

Salvation through Judgment

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[0 : 00] I want you guys to get your copy of the Scriptures and turn to 1 Peter chapter 3. We are going to, hopefully, God willing, finish chapter 3 this morning, and then we'll move into chapter 4 next week.

But this morning we're going to begin in verse 18 of chapter 3. Read down to the end, verse 22. So I want you guys, as you turn there in your Bibles, I want to ask you to stand with me in honor of God's words we read together.

The Apostle Peter writes, 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, in which He went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, 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.

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, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers, having been subjected to Him.

Thank you for your word. In Christ's name we pray. Amen. You guys take a seat. Last week we began to look at this last paragraph in chapter 3, and I told you that the danger that we face when we come to a passage like this is that we will miss the forest for the trees.

[1 : 35] And what I meant by that is that anyone who reads through that paragraph carefully will recognize that there are some confusing statements made by Peter. There are some difficult phrases, difficult sentences that he writes here in this paragraph so that we could be tempted to devote all of our time to trying to unravel those difficulties in the text and miss the big picture, miss the main point that Peter is trying to make.

And so I told you last week that the big picture, the forest of this paragraph, is that Christ, through His death and resurrection, has paid the penalty for our sins and He has defeated the spiritual powers in this world.

He has, by His death and resurrection, paid the penalty. He has redeemed us from our sins and He has won and secured victory over evil demonic forces.

That's the main point of this particular paragraph. And you can see the first half of that in verse 18. We spent all of last week really looking at verse 18.

And the reason that we did that is because while it's true that we may miss the forest for the trees, it's also true that we may spend all of our time examining the odd-looking sapling in the middle of the forest and ignore the fact that right next to it is a giant redwood tree.

[3 : 05] And I felt that verse 18 was a giant redwood tree in this passage, a brilliant statement of the gospel. And so we spent some time there. Take a look at it. Peter tells us that Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God.

And I told you that this means that Christ on the cross died in our place. He suffered the punishment that was due to you and I for our sins.

This is called by theologians a substitutionary atonement. He was a substitute. He died in our place. You and I, apart from Christ, have no hope.

You and I, apart from Christ, cannot be brought into the presence of God as Peter says Jesus is doing through His death. We cannot survive long in the presence of God with our sins covering us. So Christ took our sins upon Himself and He bore the wrath of His own Father due to us on the cross. And we receive through faith His perfect obedience as a gift.

[4 : 17] So that now when God looks at those who have trusted in Christ, He no longer sees our sins, but He sees the perfect righteousness of His Son covering us.

That's what verse 18 is telling us. He died for us, for sin. The righteous one, Jesus, was substituted for the unrighteous, you and I. And now because of that, we can come into the presence of God covered by His righteousness.

That is, if you have trusted in Christ. If you have not trusted in Christ, you cannot come before God's presence and survive.

You cannot do it. And so before I move any further with this passage, I want to plead with you to look into your heart and ask yourself the very simple question, Have I trusted in Him?

He is your only hope. He is the only means by which we may live forever in the presence of an all-glorious, all-holy, majestic God. There is no other way.

[5 : 19] And I appeal to you, trust in Jesus. So that you might say, The righteous one was substituted in my place. He bore my sins upon the cross.

That's the gospel message. And it stands here in this paragraph like a giant redwood tree, demanding our attention. And then on the other end of the passage, in verse 22, we see the power of Christ's resurrection at work.

It says that Jesus has gone into heaven. That's His ascension after the resurrection. And He is at the right hand of God with angels, authorities, and powers, having been subjected to Him.

So verse 21 refers to the resurrection of Jesus. Verse 22 tells us that having been raised from the dead, Jesus has now gone into the presence of His Father, and He sits there exalted above whom? All spiritual powers, good, angels, and evil, authorities, and powers. All of them, they all lie down subject to Christ, now that He has been raised from the dead.

[6 : 26] So keep that big picture in your mind. By His death and resurrection, He has paid the price for our sins, and He has won victory over all spiritual powers that exist.

Keep that big picture in your mind as we now turn our attention to some of these funny, scraggly-looking saplings lying around the forest.

The first one has to do with this business of going and preaching to spirits. I want you to take a look. We need to start at the end of verse 18. If you notice, there's a phrase that I didn't cover last week in verse 18, and we'll start there.

