

Victory through Suffering Part 3

Our Identity in Christ

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We're picking up where we left off two Sundays ago in 1 Peter 3:18 to 22, which our third Sunday in this text, and I mentioned to you when we started into it, it's one of the most difficult passages in all of Scripture. A couple of different interpretive questions in this text are some of the most complicated questions that you'll find in the New Testament. The two questions we've looked at, we looked at one already, who were the spirits now in prison? We looked at that two weeks ago. And today we look at the second question, which revolves around the words in verse 21, baptism, which baptism now saves you. What does that mean? So the title of the message for these three Sundays has been "Victory through Suffering," so that's the title again, but the subtitle, "How Baptism Saves." How baptism saves and we're going to, because the text says that I'm using those words, but we're going to see that the baptism, the way the Scripture uses it, does not just refer to water baptism. In fact, the most significant way Scripture uses the word baptism is to speak of baptism of the Holy Spirit, which happens when someone is born again, you're baptized with the Holy Spirit and so Peter, I'm going to argue, is talking about that when he says baptism now saves you. He's speaking of spiritual baptism that is a once for all, spiritual baptism's a once for all sovereign act of God. When a believer is, a person is regenerated, made new, it happens one time, you're baptized with the Holy Spirit by the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so I'm going to show you that from the text and then also as we look at the larger context of the New Testament. It's a very important doctrine because, and this passage is very important, because those who misunderstand this and indeed, as Scripture says, twist the Scriptures to their own destruction, teach something called baptismal regeneration. That is the idea that water baptism, the water baptism itself, this is a heretical doctrine called baptismal regeneration, that water baptism itself effects your regeneration, that it's the means through which God actually saves, that you're not saved until you're water baptized. There are a number of different Christian sects who believe this, but this is a heretical doctrine. It's a damnable doctrine. It's a doctrine that keeps people out of heaven. The Roman Catholic Church believes in baptismal regeneration, and also the Church of Christ. Most Churches of Christ, Christian church, you need to be aware not all of them teach this, but most do, baptismal regeneration, that is that water baptism saves and they take a verse like this, they don't read it carefully, and they misunderstand it to their own peril. And so it's important for us to understand these things correctly, and

when we understand the Scriptures correctly, the Scriptures are life, life-giving, and my prayer is that as we look at this, that you will see the wonder of how baptism, the baptism of the Holy Spirit was made possible through the suffering of Christ. That's really essentially his argument here, that baptism, the baptism that we have that saves us was made possible through Jesus' suffering.

Let me read the text of Scripture, 3:18 to 22, 1 Peter.

18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; 19 in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, 20 who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. 21 Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

Let's pray.

Our Father, as we come to Your word, we come confessing and believing that it is Your truth, it is Your word which gives life. It's what saves, You use this instrument to cause people to be born again, to be baptized in the Spirit. You use Your word to help us to be sanctified. You transform us and we pray that You might use Your word this morning to all of those purposes that You might bring unbelievers to life, that You might take believers and help us to be more and more like Jesus, more and more holy because of the power of Your word. We pray this in His name and for His glory, amen.

So victory through suffering, how baptism saves, and the key sentence that we're looking at is baptism now saves you, verse 21, "Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you." Baptism is used two ways in Scripture. It's used of water baptism. So when we most naturally think of, because it's the one that we experience visibly and physically, but Scripture also speaks of spiritual baptism, the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Water baptism becomes an external witness to the internal reality of spiritual baptism. To be saved is to be baptized with the Holy Spirit and water baptism is an outward rite that commemorates and testifies to the inner reality that's already happened in the life of the believer.

So when he says, baptism now saves you, why does he bring this up? I mentioned before two of the toughest passages or two of the toughest exegetical questions in the New Testament are verses 19 and 20, who are the spirits in prison, and then why does he say baptism now saves you, and Peter packs both of them into one passage. And I want to remind you, he doesn't do this to trip us up, to be complicated, to be difficult. He's illustrating his main point and actually, when we look at it carefully and we understand the Scriptures properly, these things really become clear. It's our own hardness of heart

that leads us to have the difficulty. So I want us, as we look at this question, baptism now saves you, what does that mean? And to come to the answer of that question correctly, we need to let the Scripture speak and context is always key. Context is king, someone has said related to hermeneutics, interpretation. You want to know what something means, be careful and attentive to the context, what is being said. And so I want us to think about what Peter's talking about in his letter. So there's two main points this morning. First is the immediate context. We're trying to consider this question in light of context. The first point is the immediate context and the second point is the larger context of Scripture. So we're asking the question, what does "baptism now saves you" mean? We're going to look at that in light of the immediate context first and in light of the larger context of Scripture secondly.

