

## INTRODUCE

Good morning! Welcome to Fathom Church. It's good to meet with you this morning.

If you don't know me, my name is Eric Shelly and I am one of the elders here at Fathom.

Please take out your bibles. We're going to continue in the book of 1 Peter today.

- Feel free open your own bible, bring it up on a phone, or you can use one of the hard-backed bibles beneath your seat.
- We want each person to have the text in front of them.
- We'll be in the book of 1 Peter 3 today. Verses 13-22
- In the hard-backed bibles it's on page 1,016

So, today's passage is a tough passage. It's not a controversial passage like those on government or marriage

- Chris covered those the last 2 weeks
- I don't think you'll send me any emails about something unpopular from this passage – it's not tough in that sort of way
- Rather, parts this passage are tough interpretationally
- There are some parts that a just tricky to interpret

When I started preparing, I spun my wheels a little bit with certain parts of it

- It took me some time to get my head around parts of the passage
- As I prepared, I came across some helpful comments from other commentators and pastors

Pastor JD Grear says, *"these verses in 1 Peter are regarded by many to be one of the most, if not the most, confusing in the NT!"*

Theologian Warren Wiersbe said, *"When Peter wrote this section of his letter, he had no idea that it would be classified as one of the most difficult portions of the New Testament. Good and godly interpreters have wrestled with these verses, debated and disagreed, and have not always left behind a great deal of spiritual help."*

Then he adds: *“We may not be able to solve all the problems found in this section, **but we do want to get the practical help that Peter gave to encourage Christians in difficult days.**”*

So that made me feel a little better... at least knowing that some other guys *also* thought this passage was tough

- Now, normally we'd just go straight through the passage verse by verse. That's what we typically do here at Fathom
- But today, I want to address two hard sections first and then work our way through the rest of the passage
- Because part of that last quote stuck with me, which said *“We may not be able to solve all the problems found in this section, but **we do want to get the practical help that Peter gave to encourage Christians in difficult days.**”*
- That's what I want to try to do. I want to address these two hard sections first, and then turn to the more practical help from this passage.

For me, there are two sections that are really tricky.

- 1) The first is in verse 19-20: What does it mean that Jesus ‘went and preached to the spirits in prison’?
- 2) The second section is in verse 21: What does Peter mean when he says that ‘baptism saves you?’

I'm thankful to commentators like Wiersbe, Grear, and DA Carson for their insight into unpacking these sections.

## **SPIRITS IN PRISON**

Ok, the spirits in prison... verse 19 and 20 say that Jesus, by the Holy Spirit also **went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.**

Strange verses, right? **spirits in prison**. Sounds more appropriate for this Halloween season than for a Sunday morning sermon.

Who are these spirits? And why are they in prison?

- Some commentators think they are the fallen angels from Genesis 6 who came down and had relations with human women

- Some commentators think that in the time between his death and resurrection, Jesus went and proclaimed his victory to a group of disobedient demons who were awaiting final judgement, to give them a preview of His final victory
- Still, other commentators think that Peter is making the point, that Jesus preaches through his Spirit
  - In the days of Noah, he preached through Noah
  - and today he preaches through us
  - And back in Noah's day, no one listened to Noah
    - i. and they are now in prison or in hell
    - ii. because they didn't listen to or believe Noah's message
  - So, when we share the gospel or share our testimony today, we shouldn't get discouraged if no one listens to us today
  - And that's because even though no one listened to Noah, God ultimately brought salvation in Noah's day through the Ark
  - And we should believe he'll still bring salvation in our day
- It's this 3rd idea that I think is most applicable:
  - That through Jesus, God will ultimately bring salvation,
  - despite a culture and society that may not listen to the gospel message shared by believers

## BAPTISM SAVES YOU

The next hard section is right after this one, in verse 21 which says, **Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you.**

Put more simply, this reads as "baptism saves you."

