

# AS THE HEAT BEGINS TO CLOBBER US THIS WEEK...

We wouldn't think of maintaining all of our winter practices as the heat rolls in over us. We have "armed" ourselves for it in a number of ways. We have AC units in our homes and cars. We have summer wardrobes. We change our schedules so as to do hot things in the early morning. It all positions us to survive and thrive.

God's heart for us is that we be well-armed for living well when surrounded by evil. It requires certain things from us, namely, intentionality in certain practices. His heart is that we not succumb to the evil that is IN us. He used Peter, whom He had helped break free from so much, to counsel us about escaping evil's traps.

## **Work through these questions 1 Peter 3:8-17 raises.**

(Kyle's sermon and Pastor Bob's commentary below will help you.)

1. We suffer from evil all around us and evil IN us. What passions seem stubbornly present in you (4:4), that have caused you pain and that you must constantly rule over? Do you feel like you've had enough of these?
2. What are some ways in which you can "arm" yourself to win these battles within?
3. Peter says Christ died in order to bring us to God (3:18). What are some of the ways in which you have been "brought to God." What are some ways you will experience this in the future?
4. Commitments are important to any who would follow Jesus. What commitments have you made to Him that have been life-changing? What do you think are "next commitments" you should make?

5. Whom might God have you pray for that is far from Him right now, that needs to “have enough” of the life they’re living so as to get free?

## **A HIGH-YIELDING, BONUS ACTIVITY**

As Kyle said, “Commitments are a big part of following Jesus.” So, as he suggested, thank Jesus this week repeatedly for His unequivocal victory over sin. There is so much for you ahead because of His victory.

As you do that, read and think about Psalm 32. It has many important things to say about confession and transparency in your relationship with God. Ponder the statements you read in verses 1-7. Evaluate your own practices of confession. What can you do to enrich your practice of confessing the passions in you that keep leading you back into the same pain? What commitments is God leading you into?

Now, listen for His instruction to you as you read verses 8-9. They’re critical. Then, read on about the blest life He wants you to enjoy in verses 10-11. Now, be glad in Him!

Repeat that six times. That’s one set! Do three sets. Get the point? If we made commitments in spiritual things like we do in other things, how might those commitments strengthen us and enrich us for all of eternity?

## **1 PETER COMMENTARY**

**3:18—“For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.”**

There are times when in the plan of God our lot is to suffer in order for God to accomplish an objective that is important to His plan. We might never understand what that objective is until the day we stand before Him and He explains it. We most certainly will not understand it fully until then.

We must not be so locked in to the general rule that God blesses His own that when suffering comes our way we think something has gone wrong or that we have done wrong. We must at those moments remember Christ. He was just, absolutely just. There was nothing in Him that made Him deserve what He suffered except His absolute submission to the plan of God and His absolute love for humanity. It was in fact, His absolute goodness that so locked Him on the objectives of God the Father and those required that He suffer at the hands of sinful men. He became their substitute. What should have been our suffering, became His. He bore it so that we would not have to.

He did it once, because that was God's plan, to pay for all the sin of mankind once for all. That is why Jesus could say as He died, "It is finished." Never again would humanity's sin need to keep them from having fellowship with God. The way was opened by Christ's death to restore what Adam had lost in Eden. The only thing that could keep humans from God was their stubborn refusal to admit their guilt. So Christ suffered to bring humanity to God. There are times we must suffer to bring them to God. Our role is not the same as Christ's. But we are part of the same mission, drawing humanity back to God. Suffering is simply a part of working to restore fallen humanity.

We will at times suffer though we are doing exactly what God wants us to do. Our objectives are not those that relate to this life. And so our body, which epitomizes all that relates to this life becomes something we lay down for the sake of things that are of the Spirit and related to the spirits, ours and others. Christ's body was put to death, His spirit was not. Eventually, at just the right time as orchestrated by God the Father, it returned to give life to His body. So for a period Christ's spirit and body were separated.

Our spirit will be separated from our body's also by physical death. That is in fact what physical death is, the departure of the spirit from the body. We should not view that event however as final, nor does it handicap us, in terms of being actively involved in God's plan and His work. The next verse in fact, reports a part of the activity of Christ in spirit, what He did, and was aware of doing, while His body lay in the garden tomb.

