

Enduring Persecution

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[0:00] 1 Peter 3, verses 13-22 Now 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 a reason for the hope that is in you.

Yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that when you are 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.

Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of thirst from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience.

[1:45] 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.

This is the word of God. Thank you, Joan, for reading. One of the surprises of the Christian life, is that we sometimes suffer, for doing good.

And the passage that we have come to this morning, as we continue our sermon series, in the letter of 1 Peter, brings us face to face with this reality, that sometimes, God's people suffer, for doing good.

And I want us to hear what God's word says, to us this morning. But first, let me pray for us. Let me thank you that your words are indeed wonderful.

We ask that you would draw near to us now, and open our eyes to behold wonderful things in your word. We ask that you would draw near to us, and use your word to transform our lives, and to build up this local church, for the glory of your great name.

[3:15] Lord, you know where each of us is, and you know what each of us needs. And we pray, that you would draw near, and meet us, at the point of our varying needs.

We ask that you would do this, in Christ's name. Amen. This letter of 1 Peter is about, how God has graciously saved people.

And how he, in light of that salvation, caused them to live for him. And so far, in 1 Peter chapter 3, we have seen how Peter instructed husbands and wives, about how they are to live in the home. Last week, we saw how he instructed us, about how we are to live in the church. And now, as we come to verse 13, this morning, Peter turns his eyes to the world, and he tells us, how we are treated, in the world.

Peter tells us, that as we live in this world, we will face persecution. And in this section of the letter, that we have come to, there are, what I would call, three surprising aspects, that Peter highlights, about persecution.

[4:48] And I want us to consider them, in our remaining time. 1 Peter draws our attention, to the surprising aspect, of the cause, of persecution.

In verse 13, he asks the question, now who is there to harm you, if you are zealous, for what is good? The answer to this question, seems obvious.

The answer to this question, seems to be, no one. There should be no one, who would harm, a person, who is zealous, for doing good.

But in verse 14, Peter points to the reality, that as God's people, we may suffer, for doing good. We may suffer, for righteousness sake.

And so this is a surprising cause, for persecution. We all understand, that an evil person, would be punished, that an evil person, would be persecuted.

[6:00] But it is a surprise, to learn, that, by living righteously, by doing good, we can suffer, persecution.

persecution. And yet, this is a reality, that God's people face, in an ongoing way, as we live in this world, we face persecution, for doing, what is right, we face persecution, for living, the right way.

In verse 14, Peter tells us, that we may, face persecution, for righteousness sake.

But he says, if we are persecuted, he says, we're blessed. He says, we are blessed. And the blessing, that Peter, refers to, is not a future blessing, in heaven.

Although, the Bible does promise, blessings, to God's people, in heaven. The blessing, that Peter, is pointing to, is a blessing, that is, here and now, a blessing, that we experience, when we walk, through persecution, a blessing, that God, bestows, on his people, when they are persecuted, for righteousness sake.

[7:24] And so, brothers and sisters, despite the hardships, and the sorrows, that come, from persecution, God's word tells us, that we are persecuted, we, are blessed.

And this is hard, to believe, that, we are in a more, blessed condition, when we are persecuted, than when we are not.

If we're in a blessed condition, when we are not persecuted, then it would be, meaningless, for Peter to say to us, that when we are persecuted, we, are blessed.

Now, I know this morning, when we hear the word, persecution, for many of us, we automatically think of, the severest kind of persecution. We, we think of, being put in jail.

We think of, being physically attacked, or even killed, for following Jesus. Or our mind goes to, hostile countries, like North Korea, and, and China, and Pakistan, and parts of India, where people, suffer, oftentimes, for following the Lord, Jesus Christ.

[8:34] Or maybe some other hostile country, comes to mind. But in our part of the world, we don't see, and experience, this kind of severe, and extreme, persecution.

I think it's fair to say, the persecution that, we would have experienced, and if we do experience, is what we may call, mild persecution. But it's persecution, nonetheless.

And scripture is clear, in 2nd Timothy, chapter 3, verse 12, that all who, desire to live, a godly life, will, suffer, persecution.

All who desire, to live a godly life, in Christ Jesus, will be, persecuted. To whatever degree, whether severe, or mild, that is the lot, of those, who follow, Jesus.

And sometimes, it may be, that, by living a godly life, we're excluded. We're marginalized. We're denied, certain opportunities.

