LIFE BIBLE MINISTRY

1 Peter 3 (Part 2) :8-22

Always Prepared to Make a Defense

Pastor Paul LeBoutillier · September 07, 2026

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Here on Sunday morning, we're going through the New Testament, and we are right now in the book of 1 Peter 3. So open your Bible there, please. 1 Peter 3. For those of you who have been following our study in 1 Peter, this has been a good time, a good time in the Word. So let's start today with prayer, shall we?

Father, we thank you that we can come together as the body of Christ and open our hearts to you and to your Word, that you would speak to us and bring wisdom and understanding to our hearts. But Lord, even more so that we might take the Word and apply it as we go from this place and walk it out, live it out in our daily lives. And for that, Lord, we need your strength and courage. So Father, we look to you for the whole thing, to open our hearts, to speak to us, and then to enable us to walk this out and to live it on a daily basis. And we thank you, Lord, that you are faithful in Jesus' precious name.

Amen. Amen. We've been talking here the last couple of weeks about how to walk in harmony. And Peter started in the last chapter talking to us about how we can live harmoniously. He mentioned how we can live with the world and particularly as it pertains to the governing authorities.

Then we covered harmony in the workplace, particularly when you have less than ideal working conditions or maybe a boss who's kind of a stinker and likes to make life hard and that sort of thing. And in the first seven verses of this chapter, you'll remember that Peter talked about harmony in marriage. And we looked in those verses and saw how God has established order in the home between the relationship of the husband and the wife. And when we walk according to that order, there is harmony. When we get out, and you guys know what harmony is.

We heard some harmony this morning during our worship time. It's fun when I get to sit next to people who know how to harmonize too. And I can hear harmonies going on, you know, all around me. It's very, very cool, you know, because harmony is beautiful. It's notes that blend together in a very pleasing sort of a way.

And that can actually be our lives when we are walking according to God's word. And particularly as it relates to marriage, there can be harmony. Yes, there can be harmony in marriage. Just in case you were wondering. Yeah, it is possible.

But only when we're walking according to the word of God, and applying it in our lives. And when there isn't harmony, then you got… It's like people playing different chords on two instruments, and they're not playing the same thing. And it's very discordant, and it's like… And our marriages can be that way too, can't they? So, we discussed that whole issue last week. Now, as we get into this section of 1 Peter 3, he's going to begin by talking about harmony in the church, or among the members of the body of Christ.

If you look with me in verse 8, it starts off in your Bible saying, finally, all of you have unity of mind. And we talked how that word… This is a couple of weeks ago. We talked how the word unity is a Greek word that is actually translated by some Bibles, like the NIV, as harmony, live in harmony. And he's talking here about having harmony in our thinking. Notice he says, have unity of mind.

He's not talking about thinking the same thoughts in the sense that, you know, we finish each other's sentences or something like that. He's talking about harmony as it relates to our understanding of the revelation of God's word. It means being on the same page. Have you ever wondered why Christians don't get on the same page? Why are there so many different expressions, and why are we, you know… We've had a couple of thousand years to mess things up.

And we veer from the word of God, and we start injecting things like personal opinion. And people will say… They'll read something in the Bible and say, well, to me, that means… Well, that's not what the Bible is about. It's not about what it means to you. It's about what it means. It's about what God intended it to mean.

And that's not something that's open to personal interpretation. God interprets the word of God through His Holy Spirit to our hearts, and He brings the meaning. That's what He said when He told His disciples, the Holy Spirit, when He comes, will lead you into all truth. It's His truth. It's not my truth.

It's not your truth. It's not a particular denominational truth. It's just simply the truth of God's word. And the way we have unity of mind is when we just stick to the word of God, and we don't veer from it. Now, like I said, we've had a couple of thousand years to veer from the word of God.