It says that He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit, in which or in whom He went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey when God's patience waited in the days of Noah.

Pause right there. Here's the question. Who are these spirits to whom Jesus went and proclaimed or preached, and when exactly did He do that?

[7 : 36] Those are the questions that we need to answer in order to understand this passage. And those questions have been answered in dozens of ways by interpreters of the Bible throughout church history.

In fact, if I were going to lay out for you all of the various interpretations of these verses, we would be here for the rest of the morning and into the afternoon, and I wouldn't get to preach about anything else.

So I'm not going to do that. What I'm going to do instead is I will share with you the three most prominent, the three most well-known and most frequently taught interpretations of these verses, and then I'll show you the one that I think is correct.

And I'm giving you that I think because I want to approach this passage with an appropriate level of humility. The great reformer, Martin Luther, not Martin Luther King, but Martin Luther from the 16th century, the great Protestant reformer, when he commented on this passage, he described it as a strange passage.

He said that it contained some obscure things, and that even after having studied it, he wasn't quite sure what the Apostle Peter was trying to say in these couple of verses here.

[8 : 46] So if he's not sure, I want to approach it with an appropriate level of humility, but I also want to come to you and say, I do think that I have what may be the right understanding of the passage.

So let me give you the three primary main interpretations, and I'll show you which one I think is right. First of all, there have been a number of theologians going all the way back to St. Augustine a long, long time ago who have taught that what Peter is saying is that Jesus preached through Noah.

So it's not actually Jesus preaching, it's Jesus preaching through Noah to the people who lived in the time of Noah. Because all of this is tied into the story of Noah.

And in fact, the next difficult part of this passage where it deals with baptism is also tied to the story of Noah. Peter chooses to use the story of Noah from Genesis 6 through 9 to illustrate his point about what Christ has accomplished in his death and resurrection.

Now that's not completely random. It's not as if Peter thought, huh, let me choose an Old Testament illustration that will really complicate things here and make it difficult for everybody for the next 2,000 years to figure out what I'm talking about.

[10:05] It's not at all what he did. In fact, he chose the story of Noah because the people to whom he was writing lived in a part of the world in which the story of Noah was very highly celebrated even among the Gentiles, the non-Jews.

They're in a region known as Asia Minor, which today we call Turkey. And in that region, the story of Noah was the favorite story from the Bible. In fact, there were three or four various flood stories that had been passed around in this area throughout the centuries before the Jews actually arrived there sometime in the mid-3rd century B.C.

And when the Jews arrived there, they noticed they've got flood stories, which of course, as those who believe the Bible is true, would say, well, of course. Every civilization has a flood story because every civilization is descended from Noah and his children.

So that's not surprising at all. But as the Jews arrived and they began to mix and mingle with the Gentiles and share and teach and things, the story of Noah stood out as something that they connected to.

In fact, so prominent were these flood stories that there was a particular town in this region that was actually named by the Greek word for the word ark.

[11:21] And we can see about 200 years after Peter wrote this letter, there have been discovered coins, Roman coins, that on one side bear the image of Caesar and on the other side bear an image of Noah and an inscription about Noah.

An inscription about Noah. So this story figured very prominently in the minds of the people. That's why Peter chooses it to illustrate his point.

And so being situated within the story of Noah, it's noted by many theologians, Augustine and many after him, that Noah is called in the Bible a preacher of righteousness.

So he was indeed a preacher. And we know from the Genesis story that he was preaching throughout the entire 120 years in which he was constructing the ark, calling people to repentance.

And then not only that, but if you'll turn back in 1 Peter, I'm not sure if you recall this, but if you'll turn back to chapter 1, we read this in chapter 1, verses 10, 11.

[12:24] It says that concerning this salvation, our salvation that we have today, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

So Peter tells us here in chapter 1 that the Spirit of Christ was indeed preaching through the prophets of the Old Testament. So it's not a great leap to come to chapter 3 and think, huh, maybe this preaching of Christ in the Spirit, or you can translate it by the Spirit, is a preaching of Jesus through Noah who is a prophet to the people who lived during his day.

In which case, the when question is solved. It happened during the time of Noah. And the who are the spirits question is answered by saying, well, these spirits are the people who lived during the time of Noah and then perished in the flood.

