



## 1 Peter Chapter Three

III 1 Peter 2:13-4:11 - Living as Aliens to Bring Glory to God in a Hostile World - (continues)

III.a 1 Peter 2:13-3:7 - Testifying to the gospel in the social order - (continues/concludes)

### Summary of Chapter Three

In this chapter Peter describes the duties that husbands and wives have with regard to each other, beginning with the duty of the wife (vv.1-7). He exhorts Christians to unity, love, compassion, peace, and patience under sufferings; to oppose the slanders of their enemies, not by returning evil for evil, or argument for argument, but by blessing; by a ready account of their faith and hope, and by keeping a good conscience (vv.8-17). To encourage them to this, he proposes the perfect example of Christ, who suffered, the just for the unjust, but yet punished the old world for their disobedience, and saved the few who were faithful in the days of Noah (vv.18-22).

III.a.ii 1 Peter 3:1-7 - Wives and Husbands

Here Peter is mainly addressing his teaching to believing wives, whose husbands were non-believers and states that, as per the cultural norm of his day that the wife should remain subject to her husband in such circumstances. He also shows that believing husbands with unbelieving wives should continue to show them honour in their unbelief.

<sup>1</sup> **Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives, <sup>2</sup> when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.**

### 1 Peter 3:1-2

For a Christian wife to have a different religion than her husband was quite astonishing for that culture. For example, the Greek historian Plutarch (AD46-127)

said, ‘A wife should not acquire her own friends, but should make her husband’s friends her own. The gods are the first and most significant friends. For this reason, it is proper for a wife to recognise only those gods whom her husband worships’ (Advice to Bride and Groom 19, Moralia 140D). Even though Peter calls on wives to submit to their husbands, it was a different, more affectionate submission than was common in that culture, for the wives’ devotion was first and foremost to Christ.

Her submission to her husband was the cultural norm and would help to bring peace and harmony to the relationship, which is what God requires of those who love him: <<*My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest*>> (Isaiah 32:18), and: <<*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone*>> (Romans 12:18). Submission was ordained by God immediately after The Fall: <<*To the woman he said, “I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you”*>> (Genesis 3:16), and has further apostolic agreement, for their cultural times at least: <<*Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord*>> (Ephesians 5:22), <<*Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord*>> (Colossians 3:18), and: <<*A woman should learn in quietness and full submission*>> (1 Timothy 2:11).

It is difficult to argue against a command of God and the dictates of men like Peter and Paul, but it would be a foolish man who did not recognise the spiritual gifts that his wife brings to their relationship and not to accept her in equal partnership in the eyes of God.

Husbands are to be the leaders in their homes: <<*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church – for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband*>> (Ephesians 5:21-33), and: <<*Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them*>> (Colossians 3:18-19), and wives are to be submissive to them, and follow their leadership. Refer to vv.5-6 as well.

If a wife has an unbelieving husband, those who do not believe the word, who is disobedient to the word, i.e. the Gospel, she should not try to pressure him into converting. Instead, her godly behaviour will testify without a word to the truth of the Gospel. There is no more powerful tool for winning souls to Christ than the

Word of God. Next to that is Godly conversation and lifestyle, especially in helping to convince an unbelieving spouse. Church goers who choose not to live their lives like true believers are a sure cause for turning people away from Christ, as it is called hypocrisy. Matthew Henry writes: “Where the hypocrites work ends, the true Christian’s work begins”. Paul, however, records that if an unbelieving spouse should desert the marital home then the believing partner need not try to be reconciled to them: <<***But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace***>> (1 Corinthians 7:15).

Your husbands. Scripture never says that women in general are to be subject to men in general, but it does affirm male headship in the home: <<***to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God***>> (Titus 2:5), and Paul states women are not to teach men in the church but are to submit and defer to male leadership. Scripture affirms the equality of man and woman as being made in the image of God: <<***So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them***>> (Genesis 1:27), and in v.7.

Peter speaks of the way that a believing wife can lead her husband to obedience in the faith simply by living out her faith in her everyday life. An example of this was the wife of St Augustine’s father who brought her husband to faith in just that way, and then her son Augustine in the way she was a mother to him. Although women were not called to formal teaching, they could teach very powerfully through their obedient lifestyle to Christ as they lived it out within the family home.

St Augustine of Hippo (AD354-430) was a Latin philosopher and theologian from the African Province of the Roman Empire and is generally considered to be one of the greatest Christian thinkers of all time. His writings were very influential in the development of Western Christianity and translations remain in print. According to his contemporary Jerome, Augustine ‘established anew the ancient Faith’.

<sup>3</sup> Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewellery and fine clothes. <sup>4</sup> Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.

#### 1 Peter 3:3-4

Your beauty should not come from outward adornment. Peter’s instructions here were common in his day, see Seneca, Epistles, To Helvia 16.3-4; Dio Chrysostom, Orations 7.117; Juvenal, Satire 6.457-463 and 490-511; Plutarch, Advice to Bride and Groom, Moralia 141E; Epictetus, Handbook p.40). Paul held a similar view to Peter: <<***I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes***>> (1 Timothy 2:9).

