

UNSHAKABLE: An Unshakable Victoryⁱ 1 Peter 3:18-22

MEMORIAL DAY RECOGNITION:

Good morning, Church Family. I want to welcome you to corporate worship here at Trinity Baptist Church. Guests with us this morning, we are especially glad you've joined us today, and we would love to connect with you. Stop by our information center in the lobby, under the banner that says, "Hope is Here," so that we can get basic contact info and give you a gift for being here today.

Well, this is Memorial Day weekend. You know, we are so very blessed to live in our country. And we are very aware that the freedoms that we enjoy as citizens of The United States have come at a great cost. Brave men and women throughout our history have fought for and defended our freedom. Many have paid the ultimate price, given their lives as a sacrifice for us to continue to live in freedom.

And Memorial Day weekend is about remembering and honoring those that have paid that ultimate price. And the Bible tells us in Romans 13:7 to give honor to whom honor is due. Those that have given their lives on the battlefield for us are certainly worthy of honor.

I want to ask you, as you gather with family friends tomorrow, and enjoy a day off from work, that you remember and pray for families that look back on this day with heartache, loss, and grief. Give thanks to The Lord and ask Him to minister to those families and to continue to bless our country. I'd like for us to begin that by taking a moment of silence.

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, church family.

SERIES OVERVIEW:

I want to invite you to grab your Bibles and turn with me to 1 Peter, chapter 3. We're in the middle of a teaching series called Unshakable, as we are working our way through the New Testament book of 1 Peter. So far, we've discovered our unshakable hope, unshakable walk, our unshakable love for one another, the unshakable church, the unshakable honor we show everyone, how to have an unshakable family, and our unshakable peace. Today we're looking at an unshakable victory. We will be looking at verses 18 through 22 of 1 Peter 3.

OPENING ILLUSTRATION: The Battle of Waterlooⁱⁱ

One of the most famous battles in history took place June 18th, 1815. It's called the Battle of Waterloo. In that battle, The Anglo, German, Dutch forces led by the Duke of Wellington went up against the infamous French army led by Napoleon. Now, Napoleon was known for his strategy in war that led him to be almost impossible to defeat. However, in this particular battle, he lost, and the Duke of Wellington was victorious.

All of England held its breath awaiting news of the outcome of Waterloo. In those days, messages were relayed by light transmission via morse code. The flashing lights would spell out the message letter by letter. The message read, "Wellington Defeated...", when a heavy fog set in blocking the rest of the message. The people were upset that the French had won, crushing the hope of liberty.

But suddenly, the fog lifted, and the message was transmitted again. This time, the entire message, "Wellington Defeated The Enemy!" As you can imagine, the demeanor changed as the people rejoiced at this announcement.

Today's passage is an announcement to us that our enemy, the Devil, has been defeated. By way of our victorious warrior, Jesus, you and I have victory, an unshakable victory.

We are going to see three aspects of our victory, today, as we study 1 Peter 3. We will see our victory over sin, victory in spiritual warfare, and victory in Jesus. Let's begin this morning by looking at our unshakable victory...

MESSAGE:

1) Over sin.

As believers in Jesus Christ, we have something that no other world religion has, the certainty of forgiveness of our sin. Read with me, 1 Peter, chapter 3, verse 18. *"¹⁸For 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."*

Last week we talked about how to have peace amid suffering. Peter used Jesus as the model for us to follow. Here, he continues that thought by talking about Jesus suffering for our sins. Peter's focal point is the suffering Jesus experienced on the cross. Some translations read, "For Christ also died."

It is what Christ suffered that paid for the penalty of our sin. That is the purpose of Jesus' death on the cross. But Peter is specific. It is not Jesus' sin that He died, but our sin. Peter says, the righteous, Jesus, for the unrighteous, us.

Why did Jesus have to die, though? Couldn't there have been another way to offer forgiveness of sin? The short answer is no, there is no other way. Remember back to the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit. When they ate, their eyes were opened, innocence was lost, and they realized they were naked and were ashamed. One of the curses of the sin that had now entered the world was for God to make coverings of skin, animal skin, as their clothing. So, an animal had to die, quite literally, to cover the sin of Adam and Eve.

