

3-7-21

Sermon- Spirits in Prison?

Scripture- 1 Peter 3:18-22, CTW PS 25:1-10

Hymns- 3, 225, 442

Theme- This passage reminds us that Christ's good news of salvation and victory is not limited. He controls all the earth and above and below the earth. He is not afraid to reach His hand into dark places for us...are we too afraid to grab that hand?

I. Figuring Things Out

A. Have you ever had something in your life that no matter how hard you tried, you just could not figure it out?

Rubik's cube is one example for me. I finally solved mine by peeling off all the colored stickers and had a perfect all white cube. It just never made sense to me.

So, what is your downfall? It may be instructions on putting something together, or the writings of some great author. Maybe it is things in your life that happened and as hard as you try you simply can't figure them out.

As we look at **1 Peter 3:18-22** this morning, We come to one of the most difficult passages of scripture in all of God's word...trust me, volumes have been written on this one...it provides hope to some and is a curse for some...

False teachings, False doctrines, and even outright cults have been built around these words from the Apostle Peter.

Let me tell you straight out, I go hot and cold on this passage, Sometimes I think I get it, and other times I feel I am not even close! I believe in all my heart that a lot of people see this one as a mystery.

There are things in scripture that seem to remain a mystery.

We must remember that God's ways are not our ways, His thoughts are not our thoughts, and short of being able to interview Peter and ask him what this means, we are left to try and interpret his words on our own.

If we are not careful we can easily forget the purpose of Peter's writing and fail to see the forest for the trees. This is not good because when we do this we completely miss what the writer was trying to convey.

Sometimes you just have to step back to see the whole picture of a tapestry because when you stand too close all you see are a bunch of individual threads.

We know that all things will be revealed in eternity, we should know this in our hearts, so, we should count on getting clarity on this passage...

But you know what? We also should remember that at that point, we will be in the presence of Jesus Christ, and have no doubt that we will no longer care what this means.

Let me read 1 Peter chapter 3 verses 18-22 for you again in its entirety, then we can come back and break down the parts that are clear (this is from the New Living Translation by the way)...

18 Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit.

19 So he went and preached to the spirits in prison, **20 those who disobeyed God long ago when God waited patiently while Noah was building his boat.** Only eight people were saved from drowning in that terrible flood. 21 And that water is a picture of baptism, which now saves you, not by removing dirt from your body, but as a response to God from a clean conscience. It is effective because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

22 Now Christ has gone to heaven. He is seated in the place of honor next to God, and all the angels and authorities and powers accept his authority.

II. Ok, Let's start with the easy stuff...

We have been taught that it is important when we read scripture that we read in context. Those of you who have been in my Bible study know that I quote my New Testament Professor, Dr. Buckwalter when I say "Context is King!"

A. Peter in this passage of scripture was instructing the readers on the idea of suffering unjustly, and we have covered that before...a subject that Peter would be very aware of.

In addition James, brother of Jesus starts his letter by boldly stating that Christians should consider it pure joy when they face trials of Many kinds!

So, in today's language we should not freak out when trouble comes, but trust that God will handle it, and the Holy Spirit will teach us what lessons we need to learn from it.

Make Jesus Christ Lord of **all** in your life, the good and the bad- he is the Lord of the mountains and the God of the valleys and we need to always be ready to tell others the reason for the hope that you have...1 Peter 3:15 This will help you keep integrity in all you do...Good principals to live by from the Apostle Peter!

So, in context Peter is still talking about suffering... he has not changed subjects.

But in context, we must keep in mind that his letter is a letter of encouragement! He wrote to the believers who had become wayfaring strangers, to help them deal with the hardships that often come with belief in Christ.

In a further attempt to encourage us, Peter gives us this reminder in verse 18: "Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit.

We will suffer but Christ also suffered. He did this once, and for all. His work on the cross completed the demand for a sacrifice. He suffered no additional punishment for our sins. His death was enough.

B. He did this for us, took on our sin, and was punished for it, although he had never ever sinned. There was no sin in him. His death was the completion of the work!

It was and is eternal, It was substitutionary – this means it covered the sin of all who will believe, and His death reconciled us

to God...Christ's sacrifice restores us into proper relationship with God.

What Jesus got is what we deserve...**Every** one of us...he took the nails in our place

And his death was followed by resurrection, which shows us that death no longer has a hold on his children. He did not stay in the grave and we will not stay there either though his power and through his sacrifice

We will suffer physical death unless Jesus comes back first. We may suffer hardships and illnesses and injuries Our bodies may take the blows that this world has to offer.