So first of all, the immediate context. Let's look at what Peter's talking about when these words come out of his mouth, as it were, and through his pen to the page when he writes this letter. Peter is writing this epistle, we've said, to prepare believers for persecution and suffering in the first century. He writes 63 AD to a church that is already experiencing persecution and is about to experience a lot more and he writes to prepare them for suffering, and suffering is a key theme in the book. We've seen that he, not only suffering, but suffering for righteousness' sake, which is the question he's dealing with when he gets to 3:18 to 22. He's trying to say to believers, "Listen, you're going to suffer for righteousness' sake and when you do, don't be tempted to return evil for evil or insult for insult. Don't be tempted to fear but in those moments, look to Christ and walk in a way that's pleasing to Him. Keep on doing good as you suffer. Don't stop doing good because others are attacking you for doing good. No, you keep doing good. You be like Jesus." That's essentially a main theme in the book. He's calling us to overcome evil with good, as Paul says. You're going to encounter evil, opposition, hostility, malice from unbelievers as you live a holy life in their presence, don't resort to returning evil for evil, you keep on doing good, the main point, one of his main points in this letter. In fact, the idea of suffering for doing good is something that, let me just show you how prevalent it is.

Chapter 2, verse 12, turn back over to chapter 2. He says in chapter 2, verse 12, "Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles," that is, those who are completely godless, "Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds as they observe them glorify God in the day of visitation." Your behavior, your life becoming conformed to the image of Christ, conformed to the word of God, is going to be something beautiful, but unbelievers will look at it and see it as evil. When you live a holy life, when you say that marriage is one man, one woman for life, and you live that, they'll say you're being evil. When you say, not only is marriage one man, one woman for life, it's to be a monogamous relationship and that there's to be no involvement until you're married, they'll say you're doing evil and you're just doing good. When you live in a godly way in relation to the state, when you live in a godly way in relation to your employer, when you show submission and humility, they're going to call you evil, and when they do, you keep on doing good.

He says in verse 19 of chapter 2, in speaking about that issue of living with your employer in a godly way, he says verse 19, 1 Peter 2, "For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly." You're going to suffer unjustly, you're going to do right and they're going to make you suffer.

Chapter 3, verse 8, he says, "To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing." They're going to insult you. They're going to hurl evil at you. Don't respond in kind. Keep on doing good.

Chapter 3, verse 14, "But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. Do not fear their intimidation." And then verse 17, which leads right into Peter's passage we're looking at today. Verse 17, "For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong. For Christ also died for sins once for all." This is the motivation. The reason he brings this up is to say, listen, as you suffer for righteousness, keep looking at Jesus and look how Jesus, who is the the ultimate example of suffering for righteousness, who was completely pure and holy, who only did his Father's will, who was a picture of what humanity should be and all of God's will for humanity. Jesus lived the perfect human life and what did he receive? Suffering, insults, rejection, hostility, and they murdered him. But he's saying, though that happened, look what Jesus accomplished through his suffering for righteousness. That's the mindset behind these verses.

So verse 18, he says, this is chapter 3, verse 18, "Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God." Look at the good that he's done. His suffering for righteousness sake has brought believers who used to be far from God, brought us to God. It has brought us into the very throne room of God. That's what he's done and he's done it, as he said, through his death. The just for the unjust. The just man suffering. He shouldn't suffer. He's suffering for righteousness, yes, but his suffering for righteousness has brought you to God, if you know Christ.