[9:46] Sometimes, obstacles are placed, in our way, to frustrate us, to discourage us. I've heard, of people, in this church, share, about being in jobs, where they have a supervisor, who would, intentionally, schedule them, in particular ways, knowing that, they are a Christian, and they would prefer, to be, in God's house.

and they would, schedule them, in such a way, that they aren't able, to do that. And some of us, we, we live in homes, where we're persecuted, for, our faith, in, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Perhaps, at school, as a young Christian, you're persecuted, because, of your faith, in the Lord Jesus Christ. So, we face persecution, and sometimes, I think, we can easily, overlook, that it is persecution, because it's, kind of like, mild.

We may say, oh, they just make fun of me. No, they're persecuting you. They just give me a hard time. No, they're persecuting you. They're persecuting you, because you, are living, a life, for the Lord, Jesus Christ.

Another surprise, that we find, in this passage, is in verse 17, that tells us, that sometimes, it is God's will, that we suffer, for doing good. It isn't always, God's will, that we suffer, for doing good, or living righteously, because if that were the case, we'd suffer all the time.

[11:23] But there are times, when we, when we, when we face persecution, this is how I should say it, when we face persecution, the reason we face persecution, is God wills it.

God wills it, and that is why, we, suffer, persecution. And what Peter says, is, it is better, to suffer persecution, for doing good, than to suffer persecution, for doing evil, or to suffer, for doing evil.

It is better, that we suffer persecution, for doing good, than to suffer, for doing evil. And I think, as we consider, how, doing good, and living righteously, can cause us, to suffer, it helps us, it helps us to see, how broken, and how dark, our world is.

I mean, after all, who would you want, your neighbors to be? Who would you want, your friends to be? Your co-workers to be? Your schoolmates to be? You would want, those people to be, those who are living righteously, those who are doing good.

And yet, in the world, those are the ones, who are, persecuted, because they are, following, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[12 : 53] Perhaps, this may be a live situation, for some of us, this morning. Maybe at home, or, at work, or at school, you may be, experiencing, persecution, because you are living, a righteous life, for, the Lord, Jesus Christ.

Remember these words, from Peter. If you are, you are blessed. You are blessed, when you suffer, for, doing good.

So that's the first surprise, that we find, in, this passage, that God's people, sometimes, face, persecution, because they are God's people, because, they live, righteous lives.

The second surprise, is how, God's people, are called, to respond, to persecution, which is my second point.

A surprising response, to persecution. How are we called, to respond, to persecution? Peter tells us, starting in the second part, of verse 14, and ending, in the first part, of verse 16, he says, 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 a reason, for the hope, that is in you.

[14 : 29] yet do it, yet do it, with gentleness, and respect, having, a good conscience. There are five aspects, to, what Peter says, in, these verses, in terms of, how we are to respond, to persecution.

First, he says, do not be afraid, or troubled. Normally, whenever you see, in God's word, we are called, not to be afraid, not to be troubled, what it means is, there is reason, to be afraid, there is reason, to be troubled.

But he says, don't be. Don't be afraid, and don't, be, troubled, by those, who persecute us. And how do we do that?

We do it, by fearing God alone. We do it, by, fearing the one, who is able, to destroy, both soul and body, in hell.

Not fearing those, who can only deal, with our mortal bodies. And we, we, we don't fear them, by reminding ourselves, that they can only do to us, what God permits them, to do to us.

[15 : 43] They can go no further, than the permission, of God, in our lives. And we recognize, that if we are, enduring persecution, we're going through persecution, that is because, because the sovereign Lord, has built it.

And we need not, be fearful, because, he is with us, and he will take care of us. And he knows, the extent, to which, we are able, to be tested, in temptation.

And even in that, in, in our persecutions, and even that comes to death, he will be, with us, in, that moment. Second, Peter tells us, that we are to honor, or reverence Christ, in our hearts, as holy.

This is a call, to live a Christ, centered, and Christ, focused life, even when we are persecuted.

Even when hostility, is breathing down, our backs, we are called, to honor, or reverence Christ, in our hearts.

We're not to turn, from Christ, and do, as we say locally, fight fire, with fire. We're not to, lay down our salvation, and give them, a piece of, our minds, as some people often say, they do.

[17 : 13] No, instead, we are called, in the midst of that, to honor Christ. We are called, to let honoring Christ, be our chief concern, more than vindicating, ourselves.

