

Series: First Peter, Clarity in Chaos

**He also Suffered**

Sermon by Teaching Pastor Paul Joslin

First Peter 3:8-22

Waterstone Community Church, Littleton, Colorado

Sunday morning, October 27, 2024

Tim: A reading from First Peter 3:8-22: “Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called, so that you may inherit a blessing. For whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. They must turn from evil and do good. They must seek peace and pursue it, for the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear their threats. Do not be frightened, but in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have, but do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. For it is better if it is God’s will to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. After being made alive, He went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits, to those who were disobedient long ago, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, while the ark was being built. In it, only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also, not the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand, with angels, authorities, and powers in submission to Him,” the word of the Lord.

Thanks, Tim. How is everyone doing today? Good . . . let’s go ahead and pray before we dive into this message for today. All right. Heavenly Father, God, we know that the church is called to walk with those who are hurting, and we are thankful for all of the different Stephen Ministers who do that and walk alongside people who are going through some of life’s most challenging situations. We are grateful for them, and we pray that many people would join that ministry today. Father, as we turn our attention to your word, this is one of the most challenging passages in the New Testament. Some people in here will probably be disappointed to hear we are talking about submission again today, and God, as we have been looking through this book, walking through this book of First Peter, God, I know there have been so many different points of challenge, so many different points where we have felt convicted about the way we have lived our life. I pray today, Father, that your Spirit would rest on this message, that my words would not be from me alone, but would be tied deeply to your scripture, and that God, where we need conviction, your Spirit would convict, where we need encouragement, your Spirit would encourage, and where we need to be empowered to live our lives more fully for you, I just ask that your Spirit would empower us today, and it is in Christ’s name we pray, amen.

All right, so no need to congratulate me. All right, so there it is, but I voted yesterday, so good job, me. How? How many of you guys have voted already? Anyone? Okay, yeah. Who did you vote for? No, I am just kidding. A couple of years ago I was on a rafting trip with some buddies from college, and we had been on the river for three days. We got to a firepit night, we were hanging out, and there was one of those awkward lulls in the conversation, but you know the difference between when the conversation has a natural awkward low, and then the point where it is like, “No, this is just weird now”? “This is too long.” We hit that point, and so I was just sitting there, and I was like, “How do we get conversation going again?” The first question that popped into my mind was, “Who did you guys vote for this year?” and it was a laugh moment. Everybody was like, that is funny, and then the awkward silence just returned, and then one of my buddies went into who he voted for, and that kicked off a three-hour debate on politics on the side of a river, and since then that has been my favorite question to ask people in awkward moments and just throw it out there, because it always gets a conversation started. That might be a little mean, but I think it is also pretty hilarious, and I think that is a question, whether we like it or not, that is on the forefront of a lot of our minds, “Who are you voting for?”

Politics is in full steam right now. We have an election coming up in just nine days, and our social media feeds, we are getting text messages from random politicians asking us for more money and for our vote, and it is just everywhere. You might be someone who has already decided, who you are going to vote for, and you have no questions. You might have decided on the top of the ballot, but on down-ballot issues, you are a little confused. You could even be someone sitting here today that you just check off anyone that has an R next to their name or a D next to their name, and you think, “Yep, that is all I have to do. I do not even need to look beyond that,” but here is the thing. I think anyone with eyes open would recognize and would be able to name that politics in our country is pretty complex and a little more complicated than it has felt like it has been in the past, and a little difficult for us to know what to do about it. Nothing just feels super easy for most of us about politics right now.

As I have been thinking about this letter of First Peter, I have been reminded throughout this series of a person by the name of Leslie Newbigen, who some of you may have heard this name before, but he was a missionary from England to India. He spent forty years ministering and evangelizing the country of India, and while he was over there, he encountered a lot of opposition to the faith, and he experienced a lot of hostility, a lot of persecution simply for being a Christian in that country, but what is fascinating about Newbigen’s story is that when he finished his time in India, came back to his home country of England and retired. What he realized after forty years was that his country, his homeland, had changed drastically in that amount of time, and what he considered, what used to be sort of a Christian nation had fully moved into a post-Christian society and a society that was marked more by secularism and pluralism, and so he began to say, realizing that even though he had experienced opposition in this other country, the condemnation and the anger and vitriol in his home country was actually harder to deal with as he engaged with people. The contempt that people had for the gospel in England was harder than the opposition he had experienced in India, and so he began writing to the church in the West about that experience and began talking about what it means to be a Christian and live faithfully for Jesus in the shifting sands of our culture.