Such outward adorning can be witnessed in portraits and sculptures from the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, where the elaborate braiding of women’s hair and the wearing of

ostentatious jewellery was common in upper-class Roman society. In contrast to this, the Christian woman should focus on their inner, hidden beauty of the heart. What matters to God is the godly character of the wife, characterised by a gentle and quiet spirit. It is clear that Peter is not literally prohibiting all braiding of hair or all wearing of gold jewellery, because if this were the case, the same prohibition would apply also to wearing clothing! Instead, Peter warns against both an inordinate preoccupation with personal appearance and material excess in such matters.

Some commentators have argued that Peter is here forbidding women from making themselves outwardly attractive unless it is their husband's will that they do so, so as not to make themselves to appear to be a harlot. The church will be suitably dressed to attract Christ as her new husband: <<*I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband*>> (Revelation 21:2), but again it seems that Peter is focusing on the need for spiritual beauty which is inward. It does not seem that God would create women to be beautiful and then to hide such beauty, for beauty is on display throughout all creation and it should not be hidden. However, there is a clear distinction from making oneself look nice and being overtly sexual. There is also the issue of pride to consider.

The wicked queen Jezebel made herself up before going to meet her doom: <<*Then Jehu went to Jezreel. When Jezebel heard about it, she painted her eyes, arranged her hair and looked out of a window*>> (2 Kings 9:30). However, the wickedness of one woman should not be applied to all women who simply want to make themselves look and feel good; there is a clear distinction, as recently commented on. In fact, we read of Ruth who made herself presentable to the man she would go on to marry and was in no way censured for doing so: <<*One day Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, should I not try to find a home for you, where you will be well provided for? Is not Boaz, with whose servant girls you have been, a kinsman of ours? Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. Wash and perfume yourself, and put on your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do"*>> (Ruth 3:1-4).

Our outward appearance should be something that we care about and we should try to make the best of ourselves but for some people their appearance becomes a matter of pride and even a god in their lives. Our main focus should be on the inner person.

<sup>5</sup> For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands,

### 1 Peter 3:5

Hope in God is expressed in a wife honouring her husband by being submissive to him, as the venerable women in the OT did. A godly wife has inner beauty beyond description. It is not just God who should recognise the inner holiness of the

woman; a godly husband should see it too and be thankful to God for the gift of his wife.

<sup>6</sup> like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

### 1 Peter 3:6

Sarah obeyed Abraham. Peter describes Sarah's submission in terms of obedience. Such obedience does not mean the relationship between husbands and wives is like that of parents and children, but it does show that a wife is to follow her husband's direction and leadership.

God had met with Abraham to confirm his covenant promise to him: <<*Then the Lord said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son." Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing*>> (Genesis 18:10-11). In the culture of her day, Sarah expressed her submission by respectfully referring to Abraham as master: <<*So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?"*>> (Genesis 18:12).

Sarah calls Abraham her master or Lord in some translations, showing her honour to her husband. We also get a sign from God that he saw more equality in the relationship than some men wish to acknowledge: <<*But God said to him, "Do not be so distressed about the boy and your maidservant. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned*>> (Genesis 21:12). For God seems to have created us equally: <<*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them*>> (Genesis 1:27), although he also noted the dangers of listening to a wife without weighing up the consequences: <<*To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life*>> (Genesis 3:17), hence the need for partnership!

Do not fear. Peter calls on wives to model themselves after such godly women, not fearing that harm will come to them, but trusting God as Sarah did.

Some see that giving way to fear is a fear of a dominant and perhaps physically abusive husband. However, culturally many pagan women were more attuned to the superstitions of their era and were often fearful of such things, whereas a Christian woman who lives her life appropriately caring for her family and her neighbours is doing what is pleasing in God's sight and therefore has nothing to fear.

<sup>7</sup> Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder

**your prayers.**

### 1 Peter 3:7

Husbands too have a duty to their wives that must not be neglected if they are to consider themselves as followers of Jesus.

Peter's advice to husbands is compressed, perhaps because he addresses at more length those under authority who are more likely to be mistreated, i.e. slaves and wives. The word translated in the same way or likewise is merely a transition (v.1), and: <<*Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble"*>> (1 Peter 5:5); it does not mean husbands should submit to their wives, since Scripture never teaches this, refer back to Ephesians 5:21-33 and comments on vv.1-2.

To live in a considerate manner probably focuses on living in accord with God's will, which includes understanding the needs of a wife. Interpreters differ over whether weaker partner, or vessel in many translations, means weaker in terms of delegated authority, emotions, or physical strength. Peter is probably thinking of the general truth that men are physically stronger than women and may be tempted to threaten their wives through physical or verbal abuse.

It is recognised that women generally are physically weaker than men. They are also culturally weaker, especially in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century and before, where they were dependent initially on their father and then their husband in order to live. The husband would earn a living and the woman care for the home. Peter is saying this does not give the man the right to rule inappropriately over his wife for she is a weaker partner and not a servant, other than an equal servant in the Lord. The husband's role is to provide for, protect, support and guide his wife - not destroy her either physically or psychologically. Mutual respect for each other and honouring one another is as much a part of marriage as is love. Such a relationship is also pleasing to God and is an act of worship.

