

Christ Our Victor

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[0:00] 1 Peter 3, verse 18. 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.

Amen. Well, opening day of baseball season was this week, and you know that I'm a big baseball fan. But you don't have to be a baseball fan to understand what I'm about to say.

Have you ever noticed that diehard sports fans tend to speak about the experiences of their favorite teams as if they are on the team?

Have you ever picked up on that? It's really rare for us to talk about our favorite teams in the third person. We don't typically say, they really got to get it together, or they really had a big win on Friday, or they really blew it on Sunday afternoon.

[1:51] That's not typically how we speak about our favorite teams, is it? We typically speak about them in the first person. Not to say that they really blew it, but to say, man, we really blew it this week, right?

Or, man, we had a great win this week, or whatever the case is. As a fan, I contribute nothing to the victory of my favorite team.

But my relationship with and my love for that team allows me to share in their victory that they have won.

In some sense, when they win, I win. And in some sense, when they lose, I lose. That's how tightly our passion goes, how far our experiences with our favorite teams go.

Now, in a similar way, Christians speak of triumph over sin and triumph over death, actually having done nothing themselves to secure such triumph.

[3:04] Have you ever thought about that? We talk about how we have victory over sin. We have victory over death. We have victory that will lead to eternal life.

And yet, like the sports fan, we have actually done nothing to contribute to that victory. We are not actually the victors.

Jesus is our victor. And like the sports fan, we share in the victory that he has won on our behalf. Only our share in Christ's victory is infinitely greater than anything else we might experience through others in this life.

Infinitely greater. Though we recognize that Christ alone has won, we have contributed nothing ourselves to that victory. By God's grace, we, by faith, are brought into union with Christ.

And therefore, we inherit his victory. And not only do we inherit his true victory, we receive all of the benefits as if we ourselves are the ones who have conquered.

[4:26] So, your favorite sports team and the superstars on that team, they may win their championship and they may be rewarded handsomely. And you may enjoy that in an emotional sense, but you have no share in the benefits of that victory.

Other than to say, my favorite team won. Not so as a Christian. It's different. It's greater than that. As a Christian, we have been brought in union with Christ so that when we look at his victory, not only do we say Christ has won, but he has allowed me to have a full share in all of the saving benefits that he has won on my behalf.

Christ is our victor. He has won the victory for us. And this is Peter's point in verses 18 to 22.

You want to think of the context here, how it's placed in the letter. Having just told the suffering Christians in Asia Minor that an eternal inheritance awaits them beyond this time of exile and that they must persevere in following Jesus despite persecution, he now anchors all of those exhortations firmly in the good news of Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension or exaltation. And Peter's train of thought in these verses is actually quite clear, even though we can get diverted on a couple of questions that we may pull up in this text. What Peter's trying to do is actually pretty obvious.

[6:06] Here's what it is. Jesus suffered. Jesus rose. Jesus reigns. That's his train of thought here. He starts with suffering in verse 18.

He continues with resurrection in verse 18. He diverts to an illustration of how we might share in that. Then he comes right back to resurrection and finishes in verse 22 with reign, exaltation.

Jesus suffered. Jesus rose. Jesus reigns. That's the train of thought. And of course, this is the essence of the Christian's hope, which he's just told us in the previous paragraph.

We must always be prepared to display in the joy and the hope that we have in our hardship and then to defend whenever those people around us notice the joy and the hope that we possess in our hardship.

And what is really at the heart of all of that? Here's the hope. Jesus in his suffering has satisfied fully and sufficiently God's wrath against sinners.

[7:14] Jesus has triumphed over death, our greatest enemy, in his resurrection. And Jesus has the authority and power to deal decisively with all of our enemies, whether they be human enemies in this life or as Peter points out in verse 22, spiritual enemies, enemies unseen, demonic powers and authorities who rule and reign in this world.