Some of those sands you have probably felt like they are shifting beneath you, especially in the area of politics, and what is fascinating to me about Newbigen, because I think he also might have been a prophet, not just a missionary, because back in the 1970s he began to predict, and one of the things he said most was that as the West became more and more secular, as the West removed God from more and more places and the public sphere, that politics would become the new religion. What he said is that devotion and passion that had once been reserved for Jesus or for God in the West would be transferred to political parties and ideology, and instead of looking to God to be the solution to our problems, people would begin looking to politics for those answers.

That feels true, doesn't it? I mean, that was written almost fifty years ago, and here is the challenge, that it is not just as society has secularized and removed God that politics has become the religion of our culture, but it even I think it happens sometimes within the context of Christianity, that even some people who follow Jesus and have given their lives to Him, they have actually begun to replace their theology with political ideology. Where I see this the most is that if I am just being completely honest, I would say that for the majority of the people that I interact with in Christian circles, I know more about their political ideology and their political leanings than what Jesus has been doing in their life. I receive more e-mails about, "How are we going to address this political issue?" than I do about, "God just did this amazing thing in my life." I think what we see, and it is not to say that those things do not matter. They matter so deeply, but when I begin to see more posts about the political issues we are facing today than about what Jesus is doing in the world, I begin to wonder if Newbigen is right, and we have replaced our religion and our worship of Jesus and looking to Him for solutions to the world's problems and have begun looking in the political sphere.

You might be sitting there thinking, "What in the world are you doing, Paul? You are not supposed to talk about politics. That is the one thing you do not do at a dinner party, and you are in the middle of your own election, and now I might not vote for you, because you are talking about politics, and that makes me uncomfortable," right? Here is the thing. I think when we look at this letter, I have just had this notion of Newbigen in the back of my mind this entire time we have been going through First Peter, because what we have been looking at and everything that has flowed out of this series comes from the big idea in First Peter, which is verses 11 and 12 of chapter 2: "Dear friends, I urge you as foreigners and exiles to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God." This is the whole premise of Peter's letter, and what he is saying is that as followers of Jesus, we are foreigners and exiles, pilgrims in this land. This world is not our home. We live in this dual reality, where we are citizens of the kingdom of heaven, who carry out the values of the kingdom of heaven on Earth as it is in heaven, but we will never fully feel at home here, and the main aim of our lives and of our communities is that we want to live lives that would make others see our good deeds and glorify God. That is the end game. It is that we want people that we come in contact with to glorify God.

As I was thinking about that and the passage we have today, I just kept thinking about the political realm and sphere that we find ourselves in at this moment, because I think that the goal of bringing people to a place where they glorify God, if there is one place in our current context that trips us up more than anything else, it is politics and how we engage with politics and what our posture is as we go to the polls.

The question Peter is asking is, “How do we live faithfully in the now? What does it mean to live faithfully for Jesus in this moment we find ourselves in?” and Peter is writing to a very specific context, to a group of people who are experiencing persecution and hostility, that are being moved to the margins of society for their faith in Jesus, but it is also not a one-to-one correlation to our culture, because the wives who were trapped in relationships with husbands who were abusive because they believed in Jesus had no options to step out of those relationships, or the slaves who had masters who persecuted them because they believed in Jesus had no option to try to change their situation. Christians in the first century could not vote or protest or demonstrate or call their senator to see if they could get things to change, and so Peter is writing to that context, but the question before us is, “What does it mean to follow Jesus and live faithfully now in situations where we might be experiencing hostility, but we can actually do something?” That is the number one question that comes up. “Well, they could not vote, and I can vote, so I need to do something,” but how do we go about that?