And he says, "been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit," speaking of the death and resurrection of Christ. The argument of this passage we've noted is really carried in verse 18 and 22 and it's like 19 to 21, are a big parenthesis in there, okay? The argument of the passage, remember he's saying, when you suffer, keep on doing good like Jesus did because look what his suffering for righteousness has accomplished. Verse 18, it has brought you to God having been put to death in the flesh, made alive in the spirit. Skip down to verse 22 now. So he's talking about the death and resurrection. Verse 18 says, the death and resurrection of Jesus happened through his suffering for righteousness and it brought you to God. Verse 22, "who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him." He's saying that Jesus suffered for righteousness' sake and through that, through his death and his burial and his resurrection and his ascension, he has brought us to God and all of those things, his death, burial, resurrection, ascension, happened because he suffered. If he had not suffered, we would still be apart from God. There would be no

way for man to get back to God. But when Jesus ascended to the right hand of God, a human being ascended to the right hand of God. He was always God, eternally God, but became man and when he rose from the dead and ascended to the right hand of God for the first time since the Garden of Eden, man was in the presence of God. And he had to suffer for that to happen. Peter's argument is this is what happened through the suffering.

Now get that picture clear in your mind and now realize that verses 19, 20, and 21 are illustrating that point. Do you see that? He's not saying, "Hey, see if I can stump them with some confusing stuff here." He's saying, "I want to show you the wonder of how Christ's suffering has effected this." So when he talks about the spirits now in prison, which we looked at last time, two weeks ago, and I mentioned I think it's fallen angels. We went through that. I encourage you to listen to that. You don't have to agree with that point because either way, the issue is he has triumphed over his enemies. He has conquered his enemies. How has he brought you to God? I think in the truest sense what he's saying is, you remember when Jesus was ministering and he was delivering people from demons, and they accused him of delivering people from demons by a demon, and he said, "How can a house divided against itself stand?" And he goes on to say, "How do you deliver somebody, how do you go into a strong man's house and take his goods? You must first bind a strong man and then you can plunder his goods." Jesus was saying, "What's happening in My ministry is I have come into the strong man's house, that is the world system, Satan, the god of this age, the kingdom of the power of darkness, the prince of the power of the air, he had this world under his dominion." Jesus came into this world as a man, and he has, through his ministry and especially through his death and resurrection, he has rendered the strong man powerless. He's taken, and if you're a believer in Christ, you got saved because Jesus took you out of Satan's clutches. He made him weak and impotent through his death, and he's taken you away. He's delivered you from the kingdom of darkness, as Colossians 1:13 says. He has delivered you from the domain of darkness and translated you to the kingdom of his beloved Son.

Now think about this, so he has conquered the spiritual enemies and he's plundered the strong man, he has bruised the head of the serpent, Genesis 3:15, but he hasn't just delivered you from darkness, he's also taken you into the very throne room of the Most High God. He has in himself, by your baptism into Christ, you are now at the right hand of God. The New Testament teaches this. Ephesians chapter 1 speaks about Jesus and how he ascended far above all rule and authority, and he's at the right hand. And in Ephesians chapter 2, I believe it's verse 6 says that you, or verse 5 says, you, if you're in Christ, you are seated with him now in the heavenly places. That is a spiritual reality that is absolutely true and it's happened because you, to be a believer, if you're truly a believer, you've been baptized with the Holy Spirit by Jesus, and the Spirit baptized you into Christ, and now when Jesus ascended on high, he took you, captivity captive, all of us with him into the throne room of God. That's why when you die, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, because you're already seated positionally with him in the heavenly places. It's just waiting for your death like we heard about Mr. Holloway. What a tremendous man of God and great example. Continue to pray for him that he'll finish all the way to the end like he is. What a testimony. But the reality is that's what Jesus has purchased for every believer.

Now think about this. So Peter's analogies are saying, "I'm telling you, listen, His suffering accomplished so much good. His suffering has brought you to God." How? By first of all, delivering you from darkness, verses 19 and 20, the spirits now in prison, and taking you to God, baptizing you in the Holy Spirit. That's what he's getting at. That's his larger logic here. Now I want to show you this from the text and then also from the larger context of Scripture. I think it becomes clear if you look carefully at the words he uses. He says, verse 21, "Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you," And he's saying baptism is the word here corresponding to that in the New American Standard that I read, is the word "antitype," actually anti-tupon, which is anti-type, you transliterate. This is a word of typology and in the Scriptures, what we see in the Old Testament is that the Lord used types, T-Y-P-E. He used types to picture the coming anti-type. The antitype is the substance. The type is the shadow.