Upon first reading, this could be confusing. Especially when compared to other passages of scripture that speak about salvation. Passages like **SLIDE**:

- Acts 16:31 **Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved**
- Or Romans 10:9 **if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved**
- Or Ephesians 2:8-9 **For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works**

So, is Peter contradicting Scripture here?

- Is he really saying that it is baptism that saves you...

- And not belief in Jesus that saves you?
- Or is he saying something else?

Well, from what I've studied, I think he is speaking in a generality here. I think he's just using some shorthand to describe baptism

- In fact, if we read to the end of verse 21 he says baptism is **not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ**
- So, baptism **is an appeal or a confession or a declaration of our salvation through Jesus' death and resurrection**
- Peter is saying that baptism is not the means of cleansing us from our sin – that was done through the resurrection of Jesus Christ
- Baptism then, **is not the act by which we achieve our salvation. Rather, it is a declaration of our salvation**
- Pastor Chris has often used the illustration of wedding rings
  - Two weeks ago, my wife Anne and I celebrated our 17<sup>th</sup> anniversary!
  - Which means that, 17 years ago, in our wedding ceremony, we exchanged rings
  - But the rings didn't make us married – they didn't then and they don't now
  - It was the vows and the covenant that we made that make us married
  - And it is the covenant we've kept ever since that makes us married. Not wearing rings
- Peter here is speaking about baptism the way we might speak about a ring ceremony... he's just kind speaking in shorthand
  - Just like a ring ceremony **declares your marriage** but doesn't make you married,
  - Baptism **declares your salvation** but doesn't save you

So those were brief explanations of two difficult parts of this passage.

- I didn't want to sidetrack us later to explain them.
- Now that we got the hard parts out of the way. Let's turn to the rest of the passage

## **INTRO #2: HOW WE VIEW SUFFERING**

Now, I enjoy working out. I like being active and exercising. I try to workout regularly throughout the week as part of my normal routine.

- I enjoy lifting weights,
- I've done some crossfit,
- I like cycling,
- In the past year, I even started running a bit
- I try to have some diversity in how I workout and I try to mix it up a lot

One thing that I don't really like however, is fitness classes.

- Classes are great for some people, I just don't prefer them
- When I work out, I prefer to put headphones in,
- Listen to a podcast or music,
- And just keep to myself and focus on getting my work done,
- I don't want to be in a room with a bunch of other sweaty people
- And have some overly positive or over-the-top instructor barking at me the whole time. That's just not for me
- So I haven't done a whole lot of workout classes

But I have seen enough gyms and I've seen enough classes to know that some of them promote suffering.

- The idea is that the workout is so hard that you'll suffer through it
- So, they'll give workout names like "SufferFest" or offer classes named "Suffer With Friends" or "Suffer Club"
- I even saw a gym named "Suffer City"
- At the start of the workout, the instructor will say something like "Get ready to suffer!", "Who's ready to suffer today?" or "Prepare to suffer!"
- They promote suffering through a hard workout because hard workouts can be really good for you
- Hard workouts break down your muscles so they can grow back stronger
- So, if you're willing to work and struggle and suffer through them,
- Hard workouts can make you better or faster or stronger
- Suffering through a workout becomes sort of a badge of honor
- People want to do it

Working out – fitness – is one of the only areas I could think of, where people actually look forward to or desire some sort of suffering

- But usually, we try to avoid suffering
- In most other areas of life, we avoid it
- We'll do whatever we can to not suffer

Sometime and somewhere along the line, we got this idea in our brains that life is supposed to be easy

- Maybe it's the idea of the **American Dream**...
  - That a family, and kids, a house in the suburbs, and an SUV in the garage...
  - Will yield an easy, smooth life
  - With no problems, no stormy seas, no hard times
  - Or that a college degree is the path to a successful career
  - And a successful life
  - Where you can just afford everything you need
  - That is free from any suffering or hard times
- Or, maybe it's Staples selling us the idea of the **'Easy Button'**
  - Do you remember these commercials?
  - It's the idea that there is always a product we can buy
  - Or a service we can pay for
  - Or a shortcut or a hack
  - That will make things smooth and easy for us
  - And makes us more efficient and more successful
  - With no setbacks, struggles, or suffering
- Or, maybe it's been preachers and pastors who – while they meant well – have sold us on the idea **that after you accept Jesus as your savior, then life gets easy**
  - That *without* Jesus in our life, we are riddled with sin
  - And we suffer because we live worldly lives of sin
  - But once we accept Jesus, then we are free from struggling with sin
  - And free from the impact of sin on our lives
  - Jesus makes life good and easy
- Somewhere along the line we've bought into all or some of this kind of thinking – that life should be easy
  - But that's not true is it?