The Bible says, in Hebrews 9:22, *"Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins."* That was true for Adam and Eve, and it continues to be true of us today.

So, God set up a sacrificial system to remember the high price of sin. So, Jewish priests, in the Old Testament, and in Jesus' day, sacrificed spotless lambs for the forgiveness of sins. This practice dated back to the Exodus when Passover was instituted. The people would sacrifice a lamb and paint the blood on their doorposts and the angel of death would pass over their home.

Fast forward to Jesus. John the Baptist proclaimed of Jesus, "Behold the lamb of God," ultimately who would take away the sins of the world. Jesus was crucified during Passover, quite literally becoming the sacrificial lamb and the fulfillment of John's proclamation.

But Jesus sacrifice was different. According to Peter in 1 Peter 3:18, and in other New Testament texts, *"Christ also suffered once for sins."* Jesus' death on the cross, paid the price for all sin, in a one-time payment for all. That means the payment for the penalty of sin has been paid, by Jesus, by way of substitutionary atonement.

Romans 3:23-25 says, *"²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified [made right, forgiven] by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith."* Propitiation meaning, a sin offering.ⁱⁱⁱ Jesus, in His death on the cross, is that sin offering. So, in Christ, our past,

present, and future sin have been atoned. It requires a receiving of that gift. That comes by way of repentance and a surrendering to Jesus as Lord. But He is the ultimate and final sacrifice for sin, proving that by His resurrection.

You know, many people spend their lives trying to atone for sin by doing good deeds. People tend to think that as long as my good deeds outweigh by bad, then I am good with God. But that is a terrible way to live. How do you know if you've done enough? In Jesus, we can know that we have the forgiveness of sin. The Christian life is not about doing, it's about receiving Jesus, knowing that it is done. In other words, it's unshakable. It can't be undone.

Now, we still battle our sin nature. But if you have placed your faith in Jesus as Lord of your life, then you have the certainty of an unshakable victory over your sin. Thank you, Jesus!

The second thing we see here is our unshakable victory...

2) In Spiritual Warfare.

Peter wants us to be aware of the spiritual world around us. There's a war for people's souls. Spiritual warfare is very real, and you and I often feel the effects of it. And Peter gives us a glimpse into this spiritual realm in verse 19. He says, *"¹⁹in which he [meaning Jesus] went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison."*

Now, I know that this raises all kinds of questions, and we're going to get to that in a moment. But, for now, I just want us to see that Peter is making us aware of the spiritual around us. A war that involves angels and demons, messengers of God and forces of Satan. And the Bible wants us to be aware of this conflict.

The early church leaders wanted believers to be aware. Paul, in Ephesians 6:12, also says, *"¹²For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."*

But also, the Old Testament talks about spiritual battle. In Daniel, chapter 10, an angel spoke to Daniel. As he was praying, this angel from heaven touched him. That angel essentially said, "Daniel, when you started praying, I was dispatched from heaven to come to you. But it took me 21 days to get to you because we had to fight the prince of Persia. And when we return, Michael and I, another angel, are going to have to fight him again along with the prince of

Greece.” Prince referencing demons. This angel wanted Daniel to be aware of the spiritual war going on around him.

The point is that there is spiritual conflict. The Bible tells us about it. It is very real and happening around us constantly. This spiritual conflict began when Lucifer rebelled against God, and he was thrown out of Heaven along with the other angels who were with him. Ever since, Satan, has been trying to keep people from a relationship with God.

But the Bible gives us tools to be successful in this spiritual battle. Ephesians 6 continues and talks about the tools to be victorious in spiritual warfare. Verse 13. *13Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. 14Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. 16In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; 17and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, 18praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.*

We are not left defenseless, but rather equipped to be victorious in spiritual battle. And add to that the promise that God will be with us, He will never leave or forsake us, even to the end of the age. We can have an unshakable victory over sin and in spiritual warfare. Thirdly, we have an unshakable victory...