And what's the point? That as we suffer for righteousness sake, Peter once again causes us to fix our eyes entirely on Jesus Christ, who is our hope, who suffered as we do, yet won something wonderful.

In his suffering that we could never win. He is our victor. Now I want to show you three truths of Christ's victory in this text. I want to point out the grounds of his victory.

I want to show you the Christians share in that victory, how we might actually become victors ourselves in Christ. And then I want to show you the assurance of Christ's victory that's here in the text.

Let's start with the first one, the grounds for Christ's victory, which is in verse 18. Let's look at it again together. 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.

[8:52] Now, the first word here is important. And oftentimes in these verses, it is. For is the signal that what Peter now says is intended to be the grounds for everything else that he's been saying in this section.

Suffering has been the main idea. And now he's drawing our attention to Christ's suffering for us. He's been talking about our suffering for Christ.

And now at the end, he says, now let's consider Christ's suffering for us. So that we understand, even in Peter's understanding and what was the understanding of these Christians, that suffering for Christ, suffering for the faith, when we do that, we share in Christ's sufferings.

We follow in his steps. And the outworking of that, as we see in the New Testament, is that if we share in Christ's sufferings, we will also share in Christ's glory.

Now, let me just read you an excerpt from Romans chapter 8. This is Paul's picking up on this idea there. He says, Now, here's the key that Paul puts in there.

[10:22] He says, Provided that we suffer with him, so that the result of that perseverance and suffering will end in us being glorified with him.

And then he says, For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not even worthy to be compared to the glories that will be revealed to us. When we suffer for the faith, we walk in the

footsteps of Jesus.

We share in his sufferings. And when we share in his sufferings, we are promised by him that we will also share in his glories. So Peter tells us right at the very beginning, there is something to Christ's suffering and our suffering that we need to link together, that we need to understand in conjunction together.

Indeed, all of our sufferings should be understood in light of Christ's suffering. And Christ's suffering is something that is repeatedly highlighted throughout the letter.

Maybe it would be helpful for us just to see the string of passages that Peter uses here to speak of Christ's suffering. Let's just walk through them. Look first at chapter 1. Chapter 1, verse 10.

[11:39] Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours, inquired what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted what?

The sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. Move your eyes down to verse 18. Knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

Look now at chapter 2 and verse 21. For to this, that is suffering, for to this you have been called because Christ also suffered for you.

Flip over to chapter 4 and verse 1. Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking.

Look again at chapter 4 and verse 13 now. Rejoice in so far as you share in Christ's sufferings that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

[12:53] Chapter 5 and verse 1. Peter says, I exhort the elders among you as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed.

Our sufferings, Peter says essentially, is to always be viewed in light of Christ's sufferings. And what is the natural outworking of that? Well, it should be perseverance.

We persist in the faith because Christ suffered for us and defeated death on our behalf. We keep our focus on the gospel. And that's the whole train of thought working through this section.

Yes, we may suffer for Christ's sake. But what do we do fundamentally when that happens? We remember that Christ has suffered for our sake. We share in his sufferings so that we might also share in his victory.

But then again, we're reminded here in verse 18, as Peter often reminds us, that Christ's suffering is unique and distinct from ours.

[14:01] He says, Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous. Now, that's different than the way that we suffer. That he suffered once for sins is drawing our focus on the atoning nature of Christ's crucifixion.

Jesus, the righteous one, suffered in the place of those who are unrighteous. Why?

He tells us. So that he, Jesus, the victor, might bring us, the unrighteous ones, to God.

So that being put to death in the flesh, Jesus satisfied the wrath of the Father against sinners. And we can be assured of the sufficiency of that sacrifice because the Holy Spirit raised him from the dead.

That's what Peter says. Christ suffered, but his suffering is different. He was the righteous one who suffered for the unrighteous so that he could establish peace and reconciliation between sinners and a righteous God.

[15:13] And how did he do that? By being put to death in the flesh in his crucifixion and then subsequently raised by the power of the Holy Spirit.

