


TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

A publication of , the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. —*Psalm 145:11*
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. —*Joshua 22:5*

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Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you? ...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?
- Pastor Doug noted that 1 Peter 3:18-20 is one of the most difficult biblical passages to interpret—but **Peter** found some of **Paul's** writings complex and hard to understand! (See 2 Peter 3:14-18!)

2 Peter 3:16-17 describes those who distort such passages as "*untaught, unstable, unprincipled*". Tell about an untaught/unstable/unprincipled Bible teacher you've heard (on TV, podcast, etc.). When and how did you recognize that he/she was teaching the Bible inaccurately?

What are the risks **to us if we follow** untaught/unstable/unprincipled Bible teachers (v. 17)?

According to v. 18, in addition to **avoiding** confused Bible teaching, what are we **positively** to do? Are you doing that? If so, how? If not, what's your next step?

- What do **popular teachings** tell us about suffering? (Their root, their result, and our response?)

Which of **those** teachings have you embraced?

Contrast **Peter's teaching** on suffering with that of untaught/unstable/unprincipled Bible teachers.

Which of **these** teachings have you embraced?

Which one(s) do you **need to** embrace?

**Need help seeing God in your sufferings?
Let a biblical counselor help you:
counseling@tcc.org**

Application-Challenge

- Learn to handle all passages of Scripture---whether they're easy to understand or difficult---with careful observation and interpretation. Remember: "**Context is King!**"
- View your own unjust sufferings in light of Jesus' redemptive victory on the cross.
- Use your sufferings as an opportunity to point others to Jesus as Savior.

Sermon Summary (Key Text: 1 Peter 3:18-20)

Today we will be looking at one of the most difficult passages in all of Scripture. Various commentaries present differing views on what they think Peter is trying to say. Today I want to share what I think Peter is saying and why.

Any time you are faced with a difficult passage of Scripture you want to make sure that you understand the broader context in which the passage under study is found because what's going on immediately before and after it may shed light on its meaning. Here, Peter is writing to Christians who are being persecuted for their faith. In such circumstances it is easy to lose hope, so Peter writes this letter to give these suffering believers some divine perspective on their trials and to encourage them to endure persecution without wavering in their faith. He focuses our hope not on this life, but on the next because as Christians we are going to suffer for our counter-cultural beliefs and values.

Today's challenging passage, 1 Peter 3: 18-22, prompts a question: how does this passage connect to the context out of which it flows? Peter wants his readers to know that God understands their plight because Jesus himself endured undeserved suffering (1 Peter 3:18). Just as Jesus endured unjust suffering for our salvation, we are blessed by God if we endure unjust suffering because it offers an opportunity for gospel witness.

As we move forward in the text, Peter addresses Noah, who also bore witness to God while being persecuted for his beliefs. This passage is clear at the start as it describes Jesus' victory over sin and death and demonic forces and the once-for-all sacrifice that atoned for sin and concluded with a triumphant resurrection and ascension back to heaven. But, it becomes admittedly confusing when it talks about imprisoned spirits. As we begin to unpack this section of the passage, we must ask a few questions:

Who are these "spirits" in prison? Unbelievers who have died? Old Testament believers who have died? Fallen angels? The term itself isn't helpful in determining whether these spirits are demonic or human because Scripture uses the word to refer to both demons and humans.

What did Christ preach? A second chance for salvation?; Completion of Jesus' redemptive work?; The announcement of final condemnation?

When did he preach? In the days of Noah? Between his death and resurrection? After his resurrection?

When you put all of these options together, **four popular views** emerge:

- [1] Christ preached "in spirit" through Noah to unbelievers who were alive then but are now "spirits in prison" (people in hell).
- [2] After Christ died, he offered people in hell a second chance at redemption.
- [3] After Christ died, he preached to people in hell about his triumph over sin and death, but their condemnation was final.
- [4] Between Jesus' resurrection and ascension, he traveled to hell and proclaimed triumph over fallen angels who sinned in the days of Noah.

Views 2 and 3 are very similar, but I believe we should dismiss them because outside of these verses there is no biblical evidence that Jesus ever went to hell or that we get a second chance at salvation. Furthermore, both views don't build upon Peter's argument that just as Jesus' willingness to suffer unjustly led to our salvation, so our willingness to suffer unjustly can provide an opportunity for us to share our faith. View number four can also be dismissed because it is an obscure biblical account supported by an obscure non-biblical source; the phrase "son of God" only refers to people throughout the Bible, never angels; there is no biblical evidence that angels have the ability to procreate; and this interpretation of 1 Peter doesn't advance Peter's argument about undeserved suffering providing an opportunity to share our faith. Of the four views, view number one is the only one that maintains this parallel.

Paul supported this idea in 2 Corinthians 5:20, when he says that when we share our faith with our unbelieving friends, God makes an appeal through us. I believe that through Noah, God was making an appeal to Noah's generation. Understood this way, 1 Peter 3:18-22 fits well with the broader argument that our willingness to suffer unjustly can provide an opportunity for us to share our faith. Noah was a great man of faith surrounded by ungodly people, a preacher of righteousness, who was repeatedly mocked for his obedience to God, yet still called on his neighbors to repent and take God's offer of mercy. However, they people rejected his council and perished in the flood. Similarly, we can point people to God when we are persecuted; they may not respond, but at least they have heard the Gospel and have had the opportunity to respond.

Whatever conclusion you come to about this incredibly confounding passage of Scripture, we can all agree on Peter's major emphasis in this part of his letter: while Jesus' unjust suffering and death may have at first appeared to be a defeat, it was in fact a great victory over sin and death, and when we imitate Jesus by patiently enduring unjust suffering, it provides us with a unique opportunity to point others to God.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

"Five Question Bible Study" (see page below) is a simple way to study any passage.
Let's use it to learn more about suffering righteously...

Monday— 2 Corinthians 11:23-28

Tuesday— 2 Corinthians 4:7-11

Wednesday— 2 Corinthians 4:15-18

Thursday— 2 Timothy 3:10-12

Friday— 2 Timothy 4:9-18

Saturday— ***In preparation for worshipping your risen Lord tomorrow with your church family,*** read 1 Peter, chapters 1-3.

Need blank copies for doing more
"Five Question Bible Study"?
e-mail: Dan.Clement.TCC@gmail.com

Bible Text: _____

Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) is it found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text?