Women and men share an equal destiny as heirs of the gracious gift of life. Peter does not think women are inferior to men, for both are equally made in God's image: <<*There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus*>> (Galatians 3:28). If husbands do not treat their wives in a godly way, the Lord will pay no heed to their prayers.

Peter seems to believe that finding unnecessary fault in one's spouse rather than accepting them for their better qualities, and for what each offers to the other, would hinder their relationship not just with each other but also with God and thus would hinder their prayers.

King Lemuel paints a picture of an ideal Christian wife, the work she does for her family and her community, and the support she provides for her husband: <<*A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies. Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life. She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands. She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from*>>

*afar. She gets up while it is still dark; she provides food for her family and portions for her servant girls. She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard. She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks. She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night. In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers. She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy. When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet. She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple. Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land. She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes. She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come. She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue. She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: "Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all." Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate>> (Proverbs 31:10-31).*

Scripture is full of accounts where women were prominent in the workings of God's salvation plan. As well as Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah along with their maids Bilhah and Zilpah, the faithful wives of the Patriarchs, whose children went on to become the senior tribal leaders of Israel, we have many others who played a key role. Examples include:

- Deborah who became one of the judges of Israel before they had kings: <<Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time>> (Judges 4:4).
- Mary, the mother of Jesus, was still a virgin when the angel told her she would have a child. This is something that would shatter her reputation but she simply accepted it: <<"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her>> (Luke 1:38).
- Lydia was a business women, whom Paul encountered in Philippi and showed generous hospitality: <<When she and the members of her household were baptised, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us>> (Acts 16:15). The first church in Philippi was in her home.
- Mary Magdalene was the first person to encounter the Risen Lord Jesus at the garden tomb: <<At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realise that it was Jesus. "Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher)>> (John 20:14-16).

### III.b 1 Peter 3:8-4:11 - Responding to suffering in a godly way

Believers are called to live harmonious lives (vv.8-12), are to endure hardship, knowing that they will receive a final reward (vv.13-17). Christ suffered at his death but was raised from the dead, and thus has triumphed over all demonic powers (vv.18-22). Christians are urged to give themselves wholly to God, being willing to suffer and do what is right (1 Peter 4:1-6). Expectation of the end times should motivate believers to live in a way that pleases God and to exercise their spiritual gifts (1 Peter 4:7-11).

#### III.b.i 1 Peter 3:8-22 - Suffering for Doing Good

Believers are called to serve Christ in any capacity they can. They are to live their lives as good witnesses to the Gospel, both in word and deed, and must be prepared to give an account to anyone who requests more information about the hope they are living for. Equally, they should be prepared to defend the Gospel to anyone who may challenge them over their beliefs. The latter may frequently abuse believers, either verbally or physically. Believers are to accept such suffering with grace and fortitude, for that was the manner in which their beloved Lord suffered on their account.

**<sup>8</sup> Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. <sup>9</sup> Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.**

#### 1 Peter 3:8-9

Finally, all of you concludes this section in some translations and provides a transition from the preceding specific instructions to a list of godly virtues that all believers are called to exemplify at all times. Note that it is all and not just some who are called to obey.

Live in harmony: <<Tell him this is what the Lord Almighty says: 'Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the Lord. It is he who will build the temple of the Lord, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two'>> (Zechariah 6:12-13), and: <<Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited>> (Romans 12:16). Those who share faith in Christ are called to live with one mind in regard to the main aspects of that faith, and not to quarrel over issues of doctrine, tradition or procedure. Christ is central and is above all. We are his brothers, as well as loyal subjects, and are called to live and love as brothers.

Peter agrees with Paul's thinking that Christian partnerships should have one mind, one spirit, one thought, so that what seems good and right to the one is also good and right to the other in all things. But within this, it is clear that we cannot all do the same work for we have different gifts and different callings, but we are to be together in one aim and that is to bring glory to God.

**Be compassionate and humble.** Compassion and true humility should be qualities that are natural to all those who follow Christ. Compassion should be shown to all those in society who are in need of love and support for whatever reason, irrespective of their own beliefs or faith. Jesus teaches us to be so: <<*For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me*>> (Matthew 25:35). Being sympathetic and compassionate is not about feeling sorry for someone, which may well come across as condescending. It is about having a genuine heart-felt concern for the person's situation and a desire to share in their suffering in the same way as we would wish to share in the joy of others when all is going well in their lives.

Although it was clearly ordained by God, it required the compassion of a young Egyptian princess for Moses to even survive: <<*The baby's older sister found herself a vantage point a little way off and watched to see what would happen to him. Pharaoh's daughter came down to the Nile to bathe; her maidens strolled on the bank. She saw the basket-boat floating in the reeds and sent her maid to get it. She opened it and saw the child – a baby crying! Her heart went out to him. She said, "This must be one of the Hebrew babies"*>> (Exodus 2:4-6 The Message).

