue in verse 20

1Pet. 3:20 who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.

- Peter continues the Greek sentence with a clause describing the spirits

- So now we get to learn a little more about Jesus' audience during His time in Sheol
 - They were disobedient spirits
 - Well, immediately this eliminates the angelic realm
 - Peter must be talking about the demonic realm of spirits
- Then Peter's next free association is that their disobedience occurred during a time of God's patience in the days of Noah
 - So immediately we're taken back to Chapter 6 of Genesis to understand who these disobedient spirits were

Gen. 6:1 Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them,

Gen. 6:2 that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose.

Gen. 6:3 Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years."

Gen. 6:4 The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.

- Genesis 6 describes a time prior to the flood when men had begun to fill the earth
 - And at some point the sons of God began to mate with the daughters of men
 - The phrase "sons of God" is *ben elohim*, and it is used here and in Job
 - When it appears in Job, it refers to angels
 - And that's what it means here as well
 - Disobedient angels, which we call demons, began to mate physically with women
 - This is disturbing, of course, but it shouldn't seem impossible when you consider how angels appear as men and interact with mankind throughout the Bible
 - In verse 4 we're told that the product of these unholy unions were a race called Nephilim
 - The word in Hebrew means giants
 - And these were a race of mighty men who had renown for their might and size
 - They were a distortion of the human race and they were an unacceptable pollution of God's creation
- Now before we go further in Peter's chain of thought, we need to understand why it was that the demonic realm took this extreme step in the days of Noah
 - The reason goes all the way back to the beginning of Genesis

- In Chapter 3 God casts judgment on Satan for His deception in the garden

Gen. 3:15 And I will put enmity

**Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her seed;
He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel.”**

- In pronouncing a curse on the serpent in the garden, who was Satan in the form of a snake, God makes a promise
 - He refers to the seed of woman
 - Woman don't have seed in the Biblical sense, since this term is reserved for the man
 - So this would be a unique person, one who comes from the woman without the need for a man's seed
 - A virgin birth, in other words
 - This seed would bruise the serpent on the head
 - And the serpent will have opportunity to bruise the woman's seed on the heel
- This promise is called the *proto evangelium*: the first time the gospel is preached
 - What God says to the serpent in the garden is that He would send a seed from woman to destroy the serpent
 - And the serpent would have opportunity to strike the woman's seed on the heel
 - But this seed would be appointed to strike the serpent on the head
 - The meaning of these statements hinges on the difference between head and heel
 - A blow to the heel is rarely if ever a fatal blow
 - While a blow to the head is likely to be fatal
- After that promise, Satan began working to obstruct the possibility of the birth of this seed to prevent his own destruction
 - ■ He started by using Cain to murder Abel in the thought that Abel was the seed of the woman, Eve
 - Later Satan realized that the seed wouldn't come for some time, so he and his demons began to corrupt the population of men in the hope of ruining God's plan
 - Satan's final tactic was to use Herod to kill all the male children after the wise men described the birth of the Messiah
- So, based on the reference to Noah's day, we now can be clear that these were demons, disobedient angelic spirits, who tried to corrupt the human race in the days before the flood
 - These were the days when God was patient, waiting 120 years exactly as Noah built the ark
 - And the reference to the Ark leads Peter to his next free association

- He says that the ark was the means by which the Father brought a few righteous, safely through the waters of His judgment
 - Noah was obedient to God’s word, and yet he suffered persecution and humiliation during a hundred years as he built the ark
 - But because he was obedient, and though he suffered for it, nevertheless it was for his good and those of his family – and all mankind
- The ark he built in obedience became the instrument of his earthly salvation
 - And it preserved Noah and his family as God was pouring out judgment on the evil men and the demonic corruption that plagued the earth in his day
- This explains why they are now in prison
 - These demons became subject to the judgment of humanity once they took human form
 - Consequently, when the flood overtook them, they were brought down to Hades as are all unbelievers
 - And to this group Jesus made a proclamation
 - Given His audience were these demons who tried to corrupt the seed
 - It leads us to the conclusion that the proclamation that Jesus made to these spirits was the obvious point that their effort to defeat God’s anointed had failed
 - Since Christ’s very presence in Sheol was proof that the atonement had been made for sin
 - Satan’s defeat was assured
- The next free association clue comes in verse 21

1Pet. 3:21 Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

- Peter begins with the word “corresponding”, which is the Greek for antitype
 - He is calling Noah’s experience of escaping the flood in the ark a picture of baptism
 - The type Peter is describing is a deep one, and time won’t allow me to go into it in fullness
 - But the essence is fairly simple
 - The ark is a picture of Christ
 - Everything about it points to Christ
 - It is designed to allow those who place their trust in it to safely ride out God’s judgment
 - It has but one door we can enter and God closes the door behind us
 - It is covered in pitch, so that it will float, and the word for “pitch” in Hebrew is atonement

- There are numerous other connections as well, but you get the point
- Peter says that his readers were following a similar pattern when they were baptized
 - They had agreed to rest in Christ as their way to safely ride out God's judgment
 - And Peter clarifies that baptism is saving men by washing them clean, literally
 - He's referring to the washing away of sin from the flesh
 - The physical act of baptism doesn't wash away anything
 - No more than the physical ark granted Noah spiritual salvation either
 - But yet one follows from the other
 - Noah was willing to get into the ark because he believed God's promise that it would save him
 - Similarly, we are willing to be baptized because we believe that our faith in Christ will save us from judgment
- Yet that trust brings persecution in the days leading up to the flood
 - We are made to suffer in various ways at the hands of the enemy who is constantly looking for ways to war against the seed of woman
- But through that suffering, God was able to take the obedient seed of woman and turn His suffering to the good of all men who believe
 - And by His obedience, Jesus received His reward from the Father

1Pet. 3:22 who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

- What started as persecution and mocking and ultimately a death at the hands of the demonic realm
 - God purposed to turn into an act of good that He used to bring judgment to the demonic realm in prison
 - And then went further and used it as a means to bring men to glory
 - And finally, He was just to reward His obedient Son with the right to rule over all powers and authorities who once mocked Him and persecuted Him
- This is what God can do
 - And therefore, as Peter began in verse 17 of this great circle of thought...
 - It is better that if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right than for doing what is wrong
 - With Christ as our model and example, we should trust that even when persecution and trials come upon us
 - God has an eternal plan to reward us with good for the experience
 - And if we ever doubt the possibility that God could accomplish this in the midst of our circumstances

- We only need to remember what He was able to accomplish over millennia of time to fulfill His promise made in the Garden