

Lesson 19: The Triumph of Christ's Suffering

1 Peter 3:18-22, **"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."**

We closed our last lesson by once again considering the sovereignty of God in suffering. We were careful to recall Romans 8:28 (for the zillionth time here at EBC) that God does not bring trials and persecution into our lives unnecessarily, but always for our good and His glory. In this lesson we'll reach Peter climax (or mountain peak if you wish) of suffering, that being the triumphant purpose of God in the unjust suffering of Jesus Christ. We all love the story of Joseph over the final chapters of the book of Genesis. And who can forget the words of Joseph to his brothers right at the end of the book, Genesis 50:19-20, **"But Joseph said to them, 'Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.'**" Joseph (being a type of Christ) had all sorts of unjust suffering, trials and persecution thrown his way, and yet in the end we see God's redemptive purpose through it all. God allowed the wicked intentions of his brothers to play out in his life for the greater good of the Hebrew nation. This a picture (a type) of what would happen to Christ. As Joseph was betrayed by his brothers, and left for what they considered was his death, so Christ was betrayed by His people and put to death. As Joseph was elevated to a position of power, where he was able to sustain the life of his people, so Christ was seated at the right hand of the Father, where His resurrection from the dead paid the penalty for the sins of His people. There are many such types throughout scripture. Everything in scripture point forwards and backwards to Jesus Christ. At the cross, the people had fulfilled their will (their hearts desire) in murdering Jesus Christ, and God the Father also fulfilled His will (His hearts desire) in dealing out His wrath upon the sins of His people, thus saving them in the process. At the cross ultimately, and therefore in every lesser instance, we see people sinning of their own volition, and God working His will through every episode of suffering. If God worked the greatest good out of the greatest injustice and suffering the world has ever known at the cross, how much confidence does that give us that God is working good out of how we're suffering today? As we think about the good that came out of the murder of Jesus Christ, let's consider four elements from our text this lesson that show the ultimate good that came out of it: (Four S's: Sin-Bearing, Sermon, Salvation, and Supremacy).

The first "S" that we see from our text is the 'Sin-Bearing' victory of Jesus at the cross, **"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God."** As we mention often here at Emmanuel, we must pay close attention to connector words like "For". When we see a connector word like "for" we know that the writer is connecting the last thought to this one. And Peter has just been writing about our unjust suffering for doing good. So therefore, we shouldn't be discouraged or surprised when we suffer unjustly, that's the way that our Lord suffered, and for a good purpose. The "suffering" that Peter writes in this verse is sometimes translated "died", nevertheless I think it's plainly obvious by the context of the passage that the suffering of Christ we're talking about is His suffering to death on the cross. The death that Jesus died on our behalf, this sin-bearing death, was

intentionally and specifically done for us. Matthew 26:26-28, **"Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'"** John 1:29, **"The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'"** Jesus said in John 10:11-15, **"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep."** Romans 5:8-11, **"But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."** Ephesians 2:13-16, **"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility."**

We could easily spend Sunday after Sunday simply reading and thinking about the passages that teach us about Christ our sin-bearer. Peter says that **"Christ suffered once for sins"**, an important phrase that we understand. The pictorial sin-offering offered all throughout the Old Testament era of history was a symbol of the sacrifice of Christ to come. Let's read Hebrews 9:11-28. And a few verses later in Hebrews 10:5-10 we read, **"Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, 'Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'"** When he said above, **"You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings"** (these are offered according to the law), then he added, **"Behold, I have come to do your will."** He does away with the first in order to establish the second. **And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."** The voluntary sacrifice of the life of Jesus Christ was an atoning sacrifice, a sufficient sacrifice. I love the Greek word that we translated "once" from. The word is *hapax*, which has the meaning of not requiring any repetition. The sacrifice of Christ satisfied the requirement of God's penalty, it extinguished (or exhausted) the wrath of God which was previously directed towards those who sinned against Him. Hebrews 10:11-14, **"And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified."**

