

# SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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Between Two Worlds

PART

13

TITLE

Sharing Hope While Suffering Harm

SCRIPTURE

1 Peter 3:13-22



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Well, Providence family, it's good to see you. If you have a Bible, if you'd turn with me to first Peter chapter 3. And if you are a guest with us, we're glad that you're here. And we're in a series through first Peter where we're just going verse by verse and we happen to be up to verse 13 in chapter 3. And so that's what we're going to do here today. It is a special weekend and I think it's fitting for us to feel and to, let me say it this way, to be a couple of things today.

I think first of all, it's really fitting for us to be thankful. We enjoy freedoms and opportunities in this amazing country. It's a broken country, we all know that, but it is an amazing place to live. And people who complain about having to live here, the majority of them, as I've noticed, they've never lived in other places to know that this is actually an absolute blessing to be able to live here. It's not paradise, it's not heaven.

There's broken things all over the place but there are blessings. And one of those blessings is freedom. Freedom to gather, to worship and to sing and open up his word. There's people around the world who cannot do what we're doing right now. And we should be thankful and we should be thankful for the people who have sacrificed enormous amounts, including their own life to be able to provide these freedoms and to keep these freedoms for us.

I also believe it's fitting for us today to be sober-minded. And the reason it's fitting for us to be sober-minded, to be serious about our day and to recognize what's happening in our day is the Bible says that we reap what we sow. There's a law of the harvest that God has placed over humanity, over human experience. It's true in relationships, it's true in families, it's true in churches and cultures. And that is that when you plant seeds, seeds of different things, whether it's trust or whether it's godliness, when you plant something, that there is a corresponding harvest that comes out of the ground, that comes out of that friendship, that comes out of that marriage, it comes out of that church, it comes out of that country.

Well, you plant things in the ground and there's a harvest and godlessness and lawlessness and self-determination, meaning I'm a law unto myself, have been planted like seeds and are being planted like seeds into the most fertile soils of our culture. These seeds are being planted in school systems. They're planted in our media. They're planted in technology, they're planted in the arts, the marketplace, they're planted in public policy, they're even planted in churches where people are teaching and absorbing a gospel that's no gospel at all.

And what we need to understand is that these seeds, there's a corresponding harvest. You teach people young people they come from animals for 20 years, we shouldn't be surprised when they behave like animals. There's a corresponding harvest. You plant impurity, you get impurity, you plant godlessness, you get ungodliness. And as such, because our culture has planted and is planting so many seeds in this direction is that America is becoming more a place that's hostile to Christianity, hostile to the exclusive claims of Jesus, hostile to the morality that's taught within the scriptures, hostile to the teaching from Jesus himself about all manner of life, finances and sexuality and relationships and marriage.

And everything else under the sun, there's hostility to it and the question is, how do we respond? And Peter seeks to give an answer to people who are living in a culture that's hostile to the gospel much more so than where we find ourselves today. One of the hopes that I have about our country and about our world is that God's power that can be poured out in a spiritual renewal and revival can actually overcome seeds of godlessness and lawlessness. He can simply meet people on a road and turn their rebellion into worship in an instant. He has the power to do that. And so that's why we should pray to him even before we read how we're supposed to live.

So if you would, let's bow, let's pray. Father in heaven, we come before you in faith thanking you for the privilege to live in this country, thanking you for the freedoms that we enjoy and thanking you for inclining the hearts of so many people, men and women, families to be able to make tremendous sacrifices over many, many, many years that we will be able to have and enjoy and keep the freedoms that we currently have. We're thankful. And we confess to you that not only do we know that we live in a culture that's hostile to Christianity, but we confess in the way that we've lived our life, we've contributed to that culture, our own sinfulness, our own rebellion before Christ and even after.

Lord, the insincerity, the coldness, the apathy that sometimes surrounds our worship and our repentance and our obedience. It contributes to the chaos all around. We confess to you and we ask that you would forgive us and we ask that you would forgive our land. We ask God that you would be merciful to America, that you would bring a spiritual renewal. Would you rip out the seeds of godlessness and would you plant seeds of the gospel, of truth, justice and righteousness and peace and the Holy Spirit?