We are called, to, reverence Christ, in our hearts, as holy. Some of you, may recall, when, Moses, was, leading the children, of Israel, out of, Egypt, into the promised land, and they came to, a place, where there was no water, and they grumbled, and the Lord, told Moses, you go in, you to, stretch your, hand over the rock, to, just, just, hid the rock, and, Moses was angry, and the Bible says, he smote the rock, and, the Lord, was displeased, and what the Lord, said to Moses, was, you did not, show me as holy, before the people, in other words, you, my representative, you conducted yourself, in a way, that did not show, that I was holy, when we are being persecuted, we are to reverence, Christ, in our hearts, as holy,

Peter's exact words are, but in your hearts, honor Christ, the Lord, as holy, the only way, we can do this, is by, the grace, of God, third, Peter says, we have to be prepared, to defend the hope, we have in Christ, to anyone, who asks us, Peter anticipates, that when believers, are persecuted, there is the real possibility, that someone, will ask them, what is the basis, for this, obvious hope, that you have, in the face, of this very difficult situation, what is the basis, for your ability, to stand up, under these hard, circumstances, I can think of a person, at work, who's being, persecuted, to righteousness, being passed over, promotion, after promotion, being marginalized, and still maintaining, a godly demeanor, and still seeking, to honor Christ, in all that he or she does, and a co-worker, comes and says, how do you deal with that, how is it that, you have not retaliated, Peter says, we are to be ready, to give an answer, to give it a defense, to anyone, who asks us, the reason, for the hope, that we have, when we are persecuted, sometimes, we have this opportunity, to talk about, our salvation in Christ, talk about the hope, that we have in Christ, when someone, would ask us, we have the opportunity, to share, that Christ saves, sinners, not that he, saved us alone, but that he saves, others, as well, we have the opportunity, to help people, to see this life, for what it is, that it is temporary, and it is passing, and there's nothing, in this life, that is permanent, and there's nothing, in this life, that is worth, holding on so tightly, that we lose, our focus on Christ, and we cease, to honor him, as holy, in our hearts,

Peter says, be ready, to give, a defense, and see, the defense, is because, how we, are living, is such a contradiction, to what, is expected, about how, we should respond, and he says, you, you want to be able, to defend, that position, and then fourth, Peter says, we're to do it, with gentleness, and respect, even, when persecuted, even, when, the person, who may be, questioning us, is hostile, and rude, he says, we, are to be, respectful, and then fifth, he says, and we, to do all this, with a good conscience, towards the Lord, having a good conscience, means, that when we, are persecuted, we have a clear conscience, before the Lord, that we're not being, persecuted, for doing anything wrong, we're being, persecuted, for doing good, we're being persecuted, for righteousness sake, and the way, we, maintain, a clear conscience, before the Lord, is by, not engaging, in intentional, and high-handed sin, it is by, confessing sin, and repenting, of sin, in an ongoing way, that is the way, we maintain, a clear conscience, before the Lord, it is impossible, for any of us, to have a, perfectly clear conscience, all the time, because we sin, but when we sin, we must, we must, confess our sins, we must repent, of our sins, and thereby, we maintain, our clear conscience, and we must not be, in deliberate sin, we must not, be flippant, about sin, because if we are flippant, about sin, brothers and sisters, it is difficult, to maintain, a clear conscience, before the Lord, our sins, are to be sins, of stumbling, our sins, are to be sins, of misfortune, as it were, for our steps, and we can honestly, go to our heavenly father, and say, father forgive me, it is not to say, that if we engage, in high handed sin, that we are unable, to go to him as well, we can, and we must, but it is far more, difficult, to maintain, a clear conscience, before the Lord, if we engage, in intentional, brazen, callous, sin, brothers and sisters, it is the last thing, that Peter says, he says, we must do this, with, a good conscience,

[24 : 03] I think it should be, immediately clear, to all of us, that to respond, in this way, in the face, of persecution, takes the grace, of God, no amount, of personal character, no amount, of goodness, in ourselves, would enable us, to respond, in this way, we need, the grace of God, we need to depend, on the Holy Spirit, and the power, of the Spirit, to enable us, to respond, in this way, and I mentioned, earlier, about how, in our part, of the world, the persecution, we experience, is mild, but we should never, take that for granted, should never, take it for granted, that can change, overnight, night, and we must be ready, as God's people, to do what we read, about in other nations, about people, who literally, take their lives, in their hands, to follow Jesus, we must be willing, to follow Jesus, even in the face, of persecution, and the one, who calls us, to endure persecution, will also be with us, and strengthen us, in our persecution, the first martyr, that we have recorded, in scripture, is Stephen, it's recorded, in Acts chapter 7,

