



# Victory in Jesus

## 1 Peter 3:19-22

1. Some Interpretations
2. Some Key Questions
3. Some Applications

We come this morning to 1 Peter 3:19-22, which is easily the most difficult section in this epistle. In 2 Peter 3:16, Peter wrote of how Paul wrote in his letters "some things hard to understand." Well, Peter has returned the favor and has done the same in this text. Listen to the testimony of some of the commentators on this passage.

"[This is] the most troublesome section in Peter's entire first letter--in fact, [it is] one of the thorniest in the whole New Testament." [\[1\]](#)

"We are here face to face with one of the most difficult passages, not only in Peter's letter, but in the whole New Testament; and, if we are to grasp what it means, we must follow Peter's own advice and gird up the loins of our mind to study it." [\[2\]](#)

"These verses present the most difficult and controversial problems in the letter." [\[3\]](#)

With all of these comments, I agree. In many ways I'd like to skip these verses and precede on to chapter 4. But, that is not the spirit of expositional preaching. And so, we will dig into the text.

Martin Luther, the great German reformer, gave us some advice when describing how to study the Bible. He said,

I study my Bible like I gather apples. First, I shake the whole tree that the ripest may fall. Then I shake each limb, and when I have shaken each limb, I shake each branch and every twig. Then I look under every leaf. I search the Bible as a whole like shaking the whole tree. Then I shake every limb--study book after book. Then I shake every branch, giving attention to the chapters. Then I shake every twig, or a careful study of the paragraphs and sentences and words and their meanings. [\[4\]](#)

This is great advice to those seeking to study the Bible. But, when you come to our text this morning, it seems as if every leaf you turn over in the text, you encounter yet another difficulty (or two or three) in interpretation. When Martin Luther came to 1 Peter 3:19-22, he said, "A wonderful text is this, and a more obscure passage perhaps than any other in the New Testament, so that I do not know for a certainty just what Peter means." [\[5\]](#) Coming from the mouth of bold, confident, dogmatic Martin Luther, it's quite a statement.

I'm with Luther. I don't know either "for a certainty just what Peter means." I have ideas, but I'm not for certain about whether my views are correct. But, don't despair this morning, because there is still profit for us in these words, even if we aren't certain of all of the theological nuances found in this text. I'll quote one last commentator, whose perspective will give us hope. Scot McKnight gets it right when he says, ...

Few passages have so many themes and different ideas intertwined. It is no wonder that commentators have shaken their heads in despair. But the **main point is not complex**. Just as Jesus suffered as a righteous man and was vindicated, so too if the churches of Peter live righteously (as he has exhorted them to), they will be vindicated and sit with Jesus in the presence of God. [\[6\]](#)

Let us be encouraged this morning that the main point is not complex. Jesus was a righteous man who endured unjust suffering. But, in the end, He was vindicated. As we follow Him, we will be vindicated as well.

One of the keys to the main point of this passage has to do with how our text begins and end. If you look carefully, you will see that our text is sandwiched between two identical statements. In 3:17-18, Peter writes, "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. 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." Just as Christ suffered unjustly, we are to follow in His steps. Now, look to the end of our text, "Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose" (1 Peter 4:1).

**Just as Christ suffered unjustly, we are to follow in His steps.** And this is the main point of the passage. Our calling as Christians is to

follow our Master. Jesus suffered in the flesh. How ought we to expect anything different? The suffering of Jesus was completely undeserved. How ought we to expect anything different?

Verses 19-22 are an encouragement to us to follow Jesus in this way. Because, however you view the details, they teach that Jesus gained the victory. And the victory that Jesus gained is our victory, as well. Just as Jesus was vindicated, so also will we be vindicated, if we trust in Him with a righteous walk through our sufferings. That's why my message this morning is entitled, "Victory in Jesus."

Well, let's consider our text. For the sake of context, I have included verse 18 as well.

1 Peter 3:18-22

For Christ also died for sins once for all, [the] just for [the] unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits [now] in prison, 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. And 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, who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

If you read this text again, it comes out just as it did before -- a bit confusing. Peter seems to bounce from one topic to another. In verse 19, Peter mentions Jesus preaching to some **spirits**. In verse 20, Peter brings up **Noah**. In verse 21, Peter brings up **baptism** and then leads onto the **resurrection**. Finally, he finished in verse 22 by mentioning the **ascension** of Jesus.