But as we come back to the Scriptures, and as we begin to jettison our predeterminations and our preconceptions and our traditions… Oh! If I could say… You know, I mean, traditions are great when

they're fun. And, I mean, like our family has… Like your family does, I'm sure. You know, traditions around Christmas, how you go about doing things for… They're fun, you know. But when traditions begin to supplant the truth of God's word or add to or tweak or alter or whatever God's word… When tradition begins to come into play, we no longer have unity of mind because we've gotten away from the word of God and we've begun to exalt our traditions rather than the simple text of God's word.

And I say simple because we've made it more difficult than it needs to be, you know, by adding things and so forth. So Peter is encouraging us to have harmony in the body of Christ by saying, you know what? We're going to get back to the word. Let's just get back to the word. And I know… And some of these things I've learned in the past… Do you remember when you were a brand new Christian and you learned things and you just accepted them because somebody told you?

And I was the same way. You know, I just… Somebody told me something and so I believed it, you know. And then later on, I got into the word of God. I went, that's not true. You know, it's not in the Bible at all, you know.

So there's… But we've added, we've added, we've added. So we got to get back to unity by getting back to the word. Notice that Peter goes on to say we are also to have sympathy for one another. Harmony comes about through the expression of sympathy. And sympathy is a sense of concern.

It's a sense of compassion for someone who is going through challenging times, misfortune. And when we walk in an attitude of sympathy toward them, there's going to be harmony in the body of Christ. He also mentions brotherly love. And this is actually a Greek word from where we get our word Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love, they call it. But in the Greek, it means just that, brotherly love.

And I don't know if you had a brother. I grew up with a brother. We didn't always show brotherly love for one another. He liked to kind of beat on me because he was older and more athletic and taller. And he would get me in this scissor pinch with his legs until I would just tell him anything he wanted to hear.

I don't know why I told you that. But he used to beat up on me a lot. But I actually think of him today as my little brother. I don't know why. But anyway, it's funny, isn't it?

How you can have that kind of a relationship with a brother or sister, and then you grow up and you leave home, and suddenly your relationship gets a lot better. And you start showing real, true brotherly or sisterly affection after you're not living in the same home any longer. Well, what this verse is talking about when it mentions brotherly love, it's talking about treating people like family members ought to treat people. It means caring about people who are in the family. And you're in the family of God.

And there is harmony when we treat one another like we really, truly are genuinely part of the same family. Notice that Peter goes on to speak of a tender heart. We're to be tender-hearted toward one another. The Greek literally means good-hearted. And then he also says we are to have a humble mind.

And this is about thinking less of myself and more about others. Putting others first, right? So these are the things that Peter says we need to be thinking about as it relates to being a harmonious body of Christ to love, care, take care of one another in very genuine and real ways. He goes on then to address situations where you're confronted by someone who has no intention of living harmoniously with you. It'd be wonderful if everybody that you reached out to or that reached out to you, it'd be wonderful if there was always a reciprocal sort of a response.

But have you ever noticed sometimes there isn't? You go and you go to talk to somebody and be nice to somebody and they just kind of look at you like, what? And they're just kind of made up their mind they're not going to be nice back to you. And that could be a believer or an unbeliever. So how are you gonna deal with that?

Verse nine says, do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling. I don't know if you use the word reviling in your daily vocabulary. I don't oh He's reviling that guy actually the word reviling means to criticize and to attack So somebody who's on the attack So in other words, he says don't repay evil when somebody does evil to you or don't attack back When someone attacks you rather he says on the contrary Bless and then you'll notice that he makes this very important statement He says to this you were called and this is the second time Peter has made that statement In the last chapter he did it before now. He's doing it again He's talking to us about our calling your calling is not to respond out of anger when someone is angry at you But you're called to respond differently You're to be different Right, and that's what he's telling us to this you were called that you may obtain a blessing What are you called to you're called to bless if somebody treats you badly, you're called to bless That you might receive a blessing in other words That's all about sowing seeds of blessing so that you reap a harvest of blessing Those are challenging things though. I mean when somebody's in your face and they're making life hard and they're saying things that are very hurtful and Demeaning at a young woman right to me just this week who was She was beside herself pastor Paul, how do I respond to people who are verbally abusing my faith?