We ask God that you now would speak through weakness, that you would demonstrate the power of the spirit to be able to use words that were written long ago, the scriptures to be able to invade and change our mind. We give you our life and we give you this moment and ask that you would be gracious to us, help us to learn and change wherever you see fit. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

Starting in verse 13, Peter writes that who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ, the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for the reason for the hope that is in you yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience so that when you're slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

For it is better to suffer for doing good if that should be God's will than for doing evil 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.

The 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. Now, Peter is writing Christians. He tells us in verse 6 of chapter 1, that these Christians were experiencing a variety, they're grieved by various trials.

When you get to verse 12 of chapter 2, he tells us, he sort of defines what those trials are. They're not just financial trials, they're not just marital trials, they're persecution kinds of trials. He says, "Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable so that when they speak against you as evildoers, that's their trials." Unbelievers who do not understand Christ and who do to understand anyone who would put their faith in Christ, they look at their life and they say, "You are a practicer of evil, even though you happen to be somebody that's agreeing with God about what is good."

He says, "I want you to live in such a way that they would see your good deeds and glorify God." In other words, Peter's aim, the context is persecution and his aim is this, is that those people who now mock Christ would one day worship Christ. And because those people who are hostile to Christianity who are mocking Christ right now are reading your life and my life more than they're ever going to read a Bible. He says, "You have a calling."

He describes this calling in chapter 2 verse 21. There he says these words, "To this you were called because Christ also suffered for you leaving you an example so that you might follow in his steps. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly." Notice what he says, if you are in Christ, if you're a Christian, you have been called to do something, and that is to follow Jesus' example of how he suffered. Why? Because when we imitate the way Jesus responded to harm, people would be able to see Jesus.

And then it describes how he responded. He says this, Jesus, when he was reviled, he did not revile in return. Instead, what he did was he continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. You see, for people who didn't understand that Jesus had a relationship with his father, right? God, the father, it appeared in time and space just like it does to you, that it's simply two people in the room. People would revile Jesus and then he wouldn't respond with that same reviling back to them and they couldn't understand.

They didn't understand that Jesus saw a third set of eyes in the room, that there was another person in the room, that there was a judge who was going to judge justly. And as a result, instead of him being the judge and jury himself, he was able not to retaliate, not to revile in return. So you see what our calling is. He says our calling is that when we are threatened, when people don't understand us, when they're unsympathetic to the gospel, when they revile us, is that we would remember that there's another set of eyes in the room who rewards faith, who we care deeply about what he sees and what he thinks and what he hears out of us.

This is our calling that they would see Jesus. He reinforces this in chapter 3, verse 9. There he says, “Look, do not repay for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless for to this you were called.” And then we get to our passage. If you notice, from verse 13 to verse 15, he tells us to do several things. There’s lots of things you’re supposed to do. And then he includes a purpose statement. He says, “So that.” In other words, there’s an aim.

There’s a goal that he has in mind of why we’re going to do the things that he wants us to do. And he goes, “And this is the reason, this is my hope in writing this and that you’re going to obey it.” He says, “So that when you are slandered, those who revile,” he keeps using the word revile. Those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. Now let’s be careful. He’s not saying, “Walk around and live in such a way that everyone feels shame.”

He’s not saying, “Go around shaming people,” that’s not what he’s saying. He’s saying that we’re going to live with such honorable lives that even though people don’t understand us and they revile us and they mistreat us, that we’re going to respond in such a way that we’re hoping that they’re going to see our good deeds and they’re going to glorify Jesus and on the day that they glorify Jesus and they trust Jesus, suddenly they’re going to think to themselves something similar to what we thought, our self and that was, “Now that I see, I am so ashamed of my previous way of life. I’m so ashamed of my previous worldview that was so godless. I’m so ashamed of how unprepared I was to face eternity. And I’m so ashamed at what I said about Christians for now I see.”

You see, this is what he wants. He wants people to trust Christ, to see him and how are they going to see him? If they’re not reading their Bibles, they’re going to read you and me. So the question that Peter answers is how do we, as Christians help people see? And it gives us just a few things to do. First, Christ tells us to redirect our fear. Fear is part of life. You’re going to be afraid while you live on this earth. It’s not a matter of if we fear, it’s a matter of who we fear.