Various theologians down through the history of the church have understood these words differently. I believe that the best way to approach this text is to briefly mention the main lines of interpretation with these verses. So, let's look to my first point,

## 1. Some Interpretations

I say, "Some," because there are many different interpretations of these words. Depending upon your exposure to the Bible, you may have heard some of these taught before. The interpretations basically break down into two major categories.

**Category #1:** The first category of interpretations understands that after the death of Jesus, and before His ascension into heaven, He went into Hades to preach to those who were disobedient during the days of Noah. From this view comes the words of the Apostles' Creed, "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. *He descended into Hades*. On the third day, He rose again from the dead." (If, even, this is accurate).

Anyway, this view has **two sub-views**. One view sees Jesus preaching to demonic beings (that is, evil spirits). Another view sees Jesus preaching to people (that is, disembodied spirits -- those who have died, and are awaiting the final judgment).

Among these views, there is a question about what exactly Jesus was preaching to these spirits. Some say that Jesus was preaching the gospel to these spirits. Others would say that Jesus was proclaiming His victory to those who had rejected Him and His ways. When you place all of these factors together, you can see how you can come up with a wide variety of views.

Sometimes, your theological persuasion can push you toward one interpretation or another. There is a Roman Catholic flavor of interpretation, which regards Hades the place commonly called, "Purgatory." There is a liberal flavor of interpretation, which allows for people to have a second chance for salvation after they die. In this case, there is a belief in Jesus preaching to those who have died with a second chance for salvation.

There's the first category of interpretation. Jesus descending into Hades to preach.

**Category #2:** The second category of interpretations has a different chronology. Rather than understanding these words to be describing the actions of Jesus during the time between His resurrection and ascension, they understand these things to be taking place during the days of Noah. In other words, when Noah was preaching, it was actually the spirit of Christ within Noah that was preaching through him. Verse 18, "But make alive in the spirit, ... in which state of being, He also had gone and preached to the spirits now in prison, who were not in prison when He had preached to them at first. But now, that they have spurned the preaching of Noah, they are in prison, awaiting the final judgment."

At first glance, such an interpretation may seem strange. How exactly was Jesus preaching through Noah? The idea comes back to chapter 1, verse 11, in which we see "the Spirit of Christ" within the prophets teaching them. As the prophets had the spirit of Christ within them, it makes sense that Noah might have had a similar experience when he preached to those in his day as well. (More about that later). Let's now look at ...

## 2. Some Key Questions

Considering this text, there are many questions that can be asked. As I mentioned earlier, under every leaf, questions abound in this text. But, there are two questions which help to clarify the meaning of these words. Once you determine the meaning to these two questions, you can then discern what the text means.

**Question #1:** who are the spirits in prison?

Some look at this word, "spirits" and conclude that this must mean "angelic beings." After all, "angels and authorities and powers" are mentioned in verse 22. But, it's not necessarily the case that "spirits" have to mean "angelic beings." It could just as easily refer to disembodied people. For instance, Solomon writes, "The dust will return to the earth so it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it" (Ecc. 12:7). When Jesus died, He "yielded up His Spirit." (Matthew 27:50).

Those who believe that these are evil spirits look to the days of Peter. At that time, there was a Jewish book circulating around the Jewish community entitled, "Enoch" (or 1 Enoch). Jude even quoted this book (in verse 14 of his epistle). In this book of Enoch, mention is made of sinning demons during the days of Noah. Furthermore, Peter seems to allude to this in 2 Peter 2:4, where Peter wrote, "God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment." In the very next verse (2 Peter 2:5), Peter talks about Noah and the flood. Jude seems to refer to the same thing in Jude, verse 6, where he writes of the "angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day." These thoughts parallel some of the ideas in the book of Enoch. With this idea floating around in the culture of Peter's day, it is thought that he was referring to these things.

Now, to determine with confidence exactly what Peter is saying these spirits are, we must turn to the context, because it's really the context that can help us in determining what exactly is the case. And in the context, we are told a bit about these spirits. Verse 20 tells us that they were "disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah." Now, unfortunately, this doesn't really help us very much. Because, there are several different threads of interpretation of what took place at the flood.

The meaning of the words in Genesis 6 are as difficult to determine as are the ones in 1 Peter. As we look at those words, I'm not going to answer your questions here this morning, either. (Perhaps, I'll even raise more than I will answer.) But, it is good for you to have an idea of the possibilities of what it means. Consider the following verses:

Genesis 6:1-4

Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose. 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." 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.