- As we go through life, we find that none of it is true...
- Suffering still exists

And that's what today's sermon is about.

- It's about suffering
- More specifically, it's about preparing to suffer
- Suffering is one of the themes throughout the book of 1 Peter

And in this passage, Peter tells Christians that, in this life we're going to suffer.

- And so, we should be prepared for it
- Be prepared to suffer as a Christian
- Be prepared to live as a believer in a culture that is hostile to your way of thinking
  - Under a government that is hostile to your beliefs
- Be prepared to suffer for your faith and for your belief in Jesus
- Be prepared to suffer in this life in general

Peter is instructing Christians living in the Roman Empire

- To prepare to live amidst persecution and suffering
- And he's saying that preparation is the key to living through suffering

So, I'm calling this sermon **SLIDE: Prepare to Suffer**

- Sounds exciting right?
- I'm like a workout instructor
- *Welcome to Fathom Church...*
- *Be prepared to suffer* **BLANK SLIDE**

So, let's get into it. Starting in verse 13:

### **VERSES 13-15**

<sup>13</sup> Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? <sup>14</sup> But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, <sup>15</sup> but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

Peter starts with a rhetorical question. He's making a point by asking a question.

He asks, "*Who is going to bring you harm if you do what is good?*"

- In other words, if you do what is right, you don't need to be in fear
- For example, if you're driving along C-470 and you're in the right lane doing the speed limit
  - There's no need for your heart to race
  - or for you to get nervous
  - if you see a police car approaching behind you
- We've all been there, right?
  - A police car in the rearview mirror always gives you a rush of fear
  - You double-check your speed
- But if you're obeying the traffic laws – if you're doing what is good – you don't need to fear being pulled over and getting a speeding ticket

But remember, Peter is talking about coming persecution here.

- And in times of persecution, all bets may be off
- Under normal circumstances, no one will bring you harm for doing good
- But if you're being persecuted just because you're a Christian, you may face harm...
- So, in verse 14 Peter adds, that
- Regardless of how good you act or how righteous you are, you may still suffer or be persecuted
- He's saying, "*Even if you are good and righteous, you still may face some harm. But don't fear and don't worry anyway.*"

To sum up verses 13 and 14, Peter says:

- To do good in all circumstances because it may help us to avoid harm...
- But even if we do face harm, despite doing good...
- We shouldn't worry or fear. *Why?*

I think it's because **in suffering we have an opportunity**. Hard times or suffering or crisis creates opportunity to share Christ.

- We have an opportunity to share our hope amidst our suffering
- If we're prepared



In verse 15, Peter gives us the first way that we can prepare. <sup>15</sup> but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

## CONFESS

The phrase **to make a defense** that Peter uses can also be translated several ways.

- It can be translated to mean “apologetics”
  - Which refers to making a legal defense in a court to a judge
- Or, it can mean more simply “to give an answer” or “to explain”
  - Which refers to more to presenting a testimony or confession
- One commentator said that there is a difference **between giving a defense of our faith and being defensive about our faith**
  - Christians are great at being defensive about our faith
  - You’ve been on social media, you’ve seen or heard these arguments, right?
  - Defensive arguments don’t typically draw people in. They often just draw lines in the sand
- Here, making a defense of your faith means to declare or share or confess. I’m going to use ‘confess’. **SLIDE** We are to **Prepare to Confess** our hope in Christ.