But our spirit, as was His spirit will be unaffected.

III. And Now it Gets Harder...

A. I wish I could stop here or skip down a few verses and start over, but there is a verse 19 and we have to deal with it.

I have discussed this passage with many people smarter than myself,

Many of them admit to skirting around it. Some commentators leave it out of their writings. Some preachers refuse to preach it. I have spent hours reading praying, studying the words of Great bible scholars.

The numerous opinions and possibilities make it like the Rubik's cube... we want to just rip off the stickers, Or better yet throw it out the window.

But we need to confront the whole word, the whole Bible, and trust the Holy Spirit to reveal what we need to know about it.

I wish I could tell you, that I figured it out, or this author or that author made it clear for me.

I can with the utmost confidence say I do not know exactly what verse 19 means, but I can also say that because I know God's word does not contradict itself, God has showed me that the best we can say for the time being about this passage is that Christ's good news of salvation knows no limits!

God's word says that Jesus died for our sins, and Jesus said **"it is finished"** on the cross. Jesus told the thief on the cross , **you will be with me in paradise – TODAY!**

B. Jesus' words leave no room for further punishment, His death was payment in full. Nothing else was needed!

So, based on God's own word, this much we can be sure of.

Some go further to say that this verse teaches there is a place called purgatory, where you can change your eternal destination after death...In short get a second chance

However, without using the rest of our time running you through scripture after scripture that does not support this idea, we can simply conclude, **BALDERDASH!** (that word means senseless talk, by the way...)

Truth is that If we don't have to make a decision in this life, and we will all get another chance, then Jesus died for nothing, and we know he died to give us everything, if we would but accept it on His terms.

This passage shows us that Jesus is Lord over all. There is nothing nor anyone who he does not have authority over. Nothing that can stop him, and nothing that can stop his message, nothing that can stop his love or his grace.

IV. Let's Move On to The Next Hard Part Of This Passage.

Actually, it is only hard if we attempt to take it out of context to support the teaching of baptismal regeneration, or put in simple terms the concept of baptism being a **condition of salvation.**

A. The work of Jesus on the cross is all that is needed for salvation. Baptism is an act of obedience, A sign of salvation.

We are making a public profession of faith that we are saved, or we are dedicating our child to be set aside for saving and we want everyone to know it.

Look again at Verses 20b-21:

"Only eight people were saved from drowning in that terrible flood. 21 And that water is a picture of baptism, which now saves

you, not by removing dirt from your body, but as a response to God from a clean conscience. It is effective because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

Think about it...Was it the water that saved Noah and his family? Was it the ark that saved Noah and his family? Or was it the power of God who delivered them?

Of course, it was the power of the almighty God, And it was his power alone.

It is the power of God through the working of the Holy Spirit to convict us, and the redeeming blood of Jesus Christ to forgive us. That is what saves us.

Baptism is a public profession of and to that relationship. The water has no power except to show our faith It is Jesus Christ and his sacrifice that saves.

There is no further work of atonement needed.

We are saved all over at the time of our acceptance of the gift of Jesus’ sacrifice.

Saved, Signed, Sealed, and delivered. Born Again, we become a new creation.

The water does not save, good deeds don’t save, works don’t save, **Jesus saves!** As Forrest Gump said...”and that’s all I’m going to say about that!”

B. Finally we need to consider Verse 22:

“Now Christ has gone to heaven. He is seated in the place of honor next to God, and all the angels and authorities and powers accept his authority.”

Peter wraps up this part of chapter three with these words. Jesus the one and only left heaven, came to earth, suffered and died for us, was placed in a grave, rose again, and he is now in glory, interceding on our behalf.

And when He comes, every knee will bend, every person will bow, and all will recognize him as Lord.

To some who never accepted the absolute truth of His Word and Way, He will say, go away from me, for I never knew you. Only those who truly accepted all of Him will spend eternity with him. Here is where the rubber meets the road. We can, without reservation, make this conclusion: **We serve a savior who knows us.**

Inside and out. He knows our suffering because he too suffered. There is not a square inch of this earth over which He does not govern!

Folks, we need to be encouraged by this **as fact.**

All the other so-called Gods throughout time, wanted their followers to die for them.

We serve the only true God, the only God who died for us that we should live and know life in abundance.

His name is Jesus.

Amen? Let us pray...