The big question here is the identity of the "sons of God." There are many who believe them to be demonic beings, who came from the angelic realm to cohabitate with the human race. As they went into "the daughters of men," they formed a hybrid, mongrel race of beings that were half-angelic and half-human. And thus, the reason for the flood was primarily to wipe out these beings.

Those who take this view rely heavily upon the usage of the phrase "sons of God" in other portions of Scripture to refer to the angelic world (which may be right). And then, when you contrast this with "daughters of men," it appears as if the first were angelic and the later were human. Furthermore, it makes sense then in verse 4 of the notoriety of the "Nephilim." An angelic-human being could well be might powerful.

Now, there are all sorts of difficulties with this view. The greatest of which is the procreative abilities of demonic spirits. It's one thing for an angel or a demon to come among us, appearing to us as a human being. You simply need to put on a mask and costume of some type. Even a wolf can look like a sheep if it comes in sheep's clothing. Yet, it's another thing entirely for a demon to come with procreative ability. to come into the "daughters of men" and create life. But, there are many good Bible scholars who believe this.

Personally, I don't. I think that Genesis 6 is clear as to why the flood came about. It wasn't because of angelic sin. It was because of human sin. Look at verse 5, "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." It's the sin of men that caused the flood, as verse 6 indicates, "The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart." And that's what prompted his pledge to bring the flood (as verse 7 explains).

And so, returning to 1 Peter, I do believe that there are some clues to help us to see that he's talking about men. Look again at verse 20, where he describes these "spirits ... who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark." Here Peter describes God as patiently waiting during the construction of the ark.

During the days of Noah, God was patient with whom? What was He waiting for? He was waiting for people to repent of their sins. I don't believe that God is waiting for angelic beings, who have cohabitated with "the daughters of men" to repent.

In bearing children (if this is possible), the damage had been done. There's no need to wait for repentance. There's no need for God to be patient. If the reason for the flood is to wipe these beings out, there is no need to wait for anything. Repentance can't even bring back the damage that was done.

The patience of God is often presented as taking place, as He waits for people to repent of their sin. "Do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance" (Romans 2:4). Or, as Peter wrote in 2 Peter 3:9, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance."

If this is you, know that there is hope for your soul. Turn to God in a time when He may be found! Trust in Christ to carry you through life, death, and eternity.

Getting back to 1 Peter, I believe that these "spirit in prison" were men who were unbelieving and unrepentant during the days of Noah. Though many believe that they were angelic beings. And the uncertainty of this text is great enough that I have no problem with others

believing this.

**Question #2:** when did Christ preach to these spirits?

The most natural thought that comes into our minds at this point is that Jesus did this preaching shortly after He was put to death in the flesh, as I mentioned earlier with the chronology of the text, which deals with the death, resurrection and ascension. And that's one of the great strengths of the view that Christ went into Hades to preach to those who were disobedient in the days of Noah.

However, it is possible that Peter was referring to the days of Noah. In 2 Peter 2:5, Peter refers to Noah as a "preacher of righteousness." It makes sense that he would be. After all, as Noah was building this giant ark, people would naturally have come and asked him what he was doing. Noah must have told them of how God's judgment was coming upon the earth with a flood because of the wickedness of those on the earth at that time. The only way to escape the danger would be through his ark. I would suspect that he told people to repent of their sins. In this sense, Noah was certainly, a "preacher of righteousness."

And when you couple this with Peter's words in 1 Peter 1:11, you see how it is possible to understand how Christ was preaching in the days of Noah. Think carefully about these words:

1 Peter 1:10-11

As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that [would come] to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.

Here we see Old Testament prophets learning from "the Spirit of Christ" that was "within them." If the Spirit of Christ was within the prophets, it is easy to understand how the "Spirit of Christ" may well have been in Noah as he preached to those around him who were disobedient to the ways of God. There is some sense where Christ is doing the same today, through preachers of the gospel. As the "word of Christ richly dwells in us," (Col. 3:16), the words that we speak are His words. Peter even alludes to this thought in 4:11, "Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God." In other words, when we speak, we ought to speak the words of God.

When it's all said and done, I do believe that this view of our text makes the most sense, especially when you consider the context of what Peter is saying.

This is Memorial Day weekend. There are several families in our church who have spent the weekend camping. Some of these families arrived on Thursday afternoon to the camp site. I happened to join them on Friday after work. Then, I came back Saturday mid-day to finish my preparations for Sunday. Several of my children spent Saturday evening with those families. After church, it was my plan to return to join them.