We must never allow ourselves to believe that our lives can be taken. Our physical lives can be, but that which is our true life, that through which we accomplish work for God and experience being part of His plan, cannot be taken from us. In fact, there is a sense in which our spirit could become more alive at physical death. It is certain that more options are available for service to God because the limitations of the spheres of time and space are now broken. We are speculating on this. There is very limited biblical data on this intermediate state of our existence.

We see next an amazing mission Christ was able to embark on in His spirit, even as His body was being "embalmed." If we believe this, and believe that we will be like Him in death, death has lost its sting! If the most that can be taken from us is our physical bodies, then nothing can be done to harm us in terms of our enjoyment of God and our involvement in His work.

### **3:19—"in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison."**

We do not know the exact nature of this that Peter is about to report. We assume that He knew it by Christ's actual report to the eleven when He appeared to them after the resurrection. Somewhere in their various dialogs with Him He told them of this experience.

Much speculation surrounds verses 19 and 20, and we would profit greatly from a question and answer time with Peter and Jesus on this matter! Information is available in the words Peter uses. If we take the words as they are given then we are not entirely in the dark in understanding these verses.

We know that whatever this is reporting Christ to have done, it says He did it "in spirit." By this is meant that His spirit, by the work of the Holy Spirit, went someplace His body did not. At this point they were separated. But "in spirit," without a body He went somewhere. So we can say that this is possible because Christ did it. At death therefore, our bodies can be one place and our spirits free to go elsewhere.

We know what Jesus did. He went, but He didn't just journey somewhere. He went to do something and He did it. What He did was to "make proclamation." Everywhere this word is used it means to proclaim a verbal message, concrete ideas. It means to preach. So Christ was able "in spirit" to communicate in some way concrete ideas, and it was part of God's plan, program and purpose to use Him to do that very thing. There was a mission of preaching which could only be carried out "in spirit" that God had Christ do. We could be busy from the moment we die!

We know some things about Christ's audience. They were spirits. The next verse will tell us more about their identity, but we do know that Christ was Himself at this point without a body and His audience was other body-less beings. How do such beings communicate? We do not know, but it is quite likely that it is without sound. The activity of Christ was proclamation, so communication among spirits is possible however it occurs and that is what is being reported here, the spirit of Christ communicating with other spirits.

We know something about the place of this communication. It occurred in a prison. This is mysterious to us. How can a spirit be imprisoned? What sort of a prison would that be? We simply do not know. It could be something as simple as the command and word of God. Our spirits are somehow confined in this way to our bodies so we know that such confinement is possible, but we don't know how. So Christ's audience was an audience of spirits, beings without bodies, confined in some location that we know nothing about.

We do not know the nature of Christ's proclamation. We should not leap to the conclusion that Christ proclaimed the gospel, or that there was in this event some opportunity for salvation. Peter does not say that, nor do any of his words infer that. We are simply told that Christ made a proclamation to imprisoned spirits on location.

The purpose of Peter's remarks are to better prepare us for suffering unjustly. He likely wants to remove from us any fear that we can be robbed of anything by those who chose to inflict suffering on us. He wants us to know that they robbed Christ of nothing by ending His experience of normal physical life. His life went on and His proclamation of truth went. They neither silenced His message nor thwarted His achievement by their actions. They in fact, advanced both. He accomplished greater objectives and made proclamation to a broader audience by death than if He would have remained alive.

**3:20—"who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water."**

These spirit beings are identified as being a specific group from a specific time period. This proclamation made by Jesus may relate to another mysterious passage of Scripture found in Genesis 6:1-8. There we find that at the time of Noah "sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves . . ." There is much debate over what exactly is being described in those words. Some suggest that previously fallen angels became disobedient to boundaries previously set by God and entered into relationships with humanity. This idea has the difficulty of such beings somehow gaining a body so as to co-habit with humans. This is not an insurmountable difficulty, but it is a difficulty. It gets weird. It suggests things that there is no biblical evidence for.