So that's the interpretation number one. Interpretation number two says that Jesus, in between his death and resurrection, went and preached to, and there are a number of variations upon this, some would say he went and preached to the spirits of the people who died during the time of Noah's flood.

Some would say that he went and preached to the spirits of all the Old Testament saints proclaiming that he had finally won the redemption that was rightfully theirs through faith in him. But the main point is that, according to interpretation number two, this preaching occurs, the when question is answered, between his death and resurrection.

[14:07] So that in the Spirit is thought to be Christ in spiritual form apart from his body. In the Spirit went and proclaimed or preached the gospel to other spirits, people who had previously died.

That's interpretation number two. And that is largely based upon a verse that we find down in chapter four, where we read in verse six, this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead.

A reference to the gospel being preached to those who are dead. Now we'll cover that verse next week and I'll show you what I think that it means. I don't think it actually means what those who advocate this position think that it means, but we'll get to that next week.

The third view, which actually sounds like the most fantastical view, is the one that I actually think is on the right track and is correct. The third view is this, that Christ, by his resurrection, has proclaimed victory over the evil spirits, and in particular, over the evil spirits who in Genesis chapter six, we are told came down and married women and had children with those women.

Now that sounds very strange to those of you who may not have spent a good deal of time studying Genesis chapter six. So let me just pause here and let's go to Genesis chapter six so that I can show you exactly what I'm talking about here.

[15:43] In Genesis chapter six, in verse one, we read this, when man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were attractive and they took as their wives any they chose.

Then the Lord said, my spirit shall not abide in man forever for he is flesh, his days shall be 120 years. And it goes on to describe God's judgment upon the world in the flood. So here in Genesis chapter six, we have this very strange statement about the sons of God coming down and intermarrying with the daughters of men.

Now what makes this issue complicated is that not only is first Peter chapter three difficult and not only have there been a number of interpretations of first Peter chapter three, but there have been a number of competing interpretations of Genesis chapter six.

So that I know I'm going out on a little bit of a limb here because I don't have an hour to get into Genesis chapter six with you right now and I have to tell you that just explain to you my understanding of this passage and then move back to first Peter chapter three.

I understand this passage to be describing fallen angels who have, who came down and somehow subsumed human male bodies and then intermarried with women.

[17:02] And the reason that I take that interpretation, there are a lot of reasons. If I just limit myself to the Old Testament, one of the main reasons that I take that interpretation is because consistently throughout the Old Testament, the term sons of God, particularly in the plural, consistently throughout the Old Testament, it refers to angelic beings.

So for instance, we see this in Job chapters one and two, where the sons of God who are clearly angelic beings are coming into the throne room of God and presenting himself there and there are conversations that are taking place there between Satan, between these angelic beings and between God himself.

So I think sons of God does refer to some sort of angelic being and I think that what Moses, the writer of Genesis, is telling us here is that these angels left heaven, fell, came and intermarried with these women and that was, that was one factor, not the main factor, the main factor was the wickedness of humanity, but that was one factor leading to God's judgment upon the world.

Now, back to 1 Peter chapter 3. Alright? Are you guys still with me? This is a little, it's a little bit more detailed of a sermon than you got last week. I recognize that. We're going to dive back into 1 Peter chapter 3 and let me give you my reasons for thinking that choice number 3 is correct.

Number one reason is because I don't think the events that are taking place here occur between Christ's death and resurrection. I believe that the preaching of Christ here occurs after his resurrection and I'll show you why.

[18:34] We are told in verse 18 that Jesus was put to death in the flesh but made alive in the Spirit. Put to death in the flesh but made alive in the Spirit.

The real question becomes what does this phrase made alive in the Spirit or made alive by the Spirit, what exactly does that mean? And when you do a search to figure out how is this particular word translated made alive, how is it used throughout the New Testament, overwhelmingly it is used to describe resurrection.

It is not used to describe spiritual life in between death and resurrection. It is used to refer to a kind of spiritual life that we obtain through faith in Christ on a couple of occasions but overwhelmingly it is used to describe resurrection life.

And I'll just show you two examples. Just hold your place there and I want you to turn back to John chapter 5. I'll just show you two examples, one from the Gospels, one from one of Paul's writings. In John chapter 5 verse 21 it says this, For as the Father raises the dead, there's resurrection, okay, normal word for resurrection.