Humility is one of the most important aspects of fulfilling God's will in a believer's life, although false humility dishonours God and is a sin. We need to accept that, in God's sight, all believers are equal and the work they do is equal, whether they are a husband or a wife, a slave or a master, a church leader or a member of the congregation, an evangelist or a tea maker. Each has their place, each is valued by God and should be valued by their brothers and sisters. That some have chosen a different path, especially through different church traditions, does not make one better or worse than the other, providing their heart's motivation is in extending the Kingdom of God and to bring worship to him alone. In trying to project one's own ideas above those of another tends to lead us to a place where God's will is sidelined and men find themselves striving for something they believe to be better. Paul warns of this as well: <<*But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ*>> (2 Corinthians 11:3). We must avoid doing Satan's work for him but keep our eyes firmly fixed on Christ and stay as close to him as we can: <<*And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus*>> (Philippians 4:7). We are not called to understand that which has not been revealed but simply accept it in faith.

**Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult.** The Gospel gives us the greatest example of how we should conduct ourselves and that is in the manner of Jesus himself. He is so distinctly portrayed that we may trace this virtue especially in him. The Pharisees assaulted him, others took him and abused him, yet he never became enraged. Although the apostles, it seems Peter in particular in the Gospel accounts, did stumble and act a little foolishly here and there, Jesus nowhere assails them with angry words, but is ever courteous, although at times there is a

sense of frustration at their lack of faith. In doing so he attracted them and us towards himself. The prophet had told us: <<*He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him*>> (Isaiah 53:2b), and yet angels and wise men were drawn to see the new born baby and infant Jesus, grown businessmen gave up everything to follow him: <<*So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him*>> (Luke 5:11), and: <<*After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him*>> (Luke 5:27-28). Today, although we never see the man or aurally hear his voice, yet we perceive him and are drawn ever closer to him if we abide by his living Word and our hearts are open to the work of his Holy Spirit.

If someone tries to hurt or mistreat us, the Christian response should always be one of love for the persecutor. Paul too writes in this vein of thought: <<*Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good*>> (Romans 12:17-21).

As noted, there were times when Jesus was clearly irritated or frustrated at the lack of faith, perception or understanding of his closest disciples. There were times when he had to publically rebuke them for the benefit of their individual growth and also as a lesson to all, including disciples throughout the generations since then.

Peter had on several occasions been the object of Jesus' rebuke in this manner, such as when he said he would prevent Jesus' destiny with the Cross: <<*But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men"*>> (Mark 8:33), and, in fear of his own safety, he would deny three times even knowing Jesus: <<*He denied it again, with an oath: "I don't know the man!"*>> (Matthew 26:72), yet Jesus went on to fully reconcile Peter to himself, in love and grace: <<*The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep*>> (John 21:17). Peter, as a church elder, evangelist and apostle, went on to feed many sheep, and continues to do so through these words today.

God had made a promise to Abraham: <<*"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you"*>> (Genesis 12:3). Part of the great nation that would come from Abraham's offspring was the seed of promise, i.e. Jesus the Christ. We are now part of that great nation by accepting Christ as our Lord and Saviour and therefore we are called to be a blessing to all the peoples of the earth, irrespectively of how they may choose

to treat us.

Those who bless others will receive a blessing from God, as Peter explains in the next verses.

<sup>10</sup> For,

“Whoever would love life  
and see good days  
must keep his tongue from evil  
and his lips from deceitful speech.

<sup>11</sup> He must turn from evil and do good;  
he must seek peace and pursue it.

<sup>12</sup> For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous  
and his ears are attentive to their prayer,  
but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

### 1 Peter 3:10-12

Peter draws on Psalm 34:12-16, see comment made on 1 Peter 2:3. Psalm 34 is a prophetic writing of David, warning especially of the dangers of the tongue. We are called not only to speak kindly, if truthfully, to and of our friends, and in the same manner to everyone. The tongue can be a potent weapon in the armoury of the believer if used to appropriately share the Gospel but it is also the most dangerous organ that can be so damaging to all if not carefully controlled. Indeed, James speaks in some detail of the dangers: <<*Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be*>> (James 3:5-10).

The bible is full of passages that describe both appropriate and inappropriate use of the tongue, including: <<*You love every harmful word, O you deceitful tongue!*>> (Psalm 52:4), <<*My tongue will tell of your righteous acts all day long, for those who wanted to harm me have been put to shame and confusion*>> (Psalm 71:24), <<*A man who lacks judgment derides his neighbour, but a man of understanding holds his tongue*>> (Proverbs 11:12), <<*The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit*>> (Proverbs 15:4), <<*“They make ready their tongue like a*

bow, to shoot lies; it is not by truth that they triumph in the land. They go from one sin to another; they do not acknowledge me,” declares the LORD>> (Jeremiah 9:3), <<Her rich men are violent; her people are liars and their tongues speak deceitfully>> (Micah 6:12), and: <<“Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit.” “The poison of vipers is on their lips”>> (Romans 3:13).

To love life and see good days is the result of the blessing (v.9) of God in one’s life. Peter says this will come to the person who will keep his tongue from evil and who will turn away from evil and do good. Obedience to God in daily life is the path to experiencing God’s blessing (Psalm 34:4-10), and by implication disobedience will lead to God’s discipline (Psalm 34:16 and 34:21), and: <<*In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.” Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it*>> (Hebrews 12:4-11).

