

## Friday: Assurance

**Read:** 1 Peter 3:21-22 <sup>21</sup> Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, 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, <sup>22</sup> who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

### Reflect:

Verse 21 is a strong statement and we should not try to “water down” its meaning. The Bible is clear, Baptism saves people. Now hold on, I’m not talking about simply getting wet by being immersed.

You may or may not know this, but the Christian Church (like New Life) has been slandered as being “water regenerationists” in the past. Some still accuse us of that today. However, there is no magic in the water – that is why we only immerse people who profess their own faith (perhaps I’ll discuss the false label of ‘water regenerationist’ later).

The phrase “good conscience” is a formula for the Christian life (cf. 1Pet3:16). Also, the word “appeal” is a technical term used in legal contracts. All of this means a person is looking forward to a life of obedience which they are starting with their immersion when they kill their old self (cf. Rom6). So we see that Baptism (immersion) is involved, but without what happens after it (i.e., living faithfully) a person simply got wet. Salvation is a process, not an event. From the point of our immersion the rest of our life should be an ongoing effort to live out that reality (i.e., living faithfully for God having killed our old self).

### Respond:

There are other strong statements on baptism in the Bible (e.g., Mk16:16; Jn3:5; Rom6:3-4; Gal3:27; Col2:12; Tit3:5).

Do you have questions about the salvation process? If so will you ask an elder or myself (Brent)?

Don’t miss the glorious victory of Jesus in these verses. He is supreme over all evil forces, therefore 1Pet3:13 takes on a different slant doesn’t it?

**Pray:** Pray for our wisdom and ability to discern God’s direction for New Life. Confess to God your desire to live faithfully for Him. Continue to pray for protection from sin and strength during times of testing.

## Saturday: God’s Glory

**Read:** 1 Peter 4:1-11

### Reflect:

Do you ever get the picture that all we do ought to be for God’s glory? That theme is repeated throughout the Bible (e.g., Jn17:1; Rom15:7; 16:27; 1Cor10:31). In fact, as you know, creation originally reflected the glory of God (Gen1:31), but that glory has been marred.

The good news is that as Christians we can play an active part in glorifying God. Well, perhaps I should replace “can play” with “are playing”. That is our calling. The salvation of people brings God glory and we are invited into that process.

I wonder, do our prayers reflect a concern for God’s glory? Does the stewardship of our gifts reflect a concern for God’s glory? Have our passions been tempered by the Will of God? If you’re like me the answer to the above questions are sometimes “yes” and sometimes “no”. I long for them to be consistently “yes”.

### Respond:

What can you do today to prepare yourself for worship tomorrow?

Do you have a regular time in which you pray to God?

Do you know your spiritual gifts? Are you utilizing them?

**Pray:** Pray for those God is prompting to come to New Life tomorrow to be obedient and come. Pray that what we do tomorrow is pleasing to God and that lives will be positively impacted by the interactions we have, the singing, preaching, and teaching...pray for a God-honoring day. Thank God for His love.

# Theologically Grounded

November 23 – 29

Let’s face it, we don’t really like to “suffer” do we? At least it seems we don’t. Yet I wonder if our outlook on suffering can make a big difference.

- Did you ever play sports? If so chances are good that you had some suffering (physical exertion, pain, injuries) to face didn’t you?
  - What was it that kept you going? Personal goals, not letting the team down, what?
- Do you have a budget? If so chances are good that you’ve had to suffer by not buying something you’d like to have.
  - What kept you from splurging? Was it the peace of maintaining orderly finances to provide for your family? Was it fear of running out of money? Did you have something for which you were saving your money?
- Have you ever lost sleep on behalf of a child? This could be while caring for an infant, waiting up for a teen to come home, traveling long distances to attend extracurricular activities...
  - What prompted those sacrifices? Was it a concern of being viewed by others as a “bad parent”? Or was it love for your child?

There are obviously many more examples of “suffering”. Granted, those types of suffering are relatively miniscule...but to an extent suffering is relative. It is measured by that with which we have become accustomed.

I think it is interesting that in our passage for today Peter heaps up some heavy Theological stuff for his readers. Keep in mind, many of them are likely afraid of being persecuted for their faith (e.g., possessions seized, mistreated, slandered, even killed – “suffering”). At times like those a “lesson in Theology” doesn’t seem all that important.

Yet Theology gives us an anchor. When we more fully understand God it helps us to face whatever is before us.

- So, Peter tells them only God is the one worthy of your fear (1Pet3:14-15).
- Peter also tells them that their suffering is an indication that they are living in God’s Will for their lives (1Pet3:17).
- He also reminds them of the once and for all sacrifice of Jesus (1Pet3:18) – He suffered too.
- Peter encourages his readers with the reminder that Jesus is victorious and that the evil behind those persecuting them (his readers) has been defeated (1Pet3:19,22).
- Peter also reminds them that they are saved, provided they follow through on their commitment to God to live a faithful life (1Pet3:21).
- Oh yeah, and God’s people have always been in the minority (1Pet3:20).

Reality checks can work wonders can’t they?

**Monday: Come Again...**

**Read:** 1 Peter 3:13-14 <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...

**Reflect:**  
Can't you practically here Arnold saying "Whatch you talkin 'bout Willis?" when you read verse 13? You know...the sitcom "Different Strokes"? At any rate, it seems that Peter's audience would think, "There are a lot of people ready to harm us...in fact they are practically lining up for the opportunity!"

I imagine Peter knew that was the reality. However, Peter is trying to expand the perspective of his readers to encompass what God is doing and has already done. These verses can also trace some of their thought back to Jesus, and He calls those who are persecuted "blessed" and heirs to the Kingdom (cf. Mt5:10).