What is the grounds of this victory that Christ has won? What is the grounds of this victory that we hope to share in? It is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It is his atonement that he made in the shedding of his blood. And it is the show of sufficiency in that atonement that we see in his resurrection.

We have peace with God through the victory Christ has won in his death and resurrection. Now, why is Peter bringing this up again? It is the fact that Jesus died and rose.

Have you ever gotten over the fact that Jesus died and rose? Does that mean anything to you? I heard somebody the other day, they asked an apologist.

[16:17] They said, what is it that just, you're so attracted to Christianity? I don't know that his answer was really a helpful answer, but here's how he responded.

He said, you know, I just have this personal policy that whenever someone predicts their own death and resurrection and then follows through on it, I'm just going to kind of go along with what they say. You know, that's kind of the essence of what we're getting at here with Christianity.

When we're awakened to the significance of what Christ's suffering actually was and what it accomplished and the truth of his resurrection, there is something to that. We can't get away from it. Peter can't get away from it. Why is he bringing it up again? Well, he's just reminded the suffering Christians here that though they may suffer for righteousness sake in this life, he's acknowledging this life might get really, really hard for you because you're a Christian.

He said, though, you will be blessed in the judgment. Now, how will they be assured that that blessing and judgment will actually come? It won't be because they look at their own life and say, well, I'm doing pretty good.

[17:27] Now that I'm a Christian, I'm living a really good life and I think God will honor that. That's not the assurance. What's the assurance? That Christ died for my sins and rose from the dead.

That's the assurance. How can I be assured of a future blessing, of a future inheritance? Not because of you, but because of Christ the victor.

Peter's just told them that no matter how difficult it gets, they must not fear their enemies, but they must continually, faithfully follow Jesus as Lord.

He's just exhorted them to display true gospel hope and defended and asked when asked. And now in this section, he's grounding that instruction in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

He's grounding our hope in Christ the victor so that we can endure because Christ also suffered once for sins that he might bring us to God.

[18:27] That's the grounds of our hope. That's how he won victory. And if that isn't true, then we have no victory in which we might share. So the grounds for Christ's victory, his death and his resurrection.

Let's look at the second thing here. We see next the Christians sharing in Christ's victory. The Christians share in Christ's victory.

Let's read verses 19 to 21. Christ was made alive in the spirit. That is, the Holy Spirit raised him from the dead.

In which, in the spirit, 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.

[19:30] 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.

Now, if Jesus suffered once for sins to bring us to God, how can we then share in that victory? How can that victory be ours when we're not the ones who want it?

How do we receive the benefits of the salvation Christ has won in his resurrection? This is fundamentally, this is the question that Peter is answering here in these verses.

He's doing it with an illustration. But the simple answer is this, just so that we know before we dig into some of the complexities here. The simple answer is this, we receive the benefits of Christ's victory through faith in the salvation that he has provided.

We receive the benefits of the salvation that Christ has won through faith in the salvation that he has provided.

[20:37] And of course, the outworking of that means this faith includes repentance. There's a turning away in order to turn to Christ. That's represented here as well.

But there's also a seal to this. A seal, a signifying act that we have turned and trusted Christ.

And we see here that that is baptism, which is really important to this text. Now, let's dig a little deeper to see how Peter's making his argument.

When Peter thought of the circumstances of these Christians in Asia Minor, notice his mind went to who? Noah. That's a surprise, right?

You're reading through this letter. Suddenly Noah appears. That's kind of unexpected, right? What does that tell us? That tells us that Peter is contemplating what these Christians are going through.

[21:32] And he begins to think, you know, this is a lot like what was happening with Noah and what they're experiencing now is a lot what is happening. He uses Noah as an illustration of their own life, of their own sufferings, but of their own salvation.

That's really what's happening here. Like the people to whom Peter wrote, Noah was a religious minority who feared God and trusted God's word.