Keep his lips from deceitful speech. David pleads with God once more: <<*Hear, O LORD, my righteous plea; listen to my cry. Give ear to my prayer – it does not rise from deceitful lips*>> (Psalm 17:1).

He must turn from evil and do good. John picks up on this theme as well: <<*Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God*>> (3 John 11).

Seek peace and pursue it. Even if it may seem just, to retaliate will only lead to further conflict. To refrain from retaliation may be hard but it will lead to peace, for the believer at least if not for the perpetrator of the conflict.

Jeremiah had written to the first wave of Babylonian exiles: <<*Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper*>> (Jeremiah 29:7). The same applies to these Christian ‘exiles’ who wish to do well in terms of Kingdom living and witnessing for Christ. We too can look to settle within our communities. If we prosper we can use what we have to advance God’s Kingdom within that community. Prosperity does not always mean financial or material wealth but a whole range of blessings and opportunities that may come our way.

Peter continues his quotation of Psalm 34, for the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, to observe and care for them; and his ears are attentive to their

prayer, for various needs and cares. This does not mean that God keeps obedient believers from suffering, refer to 1 Peter 2:19-23, 3:14, 3:17, and 4:12-19, but that God will provide his grace to strengthen and establish believers in the midst of their suffering: *<<And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast>>* (1 Peter 5:10), and in times of great need: *<<But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me>>* (2 Corinthians 12:9), and: *<<Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need>>* (Hebrews 4:16).

Peter is also using this Psalm to show that we can rely on the Lord to deal with those who may wish to abuse us. We have a mediator before God in heaven who receives and passes on our prayer and so we can be satisfied in faith that they will be answered even if we do not see the outcome, at least not in the way that we might wish or expect from a human perspective. For to grant our wish based purely on human desire would not be of God and we must leave him room to deal with all evil doers as he sees fit and in his good time, whether now in the flesh or later at the judgement seat that we must all one day face.

### 1 Peter 3:13-16

Believers have a blessing that is incomparable, one that no one can take from us. Those who persecute us have nothing but possible prosperity on earth, and thereafter eternal damnation, while believers have an eternal incorruptible good, although we may lose a small temporal blessing during this life. It is important that we do not let fear of life become a barrier to our relationship with God. The best antidote to fear is love: *<<There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love>>* (1 John 4:18).

<sup>13</sup> Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good <sup>14</sup> But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened.”

### 1 Peter 3:13-14

Peter quotes Isaiah 8:12. It is not easy to consider ourselves blessed in suffering, even if we are suffering for a good cause, but the word is clear that we are blessed and we need not be fearful of those who are the cause of our suffering, for they are the ones who need to fear: *<<“I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him>>* (Luke 12:4-5).

David cries out to God: *<<The Lord is righteous in all his ways and loving toward all he has made. The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfils the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them. The Lord watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he*

**will destroy**>> (Psalm 145:17-20). We can learn that if we give God praise in regard to such matters, and consider such things as good, holy and excellent, then we satisfy him in our hearts. But they who complain that they are treated unjustly, and say that God is sleeping, and will not help the just, or restrain the unjust, these people dishonour God, and claim that God is neither just nor holy.

But whoever truly believes in God should attribute righteousness to God and unrighteousness to himself, should consider himself unholy and God holy, and should say that God in all his deeds and works is holy and just; this is what God requires. We cannot claim that what God does to us is unrighteous or that it was undeserved for we have been unjust and disobedient to him, and we receive whatever punishment we deserve, although his grace and mercy abound, and rarely are we punished fully. But if we are punished by men to whom we have done no wrong then they will deserve any punishment that God should choose to bring upon them at the proper time. We are then left to rejoice in such suffering as previously discussed.

What Peter is alluding to is something that Jesus would later reveal to John. That is, Jesus is looking for his followers to overcome their difficulties and, in doing so, will receive a reward that will be a gift of pure grace: <<He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God>> (Revelation 2:7), <<He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death>> (Revelation 2:11), <<He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it>> (Revelation 2:17), <<To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations – ‘He will rule them with an iron sceptre; he will dash them to pieces like pottery’ – just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give him the morning star>> (Revelation 2:26-28), <<He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels>> (Revelation 3:5), <<Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name>> (Revelation 3:12), <<To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne>> (Revelation 3:21), and Paul confirms the majesty of the prize: <<However, as it is written: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him”>> (1 Corinthians 2:9).

If you are eager to do good. Paul exhorts Titus to teach on this very theme and other issues addressed by Peter: <<For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all

wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good>> (Titus 2:11-14).

Even if. Peter is writing to Christians already suffering for their faith, therefore he is not saying that such suffering is improbable. His point is that no one will ultimately or finally harm Christians, even if they suffer now, for God will reward them: <<What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?>> (Romans 8:31). Indeed, they will be blessed by God in their sufferings: <<Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven>> (Matthew 5:10).

Job recognises God's justification and indeed sanctifies him, even though it had appeared that God had taken away Job's children and his wealth: <<At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised">> (Job 1:20-21), and after he had been personally afflicted with sores and boils: <<His wife said to him, "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!" He replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" In all this, Job did not sin in what he said>> (Job 2:9-10).

Do not be frightened. Jesus too advised this as he discussed the end times with his disciples: <<When you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away>> (Luke 21:9).