So, what I thought, and this was probably a terrible idea, but what I thought we could do is look at this passage and try to take the implications of what Peter says and apply that to this election season that we find ourselves in. What I want to say from the front is this; I am not going to tell you who to vote for today, and I am not going to tell you who I voted for yesterday. Even if you ask, I am not giving you that, but here is the thing. I listened to a sermon a couple of weeks ago that was entitled something like, “How should Christians vote like Jesus?” and this pastor who I actually listen to frequently and have a lot of respect for, he essentially said, “I am not going to endorse a candidate today,” and then he preached a fifty-minute sermon about how everyone who is a Christian should vote for one particular candidate over the other without naming them, and I thought, “That is not actually helpful,” and so what I would like to do today is apply these principles to the political sphere that we find ourselves in, to see if we can have guidance for what a Christian posture should be as we enter the polls. How does that sound? Good. Yeah, yeah, all right. We are not sure. You guys do not really have an option, because you are here already.

All right, so this is what I want to do. I want to walk through this passage, and we are going to look at seven principles of Christian posture at the polls from First Peter. Are we game? All right, that was a little bit better. Not really, but we will just say it was, so I can keep going. All right, verse eight. This is where it starts, and it says, this will be Principle One: “Finally, all of you be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called, so that you may inherit a blessing.” Now just to remember some of the context of what we have been going through with First Peter is Peter, oh, sorry, not the principle yet. Can we go back to the passage? Is that all right? We just gave the game away. That’s okay. That’s alright. No, I am just kidding, verse 8. Do you have that one, verse eight in the slides? All right. I am going to just go back to this verse, so Peter begins by saying, “Finally, all of you,” so here he is talking to everyone. He has been talking through specific categories of Christians, and he says, “First of all, Christians, you need to submit to the government authority.” Then he talks specifically to slaves. Then he talks to wives. Then he talks to husbands. Now he comes back, and all of this is wrapping up the teaching that we have been walking through the last several weeks, and he says, “All of you,” so this applies to all Christians that Peter is talking to. This is a universal principle, and he says, and he begins by saying you need to be like minded as Christians. In situations of hostility and persecution,

you need to be like-minded. He is calling Christian believers to unity, and it is important for us to recognize that this harmony he is calling for between Christians and how they relate to one another, the goal is not uniformity. He is not expecting all people that are Christians to be exactly the same, but what he is expecting is that despite our differences, we can still be in community together.

Here is one of the things that I hear often times when it comes to politics and following Jesus, the number of times I have heard someone say, “I just don’t understand how they could vote like that and still be a Christian.” You have heard this? Yes. Maybe some of us have even said that. What happens when we have this mentality is that there is one particular way for Christians to vote, and that if you do not vote this particular way, then maybe you are not a Christian, and so what we end up doing inherently in that statement is we place political ideology above theology, because the last time I checked, there is nowhere in scripture that says how you follow Jesus and whether or not you follow Jesus is dependent on who you vote for. I do not see that in scripture. It is whether or not you have given your ultimate allegiance to Jesus Christ and Him alone. That is what makes someone a Christian, so the principle from this, which you have already seen, is this: as a Christian, you are free to vote your conscience and your conviction, but you also need to accept that other Christians will do the same and that they might vote differently than you do.

It is so quiet in here right now. You are allowed to have your convictions. You are allowed to vote and hold strength and conviction in your conscience, but you are not allowed to dismember or divide the fellowship of believers based on their voting record. That is not what holds us together. Oh, all right. There we go. We may have different answers for which political party gives us the best shot at flourishing, but we only have one answer when it comes to who is the savior of the world, and that is Jesus Christ, and so we have to recognize that while we hold different convictions very deeply, that there are Jesus-loving, Bible-believing, God-worshipping people who will follow Him this week into the voting booth and vote differently than you would, and we need to get over that, because politics is not worth dividing us over.