Peter goes on to say that this one time, sufficient sacrifice of Christ was substitutionary, **"the righteous for the unrighteous."** 2 Corinthians 5:21, **"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."** Peter tells us that the greatest injustice in

human history (the murder of perfect God-man) actually resulted in the greatest triumph of our salvation! What an encouragement this ought to be to us! The triumph is expressed by Peter when he writes, **“That He might bring us to God.”** When Christ died on the cross, **“the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.”** (Matt. 27:51) In other words, where there was once a wall of division between God and man, there was now granted access. The wall that protected man from entering into the Holy of Holies, where he would surely die because of his sin, was made available to mankind because the sin-debt was now paid. Where limited access was only granted to the High Priest after much preparation, and only at certain times, full access was now granted to the priesthood of all believers, as the work of preparation was complete.

The second “S” that we’ll discuss in this lesson is the triumphant Sermon of Christ. 1 Peter 3:18-20, **“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.”** Many skeptics of Christianity argue that it is impossible for a dead man to rise back to life. They would say that there was some conspiracy on the cross where he didn’t die, and when he was nursed back to health, people worshipped him as resurrected. We know from scripture that Jesus Christ died on the cross. John 19:31-33, **“Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.”** Crucifixion was a lengthy, agonizing, tortuous death. Those victims would push themselves up on their legs to allow their lungs to take another breath. To quicken the process, they would break their legs disallowing them to come up for air, ending the suffering. Such was necessary the men on the left and right of Christ, but was unnecessary for Christ as He has already died. In order to determine that he was indeed dead, **“One of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.”** (John 19:34) The presence of both blood and water was a physiological sign that there was no life.

There was no doubt that Jesus was put to death in the flesh, next Peter writes that He was **“made alive in the spirit.”** The “s” in spirit is not capitalized, which is one clue to us as the reader that Peter is not referencing being made alive in the Holy Spirit, but rather His eternal spiritual life. (To that end, I take issue with ESV not capitalizing “He” and “Him” when the scripture does reference God. I cut my teeth in the faith with the NASB translation that did include those capital letters.) The spiritual life of Christ certainly did not begin at his death, the spiritual life of Christ is from eternity past if you can grasp that concept. I believe the point of Peter’s words here are to say that although Jesus’ body died, his remained alive in His spirit.

Did Christ suffer a spiritual death on the cross? Not in the sense that death brings an end of existence, but yes in the sense that His death brought about a separation in the Godhead for the first and only time in history. Do you remember the words of our Lord on the cross in Matthew 27:46, **“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”** For the first and only time in history, the God-man (who in every way lived the most dependant life on the Father) experienced the Father’s full wrath for all of the sins of all of the people who would ever be called by God. For that brief moment, Jesus Christ was treated as though the most vile unbelieving God-hater would be. The brief moment of separation from God is categorically what spiritual death is, but that brief moment ended when Christ conquered sin and death!

Next we read, **“in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison.”** The words imply that Jesus went from one place to another place in His spirit while his physical body lay dead, which I believe is easily understood by a plain reading of the text. What I do think is perhaps misinterpreted is the proclamation that Christ made to those spirits in prison. Some have interpreted Christ to have gone and proclaimed the gospel to those had previously dead in an evangelistic sense, but that’s not the meaning of the original Greek word. If evangelism were the heart of Christ, than that very specific word would have been used. The word that is used (“kerusso”) is world that speak of proclaiming victory, therefore Jesus went and proclaimed His victory over sin, death, Satan and all his demons to His enemies that were in prison. Christ has defeated sin, and in Him, so have we, Romans 6:5-6, **“For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.”** Christ has defeated death, Romans 6:9-10, **“We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.”** 1 Corinthians 15:54-57, **“When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”** Christ has defeated Satan, Genesis 3:15, **“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”** Hebrews 2:14, **“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.”**