And what Peter does is he sets up two possibilities. It says, if you happen to be in a room and someone’s reviling you, you can have a primary fear of that person. Unless you remember that there’s another person in the room that they can’t see who’s even more powerful than them. And when you fear them over man, over what man can do to admire you or to attack you and you say, “I fear Christ even more so.” But we have to redirect our fears. And this is why when he gets to verse 13 and he asks them a question, he goes, “Now, let me ask you a question, who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?”

The answer is a bunch of people, that’s who. It’s a matter of three years from the time that he finished writing first Peter, he’s hanging on a cross upside down, crucified for his faith. Those people can do you harm. And the readers who are scattered around the whole Roman empire, who are being persecuted for the faith, those people can do you harm because they are doing you harm. What he’s saying to them is this, can they do harm to the most important thing? Can they do harm to the truest thing about you and your future?

We should ask the question, why do they harm, why do they ridicule? Why do human beings do this? There's a story, Jesus, he's teaching about money. He's teaching about how money, you can't hold onto it. And here on the earth, if we just build and build and build, it eventually rusts or it rots or things happen. And so he's talking about living a generous life for the kingdom and then he gets to the end of his little message, and this is what he says in Luke chapter 16, verse 14, "You cannot serve God and money."

You can't have two gods. You got to have one, pick one. One allegiance, one affinity, one affection. But then it says the Pharisees and then just notice Luke, by the way, they happen to be lovers of money. It says they heard these things and they began to ridicule him, to revile him. So this is the ingredients of why people would do harm to people who are zealous for what is good.

First, there's a love. It's a misplaced love, it's money instead of God, it's impurity instead of God, it's self-determination instead of God, it's something other than the one true living God that they worship. And they say, "This is what I love," it's a misplaced love. And then because a misplaced love happens to be what the Bible calls an idol and idols, they don't have arms, they're not strong. And so what that means is they need a protector and defender that God does not need.

When you love something that's not worthy of your love and someone speaks against them, well, then you have to defend. So when it comes to Christianity and the gospel, when people look at Jesus Christ and they don't love him, they don't love the gospel, they love something else, and suddenly our life is lived. And sometimes they even hear from us a statement that crosses their misplaced love they feel like they have to run and defend.

In other words, if you happen to be or if we happen to be as a church family, zealous for purity, then our very life will be a statement against those who have fallen in love with impurity. If we as the church family happen to be zealous, in love for the Bible, then our very life will be a statement against people who have fallen in love with the idol of self-determination. I'm a law unto myself. And if we have fallen in love and become zealous for Christ, then our very life will be a statement against people who do not see Christ as consequential.

And Peter's saying whether your zeal for good is admired by the world, you build a hospital and they give you a plaque or your life is a statement about something that they love that they should not love. He says, "I want to encourage you to remember that we have a higher king to revere than public opinion. And so he says in verse 15, "Have no fear of them nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy." I just love Peter because Peter, he lived the rest of his life after making a tragic mistake, a mistake that was motivated by misplaced love.

There was a night when Peter said, "You're going to deny me," and Peter says, "No way I'm going to deny you." And he goes out that night and suddenly a love to stay alive, a love for public opinion became more powerful than allegiance to Jesus Christ. In three times in one night, he denies him. So Peter is a great person to learn

from when it comes to redirecting our fears because he knows all about fear is being in the wrong place.

I think that's why he had such an affinity with a man named Isaiah in the old testament. In fact, Isaiah chapter 8, what you find is Israel is kind of packed in the wall and they're looking out, there's a foreign army that's about to come out and attack Israel. And everyone's afraid, including Isaiah. Isaiah, you can just see him he's on the wall, he's like, "Oh my gosh." And his heart is beating and he's so terrified. And he looks to the right and the left and it happens to be people, Israelites just with him and they're also terrified as well.

And God comes through and he goes, "Wait a minute, Isaiah, you're my prophet. You're the one who's supposed to have regard for me. They don't regard me. They ignore me. They don't see that I'm consequential in any way and yet you in this moment are behaving just like them. You're not being distinct at all." So God comes to Isaiah in that moment, this is what he says. Notice the similarity between Isaiah 8 and first Peter, "Do not fear what they fear, do not have fear of that."

But the Lord of hosts, he takes out Lord of hosts and he simply puts Christ the Lord because he is the Lord of hosts. Him you show honor as holy, in your hearts honor Christ as holy. Let him be your fear and he will become your sanctuary. What that means is this, is if you have a right fear of God, you know your fear of God is rightly placed because you run to him instead of away from him. And when you run to God because you have a right fear, you find him to be a sanctuary. And when you're in that sanctuary, the fear of man becomes very small.