I think some of us are capital-D Democrats, or we are capital-R Republicans, or maybe we have put the moniker on us that I am a Christian Republican or a Christian Democrat, and we are called to be Christians first and foremost, and all of those other monikers that come after, they do not mean anything. They are not the deciding factor of who we worship, and so we cannot tear the church apart for the sake of politics. Okay, that is principle number one. How are we doing so far? All right.

Okay, we are going to go to principle number two. Next, Peter says that Christians are not only supposed to be like-minded, but they are also supposed to be sympathetic to each other, and they are supposed to love one another and be compassionate, be humble with each other. Now here is the thing, and this is so important that we get this idea. Throughout the previous several teachings, Peter has been talking specifically to Christians in relationship to people who are outside the faith, but here he turns his attention, and he says when Christians are experiencing persecution, this is how they are supposed to relate to one another. This is internal language of how Christians experience life together when they are under stress from hostility and persecution, and he says that together we need to love one another, to be humble with each other, be sympathetic to one another. It is not language about the outsider. Here he is saying this needs to hold the group of Christians together when we experience persecution, and so principle number two, when we engage in the political sphere, how you love is more important than whether or not you win.

The bottom line of political parties is power, but the bottom line of Christians is love, and those two things are often incompatible, because people who want power will do anything they can to win and achieve power. Christians are supposed to be characterized by love, and so if your political passion is making it hard for you to love your neighbor, then I think you need to turn it down a notch. Politics sees enemies as threats to be eliminated, but the gospel of Jesus Christ sees enemies as people who are made in God's image and deserving of love. What scripture says is that we can engage with the world, but if we are not characterized by love, it does not matter if we have the truth, that if we are not characterized by love, then it is as if we are just banging on a cymbal as loud as we can, and they cannot hear our words or see our actions. I think sometimes when we engage with politics, the posture we take is we are so angry and so hate-filled, we do not have love. We just want to make sure our party wins, and the message we are sending to the surrounding world is it does not matter whether or not my fellow believers believe what I do. I just need to make sure I win. We are banging the gong, and no one listens to us, and we wonder why. It is because we are not being characterized by love.

Principle three: the pursuit of power does not release us from following the Sermon on the Mount. In verse nine of this passage, Peter is actually quoting from the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:10-12, where Jesus says that we are to be characterized as people who pray for our enemies, who love those who persecute us, and that we will be blessed when we do so, and that is what Peter quotes in this passage. What is fascinating to me about Peter quoting this is that Peter was there when Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount. He heard those words from Jesus in Matthew 5 first-hand. He was sitting at Jesus feet as Jesus was preaching to the multitudes, telling them about what the kingdom of God is like, and so he heard Jesus say with his own ears, "Love your enemies, bless those who persecute you, and pray for them," and Peter did not believe it. We can see throughout his story that even though he heard Jesus say these words, that he believed something very different. In fact, all of the disciples struggled with the Sermon on the Mount and did not believe it. They wanted power, and so you have these stories where the disciples go into a town, and everybody rejects them, and they are hostile to the disciples and Jesus, and they say, "Hey Jesus, do you want us to call down fire from heaven and lightning bolts and just smite them?" and Jesus is like, "No, that is the exact opposite of my ethos and what I have been teaching you," and then as Jesus is betrayed, Peter takes up a sword. He wants to go about getting power his way.

What is fascinating is that thirty-some-odd years later, as Peter is writing to these churches who are experiencing persecution, who are experiencing hostility, he has had this transformation of heart, where suddenly he is echoing the words of Jesus to this community, and he is saying it is not that following Jesus, we can achieve power through any means. Jesus gave teaching on what it looks like, and so as we engage with politics in our sphere, we have to remember that it does not release us from following the Sermon on the Mount.

I think flowing out of that, he goes into this idea in First Peter 3:10-12, and he says, "Let whoever would love life and see good days keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. They must turn from evil and do good, and they must seek peace and pursue it, for the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." Peter backs this statement up about love and how we are supposed to be people characterized by love and people who bless those who persecute us, by quoting Psalm 34, which basically makes the same

point, but it grounds that teaching in the idea that God is watching what is happening. His eyes are on the righteous, and he hears and is attentive to their prayers. The face of the Lord is against those who do evil.