For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life. That's the same verb that we're looking at here in 1 Peter chapter 3. And it's clear there. Gives them life is the same thing as resurrection.

[20 : 04] As the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son, here it is again, gives life. That is, through Christ, resurrection life comes. So here in John chapter 5 verse 21, it's obvious that to be given life or to receive life, this particular word refers to resurrection.

One other place I'll show you. Romans chapter 8. Romans chapter 8 verse 11 we are told, If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, so we've got a resurrection context here.

If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, then He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also, here it is, give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. That's obviously about resurrection. If Christ has been raised, then we will also be raised and given life. We will be given resurrection life by the power of the Holy Spirit.

And those are just two verses. If you look in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, you'll see three or four instances in which this same word is used to describe resurrection life. And so, one of the reasons that I reject view number two is because this preaching that Christ does does not occur between death and resurrection.

[21 : 30] It occurs after resurrection. Let me read this and give a little bit of interpretation as I read it here and you'll see what I mean. Okay? For Christ, being put to death in the flesh, but resurrected in or by the Spirit, in which He went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison or by which.

So, this preaching occurs in or by the same Spirit in which or by which He has been raised from the dead now. So, we have a resurrected, glorified Christ who is now going and preaching or proclaiming to imprisoned spirits.

Which means that this can't be a preaching of Christ that occurs between death and resurrection. So, that rules out interpretation number two. But, is this the resurrected power of Christ somehow preaching through Noah?

Is that what's happening here? I don't think so. And the reason that I don't think so is because I don't think that the preaching that occurs here is preaching that is done towards human beings. The reason for that is fairly simple. We are told that He went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison. Mark that down. It's to the spirits. Now, in all the times in the New Testament that we run across the word spirits in the plural, in all of those instances there's only one clear reference to human spirits.

[23 : 00] Every other reference is either vague or is a clear reference to demonic beings. Every time. And I'll give you a couple of examples of that.

Turn over to Matthew. Matthew chapter 8. In Matthew chapter 8 we read this in verse 16. That evening Jesus has been healing people.

That evening they brought to Him many who were oppressed by demons and He cast out the spirits. There's the same word. They are demons. They brought to Him many with demons.

He cast out the spirits and He healed all who were sick. Then if you turn over to Mark chapter 1 we see the same word used. Jesus again has been healing, casting out demons.

And then in verse 27 of Mark chapter 1 it says, They were all amazed so that they questioned among themselves saying, What is this? A new teaching with authority? He commands even the unclean spirits.

[24 : 00] There it is. And they obey Him. So this word spirits consistently refers to demonic beings in the New Testament.

So that when we come to 1 Peter chapter 3 I am inclined to think that what Peter is saying here is that after the resurrection Christ has come and made a proclamation to demonic beings in prison. Which demonic beings in prison? Where do we find any demonic beings in this age? Obviously after the judgment they will be thrown into the lake of fire.

And we could legitimately say they're in a kind of prison. But where do we find demonic beings in prison in this age? What we find is that those demons in Genesis chapter 6 those angels who fell and intermarried with women have since that time been locked away imprisoned by God.

I'll show it to you once in one of Peter's writings and then in another place. 2 Peter. So you only have to turn one page this time. Apologize for making you turn everywhere this morning. We usually just stick in one spot. 2 Peter chapter 2 verse 4 So this is not judgment time.

[25 : 30] There are some angels who sinned whom God imprisoned to be held in prison until judgment day. And then notice what verse 5 says.

Verse 5 moves into the story of Noah. Noah. If he did not spare the ancient world but preserved Noah. So there's good reason for thinking here these angels who sinned are the angels of Genesis chapter 6.

There's even better reason for thinking that if you turn over a few pages to the book of Jude. It's just one chapter long. It's right before Revelation. And in the book of Jude we read something very similar.

In fact, I think that Peter is probably borrowing Jude's language. Jude verse 6 The angels who did not stay within their own position of authority but left their proper dwelling he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day.

Now one of the things that you've got to be aware of as you read these verses in Jude and in 2 Peter is that the normal standard Jewish interpretation of Genesis chapter 6 that you can find in many Jewish writings that were written between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

[26 : 47] The standard understanding of the story of Genesis chapter 6 is that these were angels who intermarried with women and God therefore judged them and indeed locked them up in a prison.