Well, as I checked the forecast, it calls for rain and rain and more rain. When I looked at the weather forecast on Saturday evening, it called for rain showers beginning at 6am Sunday morning and continuing throughout the day with warnings of severe thunderstorms a bit later in the day. When I looked at the radar, I could see a giant wave of weather spreading all across Iowa that is heading our way.

However, in looking at the forecast on Sunday morning, it appeared that such severe weather is going to hold out until 3pm. But, still, the radar indicated a large front, which indicated that once it started raining, it would continue to rain. During our church service on Sunday morning, it all looked nice and sunny and pleasant outside, but I knew that the rain is coming.

And so, as I returned to these campers this afternoon, my plan was to be like Noah, and warn the campers of the impending flood coming upon the campsite. Despite what they are planning on doing, I was intending to pack up all of our belongings on the camp site and tell them of how the patience of God has kept waiting and has somehow has delayed the weather from coming upon you until now. My plan was to ride off into the distance into my van (which was to be a bit of a symbol of Noah's ark).

I wasn't sure whether or not some of the families who were camping would take heed to my "preaching." There were some of those camping who are diehard campers, who like it very rough. [\[8\]](#)

This was a bit of what it was like in Noah's day. He was preaching to them of the impending doom that was coming. The only way to be saved was to walk with him in righteousness and enter the ark when the waters came. I'm sure that such a message brought a degree of suffering upon Noah. But, in continuing to walk righteously and trust God, he would be saved.

Throughout the entire epistle this has been Peter's message as well. And through that suffering, Peter has exhorted his readers to live righteously. Consider the following verses in this regard, ...

1 Peter 2:11-12, "Beloved, I urge you, as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evil-doers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation."

1 Peter 2:15, "Such is the will of God, that by doing right, you may silence the ignorance of foolish men."

1 Peter 2:20b, "If when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God."

1 Peter 3:1, "You wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they

may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives."

1 Peter 3:9, "Not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead."

1 Peter 3:16-17, "Keep a good conscience, so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. 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."

Thus, there is great reason for Peter to bring up Noah as an example, because Noah, suffered for doing what was right. Isn't that what Noah did? In Genesis 6:9 we read that "Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God." And yet, wickedness was all around him. It makes sense that Peter would bring up Noah as an example of one who would bring great encouragement to his readers. Eventually, he was saved from his wicked generation through the ark.

But, if this text means that Christ went and made a pronouncement of victory over the demonic world, it is difficult to understand exactly why Peter brings up Noah. Why did He only mention those who were disobedient in Noah's day? Why not make a proclamation to all who sought to thwart His victory? There have been many more down through the ages who have been enemies of God, who are awaiting their final judgment, why make such a limited statement here?

Well, there are my thoughts on the key questions surrounding this text. Are you confused? I've tried my best to be clear. Anyway, let's look at my final point this morning, ...

### 3. Some Applications

I have three concluding applications. My first application is quite simple:

#### 1. Live like Noah.

We have already touched on this a bit. But, I would like for us to dwell here for a few moments. Surrounded by wickedness, Noah continued to walk righteously. In the end, God delivered him through the ark. In this way, Noah is an excellent example for us. In his commentary on this text, Wayne Grudem mentions the remarkable parallels between the life of Noah and those of Peter's readers. I want to quote him at length, because I found his insights to be so good and encouraging to my own soul. Grudem writes, ...

(1) Noah was in a small minority of believers surrounded by a group of hostile unbelievers (who were perhaps even persecuting him). The readers are also a small minority and are surrounded by hostile unbelievers who make the threat of persecution very real (3:13-14; 4:4).

(2) Noah was righteous (Gn. 6:22; 7:5; 2 Peter. 2:5). Peter exhorts his readers to be righteous in a similarly difficult situation (3:10-12, 13, 16-17; 4:1-3).

(3) Noah witnessed boldly to the unbelievers around him, preaching repentance and warning of judgment soon to come (cf. 2 Peter 2:5, 9). Similarly, Peter exhorts his readers not to fear (3:14) but to bear witness boldly (3:15-16), even in suffering if necessary (3:16; also 4:16), in order to bring others to God - just as Christ was willing to endure suffering in order to bring us to God (3:18). Peter also sounds a clear warning of judgment to come (4:5, 17-18; cf. 2 Pet. 3:10) which makes the reader's situation prior to judgment similar to that of Noah.