<sup>15</sup> But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, <sup>16</sup> keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. <sup>17</sup> It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

### 1 Peter 3:15-17

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone. Paul gives similar advice: <<Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone>> (Colossians 4:6).

Believers should always be ready to provide a rationale for their faith, but they should do so in an engaging manner, righteously and with all humility. And if they keep a clear conscience, any accusations against them will prove groundless, and their accusers should be ashamed.

Keeping a clear conscience should be easy providing we stay close to Jesus, remain faithful in prayer to God and meditate frequently on his Word. The devil and the world may rant and rave against followers of Jesus in order to discredit the church. This is nothing new and was identified by King David and quoted by the believers in the early church: <<You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth

of your servant, our father David: 'Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One'>> (Acts 4:25-26).

Keeping a clear conscience was something that Paul always tried to do himself: <<So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man>> (Acts 24:16), <<My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me>> (1 Corinthians 4:4), <<They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience>> (1 Timothy 3:9), and: <<I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers>> (2 Timothy 1:3). The writer to the Hebrews uses Pauline language too as he sums up his letter: <<Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honourably in every way>> (Hebrews 13:18).

It is sometimes God's will that Christians suffer for doing good. Paul even saw suffering as something to rejoice in: <<Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church>> (Colossians 1:24). However, we should note it is the outcome of the suffering that is the cause for joy, not the suffering itself!

We must always remember that Peter too had suffered for being an apostle, he had been put in prison by Herod Antipas with the expectation that he would be executed just as the apostle James had been around the same time, but he was miraculously rescued by an angel, see Acts Chapter 12 for the full account. Jesus had also prophesied Peter's martyrdom: <<I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!">> (John 21:18-19). These are not just fanciful words that Peter was writing but came with full apostolic authority of one who knew what lay ahead for his own life of service.

The answer for our hope is clear. God has promised in his Word that whoever believes in Jesus as the Christ has been redeemed from condemnation, death and hell. God has sworn this on himself, the highest authority there is, and those who have accepted Christ as their saviour know without the shadow of doubt that we have hope beyond hope in our eternal future.

It is sufficient to justify our faith and hope on the written Word of God. However, there are those who will claim that Peter, Paul and even Jesus were men and therefore it is the word of men. It is not wise to enter into futile argument. It is sufficient to say that true believers accept it as the Word of God in its original form and they can accept it or deny it. That is between them and God. We need not get into arguments about different language translations either, as there are good reasons why some scholars translate ancient language differently but scripture is opened up to us by the Holy Spirit, and it is enough for us if we are open to him, whichever translation we choose to read. One thing they all have in common is that they confirm that Jesus is the Risen Lord,

God incarnate, who lived, died, rose again and now sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven, having paid the redemption price for us all. That has to be more than enough for anyone!

Peter tells us to give our answer with gentleness and respect. For one thing we have nothing to be prideful or even boastful about in ourselves, for the message of salvation that has been given to us is of free grace and has nothing to do with us apart from that grace. We need to proclaim the Gospel boldly but also with all humility for others need to understand that it is only something that they can attain to by faith in the one true God and to come to him through His Only Son, Christ Jesus. Although Paul writes of the right kind of boasting on several occasions, including: <<*May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world*>> (Galatians 6:14). When called upon to give an answer we can rely on the teachings of Jesus: <<*“When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say”*>> (Luke 12:11-12).

It is better to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. Although believers may be called to suffer outwardly in this life, inwardly they have contentment and comfort in their hope for an eternal future in the presence of their God and Saviour.

However, it is not for us to seek suffering. If our cross comes then we are called to bear it; but if it does not come then we are not called to go out and seek it. We do not have to undergo penance in order to enter heaven. God has given that gift freely to all who believe, irrespective of what work or suffering he may require of them in the body.

<sup>18</sup> For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit,

### 1 Peter 3:18

This is a key statement on the substitutionary atonement of Christ. He suffered and died as the righteous one in place of the unrighteous, in order to bring us to God: <<*Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, ‘Here I am – it is written about me in the scroll – I have come to do your will, O God’”*>> (Hebrews 10:5-7).

One interpretation of being put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, is that ‘in the flesh’ means in the visible, physical realm in which Jesus was crucified, and by the spirit, as in: <<*For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit*>> (1 Peter 4:6), means in the invisible, spiritual realm where Christ now lives. Another view is that Jesus died physically but was raised from the dead by

the Holy Spirit.

**As we will see in vv.19-20 and in the next chapter, the verse quoted here in no way represents the Gospel being preached to the spirits of the dead!**

We are called to remember that Christ was righteous and we are not, and yet he chose to lay down his life in order to bring us back into communion with God. It was a free will offering by God in order that his people could stand once more in his presence: <<*The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life – only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father*>> (John 10:17-18). It is an act of pure love that we are commanded to remember until the Lord returns to call us to him: <<*And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you*>> (Luke 22:19-20).

Jesus is offered as the primary example of one who suffered unjustly, not just for the expiation of our sin but for its propitiation, reconciling all mankind to God. If God did not spare his own Son from suffering, why should anyone else expect to be spared? Those who are guilty should expect to suffer but we can do so in the knowledge that it is not as punishment, which we deserve, but for correction and trial to strengthen us in our faith.