Stephen was being opposed, by a large company, of unbelieving Jews, and Stephen, in Acts 7, gives a lengthy, defense, for the hope, that he had, starting with Abraham, and finishing, at Christ, and how did, the Jews respond, it says in verse 54, Acts 7, 54, and when they heard, these things, they were enraged, if you read, the defense of Stephen, they were enraged, and it says, they ground their teeth, at him, and how did Stephen, respond, to this, mob, that were grinding, their teeth at him, we have his response, in, verses 55, and 56, first, and this is what, we have, it says, but he, meaning Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and

Jesus standing, at the right hand of God, and he said, behold,

I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man, standing, at the right hand of God, Stephen had this vision, in the face, of a violent mob, getting ready, getting ready, to stone him, we read in verses, 59, and 60, and as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit, and falling to his knees, he cried out, with a loud voice, Lord, do not, hold this sin, against them, and when he had said this, he fell, asleep, the Lord was with Stephen, both in his testifying, and, in his dying, and there's no greater example, of submitting ourselves, to Christ, and trusting in Christ, than forgiving, those, who are our enemies, and we see Stephen, following in the steps, of the Lord Jesus himself, who as he died, forgave, his enemies,

I think it's fair to say, that, none of us, this morning, are likely to die, as Stephen died, none of us, are likely to face, that degree, of persecution, will be, whatever degree, of persecution, we face, brothers and sisters, let us, by the grace of God, seek to honor Christ, in our persecutions, well, third and finally, in this passage, the Apostle Peter, points to, the surprising outcome, of persecution, and the surprising outcome, of persecution, of persecution, is that the one, who is persecuting, might be persuaded, to the very faith, that he is persecuting, the faith of the person, that he is persecuting, a surprising outcome, from persecution, is that, the persecutor, can be persuaded, to the faith, of the one, who is being persecuted, look at what Peter says, in verse 16, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile, your good behavior, in Christ, may be put, to shame, what does it mean, to be put to shame, what does it mean, that those who are, reviling, and slandering, are good behavior, may be put to shame,

I found, Wayne Grudem's, comment, on verse 16, in his commentary, on first Peter, very helpful, this is what he, says, the hope, that opponents, will be put, to shame, does not suggest, that their shame, is something good, in itself, but that it will issue, or it will result, in, the silencing, of their slander, and subsequently, in their considering, and believing, the gospel, what he's saying, is that when we, bear upon the persecution, in a gracious, and a God honoring way, those who persecute us, those who revile us, those who slander us, may subsequently, be persuaded, they may be put, to shame, as it were, and it might result, in, them being converted, the person, during the persecution, can be, converted, to Christ, and so, what Peter has, in view here, is, what we may call, redemptive persecution, again, in verse 17, he says, it is better, for us, to suffer doing good, if that is God's will, than for doing evil, and I think, one of the ways, it is better, is that this real, possibility, exists, that we have, a redemptive opportunity, in how we respond, in, our persecution, for that person, to see the light, and possibly, come, to Christ, this is the point, that Peter is making, look at what he says, in verse 18, he says, for Christ, also suffered, once for sins, the righteous, for the unrighteous, that he might bring us, to God, now, to see the point, he's making, you have to recognize, that verse 18, is connected, to verse 17, verse 17, says, for it is better, to suffer, for doing good, if that should be,

[32 : 27] 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, this is the gospel, that Christ, was the one time, sacrifice, for our sins, that he, the righteous, suffered, for the unrighteous, that he, might bring us, to God, his righteous, suffering, had a good, result, it brought, unrighteous people, to Christ, now, this is not, an exact parallel, it's not, an exact parallel, that Christ's, suffering, saved people, so our suffering, persecution, at the hands of enemies, those who don't mean as well, will result, in their salvation, it's not that, but it is a parallel, to some degree, nonetheless,

Peter's making the point, he's saying, good may come, out of your persecution, this is a surprising outcome, good may come, out of your, persecution, brothers and sisters, let us, not forget this, there can be, redemptive, value, in the persecutions, that we go through, in relation, to those, who persecute us, and we shouldn't, lose sight of that, we shouldn't be, so focused, on ourselves, that we lose sight, of that person, who needs Christ, though, they're persecuting us, and they stand, to gain, more than we stand, to lose, they stand, to gain, if they come, to Christ, more than we can, ever lose, in, our persecution, depression, I remember, when I started, my first job, I was, there was a, period of time, when I was,

