

“THE ADVANTAGE OF LISTENING TO THE GOSPEL” – Pt 3

1 Peter 3:18

Theme: Jesus has assured our hope by providing the only effective way we can be brought to God.



I. The Provision for Deliverance – 3:18

A. The Power of Christ’s Sacrifice

1. Peter has just gone through a discourse on not allowing the intimidations of persecutors to cause defection from the faith.
2. He calls us to prioritize our loyalty to Christ, thus keeping a good testimony in both conscience and behavior.
3. He based these instructions on the truth that no one can harm us – cp. v. 13
4. **“*For Christ also died for ...*”** - He gives us the reason why we ought not to shrink back from suffering for Christ sake – the fact that He was willing to suffer horrific things for us – He has accomplished our deliverance by His death.
5. Characteristics of His sacrifice that demonstrate power:
 - a) It was atoning – **“*died for sins*”**
 - b) It was unrepeatable – **“*once for all*”**
 - c) It was vicarious – **“*just for the unjust*”**
 - d) It was actual – **“*put to death in the flesh*”**
 - e) It was accepted – **“*made alive in the spirit.*”**
 - (1) The distinction between **“*flesh*”** and **“*spirit*”** here cause a level of confusion for some.
 - (2) However, both **“*flesh*”** and **“*spirit*”** are referenced without a definite article and therefore emphasize the quality – whether “natural” (**“*flesh*”**) or “glorified” (**“*spirit*”**)
 - (3) The contrast is between Christ’s death as a real man here on earth and His risen life as the glorified Lord, victorious over death.
 - (4) It was by means of the resurrection that God declared His acceptance of the work of Christ – cp. **Romans 1:4**.
6. These things cumulatively demonstrate the reason we need not fear the persecutions we face – cp. **Romans 8:31-39**.

B. The Purpose for Christ's Sacrifice

1. The stated purpose for the sacrifice of Christ was in order that you might be brought to God – “... *so that He might bring us to God ...*”
2. This concept “*bring us to God*” [προσάγω] conveys the idea ushering someone into the presence of another, or cause us to approach God – the tense [Aorist Subjunctive] refers to one act:
 - a) Either the individual approach that occurs at the point of one's salvation when we are brought near to God through faith; or,
 - b) The ultimate approach to God when we are brought into the presence of God in glory.
3. This necessarily mandates that without the sacrifice of Christ applied to a person, they are estranged from God and there was no possible approach to the Father – cp. ***Ephesians 2:12-13, 17-18.***
4. Through His sacrifice:
 - a) Those who were in a state of ignorance and error were enabled to know the character and will of God – ***Ephesians 4:17-24***
 - b) Those who were hostile to God were enabled to be reconciled to God – cp. ***Colossians 1:21-22***
 - c) Those who were morally dissimilar were enabled to be brought to moral resemblance – ***Ephesians 4:23-24***
 - d) Those who were dead to God were enabled to know quickened fellowship with God – ***Ephesians 2:4-7.***
5. However, there is no other way a person can be brought to God – cp. ***John 14:6***
 - a) By dying, He removed the obstacle of our sin which barred the way to God – cp. ***Matthew 27:50-51***
 - b) Notice the love that prompted Christ to see that we could not find a way to God, so He came to us – in order to bring us to God – cp. ***Hebrews 2:10***
 - c) It is only through Christ Jesus that the confidence can be found to see us through our trials.
6. Have you given your life to the Lord? Have you confessed to the Savior that it was for your sins that He suffered and died? If not, then confess your sins today!

II. The Proof of Deliverance – 3:19-20

A. The Dedication of Noah – vv. 19-20a

1. Peter now verifies his point of the power of Christ to deliver those whom He is bringing to God by examining the illustration of the Old Testament Noah, who placed his confidence in Christ to deliver him.

2. Let me share with you what this section does NOT mean:
 - a) Some say that between death and resurrection, Jesus went to Hell and preached to the damned (essentially, this is what the Apostles' Creed says).
 - b) Others say that He went there and preached to fallen angles.
3. However, we are sure that Christ went to Paradise upon His death.
4. Regardless, He had already taught His disciples not to “cast pearls before swine” – a reference to “giving what is holy to dogs” – cp. **Matthew 7:6**
5. The “*spirit ... in which also He went ...*” is a reference to the glorified Son of God – a commentary on the quality of being that Jesus was upon His resurrection – restored to His previous glory – cp. **John 17:5**
6. The phrase “... *He went ...*” [πορεύω] is an aorist passive participle – working in relationship to the verb for “*made proclamation*” [κηρύσσω] which is also aorist.
 - a) When He went is the matter of debate.
 - b) Did He go upon resurrection? ... or did He go between crucifixion and resurrection? ... or did He go during the days of Noah?
7. Here is what I conclude on these matters:
 - a) Peter is saying here that Jesus was raised to glory, restored to His divine glory with all of the power that He possessed prior to the incarnation.
 - b) Peter is referencing that it was Christ who called Noah to preach His Word to the world and was actually “in Noah” while Noah preached – cp. **1:10-11; Ephesians 4:20-21; 2 Corinthians 5:20; 1 Samuel 8:7**
 - c) While he was construction the Ark, Noah continually preached to those around him – those who refused to obey the Gospel being preached – cp. **2:8-9**
 - d) Because of their unbelief, they were condemned and perished in the flood – and these are “*the spirits¹ now in prison*” awaiting judgment – cp. **Hebrews 11:7**
8. The analogy Peter is making is that those “*spirits now in prison*” were the very people who were attempting to intimidate Noah into apostasy when he was building the ark and preaching to them.
9. They couldn't succeed because Noah had placed his hope in God to deliver him.
10. They were now the objects of God's wrath – and He is determined to execute vengeance upon them – cp. **v. 17**.