(4) Christ, though he was in an unseen 'spiritual realm,' was preaching through Noah to the unbelievers around him (3:19-20). Similarly, Christ is working in an unseen spiritual way in the lives and hearts of Peter's readers (3:15; cf. 1:22; 4:11, 14). Thus, Peter by implication is reminding his readers that if Christ was preaching through Noah he certainly is also preaching through them as they bear witness to the unbelievers around them.

(5) In the time of Noah, God patiently awaited repentance from unbelievers, but finally did bring judgment. Similarly, at the time Peter is writing, God is patiently awaiting repentance from unbelievers (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9) but will certainly bring judgment on the unrepentant (4:5; cf. 2 Pet. 3:10).

(6) Finally, Noah was rescued with a few others (3:20). Similarly, Peter reminds his readers that they too will be saved, even if their numbers are few, for Christ has certainly triumphed (3:22), and they will share in his triumph as well (4:13, 19; 5:10; cf. 2 Pet. 2:9). [\[7\]](#)

I believe that the life of Noah would have been of great encouragement to those who lived in Peter's day. It makes sense for Peter to mention him. So, there's my first point of application: (1) Live like Noah. My second comes from verse 21, ...

#### 2. Be Baptized.

For many of you, this is an easy application. You have already been baptized. That's great. But, it may be the case for others of you, that you haven't been baptized. If this is the case with you, I'm merely pointing out that baptism is important. Peter writes in verse 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."

Now, there are some who take this verse to mean that the physical act of "baptism" saves you. That is, the physical act of being dunked in water. Those who believe this simply take Peter's words at face value, "Baptism now saves you." And they say, "See, if you want to be saved, you need to be baptized." But, if you look carefully at what Peter wrote, he clarified his statement about baptism. Immediately after saying, "Baptism now saves you," Peter is quick to point out that it isn't the water that saves! Look at what he says. It's "not the removal of dirt from the flesh" that saves you. Rather, it's "an appeal to God for a good conscience" that saves you.

At this point, as we lift up another leaf, we have another interpretive difficulty. It has to do with the meaning of this word translated, "appeal," an "appeal to God for a good conscience." Some of the most common translations don't translate this as "appeal." Some translations say, "a *pledge* of a good conscience toward God" (NIV). Other translations say, "the *answer* of a good conscience toward God" (NKJV).

The confusion comes about because of the difficulty in understanding exactly what this word means. This is the only place in the New Testament where this word is used. Though the related verb is used on a handful of occasions so, it's not like we are to totally in the dark.

The idea of "appealing," is the idea of crying out to God for help. Romans 10:9-10 gives the idea here, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."

The idea of "pledge" or "answer" is best understood to be like those who take their marriage vows. When a pastor officiating the service asks the question, "Do you take this woman to be your lawfully wedded wife," the response is "I do." When the pastor turns to the woman and says, "Do you take this man to be your lawfully wedded husband," the response comes back, "I do." They are pledging their allegiance toward one another.

In some measure, each of these ideas are present in the baptism ceremony. As one stands in the waters of baptism, he/she expresses his/her faith or trust in God. They are also expressing their commitment to follow the Lord all of their days. At Rock Valley Bible Church, we ask those being baptized to share their testimonies of how they came to faith in Christ. I always encourage those being baptized to prepare a three-part outline.

- What were you like before you were saved?
- How did you come to faith in Christ?
- How has your life changed since then?

Upon their profession of faith, we immerse the candidate in water. In so doing, those being baptized have an opportunity to speak to all present of the Lord's working in their life, which is the reason why any are baptized in the first place. In this way, those being baptized are expressing their appeal to God for a good conscience. They are pledging to follow Him!

That's what baptism is. It's an expression of your appeal to God. It's an opportunity to express your commitment to follow Him. This, by the way, is a great reason why we don't baptize infants at Rock Valley Bible Church. They are incapable of giving an appeal or pledge to God. If you are here this morning and have trusted in Christ, but haven't yet been baptized, I would love to talk with you about being baptized.

Last summer, we held a baptism service at a public lake. We called ahead, and they reserved a spot for us at the end of the beach. And then, one Sunday afternoon, a bunch of us gathered to hear the testimonies of those who had come to faith in Christ, but had not yet been baptized. After this testimony, they were immersed in the lake, as a symbol of their cleansing.

What was particularly encouraging to many is that these testimonies weren't merely given to those in the church. There were many upon the shores who had planned on spending the day on the beach at the lake. But, they had the opportunity to see the work of God in the lives of some of our people identify with Christ through their baptism. It even led to an opportunity to share the gospel, an woman was particularly interested in what was taking place.