And so let me encourage us. First application, let's settle the issue of who is Lord of our life. Every one of us has somebody that's motivating us to make our decisions. There's someone who's contributing to how we're living, who's calling shots, who's motivating their evaluation, their pleasure, their threat, whoever they are that's out there, they're motivating how we live our life, whoever that is in that moment, they are a Lord. It can be people that we want them to admire us.

In other words, I can look at you and I say, "I really want you to admire me." And therefore your approval of me becomes the Lord over my life. I have to behave in such a way. I need your approval so much and so some of us, we struggle with the Lordship of Christ not because we feel the fear that someone's going to hurt us, but because we fear losing their admiration. Some people are afraid of people that would attack us, persecute us and say, "You know what? I don't want that person to be against me because that would be uncomfortable. They're going to revile me, ridicule me, embarrass me, shame me, imprison me." Now suddenly that fear becomes a Lord over our life, motivating our decisions.

The other possibility is Christ himself who created us, who sustains us, who died for us, who rose for us, who forgives us, who seals us, who gives us eternal life, who's going to bring us to heaven. And this Jesus Christ stood on this earth and in Matthew 10, he says, "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul, rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell." "You should be afraid of someone on this earth

and make sure,” Peter says, “it’s the right one.”

What I know about scripture and what I know about God is this, is that Christ has no desire to be an addition to our team of advisors. And whoever your advisor, counselor, author is, is good to the extent that they echo the will of Christ over your life. Who is your Lord? You see, the only people who settle this issue that is Jesus Christ can participate in verse 14 and verse 17. Verse 14, he says, “But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed.”

People who surrender to the Lordship of Christ recognize that it is Christ himself who will bless if I make a stand for righteousness and it may not be a blessing here on the earth. 17, for it is better to suffer for doing good if that should be God’s will than for doing evil, recognizing that there’s another set of eyes. And so he tells us to redirect our fears. Now what happens if you redirect your fears where you’re going to live a little different than the rest? That’s where he gets to the next one.

Christ tells us to prepare an answer for our hope. He assumes that by living differently and not reviling people when they revile us, that people are going to look at us and go, “Explain yourself.” Where is the hope that you have that this is going to turn out well if you don’t defend yourself, if you don’t revile in return? And so what does Peter say in verse 15? He says, “Look, set Christ apart as Lord,” and then he says this, “always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for the reason for the hope that is in you.”

Now, I love what he says here. I love this because all of us can do this. Some of us, we have looked at this and they go, “Oh my goodness. I need to have an articulate, intelligent academic defense for the tenets of the Christian faith before I leave this room.” Peter says, “No, you need to have an answer for why you feel hope.” That’s what he’s saying. I’m not saying that and either would he, for us to have reasons for the evidence of our faith, that’s a really good thing and to be able to communicate those in healthy ways, that’s a really good thing.

But what Peter saying here is this. He’s saying when someone comes to you and they say, “You know what? I just don’t get you. I saw what just happened in that room. I saw how you responded. It doesn’t make any sense. You respond to being reviled as if somebody else happens to be in the room with you observing your actions, that you trust. You just behaved in that room as if you believe that there’s blessings that exist beyond what I can see. What am I missing? Where’s your hope?”

Peter says have an answer for that. Do you have an answer for that? I want to encourage us these applications, they’re not like birth in a factory of creativity. Let’s consider why we have hope. Do you have hope? You say, “Yeah, I have hope in Christ.” Why? Why do you have hope? I remember when I was 16 years old after parents who had taught me the gospel and modeled the gospel and loved each other and still do, well, and no excuses in that way.



At 16 years old, I started to read the accounts of Christ in the four gospels of the new testament and I became so overwhelmed at the quality and the winsomeness of his life, how he treated people, how he talked, how he was able to give rational lucid answers to the biggest questions of life, the problem of evil, the intricacy of creation, the origin of life, the origin of my life, the purpose of my life, the destiny of my life, life after death, the purpose of death. Continued to read his stories and I just got to the place to where he says, "I'm going to go to Jerusalem and I'm going to die for your sin."

