

More Soundings in 1st Peter

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[0 : 00] Let's pray. I'm going to use the collect for the second Sunday in Advent, because it is the Word of God that we're going to study.

Blessed Lord, who has caused all holy scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may now in such ways hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and encouragement from your Holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Some of you will recall that I'd spoken on 1 Timothy before. Some of you may remember that at that time I passed out an outline of 1 Timothy as I saw it, and I, of course, am confident that today, which is our second helping of 1 Timothy, you would all remember to bring the outlines and to bring your Bibles also, so that you could follow most closely what was going on.

But knowing human nature, as over the past 70-odd years I've been privileged to do, I took for granted that most of you wouldn't have done that.

And so I had better be careful in what I present to you, not to assume that you've got any outline in front of you, not to assume that you have your Bibles with you either, but nonetheless to try and be clear and meaningful and bring you along with me.

[2 : 26] Well, that's my agenda, brothers and sisters. And the overall title that I've given to these three studies, and so directly to the one now beginning, is Soundings in 1 Peter, which is an image from what they do in ships.

They take Soundings of the bottom of the sea to know how deep it is. I speak of Soundings because when you're doing that kind of thing, you don't, of course, manage to make a full map of the sea, much as you'd like to, but what you do succeed in doing, at least if you do it properly, is to chart your own course and get clear on which way to steer in order to get your journey right.

And I told you last, when first I spoke on 1 Peter, that the thought in my mind, for quite some time, whenever I have thought of 1 Peter, is of the old devotional that was going the rounds in the early years of the 20th century, called the Traveler's Guide.

Now, we're not, of course, talking anymore about sea voyages. We are talking about travel over land, but it's travel.

We're on a journey, every single one of us. And it is as fellow travellers on this journey that I speak to you to share what I think I can see in 1 Peter that helps us.

[4 : 40] And so, I simply remind you, 1 Peter seems to me, as I'm sure I said last time, to fall into three parts.

Part 1, starting from the beginning and going on to chapter 2, verse 10, deals with what I'm going to describe as looking up.

That is, appreciating the grace of God in which we all share. And celebrating it, rejoicing in it.

That's what the first study was concerned with, if you recall. And today, we get on to the second part, chapter 2, 11 through to the end of chapter 3.

And that is concerned with looking around and getting our bearings with regard to the world in which we are called to bear witness to Christ and the realities that we encounter as we seek to do that.

[6 : 04] and how we are to glorify our Lord in handling those realities. And then, the third study will have us looking ahead and it will cover chapters 4 and 5, rounding the letter off.

And it will be concerned, I can tell you now, with the opposition that we face in this world, the suffering which that involves for us, and the final triumph which is promised at the end of our pilgrimage, our course, our travel.

We are heading for glory and 1 Peter ends by telling us so in no uncertain terms. So, that's how it's going to end next time we are together.

A very much valued friend of mine half a century ago was the late Alan Stibbs who wrote a commentary on 1 Peter and was one of the top Bible teachers back in Britain in those days. And I would like to read you what he, well, some of the sentences that he wrote in his preface to his commentary to make the point that 1 Peter is particularly relevant to the present day.

[7 : 56] He writes, When scientific achievement, the welfare state, and secular materialism combine to make our century, that's the 20th century, same applies to the 21st, they combine to make our century too worldly minded, as they do, 1 Peter recalls us to the heavenly and eternal outlook and reminds Christians that they are but strangers and pilgrims here.

Similarly, when relief from physical disease and the provision of physical comfort tend to be treated by some as the primary Christian objective, having it easy, all the way to heaven he means, we need the reminder of 1 Peter that holiness matters more than any of that and that all who would follow Christ must, in a selfish and sinful world, be prepared to suffer for righteousness' sake and to recognize that God uses suffering for the highest good.