It’s also important to note the word ‘spirits’ used here is never used in reference to humanity, but those spirit beings of old. If people had in mind those people who had died in history past, there was a specific word that he could have chosen. This proclamation of victory was made specifically to the spiritual world of darkness and opposition to His rule and reign and authority. Sometime before the events of Genesis 1 (we’re not told exactly how long before) there was an eternal breach in the heavenly order, as Satan and those angels who were likeminded fell into sin. From that moment onward until today there has been a conflict between good and evil, between holiness and unholiness. Satan has attempted to establish his wicked rule here on the earth with the help of those fallen angels, his first attempt being to tempt Eve in the garden by doubting God’s goodness, wisdom, and law. As we read in that last paragraph, from that early moment in human history, a divine promise was made to Satan that he would ultimately be crushed for his wicked rebellion. Satan and his whole system is on borrowed time, since the victory has already been won. From the issuing of that promise that the Crusher would come from the woman’s seed, Satan made every effort to extinguish the people of God. We know from scripture, and clearly see in the example of Job, that Satan’s efforts to seek and destroy can only go as far as the Lord allows him to go. Satan attempted to destroy Israel in the Old Testament, he tried to destroy the Messianic line during the time of Joash in 2 Chronicles 22-23. When that plan backfired, and the Messiah eventually was born, in panic he made an attempt to murder Jesus as a baby. Matthew 2:16-18, **“Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: “A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.”** When that plan

backfired, he attempted to lure Jesus to come and be subject to him and his plan in Matthew 4:1-11, **“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.’ But he answered, ‘It is written, ‘ ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ ” Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, ‘ ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and ‘ ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’ ” Jesus said to him, ‘Again it is written, ‘ ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’ ” Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, ‘All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.’ ” Then Jesus said to him, ‘Be gone, Satan! For it is written, ‘ ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’ ” Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.”** And when that plan backfired, Satan murdered Jesus to finally be rid of Him before He could come to power, Mark 15:6-15. Guards were put outside of the tomb of Jesus by the direction of Satan no doubt, so as to protect any possibility that these people who continue in their worship and adoration of Christ, Matthew 27:62-66, **“The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, ‘Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise.’ Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last fraud will be worse than the first.” Pilate said to them, ‘You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can.’ So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.”** And then that plan backfired. Can you imagine the jubilation that was happened within the spirit realm of the demonic world at the moment of the death of Christ? After one failed attempt to thwart their prophetic doom after another, they finally managed to kill Him! They must have been ecstatic at their victory over holiness, that is until Jesus showed up at the party. Jesus showed up proclaiming to them that it was over, He had won!

Christ has defeated sin, death, Satan, his demons, even Hell itself. There is an expiration date that is set upon all of those things. The time of Christ’s return to fully and finally bind and remove those things is set. When that time is, no one but God knows, but we know that today isn’t the day (at least up to this point today) because God is still busy building His church. There will come a day when the last name that the Father recorded in the Lamb’s Book of Life from before the foundation of the world will be called to Himself, when every single person who’s sin was blotted out on the cross will be saved, and then final judgment will come. Christ will not lose any from His hand whom He died for.

Until that final day comes, we will continue to battle sin in our lives. While our hearts are now flesh where they were once stone, we still battle an indwelling sin nature—that dead man that drags behind us. While we are now in Christ, we still live in a world that is under the domain of the Prince of the Power of the Air. Ephesians 6:12, **“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”** While we must not concern ourselves with dealing with these forces, attempting to communicate with them by ordering them around, we must be wise and understand that we’re now caught up in the middle of a spiritual war between two opposing sides, and our new-found allegiance to Christ has just placed a target on our back. Satan would love nothing more

than to see us break our allegiance to Christ and curse His name. Satan would bring anything he could into our lives to discourage our trust in Christ. It is important that we remember that there is an opposition that we're up against. While this is slightly off-topic, as we're considering our spiritual enemies, it might be helpful to think through what they're not. There is only one being like our God. There are many attributes that our God has that no one else in the created order does, including Satan. Satan and his demons are not omnipresent, they can only be in one location at a time. They're not omniscient, they don't know what you're thinking, they don't have perfect recall of all you've been through, most likely, Satan has never heard of you before. Satan and his demons are not omnipotent, they have a level of strength that's been granted them by God for a season. Those truths are important to balance in within our theology because we want to be careful to brush off the reality of our spiritual enemies (since we deem they're not significant), but we also don't want the other end of the spectrum where we fear them as though they're an opposing deity.