And throughout the time that he built the ark, we understand Noah to have had to provide an answer to others who were asking about what they perceived to be a really foolish thing on his part. Well, you're saying, what's going to happen, Noah? You're building what, Noah? Why on earth would you do that? Why would you trust this God?

And what is Noah that the writer of Hebrews calls him that preacher of righteousness? What is he doing there in that time? He's providing an answer for those who come and ask about this hope that he may have of this coming judgment that they don't believe will actually come.

[22:46] That sounds a little bit familiar, doesn't it? This is how we're to understand verse 19, I think. When Peter says that Jesus went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, I think what he means to say here is that in the same power of the spirit that raised him from the dead, Jesus preached God's judgment and God's salvation through the prophetic voice of Noah.

Jesus preached through Noah in the power of the spirit. Now, Peter's already given us a clue in this letter about how this works.

Flip back over to chapter 1. He's telling us all throughout the letter how he reads his Old Testament. Look at verse 10 again of chapter 1.

We read it a moment ago. Let's read it again. Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully.

And we understand Noah to be a prophetic voice in the Old Testament in Genesis. Verse 11. Now, let's pause there for a second.

[24:16] Peter's cluing us in here, isn't he? That the spirit of Christ was active in proclaiming the shadow of the gospel through the prophets of old.

They understood the spirit of the Christ, the Holy Spirit of God, speaking through them prophetically as they pronounced the word of God. Now, I think that's what he means Noah was doing.

That as Noah was preaching this hope and preaching this judgment and preaching this potential for salvation on the ark, it was the spirit of God in the prophetic voice of Noah speaking and preaching through Noah in those moments.

Now, keep reading in chapter 1. He links it for us in verse 12 to now. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you, the gospel to you, by who?

By the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Things into which angels long to look. Now, I think this is the explanation for that kind of the obscure and mysterious voice, the verse of verse 19.

[25:31] That in the same power of the spirit that raised Jesus from the dead, the spirit was preaching prophetically through the prophets of old, and that included Noah. Those who disobeyed Noah's preaching, spirit-filled preaching, were judged in the waters of the flood.

While those who obeyed the spirit-filled preaching of Noah were saved in the ark. Peter understood the story of Noah as we get back to chapter 3 now.

Peter understood the story of Noah typologically. That is, it was a shadow pointing forward to salvation in Jesus Christ.

The waters of the flood represent God's judgment on sin, God's judgment of sinners. The ark represents God's providential means of salvation.

Noah and his family represent those who believe God's word regarding his coming judgment and his means of salvation.

[26:41] So you see, there is judgment coming. That's the flood. God, God, not Noah, God has provided a means of salvation in an ark.

Those who will believe God's warning of judgment and will turn to his provision of salvation do what? They get on the ark and they're saved.

Peter now links that to believers' baptism. Now look at it again in verse 21. Baptism, he says, which corresponds to this, corresponds to this whole typological look at the story of Noah, now saves you. The ark saved Noah. Baptism saves you, he says. Baptism saves you, he says. Well, that's confusing, isn't it? Well, we can understand this.

He doesn't mean that there is a saving effect to the physical act of baptism. That's not what he's saying. In fact, he clarifies it in the next phrase.

[27:52] Baptism now saves you, in case you misunderstand, not as a removal of dirt from the body. It's not the thing physical that is providing some type of justification to you.

That's not what I mean. Rather, he's emphasizing what is signified in baptism. What is signified by the one who is being baptized into Christ.

Now, if you'll just allow me, I diverge in here for just a moment. Let's get some clarity here before we move on to the way he's using this as an illustration. Baptism, we understand, is not a justifying act.

That is, justification is when God declares us righteous. And we are not declared righteous by God based on anything we do.

We are justified by faith alone in what Christ has done. Not any works that we would do, even religious works that God commands.