**Peter is saying that to prepare for suffering, we should be prepared to confess our hope**

Often, we hear the word “confess” and we think “admission of guilt,” “confessing to the crime,” or “fessing up”

- But confessing also means to declare or state your beliefs,
- to state your doctrines
- and your principles

We are to be able and ready to confess our faith when crisis and suffering hit.

- Peter knows that **crisis creates opportunity to confess our faith in Christ**
- And he knows this because earlier in his life, he failed here
  - Remember... In a time of crisis – when Jesus was being arrested – people were asking Peter, “weren’t you one of his followers also?”
  - And instead of confessing his allegiance to Jesus...
  - Peter denied it
  - In fact he strongly denied it 3 times!

- And, even though Jesus later forgave and restored Peter, I'm sure denying Christ was one of the great sorrows of Peter's life...
- A lost opportunity
- So, Peter knows from experience that we should be ready
  - Ready to confess Christ during crisis
  - Instead of panicking and hiding our beliefs
  - Or simply staying silent
  - We should be prepared to state them
- And that is what Peter points to here

We are to confess **a reason for the hope that is in you** and we are to confess it **to anyone who asks**

- In other words, can you state why you love Jesus and accept him as your Savior... In a clear, succinct manner?
- Can you bring it into different types of conversations?
- To a variety of audiences?
- Being able to answer **anyone who asks** is easier said than done... it requires some practice and preparation

And furthermore, Peter says to do this with **gentleness and respect,**

- So, he calls us to give our confession humbly,
- In such a way that whomever we are speaking to is not turned off by how we say things
- But rather engaged with what we are saying, because
- **How we say something matters just as much as what we say**
- And if we say something that is truthful,
  - but lacks gentleness or respect
  - Then the truth will never even get heard

How many times have you seen an interaction online or in person

- And you read someone's comment and think to yourself, "yeah, he's right."
- "Yeah, he's right... and he's an absolute jerk."
- It happens all the time. The message gets lost because of the way the message gets sent

- It's hard to do **gentleness and respect**, on social media or otherwise

It's really hard. It takes some practice and preparation. And prayer.

## **PERSONAL EXAMPLE**

The past two years our family and 3 neighbor families on our street have gone camping together on Labor Day weekend

- These are families we've become friends with
- And each family has kids that are similar ages to our daughters
- This year, as the trip approached, I began to pray that there would be opportunities for Anne and for me to talk about our faith with these friends
- On the last night of the trip
  - The kids and most of the adults had already gone to bed
  - But a few of us stayed up around the fire – because the campfire is the best part about camping right?
- While we were talking around the fire, at some point, the issue of same sex marriage came up
  - That's a bit of a sensitive topic, right?
  - Kind of heavy for a campfire conversation
  - Especially when not everyone around the fire is a Christian
- The question that soon followed was: *Why do Christians view same sex marriage as wrong?*
  - And guess who the question was directed towards?
    - It was directed towards the Christians sitting around that fire
    - To Anne and me
- Thankfully, this is a topic that we were already somewhat prepared to answer
  - Our daughters had started asking some questions about this... we'd been having some discussions with them about it already
  - I had already thought about and even practiced how I would speak to it
  - So, we felt somewhat prepared for it
- Anne and I were able to talk about
  - Our belief in the Bible as truth
  - And God's creation order

- Creating them male and female
- God's design for marriage and for children through marriage
- And how the marriage relationship reflects both Christ's relationship to the church and God's relationship to us
- We were able to share this in a way that eventually led to a follow-up question, which was: *How did we come into our faith in God?*
  - We got asked to share our testimonies around that fire...

Now, I'd love to say that the people around the fire with us accepted Christ as their saviors that night

- and that I baptized them in the lake the next day...
- and that they've all joined Fathom since.
- But that didn't happen.