I was fasting, for an extended period of time, that I'd lost, a good bit of weight, and somebody came, and told me, that there was, a particular, member of staff, who said, the reason, I lost weight, is because, I was using drugs, and, I've never, used any drugs, in my life, and I knew, well, that was the reason, but it really, didn't offend me, didn't affect me, and this person, used to still laugh, and talk with me, and I would engage, this person, never confronted, him about that, but, in the process,

I got to share, Christ with him, and he started, to attend church, attended church, regularly with me, came on Sunday mornings, came on Sunday, to the evening service, which, many of the, regular, attendees didn't do, but he would come, he came regularly, now, he didn't, he didn't come to Christ, as far as I know, but his slandering stopped, and he was persuaded, of how wrong, he was never confessed, he never said anything, to me, but, the result of that, was, his slandering, stopped, now, if I had stiff-armed him, and pushed him aside, and I never engaged him, maybe a slandering, would have, continued, the point that Peter, makes, in this section, of this passage, is that, our persecutions, may have, some, redemptive, effect, in the latter part, of verse 18, we read, that Christ, being put to death, in the flesh, was made alive, in the spirit, and here, Peter is talking about, the bodily resurrection, of Jesus Christ, the words, made alive, in the spirit, refer to his, bodily resurrection, and then, we look down, at verse 22, and that is referring, to the ascension, of Christ, Peter says, who, has gone, into heaven, and is at the right, hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers, having, been subjected, to him, what Peter says here, in this, last section, of this, passage, is consistent, with, the biblical account, of the Lord Jesus, and we can summarize, it in three segments, first his birth, and his ministry, then his death, and his resurrection, and then his ascension, and his reign, and what we see, and this is Peter's point, Peter's point, is that God, vindicated Jesus, Peter's point, is that though Jesus, was crucified, in the end, God, vindicated him, he ascended, to heaven, he is seated, and angels, authorities, and powers, are subjected, to him, God, vindicated Jesus, in the end, and what's Peter's point, to us, Peter's point, to us, is this, in the same way, that Jesus, who suffered, for sins, has been vindicated, by God, you as you suffer, for doing good, for righteousness, you likewise, will be vindicated, that's Peter's point, God will in the end, vindicate us, and this is encouraging, news to us, it was certainly, encouraging news, to the recipients, of this letter, because they were, marginalized, they were, persecuted, they were slandered, they were reviled, for their faith, and Peter's saying, to them, you will be vindicated,

[38 : 58] God will vindicate you, in the same way, that he vindicated, his son, and so brothers, and sisters, as we live in this world, as we, experience persecution, let us remember this, God will, one day, vindicate us, and we must look to him, and we, must trust him, now in verses 18, to 21, of this letter, we, we come to, two, highly debated questions, that have been debated, over the centuries, in the church, many centuries, these two, questions have been, debated, from this section, of the letter, verses 18, to 21, the first question is, whether Jesus, went to hell, when he died, and the second question is, whether, what of baptism, saves us, those are, those are two questions, that come up, now let me be clear, and say this, these two questions, are not the point, of this passage, we've covered, the point of the passage, the point of the passage, in this section, is that God, vindicated Jesus, and God will vindicate, his people, that, that's the point, of the passage, but nonetheless, these two questions, have come up, for centuries, and,

I've already been asked, this question, the first question, at least, about, did Jesus go to, hell, and I indicated, that, I'll address it, when we, came to the section, of, the, the letter, now here's the first thing, I want to do, before, I get into that, I want to just give you, three, important rules, of biblical interpretation, that will help us, as we go through, this passage, that will help you, as you, read, your Bible, these are three rules, for sound, biblical interpretation, if you remember these, when you come to, a difficult passage, in scripture, you'll be able, to work your way, through it, and not come up, with some, conclusion, that contradicts, the rest of the Bible, rule, the first rule, remember this, scripture never, contradicts itself, never contradicts itself, and so, if we ever see, anything, that we say, that's contradictory, it's an apparent, contradiction, and the contradiction, is in us, not in scripture, so we must, vindicate scripture, and say, okay,