Let's gravitate back to our text in 1 Peter now. Peter says that Christ went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison. That's important to note, even as we've just considered the fact that these beings are just as confined to being in one place at one time as we are. We conclude then that there are some fallen angels who are freely roaming around the Earth carrying out the desires of their father, the Devil, and there are some fallen angels who have been bound into a prison. It was these demons that Christ went and proclaimed too. The Bible is very informative about this group of bound spirits. Let's read more from Revelation 9:1-2, **"And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft."** As the fifth angel blows his trumpet, the fallen star (Satan) was given the key (as he's only permitted to do every act) to open the bottomless pit. This bottomless pit is the prison house where Christ proclaimed victory. For the sake of a more thorough study of this bottomless pit, let's read where else it's mentioned in Revelation 9:11, **"They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon."** The angel of the bottomless pit is Satan, and his servants are those spirits bound within. Revelation 11:7, **"And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them."** Revelation 17:8, **"The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction. And the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel to see the beast, because it was and is not and is to come."** I'm most definitely not trying to exegete each passage where the pit is mentioned, but I am trying to help convince you that this pit is the dwelling place where these demonic forces have been bound and are permitted to come forth from in the last days.

In Peter's second epistle, he writes about this pit of darkness, 2 Peter 2:4, **"For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment."** We clearly see reference to the sovereign work of God to incarcerate a definite number of these fallen angels into this prison. Let's pause for a paragraph and think about Peter's expression "but cast them into hell". Jesus mentioned Hell in many places, but let's look at Matthew 5:22, **"But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire."** It's always much more helpful for us to consider the original inscripturated

words that were penned in these verses. The word for Hell that Jesus chose was “Gehenna”, derived from a Hebrew phrase meaning ‘Valley of Hinnom,’ a ravine running along the south side of Jerusalem and a place where the rubbish from the city was constantly being burned. When Jesus linked the eternal judgment of God to the Valley of Hinnom, everyone got the message. They would have recoiled at the thought of the rotten stench of every-burning refuse. Peter however does not use this metaphor in his second epistle. He used a metaphor from Greek mythology that would have equally been understood and helpful to the reader. The word for Hell that he used was Tartarus. Tartarus was the place in Greek literature where the worst sinners who had offended the gods personally went after their death for eternal punishment. While Tartarus is a fictional place from a false system, and both Peter and his readers knew that, the word does convey the idea that this bottomless pit is filled with the those who have committed the most heinous of sinful acts.

We can conclude then that these demons are of a category of evil and wickedness that the world will ever see. They are so vile and base that God saw in His wisdom to protect the Earth from their influence until the time of the last days. Jude wrote more about this in his short epistle in verses 6 and 7, **“And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.”**

Peter continues in 1 Peter 3:20, **“because they formerly did not obey.”** Jude alluded to a breach in obedience, where they did not stay within their ranks. What was the disobedience that Jude and Peter speak of that led to their eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day? Peter’s about to tell us that it happened in the days of Noah. Let’s read Genesis 6:1-4, **“When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. Then the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years.” The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown.”** What happened in Genesis 6 was an act of sin that was so vile that it led to their imprisonment in the bottomless pit. The demons took upon themselves to procreate with women and wickedly influence future generations of mankind. We see two categories of beings placed beside one another: “The sons of God” and “the daughters of men”. A helpful distinction for us is to note that we’re not talking about two categories of humanity. If those sons were human, they would be called “the sons of men”. Some have argued that what is intended in this wording is that righteous men procreated with unrighteous women, but again there is no scriptural basis for this interpretation. The term “son of God” is certainly no stranger to the Bible. Every time the expression “son of God” is used in the Old Testament, it’s always in reference to an angel. The expression defines a being that was brought into being by the direct creation of God. Using the definition understood everywhere else in the Old Testament, it’s simple to understand that the wicked act in Genesis 6 is angels procreating with humanity. It’s also worth noting the expression “came in to the daughters of men”. The Hebrew word used is a word used to describe marriage. This act done here was not simply an act of rape on these women, or some act of sinful fornication on both parts, this act cut even deeper, these demons took these women as their wives. How could a demon possibly marry a woman? They would obviously have to dwell in a human body, as angels have done, and still do. These demons had children with those