I had a lot of sin, I still do. And then you keep reading and it says in the third day, just as he promised that he had the authority and the power and he rose from the dead. Do you know the feeling when you go out and you exercise? I know it feels miserable when you're doing it, but then when you get done, you get done and all of a sudden you feel like you feel so healthy, you feel so good that you did it.

I have so much hope because when I spend time with Christ in his word and talking to him, that's how I feel in my heart. That's why I have hope. Why do you have hope? Maybe don't go to bed tonight until you can answer that question. The third thing he tells us to do is to share our hope with care. He says there comes a time maybe that someone's going to ask you about your hope and at that time comes, it's not enough to simply tell them because you can actually tell them in such a way that feels like the reviling that they are giving to you. In other words, you and I can actually respond by giving the reason for our hope. And we can do it in an argumentative, harsh, ungentle, unloving, unkind tone that says, "I win and you lose." Peter says if you do that, you lose. He says if someone ever asks you about your hope, he goes, "This is how you answer them." He says, "Do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience."

Years ago, I went to the hospital to visit two different families. I heard they were both there at the same time, same hospital. And one of them was bringing a baby into the world and one of them was saying goodbye to a baby who was dying. Same hospital, same time, just a few hallways removed, tremendous sorrow in one, tremendous celebration in the other. And I remember going to each of the rooms and it was interesting. There was a family member who was standing just outside the door in each of the two rooms. Not planned, that's just how it happened.

And what I remember so distinctly about that day, this was over 10 years ago. So I remember on that day is that each person standing outside, their tone, their facial expression, their words, they bore witness with credibility and consistency of the reality of what was happening inside the door. In other words, one family didn't station the family at the wrong door. There was consistency, and this is what Peter is telling us.

He's saying when you have the opportunity to bear witness to the hope that you have, he says the reason we need to do it with gentleness and the reason we need to do it with respectability and keeping a good conscience, what he's saying is this, is that there should be symmetry. There should be an alignment between the tone and facial expressions and the seriousness and peril of their situation, the power of grace, the dignity of that person you're talking to.

It demands gentleness, not a victory, demands respectability. We respect them as a human being, we treasure them as a soul. And then we would speak in such a way that when we're done speaking, we go home, that we don't feel the grief of a convicted conscience, but a good conscience. In other words, we don't regret what we said, "Hey, I won the argument," and all of a sudden, God comes to us and he goes, "Well, you may have won the argument, but you just lost them. They'll never want to talk to you again."

And so there's a care in the way that we want to speak to people. You say, "Do I have to speak? Can I just be a good example?" Romans 10 says, faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ. Our testimony attracts them, the words must come out of our mouth for them to be saved. That's how God uses the word, we read this earlier in chapter 1 and chapter 2, the gospel was preached to us that God used to open our heart to cause us to be born again, they have to hear the gospel. And so let's prepare to share our hope.

If you happen to be nervous about this, you're in a big club, right? Sharing the gospel is often one nervous person talking to another nervous person about peace. And so you should think through about some ways like in this culture where people are at, there's a lot of people and they say, "You know what? I'm just going to ask this one question," and they already have. You answered this way, I know I'm already considering you, close minded. And so if you answered this way, you're just going to confirm everything.

So oftentimes here's the question. This is just one example of what we should think about. How would we answer this in a way that would keep the conversation going while being truthful? So they come to you and they say something like this, they say, "Let me just ask you this. You want to talk about hope and Christ, let me ask you this. Do you really believe that everyone who doesn't believe in Jesus Christ is going to go to hell?" Now you say yes in that very moment, you would echo the Bible and you would close down the conversation.

And you can't lie so you can't say, "No, no, I think everybody goes." But is there a way to winsomely, gently, respectfully communicate the truth and yet continue the conversation? I think there is, and this is how you might do it. You say, "That's a great question. I'm going to answer that question, but can I first ask you a question? Do you think anyone has ever lived so bad that they won't go to heaven?" And then I go, "Well yeah, maybe I could see how somebody could live so bad they don't go to heaven." Like who?

Ah, Hitler, he's always popular, that kind of answer. Hitler. Hitler's not in heaven. I'm sure. And say, "Okay." Then you can do this. You can say, "Okay." So you affirm there's a line somewhere, the in and out line, right? You affirm there's a line. So here's my question. Where do you draw that line? Well, no one ever knows because no one can know. And that's where you can say, "Well what's interesting, the Bible says there is a line. You're right, there is a line."

