

Steadfast in Adversity

Intro: Now here is something we don't hear every day. What's this about Jesus going in spirit to preach to imprisoned spirits from Noah's days? And does it not say here that baptism saves you? Although untangling the meaning of these statements is both challenging and important, I fear that a focus on these might pique our interest and yet distract us from the Word that the Spirit of God directs to our hearts, which is about how we are to handle adversity, particularly undeserved conflict and suffering. We will examine the passage under two headings: First (13-17), the Application: How are we to handle undeserved suffering? Second (18-22), the Rationale: Why are we able to be steadfast in adversity?

Application: How are we to handle undeserved suffering? (13-16)

- As a rule, zeal for good doesn't invite harm, as a rule. *But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed* (makarioi/happy)!
 - That's a bit hard to grasp, but there is pain that is productive and salutary. To what greater purpose?
 - This requires a broader perspective than just gauging our feelings and short-term effects.
- *Do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled.* How often in Scripture, *Fear not!*
 - "No good deed goes unpunished" a sardonic comment on acts of kindness that backfire... (Wiki)
 - Response to adversity typically defensive, recriminating, bitterness, lashing out, flight...
 - Ideal: Cool, calm, and collected under fire. How?
- *But sanctify Christ as Lord in your heart...*
 - Here's how to be steadfast: Put Jesus above all, before you (lit. *set apart*).
 - Always ready to make a defense to anyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you
 - *Yet with gentleness and reverence.*
 - *Keeping a good conscience in the thing in which you are slandered...*
 - Illust: SS member facing 3rd cancer relapse: "Whatever happens, I want God to be glorified in this!"

Rationale: Why we are able to be steadfast in the face of adversity? (18-21)

- *For it is better if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing right than for doing what is wrong.*
 - Because our lives are in His hands. Because we have entrusted our lives to Him totally.
 - We ourselves, by His wounds we were healed (2:24).
- *For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust in order that He might bring us to God.* **CROSS**
 - Not only that His wounds brought healing, but that the core consequence of sin paid in full for all time.
 - By His death we have been brought to God, saved from eternal damnation into forever life.
 - What can separate us from the love of God? (Rm 8) **NOTHING!**
 - Our lives "charmed" with eternity. Nothing to fear, except fear. By grace steadfast!
- *Having been put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit...* **RESURRECTION**
 - Victory over death proclaimed (*preached*) to all creation with His cry of victory, *It is finished!*
 - *He went and made proclamation to the spirits in prison, once disobedient when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah...*
 - Not "harrowing of Hell" or giving a second chance to demons or the damned, but..
 - Proclaiming the crushing of the power of sin and death—all the way back to OT times & forever.
- Back in Noah's time *few, that is eight persons were brought safely through the water.*
 - *And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you.* Now, not few but many.
 - Now not waters of flood, but of death. Now, not by boat, but life of Jesus bearing us through His death to everlasting life.
 - *An appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*
- *Who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities, and powers had been subjected to Him.* **ASCENSION**

Conclusion: I doubt any of us wants to suffer for doing right, but if it happens, how do you want to deal with it? I know my own tendencies are not cool, calm and collected, but anxious and defensive. God's Spirit is in us to uphold us in the face of temptations, to make us steadfast in the face of adversity, and all for His glory. In the days to come, should trouble knock on your door, you have been instructed, *sanctify Christ as Lord in your heart*. When you do that, watch and see what He does in you.