That was a standard Jewish interpretation. You can find it for instance in a book written between the Old and New Testament called First Enoch. You can find a very detailed story.

Now I don't think that Jude or Peter are endorsing everything in those writings that we call the intertestamental writings or apocryphal writings. I don't think the apostles are saying that everything that those writers said was right.

But in referencing and referring back and using the same language that they used to describe Genesis chapter 6 I think that Peter and Jude are telling us that on this point this interpretation of Genesis chapter 6 these beings sons of God being angels that they are correct.

So we come to 1 Peter chapter 3 and there's a mention of spirits in prison at the time of Noah. If you've interpreted Genesis chapter 6 the way that I have if you know the background and the prominent Jewish interpretation of those passages and how Peter and Jude referenced that interpretation in their other writings then it's not a stretch and it's no longer fantastical or strange to read this verse and say he's talking about those angels who rebelled in Genesis chapter 6 and now Jesus after his resurrection has gone and he has proclaimed the victory that he has won over them and all other demonic beings and that all other demonic beings is exactly what we find happening after the resurrection in verse 22 is all angels authorities and powers now after the resurrection have been subjected to him that's how I understand these very strange difficult couple of verses now let's move back away from that sort of academic discussion of how you interpret this passage and let's ask a really simple question who cares what does how does that matter to you and your life because you may be thinking right now

[29 : 09] I could have I could have gone without all this explanation and my life would have been the same afterwards as it was before I came here this morning so who cares if even Martin Luther is not sure then who cares let me tell you why this matters for you I want to remind you first of all of the broader context of this passage I told you this at the end of last week's sermon the broader context is in the midst of Christian suffering our suffering our pain we read in verse 17 it is better to suffer for doing good if that should be God's will than for doing evil we read in chapter 4 verse 1 the next verse after our passage 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 he's talking about our suffering so the context of this entire passage it's bookended verse 17 is about suffering chapter 4 verse 1 is about suffering the context of all of this is he's encouraging us to endure through suffering and he encourages us by saying

Christ also suffered don't think that your suffering is meaningless Christ also suffered and you know what God did as a consequence of that suffering he raised him up and he gave him victory over all demonic powers now you Christian participate in Christ's sufferings follow in his footsteps lay down your life for his sake and if you're rejected by friends or family if you are mocked even if it costs you your life as it cost Christ his do not abandon the faith stay faithful to Christ and the victory that he

has won will be yours this matters because when you feel oppressed when you feel like you're being pressed down by the world you must hang on to and believe that it is through suffering that God has won victory and through your suffering the victory of Christ will be expressed in your life this matters because you and I suffer

Jesus said if they persecute me they will persecute you it is through many trials we are told that we enter the kingdom of heaven we will suffer and in suffering we can be encouraged to know God provides victory through suffering he did it through Christ over all the demonic hosts and he will do it in our lives as well so it matters because you suffer but it also matters because much of our suffering comes at the hands of Satan and the demonic hosts the apostle Peter tells us that Satan is like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour now whether or not you and I are aware of it on a daily basis whether or not we are sensitive to spiritual realities in the world around us the truth is that we are surrounded by spiritual powers now I'm not convinced that there are demons of this sort of addiction and demons of that sort of thing and demons of this sin and demons of that sin I'm not convinced from the Bible that we can name every demon and do all those sorts of things but I am convinced from the Bible that we are in a war against real spiritual forces and if we're not aware of that we're in for trouble but more so if we're not aware that the victory has already been won through the death and resurrection of Jesus we will lose hope when they come against us do not lose hope even in the face of the greatest spiritual opposition imaginable because in the midst of that Christ won a great victory and that victory can be yours if you cling to these truths that's the first difficult passage in this paragraph let's move on in the story of Noah and see if we can handle the second one before you all fall asleep on me alright verse 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 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 here is the question that we must answer what does Peter mean when he says in verse 21 baptism now saves you what does he mean by that does he in fact mean that the that the rite of baptism going into the water and coming up out of the water does he mean that that very act in and of itself saves you because if you take this phrase and ignore the rest of the context that is exactly what it sounds like Peter is saying but I do not think that's what Peter is saying and I don't say that I don't think that's what Peter is saying because it doesn't fit with my theology as a Baptist it's irrelevant what my theology as a Baptist is when I come to the scriptures it's shaped it's molded it's broken it's reformed according to the scriptures so it's not because of that but it's because of the way that Peter words things here [34 : 53] I want you to take a look closely at what he says he's drawing a correspondence there's a similarity here and he actually uses the word that's translated in the SV as corresponds it's literally the word antitype baptism which is an antitype or baptism which is like this corresponds to this to what to what is baptism similar what does baptism correspond to in this passage in this passage baptism corresponds to the waters of the flood all right because we're dealing with water is a neuter verb and the word this is in the neuter that's a little grammar for you it doesn't matter just letting you know this refers back to the water so we're dealing with water here he says baptism corresponds to the waters of the flood which makes sense because we have water in baptism so it makes perfect sense here baptism corresponds to the waters of the flood so now we must ask ourselves a question in what way did the waters of the flood save