Also, when moral standards in so-called Christian countries are in decline, and when genuine young converts to Christ are tempted to spend their enthusiasm more in words than in deeds, we need the challenge of 1 Peter to express our response to Christ and the gospel in transformed behavior in relation to our fellow men.

So, he says, I have found great satisfaction in studying this epistle simply because this epistle focuses us on all those primary matters.

Well, I'm walking in his footsteps, as I understand it, in the presentations that I make to you.

[10 : 03] In our first study, yes, we looked up and focused on God's grace and celebrated all that he has done for our salvation.

all that all underlies, shall I say, undergirds, the new life that is ours as folk born again in Christ, united to Christ, rejoicing in Christ.

Those are the great themes of the first section of the letter, and we tried at least to scratch the surface of them when we looked at it before.

Now, for our second study, we look around and we realise that we who are watching the world around us are being watched by that world.

Francis Schaeffer gave us the phrase the church before the watching world, it was the title of a tract that he wrote, and the church before the watching world is the precise theme of chapter 2, verse 11, down to the end of chapter 3.

[11 : 29] So, let me introduce that by reminding you of the things that we bring to chapter 2, verse 11, from chapter 1.

This is rather important. We're not starting from cold. We're starting in the middle of a letter which has already said tremendous things. Namely, that we who have been born again through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead are in a new life which involves us in membership of a new family in which we call on Jesus' father as our father.

We are his children by adoption. And in Christ and through Christ we've become the following seven things. rejoicers.

To start with, chapter 1, verse 8, in Christ says, writes Peter, we, you or you, you though you don't now see him, you rejoice in him.

Believe in him and rejoice with joy that's inexpressible and filled with glory. as you obtain the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

[13 : 04] And it's worth my asking you right now, is that anything more than just words to us? Do we really rejoice in Christ with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory?

Peter took it for granted that we would. no. We've become, I'm going to assume that I can say, we have become rejoicers in Christ.

We have become hoppers in Christ. I've already said that we shall get back to the theme of hope at the end of part three of the letter, so I won't celebrate it here.

chapter 1 and verse 4. I'll only read just the simple phrase that Peter uses when he says that we've been born again to a living hope, an inheritance that's imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for us.

That's chapter 1 and verse 4. Again I ask, do we often think of that hope, dwell on it, rejoice in it, draw strength from it for coping with the contrary pressures in life that meet us every day?

[14:37] Well, Peter assumes that we have. So we become rejoicers and we've become hoppers and we've become purifiers, purifiers that is of our own lives.

We've taken ourselves in hand by repentance and we have set ourselves to pursue holiness above all things.

And you have that actually in chapter 1 and verse I was going to say verse yes that's right verse 22 have you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for sincere brotherly love.

And that's the next thing. We've become lovers. We've become practitioners of brotherly love to our Christian, our fellow Christians.

We've become practitioners of love to those who are not yet our Christian brothers and sisters but love is the maxim that's to guide us in all relationships whoever it is that we are with, whoever it is that we are relating to.

[16:00] And so I say we have, Peter assumes that he as he takes us into part two of the letter, that we understand this and we have become committed to the life of love.

Just as we become committed to the life of prayer, he's going to tell us before today's study is over that husband and wife living together must take care that their prayers are not hindered by the way that they relate to each other.

More about that when we get there. And then he says in chapter two we have become a people in a sense in which previously we never were a people but we have a common identity, we are children of God, we are his spiritual Israel in Christ, and he says we become a house, that is a temple, the temple of God, we, in other words, are the milieu where he dwells here on earth, where he is to be found by those who want to find him, the fellowship of the church is the place.

We are the temple of God and he celebrates that in chapter two in the verse which I don't think we were able to say much about if anything about it last time.

So let me just read it. You yourselves, well, wait a minute, let me go back, yes, let me go back to the beginning of verse four and read from there.

[17:55] as you come to him, this is Christ, a living stone rejected by men, but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves, like living stones, are being built as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ.