And while the line of questioning wasn't overly confrontational,

- It could have been
- We could have gotten defensive about it
- It could have turned into an argument or a debate
- If it wasn't done in gentleness and respect

But I felt like that night Anne and I were able to live out verse 15

- We gave a reason for the hope we had in Christ by confessing Christ
- We did it with gentleness and respect
- That's what we're called to be prepared for
- Be prepared to give a reason. Be prepared to confess Christ
- What the hearer does with what we say is the Holy Spirit's work
- But we are called to prepare to confess our faith. **BLANK SLIDE**

### **APPLY: SHARING YOUR STORY**

I think one of the best ways to prepare to do this, is to practice sharing your testimony. **Your confession of Christ.**

- Over the years, in each Fathom Discipleship Group – or D-group – I've been in
  - before we start any study or sermon discussion
  - the first thing our group has done is to share our stories

- So, for the first few weeks that our group meets, we just share our stories – 2 or 3 people a night until we get through the entire group
- In fact, our group is still doing it now... we still have a few more people left to share their stories
- Those in your d-group are the people who will help you go deeper into community and deeper with God
  - And so, sharing stories and testimonies,
  - Sharing how God has worked in your life,
  - Often, how God has worked through the hard times in your life,
  - is an amazing way to get to one another in a D-group
- But it's also a great way to practice and prepare to give the reason for the hope we have in Jesus
  - We practice telling our story
  - We practice telling what God has done in our life
  - In safer, welcoming places like a d-group
  - So, that when the time comes, we're ready to share it in less safe places, or maybe even hostile places
- This is one of the reasons we encourage our d-groups to share their stories
- It's one of the reasons in membership interviews we ask people to share their stories
- The more we reflect on and share the reason for our hope in Christ, the more prepared we are to share the reason for our hope in Christ
  - Because one day it might happen in a different setting
  - With a different audience
  - Maybe even an audience that is watching you suffer through something hard, curious to see how a Christian handles suffering
- **Crisis creates opportunity to confess our hope in Christ**
- **Be prepared to confess your hope in Christ**

## VERSES 16

Let's keep moving. Verse 16:

**<sup>16</sup> having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.**

Verse 16 starts with the phrase **good conscience**, so let's talk a bit about our conscience.

## CONSCIENCE

I just mentioned my two daughters. One of the results of having two daughters that love Disney is that but when I hear conscience

- I immediately think of the Disney character Jiminy Cricket
- Jiminy Cricket was the conscience of Pinocchio
- Jiminy Cricket tells Pinocchio,
  - *"Always let your conscience be your guide"*
  - and that if you're ever unsure of what you should do, your conscience will guide you
- I don't often agree with Disney on a lot of things, but I do think it's interesting that Disney chose a cricket to represent someone's conscience
  - Has a cricket ever gotten into your house or your garage?
  - You ever hear them chirping at night?
  - That relentless chirping
  - Is very hard to ignore
- Our consciences work the same way

Our conscience is that internal feeling or voice that speaks inside of us

- *It chirps to us – letting us to know if our actions are "right" or "wrong"*
- *CS Lewis said that our conscience is how God speaks to us within our souls!*

The word conscience comes from two Latin words:

- *con* means "with"
- And *scio* means "know". (*Scio* is also where our word *science* comes from)
- So together, *conscience* means "with knowledge" or to "know with"
- The "with" part is important because it signifies that the knowledge we have in our conscience, is a *shared* knowledge
  - It is a common knowledge
  - It is a knowledge of right and wrong that would be the same across an group of people
- Remember, Peter is speaking to other Christians whom he expects and understands to have a shared knowledge of the Christian view of right or wrong

- This is different from today's culture of personal autonomy
- Today's culture says "follow your heart"
- and "live your truth"
- and wants each person to have their own personal standard for what's right or wrong *for them*
- Instead, Peter is talking about an accepted and understood knowledge of behavior for everyone
  - There was no "what's right for you may not be right for me" thinking in the early church
  - Instead, there is "what's right in God's eyes is what's right for all of us"
- Our conscience helps us follow God's truth and God's design for our behavior
- So, when we have a "good conscience," that is God's voice speaking to us and approving of our actions as right
- When we have a "guilty conscience," that voice speaks to us of wrong actions