Noah and his family because in reality the waters of the flood were not primarily a means of salvation they were a means of judgment upon the world it was in fact the ark itself which delivered Noah and his family from the flood that's what delivered them not the waters you can take a stretch which I've seen some commentators do and say well but the waters lifted up the ark and in that sense the water saved them from what I mean were there ravenous beasts attacking the ark and the waters lifted it up out of their way how does lifting the ark save anyone it doesn't the ark itself was the means of deliverance of salvation for Noah and his family not the water so why does Peter say that baptism like water corresponds to this and it saves you like the water did what does he mean by that I think that the connection that he's drawing is a salvation in the midst of or you might say a salvation through judgment I think that's the point that he's making here that we see in baptism a picture of salvation through judgment just as we saw in the waters of the flood a picture of salvation through judgment

God saves his people in the midst of through the judgment of the flood and now today God saves us and the greatest picture we have of salvation through judgment is baptism what exactly are we picturing!

in! we are picturing our dying with Christ as we go down into the water and our rising again with him in resurrection life that's what the apostle Paul says in Romans chapter 6 you can turn there if you want you don't have to but in Romans chapter 6 we read this what shall we say then are we to continue in sin that grace may abound by no means how can we who died to sin still live in it do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death we were buried therefore with him by baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father we too might walk in newness of life so baptism serves for us as a as a brilliant image of dying with Christ and then rising again what happened to Christ as he died upon the cross the judgment and wrath of

God due to us he suffered for our sins it was the righteous for the unrighteous remember the wrath of God due to us for our sins God's judgment fell upon his son upon the cross so in his death Christ is passing!

[38 : 38] judgment we are by faith united to Christ and we pass safely in Christ just as Noah and his family pass safely in the ark we pass safely through God's judgment because he takes it all upon himself I keep saying this is a picture but that's not what Peter says precisely he says baptism saves you I keep saying it's a picture because what he says right after that notice what he says he clarifies so that we don't misunderstand and begin to think that the right of baptism itself is salvific he says baptism which corresponds to this now saves you here's the qualification not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience not in other words the actual physical right of going down in the water and coming up not just washing your body not that's not what saves you baptism only in so far as it is an appeal to

God for a good conscience saves you so what he means here is that what's actually saving is the appeal to God for a good conscience the calling the calling out to God to cleanse your sins and remove your guilt to give you a clean clear conscience that calling out to him that faith is what actually saves and baptism is a beautiful picture of that kind of faith so the baptism I would say is in fact the normal or regular means by which we express our faith in Christ it is a normal way in which we as new believers call out to God for a clean conscience it is a normal way normal means it is not however the necessary means by which we call out to

God in faith I'm going to explain what I mean by that but let me say it to you again unpack it baptism is the normal means by which a new!!! Here's what I mean by that baptism is a picture of our dying and rising with Christ is a visible way in which we express to God and to the church I am trusting in Jesus right now to wash away my sins that's what it is alright appeal to God for good conscience and it is normative we are commanded Matthew chapter 28 to go and make disciples baptizing them it's normative it's the normal way in which we do things but it's not necessary it's not necessary in the sense of if something were to prevent you from being baptized even though you've trusted in Christ you would be lost forever it's not necessary and I say that because we have for instance the thief on the cross who cries out in faith to Christ to deliver him and to rescue him to which Jesus responds this day you will be with me in paradise not well if you somehow make it down and get baptized and you'll be with me in paradise no