Christ, you are being built up as a spiritual house, a temple, a place of God's abiding and availability here in this world.

And finally, with all that, we've become travelers, as I have been saying right from the beginning of these studies, travelers of a particular kind.

And in chapter 2, verse 11, opening today's section, Peter is very specific about the kind of travelers that we are.

Beloved, he says, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh. Exiles?

[19:18] Well, yes, because this world is not our home. we're traveling through. We're heading for glory. We're not there yet. So, you are exiles in that sense, that you're not living in your own country.

You are sojourners, that is to say, people who basically are on the move, love, although you pause in places of significance, stay there a short time, a relatively short time, because you can do some good or get some profit there.

But basically, you are travelers and you're exiles, and it's as such, says Peter to his readers, that I urge you to abstain from the passions of the flesh which war against your soul.

And, positive counterpart to that, keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

And that's the theme, really, of the rest of chapter two and all the way through chapter three.

[20:49] Keeping our conduct in the world, which is what the phrase among the Gentiles means, keeping our conduct honorable, admirable, Christ-like, so as to evoke surprise and admiration from those who don't share our faith, but nonetheless who see in our lives, not only that there's something they don't know which is making us tick, but that the result of our ticking in this way is a kind of living, to which they themselves are strangers.

It's the kind of living which has love to everyone at its heart. Well, this is Peter announcing his theme.

Now he is specific about the theme in a number of particular relationships. verse. This is how you live out the Christian vocation, he says.

Chapter 2, verse 13. First of all, this is the Christian in the community.

be subject to every human institution, whether to the emperor as supreme or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.

[22 : 43] In other words, part of the Christian calling is to be good citizens, good in the sense that we are for what the community recognizes as right living and not against it, and furthermore, good citizens in the sense that we take an interest and make a contribution to what's going on in the community around us and don't attempt to turn our back on it and live as if it was nothing to do with us.

That's very basic for Christians. It isn't always highlighted in our circles the way that it should be because, as we know, there are even more important things to highlight, things that is to do with our personal relationship to the Lord Jesus and to the Father through him.

But the Christian life as a whole and faith in God through Christ by the Holy Spirit is the frame of it all.

Yes, and it's the beginning of it all, but it isn't the whole of it all. And Peter here says loud and clear, start your provision, if that's the word to use or your living of a life that brings honour to your Lord by being a good citizen.

Live as people who are free, he goes on, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, that is, not cutting loose in a lawless way, but living as servants of God.

[24 : 40] Honour everyone, love the brotherhood, the brotherhood is the fellowship of your fellow believers, fear God, fear, you know, in Scripture is a very comprehensive word for everything that is involved in honouring God, and showing that you honour God.

It isn't fear in the sense of panic, it's fear in the sense of reverence. Well, here is Peter saying it, fear God, honour the emperor.

He said that before, but he repeats it because it's very important, the emperor signifies the government. Honour the government, and if you think that the government needs adjustment and reformation, well, make your point, exert your influence within the honouring of the government as it is, as distinct from any other attitude towards it.

And then he switches from community life and politics to home life and the servant servant relationship, which in those days was a slave relationship.

We might as well use the word because that's what it really was. Servants were not hired on the basis of respect.

[26 : 19] They were purchased and put to work on the basis of ownership. relationship. Well, that's where a number of you are, says Peter.

It was that way, be it said, in just about all the early churches, Christianity made headway among servants. Yes, well, now Peter addresses servants in the congregations to which his letter is going. Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the unjust. Yes, says Peter, I mean it, that's why I say it, also to the unjust.

In other words, you must act right, even if those who own and direct your lives are acting wrong. But this is a gracious thing, he says, that's his word, a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.

[27 : 45] I suppose that for the whole of our lives, we need to be learning and relearning that. Because again and again, we are tempted to think, well, I have been laboring to live as I should, to live a decent life, a loving life, a helpful life, an honorable life, all those good things.