Although Christ did this willingly, he did not actually seek the Cross in his human nature but waited until it was the Father’s will for him to die in this way: <<*Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will”*>> (Matthew 26:39).

Christ did not take every sin upon himself but suffered once for us in that he bore many sins upon himself in a way to remove the burden of sin from all who would come to him, believe on him and be set free from guilt, shame and death, even as he is free.

Christ died not for himself, or even for our sake, but that he might present us to God. This is Christ’s reward; a blessing beyond belief and measure for all of us who were the unrighteous for whom the only righteous one chose to suffer so much. For just as he offered up himself willingly on the Cross, so too, he offered us up with himself as a gift to his Father.

Although Christ died in terms of his physical body, his spirit remained alive. It was then reunited in the tomb with his body by the Holy Spirit. Scripture tells us that Jesus will remain in a human-like body, although it is clearly a resurrection body, not subject to death or decay like our mortal bodies, but he is not an ephemeral spirit either. This was confirmed by the angels at the time the disciples witnessed his ascension into heaven: <<*They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven”*>>

(Acts 1:10-11).

Paul paints a picture of how it will be for us on the last day when Christ does return: <<So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven>> (1 Corinthians 15:42-49).

### 1 Peter 3:19-21

This is a strange and difficult passage that has caused scholars and teachers to come up with a number of varying proposals, none of which seem to fully fit the context of Peter's letter.

It raises a number of questions:

1. When did it happen? At the time of Noah; during the period between Jesus' death and resurrection; or after his ascension!
2. Did the message go to all the dead spirits or just those of Noah's time?
3. Was the message taken by a representative of Christ; by Christ in person; or by Christ in the Spirit?
4. Was it done to offer the unbelieving spirits who lived before Jesus a chance to repent and come back to God; or to confirm their condemnation?
5. When did Peter become aware of this? It could only have been either told to him by Jesus during his 40 day stay between his resurrection and ascension, or it was given to him divinely, as was knowledge of Jesus' true identity: <<When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven>> (Matthew 16:13-17).

One view generally held by protestant expositors of this passage is that the preaching here referred to took place in the days of Noah, by means of probably Noah or possibly others who were inspired by God to teach and warn. Their interpretation would be in effect - 'For Christ also suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit of God. By which Spirit also he went formerly and preached now in prison; which were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited, in the days of Noah (120 years), while the ark was being prepared, wherein

the 8 souls were saved by or through water.

Others hold that Jesus physically or spiritually descended into Hades in order to offer the lost one last chance to return to God and took with him those souls who accepted his offer of heaven, leaving the rest in the clutches of the devil.

I do not hold to any of the ideas from scholars that the Gospel was preached to the spirits of the dead. If the passage is meant to be literal then it will refer to the preaching of Noah to his generation. If figurative then it is about all the prophets and witnesses of God that have been operating on earth since the time of creation. God no doubt has other ways of assessing men's hearts with regard to those who could never have heard the Gospel.

<sup>19</sup> through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison  
<sup>20</sup> who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water,

### 1 Peter 3:19-20

Spirits in prison. There is much debate about the identity of these spirits. The Greek term *pneuma*, which means spirit in this case but also breath and wind, in either singular or plural, can mean either human spirits or angels, depending on the context: <<*But Moses and Aaron fell facedown and cried out, "O God, God of the spirits of all mankind, will you be angry with the entire assembly when only one man sins?"*>> (Numbers 16:22), <<*May the Lord, the God of the spirits of all mankind, appoint a man over this community*>> (Numbers 27:16), <<*While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit"*>> (Acts 7:59), and: <<*to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect*>> (Hebrews 12:23), etc.

Among the three most common interpretations, the first two fit best with the rest of Scripture and with historic orthodox Christian doctrine. They are:

1. The first interpretation understands spirits, the plural Greek *pneumasin*, as referring to the unsaved human spirits of Noah's day. Christ, 'in the spirit' (v.18), proclaimed the Gospel in the days of Noah through Noah. The unbelievers who heard Christ's preaching disobeyed long ago in the days of Noah, and are now suffering judgment, they are spirits in prison. Several reasons support this view:
  - a. Peter calls Noah: <<*a preacher of righteousness*>> (2 Peter 2:5), where preacher or herald represents Greek *kēryx*, preacher actually corresponds to the noun *kēryssō*, i.e. to proclaim or preach.
  - b. Peter says the Spirit of Christ was speaking through the OT prophets, see 1 Peter 1:11. Thus Christ could have been speaking through Noah as an OT prophet.
  - c. The context indicates that Christ was preaching through Noah, who was in a persecuted minority, and God saved Noah, which is similar to the

situation in Peter's time: Christ is now preaching the Gospel through Peter and his readers (v.15) who are a persecuted minority, and God will save them.