Others say these “sons of God” were simply men from the godly line of Seth who lost their way, intermarried, and so the way of God was gradually lost. This seems the more likely explanation. This would indicate a spiritual work being done against righteousness and righteous people by evil beings intent on eliminating faith. The rest of the Genesis passage explains the results of their efforts, and how corruption came to be spread. It is said that the evil was so great that only Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

Peter’s words record the patience of God in this matter. He allowed such evil to persist for a number of years as the ark was being prepared, likely most of a century. Peter’s record in these verses, along with what may be a veiled reference to the same spiritual rebellion in Jude 6, indicates that there could well have been a great spiritual crises that brought about the depraved conditions on earth at the time of Noah. It made the sweeping response of God in judgment essential. At the same time as the judgment of the flood on earth, there was judgment against the spiritual beings who had rebelled against God’s rule by leaving boundaries previously established. This resulted in these beings being confined so as to do no more damage in creation.

There are several other passages that speak of spiritual beings being bound or in some way confined. Two of these scriptures occur in the description of the judgment of the trumpets in Revelation 9. In that chapter “locust” are described as swarming out of something called “the bottomless pit.” Upon their release they torment these on the earth who do not have the seal of God. Many speculate that these are demonic beings who have been confined in a special prison. It is possible that they are, and that they are the same group mentioned here by Peter. Later in Revelation 9, four evil angels who are said to be “bound at the great river Euphrates” are released. They are said to have been prepared for a specific time when they would kill a third of the Earth’s population.

These are spiritual beings whose existence God allowed in order to accomplish a judgment of His in the future. They were created by Him, but at some point rebelled against Him as did Satan. They became so evil that God confined them because in all likelihood not even Satan could control them. When God releases them they will work great havoc on the earth.

The other instance we see of spiritual beings being confined occurs in Revelation 20, where Satan himself is said to be bound for 1,000 years. This we believe will occur in the future during Christ’s 1,000 year reign on earth, what is referred to as the millennial kingdom. This will be a time of unprecedented peace and prosperity on earth due to Satan being confined. At the end of the 1,000 years his release will bring about a final rebellion against God, a final judgment of man and all creation, the eternal confinement of all that is evil, and a new creation.

The mention by Peter of confined spirits ends quite abruptly. Most of what we have said about verse 20 is speculative though quite plausible. Peter leaves the subject of the spirits to focus on the few who were saved and the time of this spiritual crisis on earth. He is moving back to the subject of believers being carried by God through times when, like Christ, they become victims of injustice and persecution, when they are persecuted and abused because they are good.

This has been Peter’s way of saying that such suffering has often been the experience of the faithful and it is because of the greater spiritual evils that exist beyond the realm of the seen. These evil beings have always been present, but cannot pursue their agenda beyond boundaries established by God. They have an agenda against God and wish to overwhelm and thwart His agenda, but He allows only activity that will function in some way to enhance His glory in the end.

It is possible, and this is very speculative, that Jesus' proclamation to the confined spirits was one of victory. Verse 22 seems to confirm this. Jesus' visit to the confined spirits seems to have served the purpose of introducing creation's new boss. Jesus' message was perhaps a clear declaration of the Messiah's role as sin-bearer that had been shrouded in deep mystery during the era of the Old Testament. God may have kept this part of His plan mysterious for this very purpose, so that His grand purpose could not be thwarted and would actually be carried out in part by the ignorant forces of evil.

Christ's proclamation in this case would have been quite dramatic, a declaration to evil forces celebrating the death of God's anointed ruler of the earth, by that ruler Himself. He would declare to them the real news that their conspiracy against Him and the unjust and inhumane treatment of Him they orchestrated, only served to bring about the very sacrifice that would spell the end of sin and evil.

If this was the nature of Christ's proclamation, it must have been a profound statement of victory to an absolutely stunned audience. As always, evil had risen up against good. As always it could not triumph. God judged the world at the time of Noah. Evil men were wiped out, evil beings confined, but the faith survived through the offspring of Noah. Eight people were brought safely through the water to populate the earth once again and to perpetuate faith in what would still be the realm of the evil one until a pre-determined time. God knows how to preserve His own.

**3:21—"And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."**

God patiently waited during the days of Noah, withholding judgment while the ark was being built. Noah's faith saved him. The ark became the instrument God used. He could have saved Noah in some one of the myriads of ways that His miraculous powers allow. But He chose to wait and allow Noah's faith to be expressed in a visible way to the watching world. It was important enough to the character of God that He was willing to have His Spirit "strive with man" (Gen. 6:3), longer so that saving faith would be clearly and dramatically demonstrated in front of the disobedient.