3) In Jesus.

Our victory is rooted in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Let’s dive in here. Let’s first examine verses 19 and 20. *19in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, 20because 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.* What in the world is going on? Jesus preaching to spirits in prison, and the days of Noah?!

There’s a lot here and some of it is very confusing. In my study this week, I came across a quote from Martin Luther on this passage. He said, “A wonderful text is this, and a more obscure passage perhaps than any other in the New Testament, so that I do not know for a certainty just what Peter means.”^{iv} Well, thank you, Luther for nothing! So, what are we to make of this passage?

Well, let’s first address the spirits in prison. Who are they, where are they, when did Jesus preach to them, and what does this mean?! Scholars are all over the map on this text.^v Some believe it refers to Jesus preaching through Noah while he was building the Ark. I can see that. Others think this is talking about Old Testament believers who died and were liberated by Jesus. Yeah, but why mention the days of Noah? What about all Old Testament believers? A third thought is it’s the people who died during the flood and God is giving them a second chance. But nowhere in the Scripture do we see being given a second chance at repentance after death. Scripture says that we are all appointed once to die and then judgment.

While I can see one of those options, I tend to agree with, a fourth option. Again, take this for what it’s worth, consult the Scripture and develop your view. But I see this as Jesus proclaiming ultimate victory over Satan and his dominion. And this is where most scholars land these days.

Follow the thinking. This view identifies the spirits in prison as evil spirits, or demons. If you are in prison, you must be there for some sort of evil. This view is supported by 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude verse 6. 2 Peter 2:4 says, *“4For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and **committed them to chains** [that’s prison] of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment.”* But also, Jude 6 reads, *“6And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in **eternal chains** [prison] under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day.”* So, I think this is referring to the evil spirits in 1 Peter 3. They’re in prison.

But Peter goes a little further and ties these evil spirits to the days of Noah. So, they are in prison because of something they did in Noah’s day. Now, that’s a long time to be in prison! What did they do?

Well, in Genesis 6:1-4, the Bible tells us that there was a group of demons who committed horrific acts against humanity. I’ll let you read about that. But Genesis 6 is about the days of Noah. So, the evil spirits in 1 Peter 3, must have been the ones who committed these horrific acts. That’s who I think they are.

Now, where are they? If the 2 Peter and Jude verses are referencing this, they’re in hell, but they are imprisoned there, in chains. Not all demons are in prison, but these are because of what they did. That’s who they are and where they are. But the next question is, “When did Jesus preach to them?”

Well, verse 18 of 1 Peter 3 is the immediate context of verse 19, and verse 18 says that Jesus was crucified, put to death. Then in verse 21 we have the resurrection of Jesus mentioned. So, verses 19 and 20 must have taken place between Jesus' death and His resurrection. So, in my view, Jesus, when He died on the cross, went to where these prisoners are and preached to them.

What did He preach? Well, my translation says that Jesus "proclaimed" to the prisoners. Some translations say Jesus preached. But I think that proclaimed is the correct translation. The word here differs from the word evangelism. When we think of preaching, we typically think that someone is preaching to someone to give them the opportunity to respond to the Gospel. These spirits do NOT have the opportunity to respond. So, I like the word proclaim, here, because Jesus is making a statement, not giving an invitation.

So, the point of all this is not that Jesus descended into hell. The point is Jesus' victory over evil angelic powers. There is victory in Jesus! All hail King Jesus! That's the point of verses 19 and 20.

Now, let's continue by looking at verses 21 and 22. *²¹Baptism, 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, ²²who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.*

Peter says, baptism now saves you. Wait a minute! I thought baptism is symbolic. You are correct. So, how do we reconcile Peter's teaching here? Let Scripture interpret Scripture. What does The Bible say about salvation?