An example, the Passover lamb was sacrificed. Remember the blood of the Passover lamb put over the door? Why? So that they would be protected from the death angel and it was the Passover lamb's blood that led them out of Egypt, right, that enabled them to be saved from Egypt. That's a type of salvation. To be saved, you have to be delivered from the kingdom of darkness. Egypt was a picture of the kingdom of darkness. You've got to be delivered out from that kingdom and taken and planted in God's kingdom, Canaan. And how does that happen? Through the blood of the Passover lamb. You see, it's a type of salvation. You have to be delivered from the clutches of Satan. And how does that happen? The blood of the true, not the type, but the anti-type, Christ, the Lamb of God.

So type, anti-type. Old Testament type, New Testament anti-type. This is the basic pattern. Another example you could look at is Hebrews 11, I think it's verses 14 to 16, where we're told that Abraham, when he offered up Isaac on the altar, and God said, "Don't kill him." It said he received him back as a type. Isaac was a type of Christ. And when you go back and you read Genesis 22:1, the first couple of verses of Genesis 22, you know what God says to Abraham? Listen to this. God says this to Abraham. He waited all that time for Isaac. Remember how long he waited for Isaac, 25 years. Old man waited all that time for his son, finally gets a son, and when Isaac's about 12 or 13, we don't know exactly how old, probably about 12 or 13, God says to him one day, "Abraham," this is the language, "I want you to take your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go and sacrifice him on the mountain that I tell you to go to." Do you hear the language? Your son, your only son whom you love. Is God just being mean to him? No, God is typifying something else because we know God didn't let him kill Isaac and what the author of Hebrews is saying is when he raised his hand to kill him, he was going to do what God had said because God said he would do it, and the author of Hebrews tells us in that passage I just told you, chapter 11, that Abraham knew God was able to raise him from the dead because Abraham knew God had said, "Through Isaac your descendants will be named," and Abraham knew God's word cannot fail. "So if He makes me kill him, He's going to raise him from the dead because God's word will come true." And so he does that and God says, "Don't do that." Now, he takes his son off the altar. God has tangled up over there in the thorn bushes a ram that is ready to be offered in place of Isaac. He takes the ram and he offers him, and as he takes his son off the altar,

the author of Hebrews says he received his son back as a type, that is, he could see, "It's not my son, my only son whom I love, it's His Son, His only Son whom He loves is going to be the offering." That's the glory of how God has set up the beauty of salvation, type and anti-type.

Here what he's saying is the salvation of Noah and his family from the floodwaters was a type of baptism which saves you. The deliverance through the ark, what I'm going to argue for you, it's not water baptism, this is the problem, it's not water baptism that saves you, it's spiritual baptism, but it is the typology. Think about what it was. They went into the ark and then the floodwaters came and they were saved because they were in the ark. The wrath of God was poured out. They were saved because they were in the ark. He's saying, the wrath of God that is coming on the world, you are saved if you are in Christ through baptism by the Holy Spirit, because baptism of the Holy Spirit unites you to Jesus. That's the New Testament way of saying it. In Christ, in Christ, in Christ, in him. That phrase throughout the New Testament, that's the most prominent way the New Testament identifies the Christian. It doesn't use the word Christian or believer or disciple. It uses those words, but not as nearly as much as the phrase "in Christ."