God's word is consistent, and therefore, I know, this is not a contradiction, so let me do, a little bit more reading, a little bit more studying, but there's no contradiction here, the second rule, clear passages, should be used, to understand, difficult, or, vague passages, seemingly vague passages, you always use the clear, to understand, the not so clear, we don't do it, the other way around, so for example, if there's something, that we find, in the gospels, on the epistles, and we also find it, in the book of Revelation, we don't take, what we find, in the book of Revelation, to interpret, what we find, in the gospels, or in the epistles, because the book of Revelation, is in symbolic, we call it, apocalyptic, language, and so, it's highly symbolic, language, and so that's, an important rule, clear passages, should be used, to understand, difficult, or unclear passages, and then the third rule, sometimes the best way, to determining, what a passage, means, or what it's

saying, is to rule out, what it obviously, is not saying, one of the best ways, to come at, what a passage, in scripture means, rule out the stuff, that is not saying, and then you narrow it down, to what it might be saying, and then by the grace of God, you can come to, a reasonable, answer, answer, okay, so let's bear those, three rules in mind, as we consider, these two questions, the first one, did Jesus, descend to hell, after he died, the answer is no, the answer is no, now, those who, say the answer is yes, say that they find, the answer being yes, in verses 18, to 20, now, here are a few questions, that we can ask, to come to the meaning of this, what do the words, made alive, in the spirit, in verse 18, mean, what I touched on this earlier, but what do these words mean, made alive, in the spirit, well, right away, we know, that when Jesus died, his spirit did not die, in the normal way, we would say, well, his body was dead, his body was, taken, and, spices put on them, and put in a tomb, but his spirit, didn't die, and so, it was his body, that needed to be, quickened, or raised, or resurrected, and so, when Peter, is talking about, made alive, in the spirit, in verse 18, he's referring to the body, of Jesus, now, we'll see this, even more clearly, in, two other translations, you'll see it, for example, in the new, in the, in the King James Version, the King James Version reads, for Christ also hath, once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death, in the flesh, but being quickened, by the spirit, and in the original language, in and by, are used interchangeably, one word, for both of them, the, the, the ESV, uses the word, in, and, the King James uses, by, and so does the NIV, which says, for Christ died, for sins, once for all, the righteous, for the unrighteous, to bring you to God, he was put to death, in the body, but made alive, by the spirit, just the body of Jesus, that was made alive, alive, and we see this also, in Romans 8, verse 11, talking about our own, future resurrection, it says, if the spirit of him, who raised Jesus, from the dead, dwells in you, he, who raised Christ Jesus, from the dead, will also give life, to your mortal bodies, through, his spirit, who dwells, in you, now, there are some, who say, that, verses 19 to 20, refer to Jesus, going to hell, as a spirit, during the period, between, his, burial, and his, resurrection, between death, and resurrection, they say, Jesus, was, in hell, and that Jesus, preached to the dead, he preached to, those who, died before, he came, and the whole idea, was to give them, a second chance, to repent, but there's a big problem, with that view, the big problem, with that view, is that there's nowhere, in this passage, or anywhere else, in scripture, that tells us, that Jesus, preached, to the dead, generally, nowhere, in this passage, nowhere else, in scripture, that tells us, that Jesus went, to hell, and preached, to the dead, generally, again, like what verses, 19 and 20 say, Christ went, and proclaimed, to the spirits, in prison, because they, formally, did not obey, when God's, patience, waited, in the days, of Noah, when the ark, was being prepared, this is not, a general, group of people, that is being, referenced here,

[47 : 59] Noah, these are the people, who were, formally, disobedient, when God, was patiently, waiting, for Noah, as he, was preparing, the ark, so specific, group of people, no general, preaching, to all the dead, before Christ, Christ, and when you, think about it, if it is, if someone is saying, that okay, well Christ will, rent to, these particular ones, and preach the gospel, to them, to give them, a second chance, why would Christ, do that?

Why would, these people, above all other people, be given, a second chance, to come to Christ? As a matter of fact, these were some of the most, wicked people, the Bible tells us, that the evil, among them, was so great, that God, destroyed, them, and all the animals, so why would, he, choose these ones, to say, we're going to give you, some second chance, to, for salvation?

Again, this is a, it's a difficult passage, but, we can, reject this interpretation, that Christ, went to hell, and preached, to everyone, and we can certainly, reject the view, that he went to hell, to give these people, in Noah's day, some, second opportunity, to, come to Christ.

There's nowhere, in scripture, that teaches, second opportunities, after death. Nowhere in scripture. And that's why, the Bible tells us, that, today is the day, of salvation.