Peter instructs us to have a **good conscience**. He instructs us to prepare to be slandered and reviled and to suffer

- And all the while, to maintain a good conscience in our response
- This is the second way we prepare

### **SLIDE** We Prepare through Conscience

This means to speak and act in ways that we know to be right, based on God's Word

- We are to maintain a good conscience above all else. By seeking to live righteously
- Even amidst suffering
- We speak and act in a right manner to fellow Christians...
- To non-believers...
- *And* to those who may be against us

In times of suffering, keeping a good conscience will help us for several reasons<sup>ii</sup>:

- First, a good conscience gives us **courage**
  - If we know what we are doing is right, we don't need to fear what others may do to us
  - If we are right in front of both God and men, we don't need to be afraid of the outcome

- Go back to what Peter said in verses 13-14. The righteous don't need to fear or be troubled
- Even if we face suffering, we can do it with courage knowing that it is better to suffer for doing good
- A good conscience will give us **peace**
  - A *guilty* conscience can cause unrest or cause discontentment. It can keep us up at night
  - But a *clear* conscience gives us peace
    - We know we've done what is right
    - And so we can have peace or rest easy knowing that
    - We don't need to look in our rearview mirror when we're driving, worried about that police car
    - That's what a good or clear conscience can do. It can give peace
- A good conscience will give us **confidence**
  - We can face slander or insults or questioning, even false accusations
  - And despite all of that, we can persevere knowing that we are doing what is right in God's eyes

## ILLUSTRATION

I faced a situation once where a leadership decision I made was really challenged by a lot of people

- But I made it prayerfully and through reading God's Word and through seeking counsel from other Christians I trusted
- So, I had a clear conscience about the decision. I felt that the decision was right
- But still, the questions and the arguments and even the slander about me and about the decision relentlessly came
- But having a good conscience about the decision gave me confidence. It gave me some ballast and stability amidst it all
- A good conscience gives you confidence amidst suffering or slander

So, the second way that we can prepare for suffering is through a good conscience

- Through seeking to learn and know and do what is right according to God's Word
- And then seeking to live and act and speak in the way that is right
- We prepare for suffering through our conscience **BLANK SLIDE**



## VERSES 17-22

Let's finish our passage verses 17 and 18. Read with me:

<sup>17</sup> For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.<sup>18</sup> For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,

So, I addressed the end of the passage earlier, talking about some of the harder, trickier parts in verses 19-21

- Those 2 parts were hard to interpret...
- But there is one more hard part in this section
- Only this part is simply hard to hear. Hard to understand

Read verse 17 again: <sup>17</sup> For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will,

It is better to suffer... *if that is God's will*

- In other words, 'sometimes it is God's will for us to suffer'
- This is a hard thing for many Christians to hear
- Or for people in general to hear – Christians or non-Christians
- We don't like to think this way
- We don't like to think of our suffering as being God's will
- It's hard for us to understand

But when we think about our lives and suffering under God's will, we should remember that Jesus also suffered under God's will

Remember, in the days before he was crucified, Jesus was in the garden of Gethsemane praying.

- And he knew what was ahead of him on the cross
- He knew the type of suffering that was coming in the days that followed
- **SLIDE** And he prayed, asking his father, And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will. (Mk 14:36)
- Jesus knew that it was God's will for him to suffer

So, while we don't like to think about suffering being God's will for us,

- We understand that sometimes it is
- Sometimes our suffering is God's plan
- He's at work. His plan and his will are at work even in our suffering
- Just like they were when Jesus was sent to the cross
- And so, we can follow the example of Jesus
- And submit to God's plan. Even when it means enduring suffering

That's what Peter tells us in verses 17 and 18. As we prepare to face suffering, Peter points to a third way that we prepare

- He points us to the example of Jesus Christ
- He says that as Christians, we will face suffering, or slander, or persecution
- We will face it because of what we believe and who we believe in
- Suffering shouldn't come as a surprise to us, especially if we're prepared for it
- And if we're prepared for it, we can face it and endure it
- Just like Jesus did

**SLIDE** So, the third way that we prepare is we **Prepare through Christ**. We can endure suffering because Christ endured suffering.