I think that this idea has two implications. One, there is trust that we have that God sees everything that is going on in our world, and so when the world feels chaotic, when it feels like it is out of control, we trust that God sees the injustices that we face, but that is not an excuse to do evil. God says turn from evil and do good, so principle four: God is watching how we engage with the political process. Because God is watching, us, we should be mindful of how we engage with politics. I think that some of us believe that politics is angry and full of hate, and so it is not that big of a deal if we are angry and we are full of hate, and so we use some of the same mechanisms and weapons that are in the political sphere in order to gain political achievement. Peter is saying no matter what happens, no matter how afraid you are, no matter what you feel like you are facing, we should not justify doing evil. God is watching.

I feel like this week I had first-hand experience of what it means to turn away from someone when they are watching. Landon, I have mentioned this, but my ten-month-old son, he is beginning to crawl and walk and move around a lot. He is only ten months old, but we were not prepared for him to start walking, and so what he does is his favorite thing right now to do is to try to climb the stairs in our tri-level, and he knows already at ten months old that he is not supposed to climb stairs. We have made it very clear to him, like, “Don’t do that. That is not safe,” but what happens is Landon will come over to the stairs, and then he will turn back to us, and look to see if we are watching, and then if we pretend like we are not watching, then he will scurry over to the stairs as fast as he can and start climbing as fast as he can. We say, “Landon do not get on the stairs,” and we will pull him off, and then he will climb back over to them, and he will look back at us to see if we are watching him, and then if we are not watching, then he starts to climb the stairs. He is only ten months old, and he already gets, like intuitively somehow knows that we sometimes act differently when people are watching us or not, and I think sometimes when it comes to politics, we just assume that God does not care. He is not really watching. He is not really paying attention, so it does not matter what I do, and we justify all sorts of things that go against God’s will for the sake of getting political gain. What Peter is saying here is how we engage with the world when we are experiencing injustice and hostility and persecution, it matters how we respond, and God is watching our actions. God cares how we engage with the political process.

All right, principle number five: Peter says this in verse 13, “Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good, but if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed,” and he says this, “Do not fear their threats, and do not be frightened.” Principle number five: fear is not the primary lens through which we see the world. Every election, they tell us that this is the most important election. I have only been voting for eighteen years, and every single time as the election comes up, they are like, this is the most important election, and they couch all of it in this doomsday scenario where if the other side gets into office, then be prepared, because the world will probably end, and it is all driven based on fear and fear of the other side and fear of what will happen and that the fate of the world is resting on this election in this moment.

Do policies matter? Absolutely. Do politicians and who we put into office have implications for us? Yeah, one hundred percent, but do we have to be afraid in any situation, no matter what happens? Absolutely not. Do not let your political decisions be influenced because of fear of what might happen.

Peter here is actually quoting Isaiah 8:12-13, and he says this. I think this is so fascinating and has some ramifications for our political moment that we find ourselves in right now: “Do not call conspiracy, everything that these people call conspiracy. Do not fear what they fear, and do not dread it. The Lord is the one you are to regard as holy. He is the one you are to fear. He is the one you are to dread.” We get it backwards sometimes, and we get so caught up in the context and the moment that we find ourselves in, that we fear if this person is in office or this person is in office, what might happen to our country, what might happen to me? What scripture says is that whoever is in office, the person, the only thing we are supposed to fear is the name of the Lord.

What sometimes happens in politics is that when we are driven by fear, we end up in two places. We end up in one place because we just accommodate the culture around us, and we begin to bend to the moral fabrication of the culture and society that we find ourselves in, because we are afraid of what will happen if we do not, and so we just begin to make all sorts of compromises with things that God has called evil, because we are afraid of our culture more than we fear God. But not only do we accommodate sometimes, but sometimes we come over to this end, and we actually commandeer the things that are in this world, and we actually give ourselves, and instead of just accommodating culture and going along with culture, we take a stand, but instead of taking a stand in Jesus’ name, we try to use the weapons and policies and things of this world to bring about the kingdom of God, and we think if we can just pull the same levers, and if we can use the same weapons, and if we can get the same things to happen, in both scenarios, what we are trying to do because we are afraid of outcomes is use the systems and structures of this world, things that God has said are evil and not okay to justify the hard choices. I think when fear is the primary lens through which we see the world, and especially the world of politics, then it leads us to this place where we do not trust outcomes to God, who is sovereign, and we have to be a people who are not characterized by fear.