[28:58] So, baptism is not justifying. However, and please hear me clearly. It is, still yet, essential to one's conversion.

Not as a justifying work, but as a seal. A signifying act of what God is doing in the heart of the individual who has come to him in baptism.

Let's think of it in contrast for a moment. I don't know when this happened or I don't know why it's happened this way. But typically, in modern evangelicalism, when we think of conversion, we think of the seal of one's conversion.

Or the ultimate signal of one's conversion in what we call the sinner's prayer. Right? We say, well, you're saved by faith. You repent of your sins.

You trust in Christ. And that is sealed. That act of faith and repentance is sealed in what we call the sinner's prayer. Please don't be mad at me.

[30:08] There is no sinner's prayer. There's no sinner's prayer in the Bible. It doesn't exist. It's not there anywhere. Okay? But somewhere along the way, we have taken baptism and church membership and communion and all of the benefits of what comes as a result of our conversion.

We set them over here as this thing. Kind of a separate thing. But over here is what true conversion is. And it's repentance and it's faith, which is signified and sealed by a prayer.

And we show this in our evangelistic efforts. Right? We teach somebody the gospel. We tell them about Jesus. And they say, well, what must I do to be saved? And we say, well, let's pray.

And you just cry out to the Lord. Tell them that you're sorry that you're a sinner. That you are trusting in Christ as a sufficient atonement. And as they go through that prayer, we say, okay, now you're a Christian.

Okay? I'm not saying the sinner's prayer is bad. I think it can be really helpful. All I'm saying is that the thing that the New Testament shows as the seal of that conversion is not a prayer.

[31:13] It's baptism. It's baptism. So that as we go through our New Testaments and we begin to see Peter and the other apostles are preaching, people are convicted of the heart.

And they many times will respond to the apostles and they'll say, Peter, what must I do to be saved? And what is it that Peter always says? Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. What is it that Paul says to the Philippian jailer? What must I do, Paul, to be saved? He says, repent and be baptized. Not because going into the water and coming out of the water has some type of

mystical saving effect.

But the New Testament understands baptism the way that we have more recently understood the sinner's prayer. That the seal of that, the signifying act, is not to say a particular prayer.

It's to go into the waters of baptism that Jesus commanded to be the seal and the sign of our salvation. Which means in the practical outworking of that, how are we to understand baptism?

[32:15] How are we to practice baptism even as a church? A couple of things. One, we must defend and confirm justification by faith alone.

That it's not baptism itself, the physical act of it, that is a justifying work in your life. In other words, we can truly say someone can trust Christ, not be baptized, and go to heaven.

Because it's not that physical act that is justifying. We can also say someone can be baptized and go to hell. Why? Because it's not baptism.

It's not a physical act that is justifying. It's not contributing to their justification. So we must defend and confirm justification by faith alone. Second, following from that, we must affirm and defend baptism, not as kind of this optional thing you can do.

Like here's the base subscription over here. You repent and believe and do the sinner's prayer. And here's the plus subscription over here. Which is baptism and church membership and communion.

The Bible doesn't understand it like that.

[33:30] We must affirm and defend baptism as an essential seal and sign of one's conversion. Again, not as a justifying act, but as the thing that Jesus has said, this is what shows, this is what professes that you actually are following me.

Third, we must not cheapen the ordinance of baptism with gimmicks.

We must not cheapen it with gimmicks. I am all for goals that are evangelistic in nature. We want to share the gospel. We want to preach the truth.

We want to pray for God to bring fruitfulness. But as soon as we turn baptism in a profession of faith into a gimmick, that is, on this particular day, we want to have 100 baptisms.

So let's do everything we can to get 100 people to get in the water on this particular day. We've started to cheapen something that Jesus taught us was a serious sign and seal of one's genuine conversion to the faith.

[34:43] We need to be careful with that. And the outworking of that, to take it even further. We need to be really careful and wise as we rejoice and bring people into the act of baptism in our church.