I don't deserve to be treated like this. love, no, you don't, but you will be. That's what Peter says, and he rubs it in.

For what credit is it if when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? That's only what you deserve. But if when you do good and you suffer for it, you endure, you put up with it, and you go on being honorable and loving in your attitude to your boss, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.

For to this you've been called, he says, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example. Christ is the example here, leaving you an example so that you might follow in his steps.

And that prompts Peter, he does this, he's going to do this again before the end of chapter 3, he does it whenever he can. It prompts Peter to celebrate the achievement of our Lord, suffering unjustly on the cross and thereby winning salvation for all of us.

[29 : 32] He committed no sin, nor was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he didn't revile in return, when he suffered, he didn't threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

You were straying like sheep, but you've now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls. Yes, the door is open for you to come back because your sin has been atoned for.

And this is Peter taking opportunity, as he does, as I said, to celebrate the cross as he goes along and to celebrate the saving ministry of Christ that has come from the cross to all of us.

And then he switches from talking about submission as servants, or shall I say, as employees. Saying it that way I think will bring it up to date for us all.

[30 : 57] He switches from talking about submission as employees to submission as spouses. I must walk very delicately here.

Chapter 3, verses 3 through 7. Verses 1 through 6 are admonitions to wives, and verse 7 is an admonition to husbands.

Well, all right. let's simply read it, let it tell its own story. The thing to remember by way of cultural background is that prior to the Christian community, though marriage and children were matters of universal fact in those pagan nations, it was not part of their culture to bother about wives.

They didn't treat wives as, how can I say, fully fledged human beings. Wives were there as a convenience for the men, and that was it.

And one of the things that the New Testament does is to celebrate the honor and dignity of the wife, which is what Peter is doing here, and because he knows that it's a new thought to so many of the wives in the church, and a thought which maybe they haven't picked up yet, and which the husbands perhaps haven't picked up yet, he's going to celebrate it, and so he does, at the length of all six verses.

[32 : 56] Let me just read them. Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands. That's the basic relationship, sure, but that isn't the end of the story, that's only the very beginning and the frame of the much more significant things that are going to be said on that basis very shortly.

Wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives.

What a terrific vocation. Won by the conduct of their wives when they see your respectful and pure conduct.

They see how you, the wife, treat them with a respect, an honour, and a love, which the pagan world of those days knew nothing about.

Do not let your adorning be external, the braiding of hair, the wearing of gold, the putting on of clothing, but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.

[34 : 22] For that's how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves by submitting to their husbands as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord.

Well, yes, that's there in Genesis. And you are her children, Sarah's children, if you do good and don't fear anything that's frightening.

what's being referred to there is undoubtedly that in the pagan world into which Christianity came, husbands threatened their wives, perhaps beat their wives, as a matter of course.

After all, the wife, as I said a moment ago, is only a convenience. So, one knocks her around if one believes that will make her more convenient.

See? Well, this is Peter addressing Christians in the church and saying, ladies, you've got to break with all of that.

[35 : 38] You do your part right. Now, it takes him six verses to say that, and he has only one verse of address to the husbands. But, it's a very, very weighty verse.

Just listen. Likewise, verse 7, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honour to the woman as the weaker vessel.

since they, the wives, are heirs with you of the grace of life. Face up to that and live as if it were true, because it is true.

This is a very tough challenge for a husband who has been brought up in paganism, at least first century paganism.

But Peter is being quite explicit and in the circumstances he's speaking very strongly. Show honour to the woman, your wife, as the weaker vessel.

[36 : 54] prayer. Make sure that in the way that you live together, your prayers may not be hindered.

Here I want to read a bit of Alan Stibbs, because he expands on this, I think, very beautifully. Indeed, just listen to this poem.

The Christian husband should let all his living together with his wife be informed and guided by a proper awareness of her condition in relation to himself, both in nature and grace.