Acts 16:31 says, *³¹Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.*" Romans 10:9 and 10, *⁹because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.*" Jesus said, *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."* There's nothing in those verses that tie baptism to salvation. We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in the person and work of Jesus Christ. So, what does Peter mean by, *²¹Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you?"*

Peter is not contradicting the teachings in the New Testament here. It is an illustration he is using. He just talked about the days of Noah, making reference to the great flood. He says baptism corresponds to the days of Noah. That flood of water brought death, but salvation from that came by the ark, which is a type of Christ. Jesus is the greater ark, rescuing us from the penalty of our sin, death. So, now, since Jesus' atoning sacrifice, we are saved from our sin. Not by way of anything we do, but by way of surrendering to Jesus as Lord.

Look at the entirety of what Peter says. *²¹Baptism, which corresponds to this, now [now that Christ has died and resurrected], saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal [or a profession]^{vi} to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.* It is the profession of faith, a yielding of ourselves to the Lordship of Christ, that effects our salvation.

Baptism is a picture of a death, a burial, and a resurrection. It is an illustration that by faith in Jesus we are saved from eternal death. We identify with Him in His death but are raised to walk in new life. That's Peter's point.

Then in verse 22, Peter tells us that Jesus, *"has gone into heaven [that is He ascended into Heaven] and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him."* The right hand is a reference to ruling authority.^{vii} Jesus rules from the right hand of God. Ephesians tells us that Jesus is seated at the right hand of God.^{viii} That's a picture of work being accomplished. It's finished, done, He's seated, Jesus is reigning and ruling.

But Peter adds to that truth that angels, authorities, and powers are now subject to Jesus. This ties us back to verses 19 and 20. Jesus rules even over the hostile angelic powers and the forces of darkness.^{ix} The point Peter is making is that Jesus wins! He rules! He is victorious.

And remember, Peter is writing to a people that are being persecuted, even killed, for their faith. So, his point is further that even if we as believers suffer death for our faith, Jesus has defeated even that by His resurrection. There is an unshakable victory in Jesus!

CONCLUSION: GOSPEL

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Works consulted in preparation for this message: Thomas R. Schreiner, *The New American Commentary: 1, 2 Peter, Jude: Vol. 37*, B&H Publishing: Nashville, 2003; Scot McKnight, *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 Peter*, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1996; Paul A. Cedar, *The Communicators Commentary: James, 1, 2 Peter, Jude*, Word Books: Waco, 1984; John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Peter*, Moody Publishers: Chicago, 2004; William Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter*, Westminster Press: Philadelphia, 1976; Max Anderson, *Holman New Testament Commentary: 1 & 2 Peter, I, II, III John, Jude*, Holman Reference: Nashville, 1999; David Guzik, *Enduring Word Commentary: 1 Peter 3*, published by Enduring Word Ministries, accessed online: <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/1-peter-3/>; Troy Rackliffe, "Stand Firm in Your Faith: Message 7," preached at Glade Community Church, notes given by Troy Rackliffe; Michael Gossett, "Anchored in Peace," message preached at Green Acres Baptist Church, October 2, 2022, accessed online: <https://www.qabc.org/episode/anchored-in-peace-anchored/>; J.D. Greear, "Together We Endure: How to Experience Good Days (in the Midst of Bad Ones)," sermon preached at Summit Church, July 26, 2020, accessed online: <https://summitchurch.com/message/how-to-experience-good-days-in-the-midst-of-bad-ones>; Skip Heitzig, "Rock Solid: The Invisible War," sermon preached at Calvary Albuquerque, March 9, 2014, accessed online: <https://calvarynm.church/connectwithskip/teachings/#/series/175/sermon/2388>.

ⁱⁱ Charles Killian, "Defeated," article published by Asbury Seminary, April 23, 2014, accessed online: <https://asburyseminary.edu/elink/defeated>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Strong's Concordance, 2435, hilastérion.

^{iv} Schreiner, page 184.

^v Good discussion on the various views of this passage is contained in Schreiner's commentary on pages 185 and 186.

^{vi} Strong's Concordance, 1906, eperótéma.

^{vii} Schreiner, page 197.

^{viii} Ephesians 1:20.

^{ix} Schreiner, page 197-198.