Peter goes on in verse 15, and he says this, “But in your hearts do not fear them, but in your hearts revere Christ as Lord.” Fear the Lord, and then he says this: “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have, but do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander, for it is better if it is God’s will to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.” Peter says that when Christians experience hostility or persecution or people who are pushing against them, that they need to be prepared to give an answer for the hope that they have.

I wonder if someone were to come to you and say, “What is the hope that you have?” in this season, how quickly would you turn to politics? Would you name politics before you name Jesus? If someone asked you, “Hey, I have noticed that you are a follower of Jesus. Why have you placed your hope in Him?” how prepared would you be to give that answer as opposed to if someone came to you and said, “Hey, I have noticed that you seem to vote this way, “Why do you like this candidate?” What defense would you be more prepared to give, your political ideologies, or your belief in theology about who Jesus is? I think sometimes we have inverted these things, and some of us are more prepared to defend our politics than our theology, and so here is principle number six: If your neighbor knows your political allegiance but does not know your faith allegiance, then you are doing it wrong. If you are willing to put political signs in your front yard or bumper stickers on the back of your car, but you cannot share Jesus’ name and what



He has done in your life to your neighbors and your friends, your priorities are backwards. Do we share in engaging in the gospel with the same intensity that we care about politics? Peter says give a defense, and you can give a defense, but do not be defensive. Give it with gentleness and respect, and how might the world change if we just engaged with that one principle a little bit differently and changed the tone of our convictions? We do not have to be angry the same way the world is, because we have a different hope.

We are going to conclude with this last principle that comes from verses 18-22, and what I have to say about it is this passage, particularly these four verses, are some of the hardest to interpret in the New Testament. In fact, there is a video you can find online on YouTube where a pastor is making fun of all these pastors who got to this passage, did not know what to do with it, and just skipped by it, and they are just laughing at all these people were like, “Yep, no, too hard. Let’s not deal with it. Okay, we’re not going to do that today,” but I will say that when we go through this passage, what you have to understand is there is a lot of disagreement and not really any consensus about what Peter is saying in these words and what they mean, particularly verse 19. So, I will start reading it, and then we will try to make some sense of it, and then we will unpack the main point is, so starting in verse 18: “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body and made alive in the Spirit,” and then verse 19, this is where it gets funky: “After being made alive, He went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits.”

Who are the imprisoned spirits? Nobody really knows. We have a lot of opinions about who the imprisoned spirits are, but “to those who were disobedient long ago, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, while the ark was being built.” Suddenly he is talking about Noah, and we are not quite sure why he is talking about Noah, and he says, “In it, only a few, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water,” the flood, “symbolizes baptism that now saves you also, not the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of a clear conscience towards God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand, with the angels, authorities, and powers in submission to Him.”

There is a lot there, and when it comes to the imprisoned spirits that Peter is talking about that Jesus made proclamation to, I am going to give you just three interpretations of what people think that it may mean. So, the first one is that Christ proclaimed victory to fallen angels and demonic spirits. That is one interpretation. This view suggests that there are spirits, there are fallen angels and demons, demonic beings, who were disobedient in the time of Noah, so if you go back to Genesis, and you read Genesis 6 leading into the story of the flood, there is this group of beings called the Nephilim, and there is something about them that is a little bit hard to understand. They seem to be spiritual beings that have somehow mixed themselves with physical beings, and so what the interpretation essentially says is that Jesus goes to those people who have been imprisoned since the time of the flood, and He proclaimed his victory to them, and so He goes to them, and He says, “I am victorious over sin, death and all forces of evil that have been existing in the world since the beginning of time.” He is proclaiming his ultimate triumph over all realms.