So that's what he's arguing here and I think it's clear it's spiritual baptism because of the words. Look, he says, "Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you," look what he says next, this explanatory clause, "not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience." Actually, the Greek, you know, you can move the words around in Greek in ways you can't in English. In Greek, it says, "not flesh." That's the first word it says. "Not flesh, the removal of dirt from," and by doing that, it puts flesh in the prominent position. It's not flesh, and the second clause, but on the contrary, the strong, adversative word used "but" here, there's two different words that are conjunctions for adverse conjunctions, but this is the strongest, "but on the contrary, it's not the flesh, it's not the removal of dirt from the flesh like water does, but on the contrary," and the word after the "but" is "conscience." It's put up to the front again to put an emphasis. It's not the flesh, but the conscience. Baptism not that affects the flesh, but baptism that affects the conscience. Not baptism that affects the outer man, the body, but baptism that affects the inner man, the conscience, the soul. Peter's saying, "Don't miss my meaning. I'm talking about, it's the baptism of Jesus in the Holy Spirit that gives you a good conscience," because what does it do? The baptism of the Holy Spirit baptizes you into Christ so that his death becomes your death, his resurrection becomes your resurrection, his life becomes your life. You now are declared righteous forever on the basis of Christ, your union with him, therefore you have a clear conscience. That's what he's getting at here in the passage.

Now let me show you this from the larger context because it's so important to understand baptism correctly. How does the Scripture lead us to understand the word baptism? Let's look at how it's used in Scripture. I mentioned water baptism is one way, the actual immersion of the believer or the pouring of water on the believer, not the sprinkling of water on the believer. I don't think you can get that. The pouring, yes, it could be that. In fact, it's a pretty good, the mode is not the issue, they went down into the water. I think they immersed, but it's possible they went down into the water. They went into the water

though. Now you don't go into the water for somebody to sprinkle a few drops on your head. You go into the water so that they can take a bucket like and just pour it over you. They may have done that because there's some symbolism of pouring that works with it. I think that immersion works better, but I wouldn't die on this hill. We believe that baptism's for believers because we think that's the pattern we see in the New Testament, and it testifies outwardly to an inward reality of spiritual immersion by the Holy Spirit into Christ, okay?

Now, let's look at the Scripture. First thing, I've got three main subpoints under this second point, the larger context. Okay, the first, intertestamental background. It's important to start off with the intertestamental background of baptism because you don't see this in the Old Testament. You see washing and that kind of thing, but you don't see the word baptize in the Old Testament. But in the intertestamental period, the 400 years between the testaments, the Jews developed a practice called proselyte baptism. So when a non-Jew converted to Judaism, okay, if they were a man, they would have to be circumcised, but male and female had to, in the intertestamental period, they began practicing proselyte baptism, that is, both would have to be immersed in water as a washing of a ceremonial expression of the washing that needs to happen to become a Jew, to become right with God. Okay? Proselyte baptism. It was for Gentiles. Jews were, they were already clean as it were, just be circumcised on the eighth day if you're a boy and then females were automatically part of the covenant community in the Old Testament way and type. That's a type of the church.

Okay, so now that's the intertestamental period. Then John the Baptist, after the 400 years of silence, no prophets speaking, John the Baptist breaks the silence. God appointed him to go before Christ and to make straight the way of the Lord. Look with me at Matthew chapter 3, because John the Baptist, we call him John the Baptist because he was John the baptizer and he preached repentance and he preached the need for Jews. Listen, get this. He preached the need for the Jewish people to be baptized. This was incredibly significant. He taught that the Jews needed to be baptized just as much as an Assyrian or a Babylonian pagan would need to be baptized. This was radical. We see it. Matthew 3 verse 1, "Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness, make ready the way of the Lord, make His path straight.' Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins." It's a preparatory baptism. He's basically telling the Jewish people, "Listen, you need to be saved just as much as the Gentiles do. You're not fit for God. You think you are, but you're wrong. If you've been reading the Bible correctly, the Old Testament tells you, no, you're not fit for God. You need a changed heart."

So this is, and this has amazingly profound implications, "Jews, you are just as in need of the saving grace of the Messiah as the unbeliever, the Gentile in the deepest, darkest regions of the world." That was his message. So that was the baptism of John. That was

actually point B, the baptism of John. Intertestamental period A, B, the baptism of John the Baptist, C, the baptism of Jesus. In fact, we're going to have four points, four subpoints. There's going to be a D. I know I just forgot to write it down. C, the baptism of Jesus. It was anticipated by John. Look with me, you're in Matthew 3, look what he says in verse 11. Now, the Pharisees come out, well, first of all, let's look at verse 7, "he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, 'You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance.'" He said he knows they're not really here to repent. Verse 11, he says something profound. "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." "My baptism is just a preparatory baptism. It's a symbolic baptism. It's to get you ready for the One who you need to be baptized by." And what he means by baptism by the Holy Spirit and fire, Jesus is going to baptize every single human being that's ever lived with either one of those two things, either the Holy Spirit or with fire. That's what he's saying. John's saying, "Listen, He sent me ahead, but the One that's coming after me, though He's younger than me, He's greater than I for He existed before me." He's acknowledging the deity of Christ in his testimonies about this and he's saying, "Look, He's coming and He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