women, creating a race of humanity that possessed the demonic influence within them. Quickly in Genesis 6, the world became a wicked and dangerous place, so much so that that we must read the very next verses that are penned by Moses directly after speaking about this sin, Genesis 6:5-8, **"The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the LORD said, 'I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.' But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD."** The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth. These people were open to the demonic influence upon them, and a new generation of demon-possessed people was populating the earth. Genesis 6:11-13, **"Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, 'I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth.'"**

The infiltration of demonic influence is a calculated, intellectual attack. The end of the demonic influence is to gain the cooperation of humanity in achieving the same goal of rebellion. Such was the plan from the very first temptation in the garden of Eden. Genesis 3:1-6, **"Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?' And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.' " But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate."**

Satan's point of attack was intellectual with Eve. He wanted her to think through God's motive in the law that was placed over her life. Was God really after her best interest? Or was He just keeping her from reaching her true potential? So Satan drops seeds of doubt into her mind which quickly grow into an act of rebellion against the command of God. He promised Eve that she would be like God, which is a promise that he repackages over and over again to people. The lie was that if Eve ate the fruit, she would be like God, in other words, she would be elevated in her insight to a supernatural level. This demonic promise has been whispered into the ears of many throughout history. Many false religions throughout history have been centered around vile sexual practice towards the end of reaching a higher level of spiritual existence.

It was the wicked spirits of this time that were sent to the abyss because they overstepped the boundaries of God's tolerance. These spirits have been imprisoned since before the time of the Flood. These are the ones that Christ visited in between His death and resurrection.

The third "S" that we see from our text in 1 Peter is "Salvation", found in verses 20-21, **"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."** We recognize that God takes no pleasure in the destruction of the wicked,

but desires that all would repent of their sins, trust in Christ and live. Even in that wicked time of Noah, God still had a plan to call sinner to repentance and save them. For one hundred and twenty years, the wicked on the earth watched as Noah and his family built the vessel that was designed by God to save them from the coming judgment. Do you remember what we just read a moment ago from Genesis 6:3? **“My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years.”** God’s coming judgment had a definite day of arrival, as does His day of final judgment, but until then there is a time of fair warning for those who will listen and turn away. In Peter’s second epistle, he calls Noah **“a herald of righteousness”** in 2:5. Of the entire mass of humanity that observed Noah and his family construction this vessel of salvation, none of them heeded the warning, a testimony to the extent of the wickedness of their hearts.

Next we read, **“Baptism, which corresponds to this”** which links the thought of finding safety from the coming judgment in the ark, with baptism. The two are similar in that they are both earthly signs of heavenly realities. The ark certainly prolonged the physical life of those onboard, but it was a picture yet still of the heavenly reality. Sin brings certain eternal judgment. In the earthly case of Noah, he was called to radical obedience. God was going to bring life-ending judgment by way of flooding waters at a time in history when it had never rained before. First, Noah and his family would have to trust that God would bring this judgment, and then they would have to construct this vessel exactly according to the specifications laid out to them. In other words, there was a prescribed way of thinking and doing things that God had provided for them, a salvation plan. They needed God’s gracious, condescending plan to come down upon them. Do we see how this was an earthly example of the spiritual reality of the need to trust in God for spiritual salvation? The ark only prolonged their physical life, but it did point them to the reality that they needed to be saved from the eternal judgment of their souls. Baptism corresponds to this in the same way. The water doesn’t save us, the Pastor doesn’t save us, our decision to be obedient doesn’t save us. We celebrate baptism because we’re obeying the command of God, but the earthly act is pointing us towards the heavenly reality that we’re trusting in the Savior who has saved us from His coming wrath.