The second interpretation is that Jesus went and preached to human spirits from Noah’s generation, so if you remember the story of Noah, he is building an ark, and there is a whole group of people that think he is insane for building the ark, and they are mocking him, making fun of him. They are living in

rebellion to God, and so some people interpret that the spirits mean people who were imprisoned in death because of the flood, and that Jesus proclaimed repentance and salvation to Noah's generation before the flood through Noah.

Third option, and this is probably all very Greek to you all, but Christ descended to the dead to offer salvation to those who had died, and so this suggests that Christ descended to the realm of the dead and into hell to proclaim salvation to those who died before his resurrection, possibly offering them a final chance for redemption, and you see this maybe in the Apostles' Creed. Now those are some of the different options. I will let you discuss them in your small groups this week, and you can figure out what you think is the best option. Here is the thing, and here is what is most important, that whatever the interpretation, most scholars agree that the main point that Peter is trying to make in this passage is that Jesus is ultimately victorious not only over sin and death, but all earthly realms and all spiritual realms. His victory at the cross and in the resurrection is complete and total, and so why is Peter telling that to this group of people? They are experiencing hostility and persecution, and he is trying to encourage them that in these moments when they are experiencing the injustice of this world, the chaos of this world, their ultimate hope is not what is taking place in this world, but in the person of Jesus, because He is victorious over all things, and as we have been looking through these passages the last couple of weeks, it keeps telling us that the posture Christians are supposed to have in a hostile, chaotic world is one of submission to the authorities above us, but here Peter flips this idea on his head in verse 22, and he says this, that Jesus has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand, with angels, authorities, and powers in submission to Him.

So, the last principle, and then we will close. Principle 7: The fate of the kingdom of God does not depend on the results of the next election or any election. What Peter is saying here is that you can have your politics, and I am thankful that we live in a culture and in a country where we can exercise political voice and impact the world through our vote, but if we believe that the kingdom of God comes through political power, then we have missed the heart of the gospel. We have vastly misunderstood Jesus' mission of what He is doing in the world. The political process, though necessary and important, has very little to do with how God is saving the world today, and so as we stand at this crossroads of uncertainty and chaos and division, I want to remind you that our hope is anchored not in political outcomes or the whims of earthly rulers, but in the unshakable truth that Jesus Christ reigns over all. No matter the outcome of the election, He is on his throne, sovereign over creation, orchestrating all of history for his glory and for our ultimate good. In a world that seems chaotic, we find our peace knowing that his kingdom is not of this world, that it transcends borders, ideologies and parties. So, as we head to November fifth, whatever happens, whoever wins, Jesus Christ is on his throne, and so let's head to the polling booths with our heads towards heaven and with our hearts filled with faith and courage, ready to be ambassadors of his truth and love, sharing the hope we have, not in the political process, but in the gospel of redemption for the world, because that is a message people truly need to hear. Amen? Amen. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, God, we come before you, and God, I know that when we talk about politics, there is a lot of tension and a lot of unknown, a lot of uncertainty. We look at the world, and sometimes it is hard to see what you are doing, but God, we are reminded from the letter of First Peter that he was writing in the first century, thirty years after Jesus was crucified and ascended to the throne in heaven, that we are still here, and we experienced persecution then, and we might experience persecution in the future.

We might feel like the sands of our culture are shifting beneath our feet, and yet God, the church remains, because you are sovereign, and you are faithful. God, may we hold to this truth that who you are and what you are doing in the world is bigger than the political debates that we have on Facebook or on our timelines, and may we be drawn in our hearts not to the left or to the right, but heavenward, that we want to see the kingdom of God come to America, as it is in heaven. God, may we trust you with that process. May we give ourselves and our full allegiance to you, not to any political party. God, we pray in Jesus' name for the outpouring of your Spirit on our country and on our people, for your glory, so that people may come to know you and glorify you on the day you return, and it's in Christ's name that we pray, amen.

45:08 minutes

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Edited by Tom Kenaston

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