I have no doubt that had the thief on the cross not been on the cross then Jesus would have called him to repent and be baptized as John the Baptist often did alright as Jesus' disciples were baptized by John I have no doubt in that but in this instance in which that's not possible Jesus simply says you've called out to me you've trusted in me this day when you die here in a little while you'll be with me in paradise it's not necessary it's just normal another example the apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians he says that I'm glad he tells the Corinthians I'm glad that I didn't baptize anyone in the church in Corinth except for the household of Stephanas that is so Paul the great evangelist the great missionary Paul didn't make it a normal part of his preaching to baptize those who responded right after they responded apparently not he left that to be done by the church later on and you begin to say why would Paul do that it wasn't because Paul was in a hurry because he stayed in many towns for two or three or even four years establishing the church he apparently saw baptism not as necessary to the evangelistic task that he was given and he could leave that to other leaders in the church and yet he expresses full confidence that those to whom he proclaimed the gospel are indeed in Christ and are saved so baptism while normal that's why Paul can use it as a picture of

everyone's conversion in Romans 6 it's normal it's the way in which we should initially express our faith in Christ it isn't it isn't necessary and I think that's exactly what Peter means when he says not just not just going down in the water not just the removing of dirt from the flesh but in so far as it is an appeal to God in so far as it is an expression of your newfound faith in Christ like Noah and his family you're saved through that now once again

I'm going to ask the question so what is getting this right matter well it matters obviously for a theological reason because you're going to come across those who say that you're not saved unless you're baptized and they'll point to this verse as proof of that so in theological debate it matters but it matters more than just in theological debate it matters once again because of the context you notice how Peter words this he says that in the flood there are just a few that is eight people eight people out of the entire world were saved in Noah's day that's astronomical because it's not like there were just a handful of people living upon the face of the earth then there were probably millions of people living in the world by then millions of people and eight eight are saved just a few just a little bit are saved we face the same sort of situation because in reality the path is wide and it's an easy one to walk to destruction but the way is narrow it's difficult it leads to life and there are few that find it the truth of the matter is we are greatly greatly outnumbered in the world greatly outnumbered and that at times can be almost overwhelming particularly when you live in a culture that is defined by pragmatism in other words what works is best and what works is usually what everybody seems to have a consensus about and everybody doesn't have a consensus about Christianity you ever stop to think that what we believe really does sound ridiculous to the world [46 : 04] I mean we believe that God was born of a virgin in a little town called Bethlehem we believe that he died and then came back to life and not only came back to life but then he ascended into heaven in the clouds and someday he's going to come back on the clouds that's fantastical sounds ridiculous to the world and yet those truths are the foundation of our faith only a few only a few in the big picture get this believe this or say only a few it doesn't seem like that because we don't experience what is normative throughout the world we don't even here in the 21st century when our nation our society has become incredibly secular we still do not experience what is true throughout most of history and most of the world when you have as you're sampling about 5% of history the last 250 or so years of the

American experiment when you have 5% of history 5% of the world's population throughout history and you're only looking at those that little small select group you might think this is normal it's normal for a lot of people to be Christians around me imagine if you lived during the age of the Puritans when almost everybody was a believer around you here in America and you might think that that was normal and we might think that the percentages that we're faced with today are normal but if you get outside of the last 200 years if you get outside of this little enclave of America and of the south and of evangelical American Christianity what you will find is we are a few we are very very small which is why in other countries Christians can be hacked to death with no repercussions because it's just a few of them and nobody notices so why other churches can be burned no repercussions the truth is only a few are saved but if you are among the few if you are among the few no matter what they do to you no matter how our world might change no matter how our culture might change no matter what might happen in the days ahead if you are among the few you are safe and secure because your sins have been washed away and the victory has been given to you through

Christ I call you to rejoice in that let's pray it's a tough passage but there's such glorious stuff in it father that if we bypassed it because it were difficult I think that we would be the poorer for it and I pray that we would never approach your word and skip over the hard parts go to the parts that we like but that we be diligent students because in even the hard parts such sweetness for us and I give you thanks that we can come in full confidence by faith in your son that our sins are washed away penalty is paid and we are righteous in your sight and we come to sing songs of thanksgiving because we have real everlasting life promised to us through the resurrection of Jesus thank you for that we now receive our offerings and our songs of praise
I pray in Christ's name amen