

Title: CONSCIENCE CLEARED, 1 PETER 3:18-22
(Chatham, NJ; 02/22/15, AM) [Pt – Topical]

Theme: Christ satisfied the longings expressed in Psalm 25 by affording us the opportunity in baptism to have a clear conscience before God.

Purpose: To reassure the congregation that because of the Gospel, we can live with a clear conscience in the presence of God.

Introduction:

1. The Old Testament expresses anticipation of redemption, whereas the New Testament offers the fulfillment of that anticipation.
2. David, in Psalm 25, clarifies the desire for a clear conscience, and Peter reminds his listeners that God has satisfied that longing.
3. Our longings for inner peace are satisfied by Christ.
4. An allusion to God's covenant faithfulness during the flood provides an example of God's readiness to ease our trouble hearts.

I. David's Longings Are the Longings of All Hearts Inclined toward God, Psalm 25 (those who "hunger and thirst for righteousness," Mt. 5:6)

A. A soul lifted up to God, 1

1. David expresses the inner turmoil of all who long for God
2. Verses 4-5 express the same reality expressed by Augustine, "Our souls find no rest until they find their rest in thee, O God."
3. It is a desire not often recognized and one that people always try unsuccessfully to fill with something else
4. God's ways are the ways of humility (9), steadfast love, and faithfulness (10)
5. David longs to know God's ways and God's will

B. An appeal to relieve shame and guilt

1. "Let me not be put to shame," (2 & 20)
2. Protection from his enemies, specifically the "treacherous" (3)
3. "Remember not my sins," (7); "pardon my guilt" (11)
4. David recognizes his own sinful heart
5. He does not project all his troubles onto everyone else
6. "Forgive my sins" (18) – though his sins are not listed, David nonetheless recognizes the primary thing that separates him from God
7. Numerous other troubles (perhaps resulting from sin and alienation): lonely, afflicted, distressed (16-18)

C. Hope of Redemption

1. God, a refuge for David, 20
2. He expresses hope of redemption for all Israel, 22
3. Anticipation and a vision of hope are discovered in waiting (3, 21)
4. Certainty and faith are seen in those who keep the covenant (10)
5. More importantly certainty is seen in God's faithfulness to it
6. One of the first covenants is the one God makes after the flood: God promises not to destroy the earth by flood again, Genesis 9
7. This covenant demands nothing of humans; it expresses God's love even without a response from us.

II. A Clear Conscience Confirmed, 1 Peter 3:18-22

A. The Appeal, 21

1. Though David made his appeal for forgiveness in Psalm 25, in the new covenant God instituted a new way of appropriating it: baptism (1 Peter 3:21)
2. By faith in the Gospel, baptism becomes an appeal addressing what David had expressed: cleansing from guilt and forgiveness
3. Peter's clarification emphasizes that this is an inward change brought about by the power of the Holy Spirit.
4. Titus 3:5 calls it a washing and renewal

B. The Means

1. Though the Resurrection is the true agent, baptism identifies us with it
2. Baptism corresponds to the flood, 21
3. The water saved Noah and his family, 20
4. Baptism "now saves you," 21
5. By the resurrection we are "born again" (1:3)
6. Our faith is an assumed part of this for Peter (1:4)
7. Baptism into the death and resurrection is God's designated means for cleansing our conscience: we are presented "holy and blameless and above reproach before Him," Colossians 1:21

C. The Reality

1. Our conscience has been purified, Hebrews 9:14
2. Christ's single sacrifice does not remind us of our sins like the sacrifices of the Old Covenant, Heb. 10:3
3. We approach God with "hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience," 10:22

Conclusions:

1. Though David's prayer in Psalm 25 is useful and relevant, we must realize that it has been fulfilled through the resurrection of Christ and experienced in Christian baptism.
2. In fellowship with God, the blood of Jesus cleanses us from sin, 1 John 1:7.
3. By remembering our faith in the resurrection and our submission to baptism as God's ordained means of appropriating it, let us today and always live thankfully with a clear conscience before God.