That's why we don't do spontaneous baptisms, which is to say we get to the end of a service and just say, okay, if anyone wants to be baptized today, come on up. We're going to get you in the water, right?

We're going to get you in the water. I don't know that that's a careful and wise way to handle such an important thing. What do we want it to do?

We want to say, if you want to be baptized, let's talk about what the gospel is. And we want to hear that you actually believe the gospel. We don't want our church to put an affirming seal of salvation on someone who doesn't follow Jesus.

We need to be careful about that. Which means that we need to be really careful even when we start thinking about baptism for our kids. As a parent, I want nothing more than for my children to love Jesus and to understand the truth and to be faithful to the Lord.

[36:06] I want that so much. I can tell you I don't want it more than Jesus wants it. But I want it. I also understand as a parent that particularly when they're younger, they want to be like us.

They trust us more than they trust anyone else. And they will believe everything that we believe, whether it's true or not. Because they trust us. And my concern is that sometimes we might be so quick to rush our kids into something like baptism.

Because we think if this is the thing that actually does it for them. And that my mind and my soul can rest if I can just get them into the baptismal pool.

And we lead them through a sinner's prayer when they're quite young. And of course, they're affirming of those things. And we end up hurting them in the long run, I think. Because we've put a seal of assurance of salvation on their lives that I don't know that they actually quite understand yet.

And I think we need to be careful about that. I'm not suggesting that we say, okay, when you turn 18, you're finally allowed to get baptized. That's not what I mean. I only mean to say that when it comes to this, we must affirm every inclination of faith that our children have.

[37:35] We must affirm when they want to be like Jesus, when they want to follow Jesus. But we also must be careful to acknowledge that when they come to Christ, that they're truly coming to Christ, not coming to us.

And attaching themselves to Christ by virtue of their love for us. But that they're actually owning their faith, not coming along with ours. That was a big diversion.

But I think it's important. Baptism is not justifying, doesn't make you saved. But the Bible does present it as a very essential part of one's conversion, the seal and the sign of conversion.

And we need to hold it and honor it the way that the Bible does. Now, let's move on from that. Like the flood. Let's think about the illustration now that Peter's doing. Like the flood, the waters of baptism represent death.

They represent the judgment of sin. Paul tells us this in Romans 6. Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

[38:47] 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 the waters of baptism, what is that symbolizing? What's it signifying? Death and death in Christ. And if the water points to death and judgment, Jesus then is the providential means of salvation to carry us through the waters of judgment.

We might say it this way. Perhaps you've said this before. You've heard it before. Jesus is the ark of our salvation. He's the ark of our salvation.

He is the ark that delivers us through the waters of judgment. How does he actually do that? Well, he does it by taking the judgment of sin upon himself so that when we come to him in faith, we are buried with him in baptism.

That is, our sins and our flesh are put to death with Christ on the cross. Why? What's the saving effect of that? So that when we are brought out of the water, it is not only our death in Christ that is signified, but it is that through his resurrection, we now share in his life.

[40:09] So whenever we go over to Kathy and Terry's house and we have a baptism, you've heard me say it before. When they go in the water, what is it that I say? Buried in the likeness of his death.

When they come out, what is it that we say? Raised in the likeness of his resurrection. What does that actually do? It's why we don't sprinkle. It's why we don't do pour overs. Why? Because the immersion in the water is significant to what it's representing.

We are buried with him in his death. Our old man is put to death. Our sin is put to death on the cross of Christ. We are raised in his resurrection. That is where our hope is.

Noah and his family received the salvation of God through faith. They believed the message of judgment. They believed God's provision of salvation in the ark.

And their faith is seen in the fact that they got on the boat. They got on the boat. They believed God. They boarded the ark before the judgment came.

[41:10] And so it is with those who share in Christ's suffering. That's a long way of answering that question, isn't it? How do we share in Christ's suffering? We believe God's word. And we trust in what God has provided for our salvation.