What's really cool about studying through a book of the Bible the way we do it at Fathom is that

- you can start to see themes emerge
- or you can see certain styles that the writer may have in their writing
- or certain ways that they write to get their points across
- Peter is no different

Two weeks ago, Chris taught on submission to the government in 1 Peter 2,

- In verses 13-20, Peter said that we are to submit to the authority of our government
- Then in verse 21 he says, **<sup>21</sup> For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.**
- So, Peter gives a teaching and an instruction
- And then he points to Jesus and the life of Jesus, as an example – the ultimate example – for us

Peter uses this same approach throughout this letter

- In chapter 1, Peter calls believers to be holy
  - First giving instruction in living lives of holiness
  - Then pointing to the holiness of Jesus as our example
- In chapter 2, Peter calls believers “living stones” that are part of a “spiritual house”
  - First, he describes our roles as stones within the house
  - Then he describes Christ’s role as the cornerstone and foundation of that house

Peter uses the same approach in today’s passage.

- He tells us to prepare for suffering through our confession and our conscience
- And now he points to Jesus and tells us to prepare through Christ as our example
- He says **18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous,**
- In other words, **Prepare through Christ**
- We can endure suffering just as Jesus endured suffering

We prepare for suffering **through Christ**, aiming to be like Christ

- **just as Jesus endured suffering**
- **and God brought about victory through it.**
- **We can endure suffering**
- **because Jesus has already won victory for us** **BLANK SLIDE**

## TYPES OF SUFFERING

Now, in these verses Peter says that there are several kinds of suffering:

JD Grear gave a helpful way to think about these. He calls them the “3 Joe’s” of suffering, Pointing to Joseph, Jonah, and Job.

First, in verse 17, Peter says we can **suffer for doing good**

- This is the kind of suffering **Joseph** went through
  - Remember, Joseph was sold into slavery,
  - falsely accused,
  - and thrown in jail

- But all the while he was doing what was right before God
- Yet he still suffered for it
- And God used that suffering for good... to bring salvation to the Israelites
- This is also the same suffering that Jesus experienced
- And the same suffering that many Christians experience today. Suffering despite doing good
- That is the first type of suffering

Next, in verse 20 Peter talks about those who **formerly did not obey,**

- These were imprisoned and are suffering for doing wrong. For disobedience
- Here we should think of **Jonah**
  - Jonah disobeyed God and ran from God
  - And as a result, he suffered in the belly of a fish
  - And God changed him and his ways through his suffering
- This is self-induced suffering
  - We may learn from it and grow from it
  - But the suffering it is a result of our disobedient or sinful actions

Then, there is suffering for no reason – or at least no reason that we can see

- This is the suffering **Job** experienced
  - Job lost everything – his wealth, his family, his health
  - And he had no reason or understanding as to why
  - It happened out of nowhere, for no reason that anyone could see
- This may be the hardest type of suffering
- Because we try to understand the *why* behind it, but we can't. Yet we continue to suffer
- It may cause us to question God and to ask him why we're going through such suffering, because we can't see why
- We may ultimately grow or change through it, but we don't know why God allows it

## APPLICATION

So church, suffering can come in a variety of ways.

- We may suffer and we won't know why – or at least we can't see why in the moment
- Sometimes we suffer and we know exactly why – because we made poor choices
- And sometimes we suffer despite living honorably and seeking to do things right

Suffering in this world can come in so many forms:

- Maybe its health related. And you're asking:
  - *God, why do I feel sick? Why do you allow me to feel this way?*
  - *Why can't I get better? Why can't any doctor or specialist help me?*
  - *God, why cancer?*
  - *God, why won't you heal me?*
- Or maybe it's the loss of a loved one:
  - *God, why did you take this person? They were so young*
  - *They were healthy and had more life left to live*
  - *Why did you take them and leave me here without them?*
- Maybe it's the loss of a job:
  - You worked really hard at your job. To the best of your ability.
  - You arrived early and stayed late
  - and dedicated yourself to the job...
  - Yet you still were laid off
  - And now it's causing financial stress
- Suffering could come through others
  - You may be gossiped about
  - Or mocked because of what you believe
  - It could be in your office, or job site, on your street or in your classroom
  - But you're reviled and each day it is hard to be there in that place