We plan on doing the same thing this summer as well. So, if you are interested in being baptized, come and talk to me. We come now to my last point of application.

### 3. Know the victory

Look at the end of verse 21. There we read, "Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." You say, "what does this phrase have to do with victory?" Remember back in verse 20, when Peter was talking about Noah? In that verse, the means of salvation of Noah and his household was the ark. In the ark, they were brought "through the water" (verse 20). And now, the comparison comes with baptism here in verse 21. At the end of the phrase, "Baptism now saves you," many of your translations will have a dash there, which indicates that the thought will be brought up later on. Indeed, it is continued in the last phrase of verse 21, "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Or, you might read it this way, "Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you ... through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

In other words, just as Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives were brought through the waters of judgment by agency of the ark that Noah built, so also are we brought through the fiery trials of this life by the agency of the resurrection

of Jesus Christ. That's the comparison that Peter is making here in verse 21. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the ark that brings salvation to us. And that's the victory. We can have troubles and hardships and distresses of all types going on all around us. But, through the resurrection of Christ, we are guaranteed our final victory. Just "as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). The victory comes through Jesus Christ.

In verse 22, we see Jesus seated on the victory stand. They Olympics are coming this summer. If you choose to watch any of the events, you will see the winners standing on the championship podium, able to proclaim their victory. In some sense, this is what God has done with Christ. He has placed Him on the victory stand. We read of the the exalted position that Jesus has obtained to after His resurrection in verse 22, "who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him."

And it is here that the application of victory comes regardless of whatever view you take on the difficult matters of verses 19 and 20. If you take the view that Jesus was in Hades proclaiming His victory in the days between His death and resurrection, or if you take the view that Jesus was preaching through Noah during the days before the flood came, the application is still the same here in verse 22, where we see Jesus as the exalted ruler.

Christ is at the right hand of God, the place of authority. He is in a position of authority, with angels and authorities and powers subjected to Him. Throughout the New Testament, such imagery is used of Christ. You can read about the exalted state of Jesus in Ephesians 1 or in Philippians 2 or throughout the book of Hebrews (chapters 1, 10, and 12). Our Lord has gained the victory. As we know that victory, we will be equipped to live rightly in the midst of our sufferings, which, after all, is Peter's point.

If you knew that you were going to win, isn't it easy to keep playing? Children, suppose that you are playing a game of Monopoly with your brother or sister. Now, suppose that you begin amassing a bunch of property, houses and hotels, while your brother (or sister) has only a few properties. Who wants to keep playing? Does the one who is losing keep wanting to play the game and continue to be pounded? No. The one who is losing will always have the tendency to quit, while the one who is winning will often want to continue playing. It's fun to win! If you know that you are going to win, you want to keep playing.

So likewise in our text. If you know that Christ has proclaimed the victory, and if He is high and exalted, and if we are on His team and have won the victory, you are going to want to keep playing. And, in Peter's mind, to keep playing is to live righteously, even through your sufferings. This is Peter's point. What is ultimately going to help you suffer in the flesh well is to know your ultimate victory that you will have. Just as Jesus suffered in the flesh, so too might we suffer in the flesh. But, just as Jesus has gained the victory, as too might we gain the victory as well.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on May 25, 2008 by Steve Brandon.  
For more information see [www.rvbc.cc](http://www.rvbc.cc).

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[1] Charles Swindol, Hope in Hurtful Times, p. 77.

[2] William Barclay, The Letters of James and Peter, p. 236.

[3] J. N. D. Kelly, The Epistles of Peter and of Jude, p. 152.

[4] This quote is all over the internet, but I was unable to track down an original source for it.

[5] Martin Luther, Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude, p. 168.

[6] Scot McKnight, NIV Application Commentary, p. 215).

[7] Wayne Grudem, 1 Peter, pp. 231-232).

[8] Let me give you the rest of the story. The campers from our church had cell phones on which they could see the same weather front coming in. As I arrived at the camp, much of the camping gear was already packed up. We were merely waiting for the rain to hit.

In the providence of God, we were able to enjoy the entire day together. After dinner, we packed up everything and had a wonderful church service, where we spent some time singing. Then, I was able to preach this message to those who were at the camp. It was especially encouraging for me to "preach thunder" upon down from heaven. Toward the end of my message (as I was speaking about Noah), the weather began to get bad. There was lightning and thunder just beginning to come upon us. As we drove away, the rain fell. It was the perfect illustration to all of us of my message.