So how do we (as good Baptists) handle the text that says that Baptism **“now saves you.”** There are many sects of Christian tradition (and I’ll include the RCC on this list in the most loosely “Christian” definition possible) who teach that Baptism saves a person. I hope that my last paragraph has helped us to reason through why the act alone of baptism does not save. But perhaps more time should be spent of building the case. In both cases, whether we are considering the Ark, or Baptism, Jesus Christ is the eternal one being pictured. In the time of the Flood, God was about to destroy the world, yet those protected in the Ark would be spared the coming drowning judgment. In Baptism, we are again finding our protection from the coming fiery judgment in Jesus Christ. In that respect, and that respect only, are those who are truly baptized in Christ saved. I underline that word to underscore the truth that the act saves no one. There are many who have gone through the waters of baptism for wrong motives, and we’re never truly interested in following Christ. But for those who have obediently been baptized as followers of Christ, they are His, they are protected, they are saved.

To help us understand that he’s not linking the act of water baptism with eternal salvation, Peter continues **“not as a removal of dirt from the body”**. Peter is careful to remove the element of water from the mind of the reader. The water has no cleansing power within itself, not even if another man tells you that he has prayed over this water and has somehow supernaturally changed it into a holy element. Peter carries the reader beyond thinking about baptism in terms of the physical element of

water, and instead **“appeal(s) to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”** The baptism that saves us is the one in which we are united with Christ into His death and resurrection. That is the very picture of each and every one of our baptisms, as we are dipped into the water (signifying our uniting with Christ in His death) and brought out of the water (signifying our uniting with Christ in His resurrection). That eternal reality saves us, not the act of baptism itself.

Every believer in Christ shares the same reality of those who were saved on the ark, they have been brought out of a life of wickedness and into a new life of holiness. The world that those Flood survivors stepped out onto was radically different than the world they stepped out of. There was a new world, a fresh start that was before them. Their old ways were not to be carried into their new life. The same is true of all believers today, Romans 6:1-11, **“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”**

This must be the attitude of the one who is truly in Christ. A true believer will not desire to keep on sinning as they once did, but will desire to walk in a newness of life. This is the appeal to God for a good conscience that Peter is writing about. A believer who is in Christ is one who is united with the life of Christ, and who walks in repentance of sin and faith in Christ. A true believer craves the spiritual cleansing every day which alone comes from Christ. A true believer comes before the Lord often with a confessional prayer seeking forgiveness and restoration, a spiritual cleansing that the Lord is happy to give in Christ.

The final and fourth “S” that we’ll consider in this lesson is Supremacy, which is found in verse 22, **“Who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.”** The glorious end of the unjust suffering of Christ is the eternal reign of Him at the right hand of God. The right hand of God is spoken of all throughout scripture and speaks of the place of all honour and authority for all eternity. Paul wrote of the exaltation of Christ in Philippians 2:9-11, **“Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”** The author of Hebrews did the same in Hebrews 1:3-6, **“He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”? Or again, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son”? And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him.”** Luke describes Jesus going up into Heaven in Acts 1:9-11, **“And when he had said these things, as**

they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

This position at the right hand of God is where Jesus sits, **“with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.”** Those being that are subject to Him are therefore all being, even the demons, even Satan himself. At the resurrection of Christ, two messages went forth for all of eternity: Those who are in Christ are fully and finally saved, and those who are outside of Christ are fully and finally damned. Jesus can claim safety and eternal damnation on everyone because we’re all subject to His rule and authority. Ephesians 1:19-23, **“And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”**

This is the Christ that we worship. We worship the triumphant Savior! We are grateful that our Lord chose to save us out of His grace. He would have been worthy to be praised even in our judgment. Romans 5:6-11 says, **“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”**

Christ died for us when we were against Him! How much good did God bring out of the purposeful, unjust suffering of Christ?! This same triumphant God that we serve is with us always, purposefully orchestrating every event of our lives for our good and His glory. No matter the circumstance we can always trust in His wisdom, knowing that our eternal security is in place, and that we too will one day join with Christ in His eternal kingdom. What a great hope that is for us!!!