On the one hand, naturally, he should recognise her more limited physical powers as a woman, and should give her corresponding consideration and protection.

Only so will he render her due honour and be worthy of her marital confidence and devotion. On the other hand, spiritually, he should also recognise their full equality as fellow sharers in the grace of God and in his gift to them both of eternal life.

[38 : 09] He should therefore live with her as a man fully aware that, in addition to the natural enjoyment of each other, they are, as Christians, called together to a spiritual fellowship with God and Christ, a sphere in which his wife is not weaker or inferior, but is a joint heir.

Only if this delicately balanced fellowship between husband and wife is thus properly maintained, will their union reach its true Christian fulfilment.

For such a partnership is meant to be specially fruitful, not only physically in having children, but also spiritually in praying together and seeing prayer answered.

it. So, care should be exercised that their prayers are not cut into, which is what the Greek word literally means.

Human disharmony can upset spiritual cooperation. Don't you think that's good? Written, I suppose, 75 years ago, but it's timeless wisdom.

[39 : 31] Wonderful, I think. So, here is Peter celebrating family life in its basic form, that's husband and wife together, and saying in no uncertain terms that as Christians, husbands and wives must have a conscience about doing their marriage right.

And it's here, of course, supremely, that it's necessary from time to time not to respond to the other partner when the other partner perhaps lets themselves down in, how can I say it, inappropriate behavior, but to go on loving and repairing and reestablishing and being infinitely patient.

And it's very interesting to me that Peter makes such an issue of the matter, seven verses, that's really more verses dealing with a single topic than anywhere else in the letter.

And then he goes on to a more general statement in verse eight of chapter three. Finally, says Peter, summing up, all of you have unity of mind, that is, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

Don't repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless. For to this you were called that you may obtain a blessing.

[41 : 38] For, and then he gives an Old Testament quote to back up what he's just said, the New Testament apostles do this regularly, as you know, because they see the Christian gospel, Christian faith, as the fulfillment of Old Testament promises and hopes.

So, here we are, we're in the Psalms. Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit.

Let him turn away from evil and do good. let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are open to their prayers.

But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. Now, Peter says a little bit more in, on his own account, hammering home the lesson.

Who is there to harm you? If you're zealous for what's good, but even if you should suffer for righteousness sake, you'll be blessed. So have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your heart, regard Christ the Lord as holy.

[43 : 05] regard, regard, though it's part of the original ESV translation, is I think very weak there, and I'm pretty sure that the ESV in its more recent editions has changed the word for something

else.

Exalt Christ the Lord as holy would be a better translation, that is to say, show by your attitude to Christ, your worship, that you are taking his point about the need for you to be holy just as he is holy, which is Peter's actual thought.

All, and he adds this, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. Yes, that's a reminder that Christians behaving in the way that Peter is teaching Christians to behave are going to bewilder pagans, because they'll be doing all sorts of things that pagans don't see as necessary and wouldn't bother to do themselves.

But they're watching us just because from their standpoint we are awed. strange. Well, all right, says Paul, remember that they've got their eye on you, and make sure that you spot it when, as occasionally happens, they show an interest in what it is that makes you tick, and they ask you and give you an opportunity to tell them.

Now, when such moments come, first thing is to recognize them, and alas, I think there are a lot of Christians who don't try to recognize opportunities to bear witness to the Lord Jesus, and because they don't try to recognize them, they don't succeed in recognizing them, and these moments of opportunity pass them by.

[45 : 24] always have your eye out for an opportunity to bear witness to Christ, and celebrate the people who don't as yet understand it, and aren't as yet within shouting distance of it.

Don't lose any opportunity that God in his providence gives us for bearing witness to them, to put them in the picture.

Yes, always be ready to make a defense. Defense, I think, is the word that Paul uses there, because the first reaction of the pagan is going to be skepticism.

Come on, friends, we're back to that, let's face it. When I was a boy, the community was Christian, but now the community is secular.