Who are talking so negatively and and so in such a derogatory way about my faith How do I respond to those people and I since we were going through first Peter here? It was kind of an easy one to answer. I just shot her back some verses from the Bible So well, here's what here's what the Bible says You're to respond with blessing and that doesn't mean that you you act all holy when they say nasty things you go

Bless you my child or something like that No It just means that when you're given an opportunity to speak you speak back kind Generous and and things that are filled with blessing and and not derogatory and hurtful back In other words, you don't hit that one back to them the same thing that they've brought to you now in just a few verses Peter is going to address the issue of how we're to respond to someone who genuinely wants us to know Why we hope in Jesus Christ and he's going to talk to us about how to do that But that's not what he's dealing with right here He's not talking about people who genuinely want to know about your faith he's talking about people who are criticizing your faith and who are talking down to you about your faith and they're Belittling it and and and and this is another thing. I mean People run into this all the time in the workplace even at home in some cases you know, I've had I've had women who've written to me just just just distressed because they have an unbelieving husband who is Constantly putting them down for believing what they believe about the Bible or whatever and and people will write to how do I? Respond and and here's the thing about that I tell him in all honesty that the Bible really doesn't give us snappy comebacks for people when they when they say snarky things That's really not what what in fact What the Bible does give us an example of and even in the person of Jesus is Not saying anything And I know that's hard when somebody has said something snarky to just kind of hold your tongue But do you do you understand that that's what Jesus actually did you guys remember after he was arrested and they hauled him in before?

Pilot who was the the governor, you know Pilot questioned him and he really didn't know what to do, but he heard that Herod was in town So he thought okay, I'll pass him off on Herod and kind of pass the buck Well, Herod was delighted. Let me show you this passage from Luke 23 on the screen It says when Herod saw Jesus He was very glad for he had long Desired to see him because he'd heard about him and he was hoping to see some sign or miracle You know, I want to see a miracle done by Jesus So it says he questioned him at some length, but I want you to notice here what Jesus said in response nada Says Jesus didn't answer Why didn't Jesus answer Herod Because Herod wasn't looking for answers Do you understand that not everybody who questions you is looking for answers Sometimes they're questioning you in such a way as to make your faith look ridiculous and There's certain ways you can ask questions To make things look bad According to the question so that there's really no way that you can answer without looking dumb and That's what they want to do. Some people do that they try to actually lead you into a conversation to make you look foolish and They're and you and there's just they're not interested they're not interested in having a genuine conversation about Jesus who he is What he is to you and so on and so forth. They don't care They're gonna just bring up all these other peripheral issues and try to blow a lot of smoke You know so that they can win their argument or something like that What does Jesus give us as an example? He didn't say anything He didn't he didn't you know, he didn't respond at all And I think that

that's an important example for us to see there are times there are times when you want to Talk to somebody about your faith but you know the Bible also talks about not casting your pearls before swine and That sounds like a very derogatory sort of a thing.

But do you understand this wine don't appreciate pearls They can't they look at a pearl and they're like can I eat it? That's all they care about You and I would look at a pearl and go. Whoa, that's beautiful. They can't do that. You look at your faith you go That's amazing.