Now, is the accepted time. Now, there are, others who say, that, Christ did go to, hell, as a spirit, not so much, to preach, to the dead, but he went there, to proclaim his victory, after his resurrection.

[50 : 07] The text doesn't say that. The text, again, does not say, that Christ, addressed, people generally. It narrows down, this group of people, to those, in Noah's day.

Now, before I go on, to say, what I believe, this puzzling, passage means, let me give you, a couple of reasons, why I don't believe, that this passage, or any other passage, teaches, that Christ, went to hell, that he descended, to hell.

Several, scriptures. The first one, in Luke, chapter 23, verse 43, Jesus promised, the thief on the cross, that he was going, to be with him, in paradise, that very day.

Some argue, that paradise, is not in heaven. But, heaven is referred, to as paradise, in several places, in scripture. For example, 2nd Corinthians, chapter 12, verse 4, Revelation 2, verse 7, Revelation 22, verse 2, and Revelation 22, verse 14.

They all refer, to heaven, as paradise. And then, in John 19, 30, Jesus said, right before he died, it is finished.

[51 : 38] It is finished, strongly suggests, that Christ's sufferings, were finished, on the cross. But, for Jesus to say, it is finished, and then go to hell, to, as some people say, pay the punishment, that we needed to pay, it's inconsistent, to say, it is finished, if it really, wasn't, finished.

finished. And then, in Luke 23, verse 46, this is Luke's account, John's account, was that, what Jesus said, was, it is finished, but Luke says this, Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit. to be, not to go to hell, but in the presence, of his father, he said, Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit.

And, when we die, our spirits, go to be with the Lord, spirit. And, the Bible says, when Christ returns, our spirits, are going to come, and, re-inhabit, our resurrected bodies.

And, it's the same thing, that happened with Jesus. When he died, his spirit, went to the Father, and, when he was resurrected, his spirit, re-inhabited his body, and he was raised, from, the dead.

[53 : 07] Now, I'll share with you, what I found, to be the most helpful, explanation of these, difficult verses. And again, I draw on, Wayne Grudem, this is what he says, and he calls, what he says, not, dogmatically, the answer, but he says this, he says, it is the most, satisfying, it is the most, satisfying explanation, of these verses, 19 and 20, than, all the other, theories out there.

Here's what he writes. The passage, refers not to something, Christ did, between his death, and resurrection, but to what he did, in the spiritual realm, of existence, or, through the spirit, at the time of Noah.

When, Noah was building the ark, Christ, in spirit, was preaching, through Noah, to the hostile believers, around him.

And then, Dr. Grudem goes on, to reference, 1 Peter 1, 11, where Peter says, that the spirit of Christ, was speaking, through the Old Testament prophets.

And in 2 Peter, chapter 2, verse 5, Noah is referred to, as a preacher, of righteousness. And then, Dr. Grudem concludes, with, this statement.

[54 : 42] So, it seems likely, that when Christ, preached, to the spirits, in prison, he did so, through Noah, in the days, before, the flood.

Now, I trust that's helpful to you. If it isn't, this is one of those passages, where, not getting it right, doesn't affect our salvation.

And so, that's good news, because it's a difficult passage. Now, to the second, controversial question. Does baptism save us? The answer is no.

Christ, through his finished work on the cross, saves us. Now, this question is easier, than the first question. But this question, is more important, than the first question.

this is easier, but it's more important. And it's more important, because it touches our very salvation.

And it's more important, because there are people, who, teach, that baptism saves you.

[55 : 57] Which is a contradiction, to, what, scripture says. We are saved, by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

not, plus baptism. We're saved, through faith alone, by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

But there are two denominations, that teach, that, baptism is necessary, for salvation. the Roman Catholic Church, teaches that, and the churches of Christ, teach that. I remember talking, with some Church of Christ friends, and they, they, told me, and this is what they teach, you cannot be saved, in an airplane.

There's no water, in the airplane. they also say, you cannot be saved, in your deathbed. If you, are in a hospital, and you are dying, and the Church of Christ, person is there, who's being true, to what they teach, he will tell you, you have no hope, of salvation.

And they have been known, to take, sick people, out of the hospital, to the beach. believing, that without doing that, they would not be saved.

[57:17] And believing, they were doing some good thing, by taking them there. I said, this question is far more important, and I want us to hear, the answer to it. And I'll try to move through it, rather quickly.