When I was a boy, there wasn't any hostility, in most circles anyway, towards Christianity. Now there's a great deal.

[46 : 35] All right, God in his providence then takes the wheel full circle, and we're back in the world of 1 Peter at this point. So these words have a very direct message for us.

always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. Let it be said, though I can't develop the thought, the faith is supremely reasonable.

It's more reasonable in actual fact than any form of unbelief. So Peter knows what he's doing when he uses the word reason. And we should bear in mind the fact that we've got a better, more coherent, more significant and meaningful case to make, or shall I say, testimony to bear, than any secularist, any atheist, any post-modernist or whatever, who speaks against, or what he thinks of as against our Christian faith.

So be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that's in you. Yet do it with gentleness and respect. If we believe that everyone is made in the image of God, gentleness and respect are the proper attitudes in all our address to them.

Gentleness and respect. That's part of consistent Christianity. Yes, do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, conscience about all these things, so that when you are slandered, as you will be from time to time, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

[48 : 37] For it's better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. For, remember, and here once again is Peter doing what he loves to do, bringing in the cross, and so reminding his readers of the frame of reference within which he's doing all his thinking, and within which he wants them to do all their thinking, though at the moment, probably they don't.

All right, so he exhorts them to enlarge their frame of reference, so that they do take in the bearing of the cross on everything, just about everything that they say, and just about everything that they do.

And now here we're up against something which I think must be frankly acknowledged, it's a literary fact. Peter wrote his letter, as we discovered in our first study, with the help of an amanuensis, or secretary, a man named Silvanus, that is Silas, seems to be the same Silas as accompanied Paul on some of Paul's missionary trials.

Well, Silas is, Silvanus, he's great at crystallizing and compressing a great deal of thought into a small space.

You must have noticed that Peter is, this letter of Peter, so far as we traveled with it, has been just bulging with thoughts on which you could spend an hour or two elaborating every thought and you'd be at it all day, perhaps all week.

[50 : 43] but Silvanus has the shortcoming that sometimes goes with that quality, that power of compression. He is capable of writing a sentence that is too long and has in it more thoughts brought together than is comfortable for the mind to grasp.

There are those who still do that kind of thing and one is very thankful when one can move on to somebody who deals with one thought at a time and a writer who is prepared to write in short sentences, each making one point and if you've got another point to make, well, you write another sentence and keep the point separate.

Just here, Silvanus, I think, does fail in clarity. I'll read you the sentence now and you shall be the judge.

It's better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. That's what Peter has just said through Silvanus.

And now here is the sentence which causes the difficulty of understanding. For Christ also suffered, once suffered, once, for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh.

[52 : 33] There's one thought and he celebrates it and it's a glorious thought and one could dwell on it. He hasn't, however, finished his sentence. Being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which he 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.

Hey, wait a minute, you say, what on earth is he talking about? He seems to be wandering. Well, as I say, it's the lapse of the mind with a gift for compression.

And the exegetes have argued about what he means, and because time is going, because the matter isn't certain anyway, I'm just going to tell you what I think it means, and what the majority of modern exegetes, not the older ones, but the modern ones, that is, those who've written on 1 Peter in the last 30 years, now seem to be agreed on.

Christ was put to death in the flesh, but was made alive in the spirit, that's a reference to the resurrection that followed death in the flesh.

And it's there in order to encourage folk who are suffering for doing good, to remember that yes, Christ suffered as he did good ahead of us all, setting us an example, but Christ was raised in the spirit, in other words, death in the flesh didn't go on forever, and it was followed by a triumphant resurrection, and that is what awaits you, friends, when you're suffering for doing good.

[54 : 53] Remember it, never forget it, there's always hope of deliverance somewhere down the road, God guarantees it. Okay, he was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.