But the Bible describes the line here, holy and everyone else, God is holy. We've all sinned and fallen short of his glory and the wages of sin is death, destruction. You see, now you have opened up the opportunity for you to be able to not only speak about God's line, but now also God's loving provision to send Christ. And so

let me encourage you to consider how to answer questions about your hope in a winsome way that continues the conversation without neglecting the truth.

There's one last thing I need to address and it happens to be the most confusing part, not only at first Peter, but a lot of commentators say the whole new testament. And I'll just reserve a few minutes because I know I wasn't going to be able to answer the question anyway. It's sort of a joke, okay, but you didn't laugh. There is one more thing that Peter knows that we need, and it is a very confusing section. What we need is this, is that Christ tells us to remember his suffering when enduring our own.

What he does in verse 18 to verse 22 is he talks about two really obvious things and then he talks about some things in between that we're not all quite certain as to what he actually means. But that doesn't dilute the reality of what he's saying, it just means that there's some things about what Christ did in life that he didn't give us total clarity about. So he begins, knowing we needed motivation, verse 18, for Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous that he might bring us to God.

When he says the word for, what he means is this. He says the reason then, the authority behind verse 13 to verse 17, the reason that it's so important and the reason it can be done is because this is what Christ did for you. He ran after you when you were not running after him. In fact, you were running from him instead. And he did so in order to bring you to God. Now what flows after this is quite confusing. Let's just read it. This is what he says. He says being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit in which he had 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. Now some of this is not confusing. The first one is not, being put to death in the flesh, Jesus died on a cross. That's what that means. And it says, but he was made alive in the spirit. And the word construction here, it leads people throughout history to be uncertain as to what Peter actually meant by this.

Some people believe that being alive in the spirit means that when Jesus rose from the dead, that his physical body was a little different than before and that it still had holes and he says, "You can touch my body," and people felt the hand and he ate fish and yet he could walk through the wall. All disciples, they're all huddled together behind a locked door and suddenly Jesus appears in the room. He didn't knock on the door, he's in there. It's like, "Oh, how'd you get in here?"

And so some people would go, "Maybe that's what he meant alive in the spirit, meaning when he was alive, his new body, his resurrection body was a spiritual body." Other people believe that what it actually means is that when his body was dead in the grave, his eternal soul and spirit that is eternal, it stayed alive and therefore he went on a three-day preaching mission to hell, to hell, in ADs.

You think, “Well, what in the world was that about?” Well, how’d they get there? Well, the next sentence, 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. Now, Noah was a guy way early in the Bible. And when the world was not walking with God, when godly people were outnumbered enormously, and God says, “I’m going to wreck the earth.” He goes, “But I see somebody who has faith.”

And so he makes an ark and he delivers because people believe only eight people they said, “We’re going to trust God. We’re going to get on that ark. We’re going to trust his provision of a savior from his very wrath.” And all those people wondering all this time in ADs, “What about this Messiah?” Well, when Jesus Christ rose from the dead, some people believe that what he did was he went to ADs and he says, “All those promises in the old testament that you rejected are true. I just died and I’m about to rise from the dead. I’m victorious.”

Other people believe that what it means though, is this, is that when he rose from the dead and he went up to heaven, that he’s proclaiming from heaven, his victory over all of heaven and all the earth and all of hell and everywhere else, there’s the reigning king. And then there’s a lot of questions that I would have. And in fact, I read a lot of commentaries, a lot of really amazing astute theologians and I just love that they echo me when they go, “What? I don’t quite understand. I don’t know exactly the answer.” But this is Peter’s point.

His point in saying all that is, is that Jesus Christ did rise from the dead and he declared his victory of the world. But a better question than what did he do during the three days when he was in the grave is what in the world was Peter thinking introducing Noah now? Like why? He should ask that question. It’s not like he was going, “Let’s talk about reviling and how we respond. Hey Noah,” right? It’s not like, “Hey, look a squirrel.” That’s not what happened here.