They can't see it So be careful We need to have discernment Christians about who we're sharing the gospel with Jesus told us in the parable of the sower that some people go out and scatter Seat on the sidewalk And it doesn't do any good The birds just come and pick it up and fly away So you see it's possible to sow your seed where it's not going to do any good You sit there and you're doing your best to try to you know, defend the faith To somebody who doesn't want to hear what you have to say So This is this is kind of a challenging thing But this is why we're called to sometimes hold our tongue and when people are cursing we are to bless And so forth he goes on to quote Psalm 34 or at least a couple of verses in Psalm 34 If you look in your Bible beginning in verse 10, this is where the quotation comes in He says for whoever desires to love life and see good days Let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good Let him seek peace and pursue it. Here's the point of why he's quoting this passage from Psalms For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are open to their prayer but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil and the whole point of this quotation is To remind you and me that God is listening. He is responding to his children according to their response and he's looking for people who are going to be peacemakers and seek peace and respond appropriately following the example that Jesus gave us in terms of how we respond right and We are to respond in peace. We're to seek peace and I know there are some people that don't want peace That's not your responsibility Your responsibility is to seek peace nonetheless and If they throw just more junk back at you, it's like well, whatever And that's how I know that's hard because man the flesh The flesh comes to life doesn't it?

You know, especially when somebody's saying things that are mean and and just flat-out you can just tell they're just being dumb You know It's possible. They don't even mean what they're saying, but they're saying things to just you know, rile you And it's really easy to get riled Especially when people are saying things about Jesus that riles me But I got to be careful that Paul doesn't rise up and say something because Paul doesn't have anything to say to them and That's happened a few times where Jesus didn't speak through me, but Paul spoke and it didn't help a thing So that's that's we got to be careful about that In verse 13 Peter asks a question and he says now who is there to harm you if you're zealous or Desirous in a very

great way for what is good and he's making a general statement here Who's gonna harm you if you if you're if you're desired to do good and it's something akin to saying You know who's afraid of getting stopped for speeding if you're always driving the speed limit It's a kind of a dumb example, but it's close It because you see Peter knew full well that it is possible to live a good life and to do nothing wrong and still be Persecuted he knew that What he's saying is don't invite trouble Don't live your life in such a way or do things in such a way that you bring trouble upon yourself And that's why he goes on in the next very next verse to say, you know If you do if you if you should suffer for righteousness sake and that means for doing right if you if you do right and then you suffer for it he says he says don't worry about that because you're gonna be blessed so don't have any fear of the people who are giving you a hard time don't be troubled by it he says and that's a these were really important words for Peter to pass along to people and you know that Peter was writing to people who were suffering do you know that Peter uses that word suffering 17 times in this book so this this is obviously a major theme of this letter you're suffering I know it so how are you gonna respond to people well listen if you are in the right you're doing good and you suffer anyway don't worry about it you'll be blessed God will bless you and so don't have any fear oh I man that's that's such a good word don't don't live in fear Jesus told us that that kind of suffering would be inevitable for believers right but now here's we get to verse 15 this is where he begins to speak to us about how we respond to people who ask us about our hope they're not just asking questions to make you look dumb or ridiculous they're asking questions because they want to know about your hope look what he says here in verse 15 starts off by saying in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy in other words set him apart as the holy one and that implies you two living a holy life but then he goes on to say always be prepared to make a defense and I want you to circle that word if you do that sort of thing in your Bible that word defense that's an important word be prepared to make a defense because the Greek word that is translated defense here is apologia and this is where we get our word apologetics and it is the defense of the faith the defense of the gospel and Peter exhorts us here to give an answer he says to anyone who asks you for the reason for a reason for the hope that is in you now I want you to stop there and I want you to think for just a moment why would somebody do that why would somebody walk up to you and say would you please give me a reason for the hope that you have in Christ listen the only reason somebody would do that is if they saw hope in you right if you're kind of a hopeless Eeyore going around you know always talking about doom and gloom and you know we're all dead it's just a matter of time nobody's gonna come up to you and say wow where's your hope I want to know where tell me tell me about your hope that's ridiculous they have to see it in you and so that's a really important question that we need to ask ourselves this morning with everything going on in the world and with everything going on in your life or the lives of those who are close to you where is your hope I want you to think about that for a