Yet this isn't to dispel the reality of these verses. The word for "troubled" indicates a deep inner turmoil – the stirring up of emotions (e.g., Mk14:26; Jn13:21). Certainly we all have emotions that get the best of us from time to time. Yet Peter is clear that our emotions, as well as our fears, need to be not only tempered but controlled by something greater than our immediate circumstances.

**Respond:**  
Have you ever met someone who is hostile toward Christianity? What was your reaction? Have you prayed for them?

How often do you think of eternity with God and how wonderful that will be?

What stirs your emotions and arouses fear in you? Do you think you're the only one with that situation?

**Pray:** Confess to God what troubles you; thank Him that He is bigger than that. Thank God for the privilege of worshipping Him with your brothers and sisters in Christ yesterday. Continue to pray for workers in God's Kingdom (Mt9:36-38).

**Tuesday: You Ever Been Asked...**

**Read:** 1 Peter 3:15-16 <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, <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.

**Reflect:**  
Isaiah 8:13 says "But the LORD of hosts, Him you shall regard as holy. Let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread." The context of Isaiah is the uncertainty running rampant due to the looming invasion of Assyria (a foreign enemy).

Based on that background, Peter says the proper response to the turmoil in which you find yourself is to realize exactly Whom it is you should fear (e.g., Lk12:4-12). In fact, despite whatever turmoil you face, your life should be so remarkable that people ask you how you are still sane. When that happens, and you will have opportunities, do you have an answer?

To give a "defense" is to give a legal defense; like you're on trial, which in Peter's day meant that you may die. Yet notice how our answer is to be given, with "gentleness" (cf. 3:4) and "respect". There may be times for "strong" words, but ultimately it isn't our words that do the convicting, it's the Holy Spirit.

**Respond:**  
Do you have a short, like two minute, testimony to give someone when they ask why you are so different?

Do you find yourself more fearful of what's material (e.g., money, comfort, etc.) rather than what's eternal (your soul – and the souls of others)?

Read Acts 2:13-41, especially vs13 and 37-41. Do you think Peter may have had this instance in mind when he wrote this?

**Pray:** Pray for Bob Griffin, Larry Hayes, and Roy Andrews; elders at New Life. Pray for the unity and purity of New Life. Continue to pray for God's people to have boldness to speak for Him (Acts4:29).

**Wednesday: I'd Rather Not...**

**Read:** 1 Peter 3:17 <sup>17</sup> For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

**Reflect:**  
I don't think anyone really likes to suffer. However, if we are a follower of Jesus, we have no choice (cf. 1Pet2:21). Now obviously we are not all called to be crucified (thank goodness), and what looks like "nothing" in the suffering department may in fact be excruciating to the one going through it. To a degree suffering is relative...

However, "to suffer" here in 1 Peter likely means "to die" (cf. 3:18). That is something we don't necessarily face here in America, but there are instances when it does happen. How many remember the Columbine shootings back in the 1999? The name of the martyr there...Rachel Scott. Her death, tragic as it was, inspired many.

Yet still, let's be honest, we'd rather not have to suffer. I know I don't want to. Acknowledging this I remind myself that I need a continually growing picture of God and His greatness. The fact of the matter is that I believe many are willing to suffer for God, but since we have it relatively easy in America it almost seems like we have to go to extremes to make it happen. Yet I wonder, are those "extremes" or are they the calling of a follower of Jesus?

**Pray:** Pray for Ed Asbury, Mike Haag, and Keith Krause; deacons at New Life. Pray for the strength to do what might be uncomfortable (i.e., "doing good") so that God is glorified. Continue to pray for God's Word to spread rapidly (2Thess3:1).

**Respond:**  
Have you been reading and rereading 1 Peter? Has it been helpful?

Read the following Proverbs if you have a tendency to struggle with how easy "evildoers" seem to have it (Prov3:31-32; 23:17-18; 24:1-2).

What is something you could do that might lead to some form of "suffering" for Jesus? Are you willing to do it?

**Thursday: Oh...That's What that Means...**

**Read:** 1 Peter 3:18-20 <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, <sup>19</sup> in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, <sup>20</sup> 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.

**Reflect:**  
This is a theologically LOADED passage. The words "for sins" relay OT terminology for sin-offerings (e.g., Lev5:6-7; Ezek43:21). From the NT we know that Jesus suffered "once" for sins (cf. Heb9:25-28; 10:10) – His sacrifice doesn't need repeated. The aspect of Him "bringing us to God" is also found elsewhere (Rom5:2; Eph2:18). Jesus has done the 'dirty work'.

Yet despite the dirty work being done, appearances can be deceiving. He was killed (the word implies a judicial killing), but that murder hastened His ultimate victory!

I'm almost out of space...but "where" and "when" did He go 'wherever'? Some say Jesus preached through Noah...but notice the text doesn't say that; it only says the "spirits" were disobedient then. Some say He went to hell, but the text doesn't say that either. The text says "in which" meaning after His resurrection. The location was a holding place for disobedient angels (cf. 2Pet2:4-5; Jude6) The reason was to PROCLAIM VICTORY!!

**Pray:** Thank God for Jesus' victory over death. Pray for Brent McCrory; preaching minster at New Life. Continue to pray for open doors to share God's Word (Col4:2-6) and the boldness to do so.

**Respond:**  
Take note of the few people saved in Noah's day. At least you know more than 8 Christians!! Do you know 8 non-Christians for whom you can pray?

Although Jesus did the 'dirty work' we have the 'daily work' still to do; living out the implications of His death.

How often do you remind yourself that Jesus has "conquered the grave"?