Baptism is a work we do that "corresponds" to Noah's building of the ark. Both are works that demonstrate faith. Both involve water. Both are meant to send a message to others. Both require obedience. Both require faith. Both displayed belief in a coming judgment. There are distinct similarities, though there are differences as well.

Peter's statement about baptism makes clear the idea that it is not the water that saves us. Some might mistakenly believe that in the act itself there is a cleansing from sin. Rather that cleansing came through the faith, the willingness to believe in God's desire and effort to save. In this belief and trust there is salvation.

Salvation comes when we appeal to God for it, not when we try by our own efforts to gain it. And this is possible because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. His perfect life was substituted for ours. Our sin was placed on His account so that He died. His death paid for our sin and His death came only because of our sins. He had none of His own. Therefore, once our sin was forgiven by His death, death had no power over Him, and He rose from the dead. His resurrection is proof that our sin was paid for and that it has been removed from the record. It exists no more.

Faith in that work of God through Christ saves us. Baptism is the “official” expression of trust in that work of God, just as Noah’s construction of the ark was the “official” expression of His faith in God’s plan to preserve Him through the coming judgment. His faith and trust in God led him to build the ark. He was then saved. Faith in Yahweh saved Him.

### **3:22—“who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.”**

This verse states Christ’s present position, and it speaks to the things He did before He assumed this position. In John 20:17, Jesus tells Mary Magdalene that He had not yet ascended to the Father and tells her to go and tell the brethren that He was ascending. During the days ahead He made a number of appearances to His followers and then Acts 1:6-11 records His ascension into heaven some forty days (Acts 1:3) after the resurrection.

We cannot state dogmatically if the ascension He speaks of to Mary in John 20:17 is the one recorded in Acts 1:9. It would seem, all things considered, that it was not. The mention of “going into heaven” in these words of Peter could refer to the ascension recorded in Acts 1:9, when He seemed to permanently take up bodily residence in heaven. They could refer to an earlier ascension, one more closely associated with the event of the resurrection.

All this we say to say this, that we cannot pinpoint the time span Jesus took to do the work mentioned here by Peter of subjecting the various powers. Time is not relevant to Him in this matter since He could do it simply by uttering the word instantly, or He could do it over time. But this verse is of interest because it further clarifies what the “proclamation” of verse 19 was.

That proclamation, as mentioned earlier, was likely a statement of victory and a proclamation of authority by Christ to authorities and powers within the realm of evil. It was not a declaration of the gospel with a second chance at salvation offered to humans. We don’t know what other proclamations may have been made by Christ from the moment of death until the time of His ascension but we do know from this verse that He was occupied with some work of an official capacity that conferred on Him His rightful authority as God’s appointed ruler. He did some things before the ascension that in some way “officially subjected” authorities and powers to Him.

The text is not specific as to who these angels, authorities, and powers are. It seems most likely that this was an official handing over and perhaps official announcement of all that would come. The actual full realization of the reality of all experiencing this rule still lies in the future. We must not make too much of this nor can we afford to make too little of it. All is under His control, but He is, by a previously ordained plan, exercising that control in a way that allows much evil to exist for a period of time until His purposes in allowing its existence are fulfilled. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. That much is abundantly clear. The day when every knee will bow has not yet arrived.

**4:1—“Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.”**

Peter has talked a great deal in this letter about the suffering of Christ. He is to be our pattern in the home, the work place, and in all situations where we find ourselves mistreated. We are to be submissive as He was to the intermediate authority, knowing that God is ultimately in control and will hold those accountable who abuse their authority. Christ modeled this submissive spirit. It is not that He enjoyed the abuse. Nor by submitting to it did He condone it. He entrusted His case to a higher judge. He appealed it to a higher authority who has certainly ruled in His favor. We are called to do the same.

Now this verse says that if we embrace this as a purpose, to suffer so as to advance the plan of God, we are “armed.” That is an important statement. By determining to sacrifice ourselves we are prepared to have impact in the battle. That is an idea that all manner of organizations came to realize in the latter half of the 20th century. We are seeing it in its extreme forms in the Moslem world. When practiced outside of the sphere of the truth the results of being willing to sacrifice are tragic and brutal. In such cases brutally self-centered men are able to rally masses to a course of self-destruction to the delight of the evil one who gladly energizes the cause. If it is a powerful force outside the sphere of truth, it is more so when subjected to and governed by the truth.

