**I Peter 3:18-22**

 ***“Encouragement In Difficult Days”***

Introduction:

1. *If the will of God be so and you suffer…*Those are the ones Peter addresses in I Peter 3:18-22.

 This is a very difficult passage and I don’t profess to have all the answers, but I do know

 Peter wanted to encourage Christians in difficult days.

2. Are you facing difficult days? Would you like to be encouraged?

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**I. OUR PATTERN 3:18-19**

Jesus is the pattern as (2:21ff). In v. 17 Peter wrote of suffering for well doing…living in

 the center of God’s will. This is one of the richest summaries in the New Testament on the

 meaning of the cross.

1. ***It Is Precious*** *Christ hath once suffered for sins*

Our minds race to scenes of the Passion of the Christ where we saw tremendous suffering.

1. ***It is Provisional*** *The just for the unjust*

I deserved to pay for my sins and so did you.

1. ***It is Purposeful*** *That He might bring us to God*

The purpose of Christ on the Cross was that He might bring us to God. Man is never at rest until he finds his rest in God.

 ***D. It is Powerful*** *Being put to death in the flesh, but made alive by the Spirit*

**Encouragement:**

1. You can suffer horribly while you are in the center of God’s will.
2. Everything that was meant for evil, God meant for good.
3. Jesus lived a perfect life and yet was crucified. How can we expect to escape suffering?!
4. Your suffering may not be for you, but for the benefit of someone else.
5. Just when everything was dead, the Spirit breathed life.
6. You may not see the reason at the time. Looking back we see God’s tremendous plan. At the time all was dark!
7. Looks are deceiving. It looked like Jesus had lost!! We Won!!

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**II. OUR PROBLEM 3:19-20**

*By whom…Spirit* Is v. 19 speaking of a ‘second chance’ after death? *Preached unto*

 *spirits now in prison (NASB)* The key word is found in v. 20 *when.* When did Christ preach

 to the spirits now in prison? *In which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits*

 *now in prison.*

I feel (though it is a difficult passage)that Christ did not go down and preach to those dead

 after He died on the cross. He preached through Noah *when once the longsuffering of God…*

 In Christ’s day those who rejected the message of Noah were *spirits now in prison.*

 ***A. Destination 19***

**1.** They rejected Noah’s message preached in the Spirit...now they were in prison.

 **2.** To reject the message of the Spirit of God is to reject our only hope!

***B. Disobedience 20a*** *Who were disobedient…*

This was their ‘sin’ that led to being in prison.

1. ***Delay*** *Waited*
2. God is not willing that any should perish. When once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah while the ark was in preparation.
3. *Waited* at the end of 120 years of warning…120 years of waiting.
4. Noah prepared the Ark and preached (II Pt. 2:5) The apostle Peter believed in a universal flood.
5. *Preacher of righteousness* He warned the people. The Ark was before them. They rejected it and his message.

 ***D. Deliverance 20b*** *Eight souls were saved by water...*

**1.** Out of millions in the world only 8 souls were saved by water.

 **2.** These were saved by means of water. It was the intermediate agent.

 **3.** The Ark was the saving agent. Peter lays stress on the water rather than the Ark

 because of his illustration of baptism that follows.

**Encouragement:**

1. God is patient, but His patience extends only so far.
2. Noah kept doing God’s will when he seemed like a failure.
3. “Success” is not based on numbers. Noah was faithful.
4. Results are His business…after 120 years and only 7 results! He was faithful to God and His word!
5. Jesus appeared to be a total failure when He died on the cross, yet His death was a supreme victory! God’s idea of “success” and value is different from ours.
6. Faithfulness does not necessarily result in souls saved.

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**III. OUR POTENTIAL 3:21a**

We can be encouraged because we are identified with Christ’s victory. This picture of

 baptism can be explained in (Rom. 6). When He died, I died (my identification with Him).

 When He arose, I arose to walk in newness of life. *Know…Reckon…Yield…Obey.*

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**IV. OUR PROCLAMATION 3:21**

1. Does water baptism save? *The like figure* is the Ark and water (v. 20).
2. What is our picture? The picture is the Ark on the water (flood). Water is a type. Our salvation is Christ *by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*
3. *Baptism* is a picture…a symbol. It does not actually save us as Peter goes on to explain: *Not the putting away of filth of the flesh…*no ceremony affects the real me. It cannot wash away my sins!! *But the answer of a good conscience to God…(v. 18)* It is the Ark resting on the water that saves us, **not the water!**
4. Baptism does save from one thing: *a bad conscience!*
5. *Answer of a good conscience. Answer* was a legal term meaning, ‘pledge or demand’. In signing a contract: *Do you pledge to obey the full terms of this contract?*
6. So it was with baptism. Candidates were interrogated carefully. Submission to baptism was a step of consecration.
7. Peter reminds them of their “Baptismal testimony”. They would be asked if they intended to obey God and serve Him and break from their sinful past. If they had any reservations in their heart or deliberately lied they would not have a *good conscience.*
8. Peter reminds them of this commitment to encourage them to be true to Christ.

**Encouragement:** Stay true to Jesus Christ. Renew your consecration to Him!

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**V. OUR PRIVILEGE 3:22**

This returns to (3:18) and the rewards for faithfulness. The *Who* is Jesus Christ.

 ***A. Placement*** *Gone into heaven*

***B. Position*** *On the right hand of God*

***C. Power*** *Angels, powers and authorities being subject to Him*

**Encouragement:**

1. He is still on the throne.
2. He is still in control.
3. He is in heaven on our behalf. There is no reason to remain defeated, discouraged, or depressed.

**Jesus Is Alive!!**

Are you facing difficult days? Would you like to be encouraged?

***Blessing follows suffering for the glory of God.***

**Suffering is just as much a part of God’s will as sunshine and roses, and are necessary to accomplish His purpose and plan.**