minute I want you to ask yourself the question am I hopeful and do I exude hope to the people around me because if you don't there nobody's ever gonna ask you about it and you're never gonna have an opportunity do you convey a hopeful outlook to others and I'm not talking about pie-in-the-sky hope either what I mean by that is well I sure hope things get better that's that's not real hope that's wishful thinking I hope our next president's better than this one no that's that's not that's not hope that's not that's not biblical hope we are talking about hope in the Lord in the Lord himself in the Lord Jesus Christ and and it is a hope that expresses itself through the peace that you have in your life that comes with the understanding that God is in control and God is working all things together for the good of those that love him and are called according to his purpose I love the fact that we sang that this morning that's where our hope is it's it's it's not in this it's not in circumstances it's not in that person you're sitting next to they will let you down count on it isn't that a fun message that's that's reality our hope is in the Lord we look at what's going on in the world our hope is in the Lord you know Aaron was praying about that here just as we were closing out the worship time where is our hope our hope is in the coming of the Lord the the the the work that he has done on the cross and the work that he will yet do in the future to make all things new that is our hope and that is what we should be conveying and so we need to ask ourselves the question do you when you're hanging around unbelievers do you think that they could detect that from you could they detect from you an outlook of hope an attitude of hopefulness to the point even where they might even ask the question why have you put your hope in Jesus and that's the next thing we need to think about in light of what Peter is exhorting us to be prepared to give an answer can you give an answer in other words can you communicate your hope to someone I know you're hopeful but can you communicate it do you know enough about the Word of God and do you understand enough to be able to articulate why you believe what you believe and why it gives you hope you see the whole point about this because I think I think we're very hard on ourselves when I say things like this or when I tell you or talk to you about Peter's exhortation to be prepared you know to share your hope with somebody most Christians think well I probably couldn't do that but what we think is we think it ought to come automatically it doesn't come automatically that's why Peter says be prepared you know that whole idea of that that word prepared means to make something ready for consideration I've prepared this and that means thinking about it talking about it how am I going to respond what what kind of things would I say to somebody if they said there's something about you there's a hope there's a there's a there's a peace even in the midst of everything going on in the world and I want to know I want to know what it is what would you say how would you articulate it Peter says be prepared to know what you're going to say so that you can give them a reason and I like that word a lot because reason tells you and me that our faith is reasonable okay unbelievers think that we have blind faith it's not blind at all it's a reasonable faith we come before the Lord and we

reason now that doesn't mean that reason is the only thing because faith does have a very important part or place in our lives but our faith is reasonable you believe the Bible is the Word of God well you know what there's good reason to believe the Bible is the Word of God when you look into it and you understand what the Bible says and and how God has kept it all these years and all of the things in life and in the world and and all of the things that testify to the reality and the validity of the Word of God it's reasonable to believe it's reasonable you know you're not an irrational person for believing that there's a Creator God although the world would like to perhaps paint you that way be prepared to give them a hope when they ask you for the reason when they ask for the reason so work on your answer but when you share it Peter goes on to say but do it with gentleness and respect having a good conscience so make sure that when when you talk when you share you're not saying things in such a way that you're gonna come off sounding purposely judgmental and condemning because you know that's just and I I know we live in a world that's primed and cocked to think that everything is judgmental that doesn't agree with their particular position I know that I get it and sometimes it's very very difficult but you have to just you have to be gentle he says do it with gentleness hold it gently hold that person gently as you're talking to them don't be harsh don't be rough be gentle and be respectful be respectful and have a good conscience about the way you do that as well now regardless of how you share there are always going to be some people who are not going to accept even when you are gentle even when you are respectful even when you have thought it out and reasoned shared your reasoning with them some people are going to read and that's why Peter goes on to say so that when you are slandered and that's going to happen sometimes the word slander is all about people making in false statements about what you have said. So when you are slandered, he says, that those who revile your good behavior, and again, that word means to criticize and to attack your good behavior in Christ, may be put to shame. And they're gonna be put to shame because your response is not to revile back, but it's to bless, but it's to bless in return. So Peter says in verse 17, for it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

Is it possible, according to verse 17, to suffer according to God's will? Yes, it is. That's exactly what Peter says. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will. You might say, well, that sounds kind of cruel of God to actually have a will that we might suffer for doing good.