Now, a new thought entirely, the spirit, it's the Holy Spirit, I think, which I'm being referred to there, not just the human spirit without the Holy Spirit, no, he was made alive in the Holy Spirit, in which, you thought, he went and proclaimed to the spirits, now in prison, which formerly did not obey when God's patience waited in the days of Noah.

and the thought is that the Son of God, in pre-incarnate ministry, the sort of ministry which we label theophany, and in this case, the sort of ministry which he fulfills through us who are privileged to speak his word, in this case it was Noah who was privileged to speak his word, and he, in his pre-incarnate power, prompted Noah in the word that Noah spoke.

Now he's thinking and talking of people who did not obey when God's patience waited in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared.

That was over a period of years, of course, Noah was building the ark, and people, I suppose, well, we can be sure, were asking why on earth are you doing this?

[56 : 44] And he told them, God is going to visit and judge us because God is profoundly displeased with us and calls us to repent and change our ways.

And, folks, you're not doing it. This is Noah's message. Noah was the preacher of righteousness to an unrighteous generation while the ark was being prepared.

That's the reference here. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus prompted Noah to speak in God's name in this way, calling people to repentance and doing it in vain when the ark was being prepared.

And now he goes on in the same sentence, but really with a new thought again. In the ark, a few, that is, eight persons were brought safely through water, though the water drowned, ruined, destroyed the sinful generation of which Noah had been part.

And now he goes on to say, baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body, baptism isn't just a matter of ordinary washing, but baptism saves you as an appeal to God for a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven, the single sentence still going on, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

[58 : 49] Well, this is the spiritual reality of baptism. being brought in, as it were, on a side wind, in just a phrase, an appeal to God for a good conscience, an exercise of faith in the atoning death of Christ, whereby one appeals to God for a good conscience, and God answers the appeal and responds to our faith by actually pardoning our sins, baptism, because we are looking to Christ and his atoning death for pardon, and baptism pictures all of this, because in baptism one goes underwater, that's the basic symbolism, and then one comes up and out from under.

The question of how much water you use for this exercise is secondary. I hope you can see that. Baptists do it one day, one way, with any amount of water, and we Anglicans and Presbyterians and so on, Catholics too, do it another way, with a very little water which we pour on the head of the candidate.

But the imagery is the same. You go underwater, that's the image of the end of the old life on which you're turning your back, and you come up and out from under committed to a new life in the power of Christ.

Well, all of those thoughts, I think, are being brought together in what in Greek is one great long sentence covering everything that I've said.

Here in the ESV in verse 21, a new sentence is begun, the translators broke it up, but even so, with the breakup, it's still a very confusing passage because of the style, all being written as a single sentence, a single unit of thought, and it's actually four units of thought, all set side by side, and none of them developed in full.

[61 : 13] people. Well, having said that, let's focus on what's important here. Christ also suffered once for sin, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, and that's what he's done.

That's the big thought that Peter wants us to get. That's what he's done, and now he's at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers, having been subjected to him, and we're in his care, he preserves us, and we always shall be in his care, because all powers are subject to him, and no power, therefore, of any kind, whatever, can pluck us out of his hand.

That's what Peter's got in mind, and that's what Silvanus is laboring to say in this overloaded sentence, and that's what we, Peter's readers, are to pick up.

So, once again, it's a word of triumph in Christ that Peter is speaking, and that's the note on which we finish.

yes, I'm overrunning, but I felt I had to in order to explain this unhappy, overloaded sentence, and I hope you will forgive me for so thinking, and so doing it.

[62 : 57] Well, end of study for today, but it leaves us with the thought that Christ is on the throne in the cosmos, of the universe, all powers, whatever, being made subject to him.

He is our savior, he must be our lord, and we must be ready, under all circumstances, to live the way that he tells us to live, and so bring glory to his name.

I could say more, but you would throw chairs at me, I think, if I did, and I'm not going to say any more, I'm going to say we've got five minutes, and I'm sure there are things here you want to discuss, so let me close and you come in.

Yes. Thank you. Thank you.