Exhortation Amidst Suffering and Preaching Complex Passages

(1 Peter 3:13-4:11)

Preaching is never far from exhortation, but exhortation requires a certain sensitivity when our listeners are hurting.  Just to add to the complexity, Peter includes some interpretationally difficult content at this point in the epistle.  In this session we will wrestle with the twin values of biblical accuracy and pastoral sensitivity.  Together we will work on developing support material for sensitively preaching complex passages.

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1. **Outline of the Section**
   1. Suffer for the right reasons, 3:13-17
   2. Christ suffered for the right reasons, 3:18-22

*“This is a strange text and certainly a more obscure passage than any other passage in the New Testament. I still do not know for sure what the apostle meant.” (Luther).*

* + 1. Baptism and salvation
    2. Interpretation 1: “After the cross”
    3. Interpretation 2: “Before the flood”
  1. Live out Christ’s victory in an unbelieving world, 4:1-6
  2. Live out Christ’s victory in the church, 4:7-11

1. **Preaching Complex Passages**
   1. Biblical accuracy
   2. Pastoral sensitivity
   3. Indefinite exegesis
   4. Developmental questions in preaching
      1. Explanation
      2. Proof
      3. Application

1 Peter 3:13–4:11 (ESV)

**13**Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? **14**But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, **15**but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, **16**having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. **17**For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil.

**18**For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, **19**in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, **20**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. **21**Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, **22**who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

**4**Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, **2**so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. **3**For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. **4**With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; **5**but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. **6**For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.

**7**The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. **8**Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. **9**Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. **10**As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: **11**whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.