Verse 3. First, sorry. Peter, would be contradicting himself, in this passage, if he is teaching us, that baptism saves us, because at the very, outset of his letter, in verse 3, of chapter 1, this is what he writes, Blessed be the God, and Father, of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to his great mercy, he has caused us, to be born again, to a living hope, through the resurrection, of Jesus Christ, from the dead.

In verses 20 and 21, what Peter is saying, is that the believer's baptism, corresponds, to Noah, and his family, being saved, from the flood waters.

And what is the relationship? Baptism, symbolizes, judgment, upon sin, in the death, of Christ, and the renewal, of life.

And it corresponds, to the flood waters, that executed judgment, upon the wicked, demonstrating God's mercy, and grace, to Noah, and his family, who passed through the waters.

[58:54] And so, what happened, in the flood, was both judgment, and mercy. Judgment to those, who were, punished, punished, and executed, and mercy, to Noah, and his family.

And so, in verse 21, what Peter says, is baptism, which corresponds, to this, now saves you. And Peter explains, what he means, in the very next clause.

He says, you may look at verse 21, he says, not removing dirt, from the body, but as an appeal, to God, for a good conscience.

And what is the good conscience? This is language, that speaks of forgiveness, and having a clear conscience, before God. Because, when we, when we obey the Lord, in water baptism, water baptism, really, is an outward, manifestation, of the inward work, that God has done, in us.

And when a person, obeys the Lord, in water baptism, it, it subjectively, gives them that clear conscience, before God. And this is what Peter, is talking about.

[60:12] In verse 21, at the very end, of the verse, Peter, gives the most important, meaning, to what he is saying, about water baptism, and it's these words, through the resurrection, of Jesus Christ.

I want you to look, at verse 21. And you know, for all the students, this morning, if you're still studying, English grammar, I encourage you to, pay attention to it, and see the value of it, because English grammar, will help us, to see, what the, main point is, that Peter makes, in verse 21.

So, you would see, that these words, which corresponds, to this, that's in, what we may call, parentheses, it's in, commas, that's, that's parenthetical, and then, not, as a removal, of dirt, from the body, that's also, parenthetical, and then, if you, but as an appeal, all that is, is parenthetical. So, let me read it, taking out, all the parenthetical, and this, this is what the, verse actually says, this is the point, Peter's making, baptism, now saves you, through, the resurrection, of Jesus Christ. That is the, heart of the sentence. It is through, the resurrection, of Jesus Christ, that we are saved. Baptism doesn't save us, in and of itself.

[61:57] It is through, the resurrection, of Jesus Christ. That is the operative, means by which, we are saved. We're saved, through Jesus Christ, not by, what a baptism.

Why do we baptize? Out of obedience, to Christ. But we don't baptize, because, if we're not baptized, we will, not, be saved.

That's not the point, that, Peter is, making. Now again, brothers and sisters, while I sought, to address, these two, repeated questions, that come from, this passage, it's not the point, of the passage.

The point, of the passage, is that when, we are persecuted, for righteousness sake, in the same way, that God, vindicated Jesus, and he is, at the right hand, of God, and with powers, and angels, and principalities, subjected to him, God, God will vindicate us, in the end.

And, I think that, this passage, ends in verse 22, in such a wonderful, envisioning way for us, as we serve the Lord, that we have this vision, that one day, Jesus, who is seated in heaven, with everything, being subjected to him, is going to return.

[63:24] And he is going to return, to receive his people, to himself. And he is going to, reward the righteous, and he is going to, punish the wicked, and he is going to, usher in a new heaven, and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

And brothers and sisters, that is our hope. Our hope, is that we will see, that one day, we will experience that. If we are dead, we will be raised, and we will be given new bodies, and our spirits, will come with Jesus, and re-inhabit, our bodies.

And if we are alive, we will be changed. And we will be with the Lord, forevermore. This is our hope. This is our hope, and persecution, if the worst should happen to us, that one day, our Savior, is going, to return.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you that, though we live in a hostile world, you have promised, that you will be with us, in persecution, you have, prepared us for it, and you have promised, that in the end, you will vindicate us.

Again, Lord, I pray for, those who this very moment, may be experiencing persecution, would you help them, to, respond, in a Christ-like way, in a faithful way, in a courageous way, and being prepared, and ready, to give, an answer to anyone, who asks, about the hope they have.

[65 : 15] Lord, you help us all, to be faithful, and to look for that day, when Christ returns, to take us home. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.