In fact, let's look with me at Mark 1. We'll just kind of walk through the gospels kind of quickly. Mark 1 verse 8. Mark begins with the ministry of John the Baptist. He doesn't start with a birth narrative. He jumps right in with John the Baptist is how he begins his gospel and he says actually in verse 7, "And he was preaching, and saying," so here John the Baptist is preaching, people are flooding out to him. His ministry is being used mightily by God. Crowds are coming out to him from Judea and all around to be baptized in the Jordan River. Verse 7, "And he was preaching, and saying, 'After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals. I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'"

Look at Luke chapter 3, verse 15. This is John the Baptist's ministry again, Luke describing it. This is Luke 3:15, "Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ," verse 16, "John answered and said to them all, 'As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.'" He comes with his winnowing fork, he's going to do his harvest and he's going to take those who belong to him and put them in his barn and everything else goes into the fire. Jesus is the one who baptizes like this.

Turn to John, all four gospels are careful to tell us about this, to help us understand what baptism really is. Verse 26. They're asking him, "Are You the Christ, are You Elijah, are You the prophet?" 1:26, "John," the Baptist again, "answered, 'I baptize in water, but among you stands One whom you do not know. It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.'" These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said,

'Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He on behalf of whom I said, "After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me." I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water.' John testified saying, 'I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him.'" Look at verse 33, "I did not recognize Him," he said, "I did not recognize Him when I saw Him," even though they were cousins, they didn't have apparently regular family reunions in his family. He had never seen Jesus with his eyes. He had only seen him when he was in the womb and Jesus was in the womb. "I didn't recognize Him when He came. I didn't recognize Him at first, but how did I recognize Him right after that?" Look, verse 33, "I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.'" And John ends it up by saying, "I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God." Jesus baptizes in the Holy Spirit.

Now turn with me to Acts chapter 1. The significance of Jesus baptizing in the Holy Spirit is the fact, listen, it was an impossible thing for man to be able to dwell with God as sinners. It's not a small thing to be saved. It is an incredible thing to be saved. For you and me who are conceived in sin, brought forth in iniquity, who've sinned every day of our lives countless times, for us to be made fit to be in the presence of God is a mighty, incredible work and this is what the New Testament teaches. Jesus had to make it possible for the Spirit of God to dwell with us. His life and death and resurrection accomplished that.

Look what he says though, after he's resurrected now, Acts 1, he's about to ascend to heaven and he tells him in verse 5, well, look, verse 4, "Gathering them together," that is disciples, he's about to ascend, "He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, 'Which,' He said, 'you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'" "I'm going to baptize you with the Holy Spirit because I've done everything necessary to baptize you with the Holy Spirit." Remember when he said, "It's good for you that I go away, for if I go away, I can send the Spirit"? He's saying, "It's good for you," that's John's gospel in the farewell discourse, "It's good for you that I go away, that I go to the Father, when I go to the Father, when a human being, the God-man, goes to the Father, now man and God are reunited, and the Spirit can be poured out. But it can't happen until I ascend in my flesh to the right hand of God." Verse 8, chapter 1, "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses."

Chapter 2, this is what happens. They wait a few more days and then Jesus on the day of Pentecost pours forth the Spirit. Look at chapter 2, verse 1. "When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance. Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred,

the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language." The reason they had tongues was so they could speak the gospel in languages they didn't know. They were amazed, the people though, were hearing the gospel in their own language.

Look what they say, verse 7. "They were amazed and astonished, saying, 'Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?'" They could tell these guys are Galileans. I guess the way they dressed, the way they looked, their complexion, whatever, they knew they're Galileans. How are they speaking in these tongues?