To arrive at the decision to sacrifice for the cause of Christ, which is God’s plan for the reclamation of humanity, is to let go of sin. Ultimately sin is the desire to control one’s own life and the events of it. No one can grasp the one without letting go of the other. It is the mark of a monumental change when someone arrives at the point of this decision. The one who has embraced the idea of personal suffering so that the plan of God can be advanced through them has made a fundamental choice about what has value. Such a decision is life-changing.

Peter does not mean that those who so arm themselves will never commit acts of sin. It does mean that a number of instances of sin in their life will not happen again, because they have submitted themselves to a spiritual agenda rather than a fleshly one. To sow of the Spirit is to reap of the Spirit and in this sense such a person has ceased from pursuing sin.

This is a significant landmark for Christian people to arrive at. Peter knew it and so instructed these Christians to arm themselves by embracing this purpose. This is the purpose that is to drive Christians. Advancing by their own personal sacrifice the plan of God for the reclamation of people is the highest use of one’s life. It is something we must intentionally do. If it was natural, or if it automatically happened without our effort, Peter would not have had to exhort these Christians to do it. It is a mistake to imagine that this willingness is present in all born-again people. It comes with maturity, with an understanding of the truth and a willingness to trust in it. It is like the building of an ark!

**4:2—“so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.”**

The decision to pay whatever the cost in order to live as God wants us to live is really a decision to make Christ Lord of our lives. It is a decision to bow to His authority even when the price is your personal rights. It yields an eternally important fruit. You begin to live in a way that you set aside normal desires of human existence in favor of accomplishing what is pleasurable to God. Things like the desire for status, for power, for being one’s own master, for unmitigated pleasure, for personal happiness become secondary to the urgency of advancing God’s plan. It is a switch that has been made by millions from a self-focus to an ever-increasing awareness of a cause involving the detail of the lives of millions of their fellow humans.



This decision also changes how time is understood, spent and invested. It is a stewardship of time, things, truth, mind and body. The “rest of the time in the flesh” is no longer seen as something to be clung to and protected. It is seen as that which is to be parlayed into something else of eternal consequence. This all is the result of making Christ our Lord. It happens in a profound moment in some cases and over a period of time in others. Either way, it is life-changing.

**4:3—“For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties and abominable idolatries.”**

Living according to what brings pleasure, to what diverts us from the pain and realities of life is natural. It is an empty way to live, to be in pursuit always of the company of the crowd and the excesses it affords. It is soon accompanied by a pursuit of a theology and spirituality that makes it all seem good and right. There is always the morning after when the haunting voice of conscience persistently asks, “Is that all there is?” It is eternity’s voice that makes us long for more, but until the Eternal One is turned to, we simply live on a merry-go-round. We keep paying a greater price for the same ride, the same scenery and the same result.

Peter says that the time spent on that ride is sufficient. We know it well. We will not miss it. Its futility is never-ending. Whatever can be accomplished and achieved is done. There will be no pleasant surprises or windfalls, just mounting costs. A time in all of our lives arrives for us to stop this bleeding of our souls.

**4:4—“And in all this they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excess of dissipation, and they malign you;”**

Whenever we swim to the side and escape the current and stand on the bank and beckon others in a new direction, there is speculation about what is really up. The one who is safe is maligned as one who is really in trouble. What is wise is said to be foolish, what is prudent is deemed reckless. Generally, when Christ is made Lord in your life you will not be thrown a party by old friends or commended for your progress in discipline and in what is good and right. They will be surprised, and not in a pleasant way.

Peter is saying they will be offended. There is a witness in the conscience of every human being that confirms when they have seen and heard what is true and right. That witness within them creates tension and discomfort. It is the grace of God when it leads to repentance. Usually before it does it produces a season of resistance in which the truth is maligned. To remain in the darkness, where the light of truth does not expose the true nature of things, is more comfortable in the moment. It says that they are okay, as good as everybody else, on the right course.

Light gives a new view of reality. What was just seen needs to be explained. Those without light must speculate, since they are unable to examine intently and thoroughly. They will understand and explain what has happened wrongly. They must be guided gently and lovingly along. They cannot be expected to immediately see. For a time the one who has escaped to safety must endure being maligned and all the misunderstanding, tension and outright abuse that comes with it. They must pray for sight for the blind and for the light of truth to produce the understanding that leads to repentance.