What’s happening is this, is he looks at people in the Roman empire and he recognizes that they all feel outnumbered by the godlessness around them. He knows that they need somebody, they need an example that they can hold onto. And so he points back and he says, “Do you remember Noah?” Noah was a godly man living among a lot of ungodly people and God provided a solution, an ark, a means to escape wrath. And he and only eight people total, they believed God enough to get in but that wrath was sufficient, that ark was sufficient.

What he’s saying is this, is for those of you who were beaten down, you feel like you’re suffering, you feel like the world is against you. He says, “Hey, take heart. You’re not the only one. Christ was victorious then, he’s going to be victorious to you.” Well, Peter follows that up with something else that’s a little confusing, it’s verse 21, he says, “Baptism, which corresponds to this,” meaning Noah and ark, “now saves you.”

Now, some of you, you’ve been at Providence while you’re like, “We teach that ism does not save, Jesus saves. Every time we get in the water, this is just probably water, tap water.” Or I could say the same thing every time that Jesus, his blood is one that cleanses and not this water. And Peter says, “You know what? Baptism, which

corresponds to this now saves you.” Now, what is that about? Well, Noah was saved by getting on an ark and passing through a flood. And he’s saying you as Christians are saved by getting on the ark named Jesus and passing through a baptism.

You say, “Well, does it save though?” Kind of. And this is what he means. He says, “Look, this baptism is not as a removal of dirt. The water does not cleanse you of sin, only Jesus cleanses you of sin.” He goes, “What baptism is, is an appeal to God for a good conscience.” Now this is we’re almost done, I promise you, we’re almost done. But you need to understand this, if not, you’re going to go away and you go, “I think baptism saves us.”

When the Bible uses the word baptism, it does so to talk about two different realities, not just one. One time it uses baptism or in one way that it uses baptism is to describe what happens when somebody is born again. In other words, when somebody looks at Jesus Christ on the cross and knowing that they are a sinner, they admit to Christ that they have a need, they admit to Christ that they believe it’s a confession, it’s an appeal, I believe in Christ, I believe, and we’re born again.

Romans chapter 6 says that we are baptized into Christ. The word baptism means to immerse. It means we’re immersing ourselves, we’re trusting ourselves holy, we’re hoping in Jesus entirely. But then baptism also talks about that symbolic act of identifying with Christ in water, right? To where the water, when we bring somebody down, they’re under water and they come back up, it’s a picture, it’s a symbol, it’s an identification of when you go down, it’s like Christ dying. We’re saying, “I’m identifying with Christ in his death.”

And when we’re under the water, it’s like I’m identifying with Christ and his baptism. And when we come out of the water, it’s a skit that says, “I want you all to know that I have trusted in Jesus Christ, and his blood has forgiven me of all of my sin and it is his death, burial, and resurrection that I’m placing all of my life. I’m immersing my entire trust and hope in him alone.” And the Bible talks about those two different ways and he uses the things and he uses the word baptism to describe both of them.

What Peter is saying in this section, I know it’s kind of confusing and I probably made it more confusing. But what he’s saying is this, is when that day comes when you are reviled, it’s really important to remember what Jesus did to make it possible for you to be forgiven. On that day when you are reviled, it is very important that you remember that Jesus rose from the dead and is victorious, that on that day when you are reviled, it’s very important that you look back and you remember a time when God brought you near, when he calls you to be born again, when you even bore witness of your faith through the act of baptism to tell other people that you’ve trusted in Christ because when you remember how Christ suffered, and when you remember that he is victorious, it becomes very powerful fuel to help you suffer like Christ.

So let me encourage us as a church family to fix our eyes on Jesus Christ. Just like Noah, we've been called to testify to the hope of the gospel to a very confused world. Versus 22 tells us that he's gone into heaven, is at the right hand of God and all angels, authorities, powers, they've all been subjected to him, which means that our task and our mission is not futile. He's guaranteed it will come to pass. And so no matter how much ridicule you receive in life, take heart.

So let me pray. Father, in heaven, we love you and we thank you that you love us, that you sent Christ to us. We thank you for those in the room who have trusted Christ that you would renew their hope, renew their understanding, renew their celebration and their worship. And I pray for those in their room who are considering trusting Christ, that you would incline their hearts right now to reach out to you in faith, to admit their need, to believe in you and confess you as Lord of their life. And so we thank you that we get to sing about our hope now. We love you so much, we're so thankful. Help us to distinguish ourselves in such a way that people see Christ in us this week. And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.



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