Which we found in verse 18. Is the atoning death of Jesus Christ and his subsequent resurrection. Which is then signified, not provided, but signified in baptism.

This is how one shares in Christ's victory. Through repentance and faith in him. Now that brings us to the third and final thing. We see in verse 22 the endless assurance of Christ's victory.

The endless assurance of Christ's victory. Verse 22. Christ, after his resurrection, has gone into heaven. That's his ascension. Acts 1.

He has gone into heaven. He is at the right hand of God. Angels and authorities and powers. Having been what? Subjected.

[42:21] Subjected to him. Now we're familiar with that word now, aren't we? We've heard it a number of times in this section in Peter's letter.

In the last two chapters, he's been instructing our subjection.

He said that we are to be subject to certain authorities. And of course, the context of that is we are to be subject to them even when they are wicked and sometimes abusive toward us on account of our faith.

That's the context of the suffering in this letter. So why would Peter bring this up here? Why would he talk about this kind of subjection here? You can see it, can't you? What gives us hope in our suffering?

That all of those who would persecute us now are subject to one who is greater. Every one of them. While he instructs us to submit to earthly authorities, Peter reminds us that all authorities, spiritual powers even beyond our comprehension, are subject to the rule and the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ.

They may threaten, they may afflict us now. They will ultimately answer to the victor who has won our salvation and will judge all of our enemies.

[43:36] What an assurance and comfort that must have been to these suffering Christians. They are struggling. They probably feel like they're barely holding on at this point because of the suffering that they're enduring for the sake of Christ.

And now Peter reminds them, not only has Christ truly provided your salvation, signified in your profession of faith and baptism, but he sits at the right hand of God and he rules over every power. They're all subject to him. And as we go to 1 Corinthians 15, we understand the last enemy to be defeated, death. It's all subject to him. Our victory in him is assured by his exalted place at the right hand of the Father.

And here is that crucial part of the gospel message that is often neglected. It is the exaltation of Jesus, signified in his ascension to heaven, that assures us of his victory and of our share in it. Now to know that our Lord and Savior sits even now upon the throne should comfort us. That was always a part of Peter's preaching in Acts chapter 2.

[44:48] This Jesus God raised up and of that we are all witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucify.

This is how the apostles preached the gospel. What will assure us in our time of exile? Well, certainly the truth of Jesus' death and resurrection. But let's not forget about his eternal reign. His is not a victory that must be defended at another time. No, he is Lord forever and ever. And one day every knee will bow before him. So we can take heart that our Lord reigns on the throne. And he reigns over all of our enemies. Now let's wrap it up. The grounds for victory are the atonement for sin that Jesus made on the cross and his resurrection from the dead.

[45:57] The assurance of that victory is that he visibly ascended into heaven where he now sits enthroned at the right hand of the Father.

However, the share in that victory is only for those who will acknowledge that Jesus is the ark of salvation sent by the Father to bring us through the waters of judgment.

And as I quoted before in Acts chapter 2, that's exactly what happened. The people heard that message of Jesus' death and resurrection and exaltation. And they were cut to the heart, Peter, Luke says.

And they asked Peter, what must we do? What do we do now? And he says, repent and be baptized. And then it says, all who believed his word, all who believed and were justified by faith, perhaps even crying out to God in a sinner's prayer, were then baptized.

That was the seal. And they were added to the church and then welcomed to the table. Jesus is the victor. The question, though, is he your victor?

[47:13] And what I mean is, are you personally sharing in the victory that he has won? And you say, how can I? Will you come to him in faith? And when you come to him in faith, you will have a full and eternal share in his life.

And what does that mean for the rest of us that have trusted in him and are trusting in him? Well, it means we can take courage. This is the hope that we are to display. And this is the hope that we are to defend. And we are to persevere in that, keeping our eyes on Jesus, patiently waiting for his return. Let's go.