¹ “*spirits*” commonly refers to angels or demons; however, since Jesus is referred to as a resurrected spirit, those “spirits” awaiting judgment are referred to in their post-death, unglorified state; otherwise, “souls” would have been more natural.

B. The Deliverance of Noah – v. 20b

1. As a result of Noah's faithfulness – despite terrible circumstances – unprecedented prophecies, and being in the minority, he was delivered.
2. As these *“spirits now in prison”* rejected the Gospel being preached by Christ through Noah, described as those *“who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah ...”*
3. God displayed tremendous patience [μακροθυμία] – the ability to bear up under provocation; the state of remaining tranquil while awaiting an outcome - even as they consistently rebelled against the Gospel.
4. However, in contrast to those who were disobedient, and who are now in prison awaiting judgment, Noah as brought safely through the water – *“... during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.”*
 - a) The agent which condemned the disobedient was the means of deliverance to the faithful
 - b) Compare the effect of Jesus Christ in the lives of men – cp. **1 Peter 2:6-8**
5. Again, the point Peter makes is that it is not necessary for us to fear the wicked – the Lord, who guarantees our deliverance – has proven His ability to deliver.

III. The Prospect of Deliverance – 3:21-22

A. The Illustration of Our Deliverance – v. 21

1. Peter goes from an ancient illustration of Christ's ability to save (the ark) to a modern one - baptism
2. He uses the concept of baptism in this verse to illustrate the same thing he used Noah to illustrate.
3. *“Corresponding to that ...”* [ἀντίτυπος] – a reference to the way that the ark was an illustration of the ability of Christ to save, so is baptism – *“baptism now saves you ...”*
 - a) Clearly, Peter is illustrating a principle – hence he uses the concept of “correspondence”
 - b) The ability to withstand the intimidations of persecutors (cp. v. 14) is reinforced by the illustration of Christ's ability to save us despite worldwide opposition as in the days of Noah
 - c) Corresponding to that is the illustration of Christ's ability to save us found in baptism.
4. Baptism is viewed as an illustration in the same way - as a picture of how we are delivered:
 - a) Noah was delivered by faith in the promise that was demonstrated

through his obedience.

- b) Likewise, we are delivered by faith in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
5. In order that we don't get confused and think that baptism is how a person is saved, he is clear to state that Baptism does not affect the defilements of our sinful flesh – *“not the removal of dirt from the flesh ...”*
- a) *“dirt”* [ῥύπος] – is a reference to filth or uncleanness
 - b) *“from the flesh”* [σάρξ] – a reference to external, physical body that was focused upon in the Jewish cleansing rites of baptism.
 - c) He is clarifying that baptism itself does not make us ceremonially clean – thereby altering our worthiness or qualification for worship as in the Jewish practices of baptism.
6. Rather, it is what baptism represents that saves us – *“an appeal to God for a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”*
- a) *“appeal”* [ἐπερώτημα] – conveys the idea of a pledging oneself through meeting conditions necessary to gain *“a good conscience”*
 - b) We know that faith in the work of Christ Jesus on the cross is the means by which we are saved – cp. **Hebrews 9:14**
 - c) Such aspiration is only possible for us because of the realities *“... of the resurrection of Jesus Christ”*
7. So, what is depicted in water baptism is a type of our salvation just like Noah's deliverance through water was a type of our salvation.
8. By the way, I believe that baptism is such a good illustration of our salvation that God expects each believer to participate in its practice – not just believe it.

B. The Insurance of Our Deliverance – **v. 22**

1. Notice that the basis for our assurance of a clean conscience is *“the resurrection of Jesus Christ”* – cp. **Romans 4:25**
2. He is saying that the resurrection of the Lord is the fact on which rest His claims and our hopes – without the resurrection, our preaching is vain – cp. **1 Corinthians 15:14-15**
3. God therefore provided infallible proofs of the reality of the resurrection so that we can be sure of our hope – cp. **Acts 1:3**
4. The assurance that we will be delivered from our distress is seen in the reality of that which awaited Christ after His faithful and obedient suffering – glorification:
 - a) He was exalted to sit *“at the right hand of God”* – signifying the

finality of it all and the honor & prestige given to Jesus for His accomplishment – cp. **Hebrews 1:3-6**.

- b) He has gloriously *“gone into Heaven”* – **Acts 1:9; Psalm 68:17-18**
- c) After having been made a “little lower than the angels,” He was restored as Lord over all creation – *“... after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.”* – cp. **Ephesians 1:19-21**
- d) Therefore, there is nothing that can thwart or separate us from the love of God that is found in Christ Jesus – cp. **Romans 8:37-39**