**4:5—“but they shall give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.”**

That people are not judged and sentenced is not because God is not ready. It is His longsuffering nature that causes the delay. It is His unwavering love for humanity and His own promise with regard to His chosen ones that delay Him. He is not trying to reach a decision. What is true and right and good was established before creation, being resident in His character. It is not that He has insufficient power and control to enter into judgment. It is not that He is trying to discern motives in the defendants. He is in those respects ready. He has selected the day and appointed the time. The time cannot be put aside or delayed by His creation. All will give an account. Not even one's own death can excuse a person from this appointment. It is one they will keep.

The concept of giving an account is an intriguing one. It is for all a judgment of stewardship. It is the Master asking for an accounting. It is a demand for full disclosure of both actions and thoughts with appropriate explanation and justification. The examiner will be armed with the true facts which will be brought to light for all to see. The outcome of the examination will be determined by truth. There will be no false convictions, no unfair assessment, no partiality, no manipulation, no suppression of evidence or any of the things that necessitate appeals or retrials and bring about false convictions within all earthly justice proceedings. All will give an account. Not even death can remove one's responsibility for their lives. And, the judge is ready.

**4:6—“For the gospel has for this reason been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.”**

This is a difficult verse that has been interpreted in a number of different ways. It has given rise to much speculation. There is that in its wording that makes the reader pause to ask if God gives those who die a second chance. It is certainly within His rights and ability to do so. But there is no scriptural evidence that this is the case and to embrace such an idea raises problems with the clearer teaching of two specific texts (Hebrews 9:27, Luke 16:19-31).

Some have seen in this verse a relationship to Christ's journey into the spirit realm recorded in 3:19. Combining the two passages they embrace a belief in an intermediate state that allows further opportunity for salvation. The Roman Catholic Church has embraced this idea in their teaching of a place called Purgatory. Such an idea can find support only here in the Scripture, and it directly violates the teaching of the passages mentioned above. It seems best to avoid those more blatant difficulties and live with some uncertainty about this particular statement by Peter.

Others have suggested that this verse describes the fact that those who were people of faith that lived before Christ, were “imprisoned” in an intermediate state until the death of Christ. Upon dying for their sins, He was presented to them with the full story of the Gospel. They all, because they were of the faith, believed resulting in their being ushered into a different intermediate state. In this sense the gospel was preached “among the dead.” This view is not without problems and difficulty, but it has the advantage of also explaining Ephesians 4:8-10, another “thorny” passage on Christ's activity between His death and ascension.

It seems best to interpret Peter's words in this verse in the following way. In the wake of the statement that God stands ready to judge the living and the dead, these words are an explanation of God's simultaneous activity as He patiently awaits the appointed time of judgment. He orchestrates the proclamation of truth, specifically explaining a course of action that leads to salvation among living and dying humans, so that when they are raised from the dead to face Him bodily they can be pardoned from their sin.

When Peter speaks here of the gospel having been preached among the dead he is talking about those now dead who when they were alive heard the gospel. His words were meant to relate to the concern that those who lived and died before Christ had no opportunity to be saved, not having heard news of Christ's suffering and death. Peter wants to assure the readers that God has always made salvation available even among those who are now dead. There has been in every age "good news," specific information made available by God which when believed resulted in personal salvation.

All are faced with physically appearing before Christ to be judged in terms of how we conducted ourselves in our life on earth (2 Corinthians 5:10). For this we will be judged. In our life on earth we also live and experience God's judgment against sin. It is for this reason that we experience weakness in our bodies and the curse against all creation that ultimately ends our physical lives. Death happens because God has judged sin. In our flesh we experience that judgment. So there are several ways in which it can be said that we are judged in the flesh as men.

But the gospel is good news because it allows something else to be happening in terms of our inner being (2 Corinthians 4:7-18). Spiritual life is happening there in the lives of all who believe the gospel. Ultimately even in physical death all such believers will experience spiritual life. As Christ did (3:18-20), we will serve God even in that state, rendering to Him spiritual service until the day our physical bodies are raised and transformed. Then, like Christ we will have a bodily existence that enables us to fully experience the life that Adam lost, and beyond.

To all generations of humanity this salvation has been offered and God has faithfully orchestrated that work as He patiently waits for the arrival of the day He has appointed for judgment.