Verse 8, "how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs." You get the picture, all kinds of people in all kinds of tongues, and the word of God is going forth out of these Galileans who haven't done a lick of language training. They're speaking the gospel in their language.

Verse 12, "they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?'" Three questions they ask. Verse 7, why are not all these who are speaking Galileans? Verse 8, how is it that we each hear them in our own language? Verse 12, what does this mean? Peter, the author of 1 Peter gets up and he answers the question. He's filled with the Spirit and he answers the question. What does this mean? 2:14, "But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: 'Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel,' Joel's prophecy and he quotes it, "And it shall be in the last days God says that I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit." Jesus ascended to heaven is pouring out the Spirit of God on his people.

How can he do it? How can this happen? He continues to answer. Look at verse 22. "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power." No sin means death cannot hold him. He was sinless. It was impossible for death to hold him. Satan took him in, thinking he had conquered, and in doing that, Satan was defeated.

Now he continues explaining, we don't read all of it. Skip on down to verse 32. "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy

Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear." That sounds so much like what he's saying in 1 Peter 3. He died, he rose, he ascended to the right hand of God, and he's poured out his Spirit. The reason you can have the Holy Spirit is because Jesus did everything that he did, everything he was willing to do. He did everything necessary to bring you to God.

And so it's the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He pours out the Spirit on them and they now are baptized in the Spirit because they have God living with them. So that's the baptism of Jesus. Now we're talking about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, because what the Scripture teaches is the verses we read so far are describing it. The Apostle Paul in his epistles really explains it. You see what I'm saying? It describes it without explanation in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Acts, though it's pretty powerful and clear when you look at just what's described but Paul explains it. And he does so in verses like 1 Corinthians 12:13. So just turn over past Romans to 1 Corinthians if you're in Acts. So Jesus baptizes with the Spirit. He pours out the Spirit. But what happens is when a person experiences the Spirit. So you go to Jesus. I mean, that's why you preach Christ and you go to Christ to be saved. You call on the name of the Lord, that is the name of Jesus, the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, "Save me," and what he does is he gives the Spirit and the Spirit baptizes you, and what the Spirit does, to be baptized with the Spirit, he then baptizes you into Jesus. This is kind of the reciprocal thing. Jesus baptizes you with the Spirit and the Spirit baptizes you into Jesus. This is the New Testament's teaching.

He says in 1 Corinthians 12:13, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body," he's going to say that's the body of Christ. You're all baptized into Christ, "whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit."

Turn over to Ephesians chapter 4, 4-6, this is talking about our salvation. So when you're saved, you're baptized spiritually. Verse 4 of Ephesians 4, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism." He's talking about spiritual baptism.

And then turn back to Romans 6. Skipped over this, I wanted to come to this last though. This is why I think my opinion is immersion is the right mode from this picture that we're going to see here. Paul's argument in Romans 6 is that how can you continue in sin when you have been spiritually baptized into Jesus and he uses the word here. Verse 3 when he asked the question, you know, "What, should we continue in sin," in verse 1, "because grace will abound? May it never be," verse 2. "How can we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection."

He's talking about spiritual baptism and water baptism at the same time, but the main thing is spiritual baptism because water does not save. This is clear in the whole Bible. It's never the physical act that saves. It wasn't physical circumcision that saved a Jew. No,

not at all. That's why after he gives the command to be circumcised, he says, circumcise your hearts, Deuteronomy 10:16. You can't circumcise your heart. Only God can. It's not circumcision, it's not baptism with water, it is the work of the sovereign work of God, which those things typify. You need God to circumcise your heart. You need God to baptize you with the Holy Spirit. Christ will do that. And so he's saying that when Christ baptizes with the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit unites you to Jesus in such a way that you're united in his death, his burial, and his resurrection so that you now are set free from the reign and rule of sin because you have been united to Christ by his Spirit.

