Intro: No one likes to suffer; in fact, most of us go out of our way to avoid it. I don’t even like watching movies about people suffering, but it is a part of life.

* Poor decisions – marriage, work, debt, etc.
* Peter writes about suffering, but not as a result of poor decisions – as a result of who our God is.

Vs. 13-15 – Principle: honor Christ the Lord as holy – let that be your guide

* Suffering is not the experience of every Xian, but every Xian must be ready
* We are tempted to focus on fears and act accordingly
  + God designed fear to protect us, but we often use it as an excuse-lazy
    - Heights, dark, unknown (fostering)
  + Peter not talking about these fears – being punished for following Jesus
    - Don’t fear that suffering
      * They may harm you, but can’t hurt you
      * Might hurt your feelings, but what is that in the grand scheme?
    - Part of the amazing miracle of salvation
      * Those who’s names are written in the book of life, who walk w/Jesus, they are secure
      * John 10:28 – no one can take them away
      * Augustine: “If you love the good, you will suffer no loss, because whatever you may be deprived of in this world, you will never lose God, who is the true Good.”
  + What do you have to fear? Comfort? So what? Make Jesus Lord
    - Less persecution than Peter’s audience, but his words are no less important to us
* “If…will be blessed” = highly privileged – identify with Jesus
  + Early church considered it a high honor to suffer with Jesus – proved who really believed – easy to believe when things go well (love)
  + When we focus on Jesus, each crisis becomes an opportunity for witness
    - Friends, co-workers, neighbors, family are watching how we respond – they may ask why we still believe – Job’s friends
* Every Xian must be ready/able to give a reasoned defense of his/her hope in Christ
  + Defense: Gk= apologia – apologetics (not arguing) – lovingly explain

Vs. 16-17 – Kill them with kindness

* Live w/a clear conscience – more than let your conscience be your guide
* Conscience internal judge that witnesses to us, approves or accuses actions
  + Window that lets in the light of God’s truth
    - If persist in disobeying – window gets darker (defiled conscience)
    - Seared conscience – so sinned against that not sensitive to right or wrong – can even approve of band and accuse good
  + Exercise conscience through time w/God and gospel community
  + Clear conscience is so important, especially in troubling times because it can comfort and encourage us because we know we are right w/God – doesn’t need to be afraid
  + 500th anniversary of reformation day: Martine Luther’s monument at Worms, courageous words spoken before the church council on Apr 18, 1521, “Here I stand; I can do no other. God help me. Amen.”
  + His conscience, bound to God’s word gave him the courage to defy the whole established church.
* No Xian should ever suffer for doing evil, but we all must be prepared to suffer for doing good – why? – That’s what happened to our God

Vs. 18 – We get bent out of shape when bad things happen to us – “Why do bad things happen to good people?” – It’s only happened once

* Purpose – bring us back to God – technical term = gain audience in court
  + Took his suffering for good
  + Took his death in your place – substitutionary atonement

Vs. 19-20 – Challenging verses – why it’s good to go through books (can’t skip)

* Not justification for another chance to follow Jesus – Heb. 9:27 – death ends the opportunity for salvation
* 2 questions
  + Who? Not people: NT = spirits referred to angels or demons
  + What proclaimed? Not the gospel
    - Gk word = to announce as a herald, proclaim
    - Not same word as 1 Peter 1:12 & 4:6 to preach the gospel – not a message of redemption (angels cannot be saved)
    - A declaration of victory over Satan and his hosts

Vs. 21 – Baptism is picture, reminder of Jesus’ death, burial, resurrection – most important day in history

* “We must never minimize the importance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It declares that he is God, that the work of salvation is completed and accepted by the father, and that death has been conquered.”
* Baptism doesn’t save you – public identification w/Jesus – from conscience that desires God – redeemed conscience

Vs. 22 – Jesus is Lord & exalted

Entire section is about encouragement in anticipation of suffering – because Jesus is Lord

* Expect opposition – if our God, who never sinned was treated cruelly, what right do we who are imperfect have to escape suffering?
* Difficult days give us multiplied opportunities for witness
  + Early church recognized it and marked it as a sign of a true believer
  + Perpetua and Felicity – early martyrs (100-150 years after 1 Peter)

Jesus is Lord – He becomes highest priority – not comfort/desires

Each week we gather, we remember how Jesus placed his own comfort aside to proclaim God’s goodness – died horrific death for us