2. In the second interpretation, the spirits are the fallen angels who were cast into hell to await the final judgment. Reasons supporting this view include:
  - a. Some interpreters say that the 'sons of God' in Genesis 6:2-4 are angels who sinned by cohabiting with human women, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah.
  - b. Almost without exception in the NT, spirits refers to supernatural beings rather than people, e.g. *<<When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick>>* (Matthew 8:16), and: *<<Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty>>* (Revelation 16:13-14).
  - c. The word prison is not used elsewhere in Scripture as a place of punishment after death for human beings, while it is used for Satan: *<<When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison>>* (Revelation 20:7), and other fallen angels: *<<And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home – these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day>>* (Jude 6). In this case the message that Christ proclaimed is almost certainly one of triumph, after having been *<<put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit>>* (v.18).
3. In a third view, some have advocated the idea that Christ offered a second chance of salvation to those in hell. This interpretation, however, is in direct contradiction with other Scripture: *<<And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us>>* (Luke 16:26), and: *<<Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment>>* (Hebrews 9:27), and with the rest of 1 Peter, and therefore must be rejected on biblical and theological grounds, leaving either of the first two views as the most likely interpretation.

As with other accounts given by Jesus and Paul about characters from the OT, Peter's reference to Noah does confirm it as an historical event, doubted by so many today despite the stories in almost every culture from around that era that speaks of a massive flood on every continent that we believed existed prior to the last ice age, which probably occurred as a result of the earth shattering events that caused the flood.

Some see Peter's reference here as symbolising baptism for almost all mankind

perished in the flood, so too does the old self of a believer die in the waters of baptism so that the person rises out of the water as a new creation in Christ.

What this passage almost certainly teaches us is that God has taken an interest in the salvation of all since the beginning of the world and has always given them fair warning. Although they did not know Christ, it was the Spirit of Christ, i.e. the Holy Spirit that had been in men like Enoch and here Noah, who had for a long time called the people of their generation to repentance. In Noah's time, he was the only one who heeded the call, who was considered righteous, and so God saved his family in the Ark and allowed all others to perish. Their bodies lost in the seas of the flood and their souls cast into hell, of which this passage possibly speaks. On the Last Day, they will be called to final judgement and condemned. This will be the same for all those who are dead and the idea that Jesus went to preach to dead souls, in order to redeem them for himself, goes against the whole concept of God from creation throughout all eternity.

<sup>21</sup> and this water symbolises baptism that now saves you also – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

### 1 Peter 3:21

A comparison is drawn between salvation in the ark and baptism. In both instances, believers are saved through the waters of judgment, since baptism portrays salvation through judgment. The mere mechanical act of baptism does not save, for Peter explicitly says, not the removal of dirt from the body, meaning that the passing of water over the body does not cleanse anyone.

Baptism saves you because it represents inward faith, as evidenced by one's appeal to God for the forgiveness of one's sins for a good conscience. Furthermore, baptism saves only insofar as it is grounded in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Baptism is a visual representation of the fact that Christians are clothed with Christ: <<*for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ*>> (Galatians 3:27), and in union with Christ they share his victory over sin. Although Christians have disagreed about the proper mode of water baptism, beginning in the early history of the church, Christians have generally agreed, irrespective of denominational differences, that water baptism is an outward sign of the inward reality of regeneration, which is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit: <<*Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit"*>> (John 3:5-8), and: <<*he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit*>> (Titus 3:5), and which may be received only by grace through faith: <<*For it is by grace you*

*have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God>> (Ephesians 2:8).*

We must remember that it is not baptism that saves but what it represents, that is, the whole person giving themselves over to God, asking for repentance of their sins and acceptance into the family of God, so that they may follow him. Baptism can only be truly undertaken by those that can make an appropriate decision for themselves and therefore infant baptism does no more than bring a child under the covering grace of God, which they probably were anyway. This is similar in a way to Jews' understanding that a child circumcised on the 8<sup>th</sup> day was fully part of the covenant of God. It was an acceptance into the covenant as an outward sign but served as no more than that until the individual accepted being circumcised in their heart. Paul confirms this: *<<No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God>> (Romans 2:29).*

For those that choose infant baptism or Christenings, there is the opportunity for them to be confirmed at an age where they can make an appropriate choice of faith. Similarly, Jewish boys undergo a Bar Mitzvah ceremony as acceptance into the adult realm of Judaism.

Up until this point, Jesus' death for us would have been noble but of little benefit to anyone. But that he was resurrected to eternal life by the power of God's Holy Spirit gives us the foundation of our faith, on which all else stands. Looking at the foregoing passage with the fact of the resurrection does give the Ark a spiritual dimension and significance, which is not flesh and blood but a good conscience toward God.

<sup>22</sup> who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand – with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

### 1 Peter 3:22

The central truth of vv.18-22 is that Christ has triumphed over his enemies. He is now ascended to God's right hand, and all angels and demonic powers in submission to him since he is Lord and Christ. Christians can therefore rejoice in their sufferings, knowing that Christ has triumphed: *<<Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me>> (Matthew 28:18).*

This passage enlightens and strengthens our faith. For it was necessary that Christ should ascend to heaven, and become Lord over all creation and universal powers, and that he may subsequently bring us to himself: *<<In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you>> (John 14:2), and: <<Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world>> (John 17:24).*

Paul writes in a similar way: *<<For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any*

*powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord>>*  
**(Romans 8:38-39).**