Let me mention one thing real quickly. I'm just going to tell you about this and have you do some homework. When you look at the end of Peter's sermon that we were just looking at a minute ago in Acts 2 verse 37, the people are cut to the heart and they say, "What must we do? You know, what should we do?" And he says, "Repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the Holy Spirit." Now in this particular instance, so a one-time event, they believed and were baptized with water before they received the Holy Spirit because God's explaining what's happening. You go on to Acts chapter 10, and you have Peter, again, the author of 1 Peter, preaching at Cornelius' house, a Gentile, a Roman centurion. And remember, he's preaching there, he's preaching Jesus and while he's preaching, the Holy Spirit falls on those Gentiles. And there's a bunch of Jews with him too. Some Jews have gone with Peter. God wanted some witnesses, some Jewish witnesses to see what was going to happen. Peter probably wanted company too, but anyway, God wanted witnesses. And so they're there. He preaches to them in their house. This was when Peter had received that vision and said, "Don't call anything unclean that God calls clean." And so he goes into their house and he preaches to them Jesus and it says, the Spirit fell upon them and they began to speak in tongues to show that they had received the Spirit. And then Peter says, "If they've been baptized with the Spirit, what's to hinder them from being baptized with water?" The order is now established. Spiritual baptism precedes water baptism. You're baptized with the Spirit, united to Christ, now you testify to it by being baptized with water. So we have a water baptism, that's not saving anyone, it's testifying that their hope is in Jesus, and they've already experienced spiritual baptism by Christ into himself. That's the glory of the salvation that we have known in the gospel.

So Peter's saying, listen, you can suffer for doing righteousness. Keep on doing good. Because God does incredible things when you suffer and keep doing good. He defeats Satan. That's what Jesus did. He defeated Satan. And when believers, when we hold up under persecution and keep doing good, you know what happens? Satan is defeated. We're actively stepping on his head. Philippians chapter 1, the end of that chapter speaks about when you're able to continue doing good and you're persecuted and when you keep trusting God and you keep rejoicing in the Lord, it becomes a sign of destruction to your opponents and assurance of salvation to you. The kingdom is going forth when you suffer and keep doing good. His kingdom and his reign is extending. And what's going to happen is as you do that, Jesus is going to be plundering people around you, unbelievers around you are going to start coming to Christ. It's a moment of incredible opportunity. And the other thing is, it's not just an opportunity to see Satan defeated, it's an opportunity to fellowship with Christ. There's something about suffering for Jesus that

enables us to see him in an even more amazing way. That's why Paul says, "I want to share in the fellowship of His sufferings." You suffer with Jesus, you look to Jesus, you will know him even more.

So believer, don't be discouraged. If the world gets darker and darker and we suffer more and more persecution, actually it is an incredibly opportune time. It's the best time to be alive because the kingdom, we have opportunity for the kingdom to go forth and Satan to be defeated and also for us to see more of Jesus. And the good thing that you can remember is that it's all by grace. Nobody wants to suffer. If you think about it, I don't want to suffer. I don't have a martyr complex at all. I have to talk myself out of taking too many aspirin. I mean, I'm ready just to end this pain right away. But you know, God never gives the grace that you need for a trial until you're in the trial. So you may feel like you can't stand up to persecution. Well, that's because you're not experiencing persecution right now at this second. But when you find yourself there, what do you do? You keep looking to Christ, trust in the Holy Spirit, the power of the Holy Spirit, and he will give you the grace you need. He'll give you exactly what you need when you need it. Isn't that good to know that? Our God is so good. He's worthy of standing for and to know him more and to know him in his sufferings is to know him in the most wonderful and deep and beautiful way.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Our Father, we thank You for the glory of the salvation that You have made known to us in Jesus Christ. We thank You that our Savior is the King of kings and Lord of lords, that He is even now seated at Your right hand, Father. He has made His enemies a public spectacle. He has triumphed over them, and He's reigning and ruling. Father, give us eyes to see the spiritual reality of Jesus' sovereign rule. Even as the world decays and darkness deepens, may the light of the glory of Christ become more and more brilliant in our eyes and our hearts. May we treasure Him more. And Father, for those that have not yet bowed the knee to Jesus, Lord, work in their hearts even now, help them cry out to You. Thank You that You said that if you knock, you will receive. If you ask, you'll receive. If you knock, it'll be open to you. And if we know how to give good gifts to our children, will not the Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him? Thank You for Your incredible generosity, Lord, that You will save whoever is willing to be saved because of Your great grace and Your sovereign working in our hearts.