I know there are other forms of suffering going on in this room

- As an elder, I'm seeing and praying through the prayer cards and prayer requests
- I know there is stuff going on that is hard

- Heck, Anne and I are going through some stuff related to health right now, ourselves

Church, suffering is a part of this world and this life.

- Even when we seek to avoid it.
- Even when we seek to do what is right and make good choices
- It still comes
- We need to expect suffering

I would love to be able to stand up here and say that

- *If you believe what's in this book*
- *And live what's in this book*
- *You can escape or avoid suffering*

It's always easier to preach positive, encouraging things like that. But I don't find anywhere in this book that says that.

- There's no verse saying, "*if you do good and do right, you'll live on easy street and you'll never suffer*"
- It's not in here!
- Church, we're going to suffer in this life on earth
  - In fact, We are called to suffering
  - Suffering may **be God's will,**
  - So, prepare to suffer

There's a saying that is often used in politics to the effect of "*never let a good crisis go to waste.*"

- It's often used cynically,
- about politicians who use a crisis for their own political gains

But I think the idea can apply here.

- During persecution or crisis or suffering,
- **When believers respond in a way that shows our faith and our hope**
- **Non-believers take notice!**
- When we can **confess our hope in Jesus amidst suffering**
- When we live honorably with a **good conscience amidst suffering**

- When we approach suffering the way Jesus approached suffering...
- It is so different that the world around us can't help but notice

When Jesus is reflected and confessed by believers – even and especially – during times of suffering, then no amount of suffering is in vain. No crisis is wasted.

All throughout this letter, the apostle Peter has been talking about suffering.

- That as exiles and foreigners in this world
- Believers in Christ are going to suffer in this world

But Peter's reminder is that we can prepare for this and expect it.

- We can prepare by using suffering as part of our **confession** of our hope in Christ
- We can prepare by how we live, living with a good **conscience** in a way that is honorable before both God and man
- We can prepare by putting our hope in **Christ** and setting our eyes on Christ and his example through suffering

One commentator stated that verse 18 *"is one of the most succinct and yet profound statements in the New Testament on the doctrine of the atonement."* And so, I want to close with reading verse 18 over you again.

**18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit**

- Church, talking about suffering is never fun.
- I don't enjoy standing up here and telling you:
- to prepare to suffer
- or saying that your suffering may be God's will
- or that your suffering – though incredibly hard – won't be wasted in God's plan
- These aren't fun things to preach

But verse 18 is. Verse 18 is our example, our reminder, our hope.

Let Jesus be our reminder today. Let Jesus be our hope in suffering. We should prepare to suffer.

But Jesus is our hope in suffering. Let's pray.

\* \* \* \* \*

## RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – The Lord’s Supper – a celebration and reminder of Christ’s work on the cross (If you aren’t a believer...)
- GIVING – Tithes and offerings – a celebration and reminder of God’s gift of Jesus (If you’re a guest/ if Fathom isn’t your home church...)
- PRAYER – [fathomchurch.org/prayer](http://fathomchurch.org/prayer) (If you need prayer today...)
- SINGING – Reflection and proclamation.

*First song:* reflection. In 1 CORINTHIANS 11. Paul lays out the words of institution for the Lord’s Supper. But he also calls us to examine ourselves before we participate.

## COMMUNION

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll continue to sing:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

<sup>23</sup> For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, <sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” TAKE

<sup>25</sup> In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” TAKE

<sup>26</sup> For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

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<sup>i</sup> “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains”

<sup>ii</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [The Bible exposition commentary](#) (Vol. 2, pp. 411–419). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.