



## BULLEEN BAPTIST CHURCH

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### SERIES : Studies in 1 Peter - "A Living Hope"

August 12, 2007. Study 9

### "LIVING FOR GOD'S WILL" 1 Peter 3:18 - 4:6

#### THE STUDY SERIES

Our Studies to this point have highlighted 8 principles from Peter's letter. The final group of studies have a different slant - not so much highlighting the principles that guided Peter's life and that he wanted to pass on to his readers, but the general application of those principles to daily life. So then, the remaining Study titles will commence with the word "Living." This week, "Living For God's Will."

#### INTRODUCTION TO STUDY 9

There are three themes running through today's passage (1Ptr3:18-4:6) They are :

1. The Triumph of Jesus through his death, resurrection and ascension.

For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, .... the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand - with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him. **1Ptr3:18, 21b-22**

2. The Triumph of the Believer - Living For God's Will

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. **1Ptr4:1-2 (also 3-5)**

3. The "spirits in prison"

also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. **1Ptr3:19-20a (also 20b-21a)**

With regard to themes one and two, commentators use the word "COMPLEX"

With regard to the third theme, they most often use the word "DIFFICULT" .... do you can see we will have our work cut out for us this morning!

Our procedure will be first to examine each of the themes and then to see how they fit in the flow of Peter's letter and what use they are in the lives of his readers.

#### THEME 1 : THE TRIUMPH OF JESUS

Peter has already emphasised Jesus death & resurrection (see 1:2b, 3b, 11b, 18-21, 2:21-25)

1Ptr3:18a is remarkable - short, but packed with extraordinary concepts:

The first clause, *Christ died (suffered) for sins* is simply a statement of FACT - disclosing the PURPOSE of Jesus' death. (The translation "suffered" is more technically correct - linking this with the previous section.) Jesus' death is:

**1. CONCLUSIVE** : *once for all* These few small words define the nature of the Christian faith -. not an ongoing attempt to relate to God, but a RESPONSE to what God has already done. God has acted. The issue is settled. (See Heb7:27, 9:24-10:10)

**2. SUBSTITUTIONARY** : *the righteous for the unrighteous.* Jesus stood in our place

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. **2Cor5:21**

He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed ... the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. **Is53:5-6**

**3. RECONCILIATORY** : *to bring you to God.* Jesus bridges the gap between ourselves and God : God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them.

**2Cor5:19**

The remaining verses of this theme remind Peter's readers that Jesus' suffering gave way to glory; he triumphed over the worst that man could do and now rules over all in the place of highest honour.

## THEME 2 : THE TRIUMPH OF THE BELIEVER

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude **1Ptr4:1**

This theme echoes Paul's teaching:

since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. **Rom6:9-12**

Peter is saying that we who claim the MERITS of Jesus' death should also be committed to Jesus' attitude toward sin ... and show it by saying that we wish to be DONE with it too.

This is not denying the fact that we will still sin, but indicating that our desire to PLEASE God is the highest priority of our lives ... applying to:

- 1. Our AMBITIONS** As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God **1Ptr4:2**
- 2. Our ACTIVITIES** For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do -living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. **1Ptr4:3**
- 3. Our ASSOCIATIONS** They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. **1Ptr4:4**

Since we are "alive with Christ" our new life is to be lived out!

## THEME 3 : "Spirits in Prison"

Commenting on this theme within this passage, Martin Luther wrote in his Commentary on First Peter, *"A wonderful text this is, and a more obscure passage perhaps than any other in the New Testament, so that I do not know for certain just what Peter means."*

Three main views (with a wide range of variation in detail among holders of the same view) :

1. Jesus descended into hell (reflected in the "Apostles' Creed) and gave the inhabitants a "2nd chance." or led "the righteous dead" from there to heaven.
2. Noah was a "type of a pre-existent Christ" whose activity and message provided a way for his contemporaries of escaping the prison of sin and disobedience.
3. Jesus' ascension was a proclamation to the spirit world of his triumph and of the certainty of the fallen angels' judgement.

Time does not allow us to enter into the debate. (For some helpful articles, those with an interest and Internet access may like to google : spirits in prison peter). But let's note :

1. Given the nature of the Scriptures, sometimes we just have to live with not knowing what a particular verse might mean! No VITAL issue is ever at stake. The things we MUST know in order to understand who God is and what he requires of us are clear and plain!

*Asked if the things that he didn't understand in the Bible bothered him, Mark Twain was reported as replying, "No, it's the things that I do understand that bother me!"*

2. Don't build a Doctrine on the OBSCURE. eg. Paul's reference to "baptism for the dead." in 1Cor15:29. Mormons have built the world's most comprehensive genealogical database so that living Mormons can locate all their ancestors and be baptised for them.

... or use the less-clear to "illuminate" the CLEAR! eg. "Baptismal Regeneration" from 1Ptr3:21a.

## THE FLOW OF PETER'S LETTER

The meaning of the "spirits in prison" theme is not clear, but the main point of it within its context is. There is an overall theme of VINDICATION.

Jesus, although not doing any wrong, suffered. And his suffering had a PURPOSE - a once-for-all sacrifice to pay the penalty of sin and clear a way into God's presence.

His suffering was not the last word. God vindicated him by EXALTING him to "his right hand" -Jesus reigns over all creation, including the spirit world.

Peter indicates that his readers, united in Christ, are sharing his suffering. Vindication also awaits :

... an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade - kept in heaven for you. who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. **1Ptr1:4-5**

Until then, they are to live out the present gift of New Life .... Living for God's will.