Shouldn't we be rewarded for doing good? Oh, the reward comes later. The suffering comes now. That's the example Jesus gave us, okay? Now, we're going to read these last five verses all together and we're gonna take just a little bit of time to talk about them and unpack them because there's some difficult stuff in here.

I'll just tell you ahead of time. Here we go, verse 18, down to the end of the chapter. It says, 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 or by, your Bible may say, the Spirit, in which he went and proclaimed, circle that word in your Bible, 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 the 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. All right, now you can tell just as we read through these verses that there's some challenging stuff going on here.

But essentially, Peter is discussing that time period between the death of Christ on the cross and when he rose again. And we know that there was essentially what made up a portion of three days. It wasn't three 24-hour periods, but it made up a portion of three days. So what was Jesus doing during that time? Just kind of cooling his heels?

Where was he? What was he doing? Was he asleep? Was he unconscious? Was he just playing cards with the angels?

What was going on during that time? That's what Peter's talking about. And there are other portions of the word that actually talk about it as well. But you have to understand that when this physical body expires, dies, the spirit is released. And there have been all kinds of questions.

Where does the spirit of man go? And particularly before Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. How about in the Old Testament? I get this all the time. Where did people go before Christ?

Did people go to heaven before Christ? The answer is no, they did not. Heaven was opened at a specific time when Jesus paid the price and made the way open for heaven to be open through his sacrifice on the cross when he paid the penalty of our sin. Well, it's interesting here, isn't it, that we're talking here about Jesus going, Peter tells us, and proclaiming to the spirits in prison. Now, you have to understand, this is not talking about a literal prison.

It literally means the spirits in captivity. And it was kind of a holding area. And we wouldn't really know much about this holding area where people's spirits went before Jesus' death on the cross. If Jesus hadn't told a story, not a parable, but a story, it's in parabolic form, but it's a story. It's a true story that is recorded for us in the gospel of Luke, which tells us about this holding place.

And by the way, it's not purgatory. There's no such place. All right, here it is. Let's put it on the screen. Jesus telling this story, he says, there was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day, had everything he wanted in terms of food.

And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. This is when the spirit is released, okay? The angels carried this poor man's spirit, right, to what he refers to now as Abraham's side.

Now, this is gonna be called other things. It's also gonna be called paradise. But it goes on here to say, the rich man also died and was buried. And in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. Now, before we move on to the next, let's go back.

Before we move on here, you'll notice here that it says the rich man also died and was buried and in Hades, being in torment. Now, Hades is the Greek rendering or translation of the Hebrew word sheol. And sheol, which is used in the Hebrew, speaks of the grave, all right? It doesn't necessarily refer to hell at all. Hades is often referenced as hell.

But Hades is simply the Greek translation of the Hebrew word sheol, which is the grave, all right? Now, it refers in this case to this part of this holding space where this rich man who died apart from embracing and accepting the mercy of God and where he was held. And it says that he was, are we back at the first one? He was buried and in Hades, being in torment. So he's already experiencing torment and he's awaiting judgment.

All right, now we'll read the next part. And he called out, Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue for I'm in anguish in this flame. But Abraham said, child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things and Lazarus in like manner, bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you, a great chasm has been fixed in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able and none may cross from there to us. This is a fascinating passage that is very insightful.

And as I said, had Jesus not told the story, we wouldn't have really known about this. And by the way, the way we know this is not a parable is because Jesus is using proper names, Lazarus and Abraham. Never ever in parables are proper names used. You only use those in a story that is true, all right? A parable talks about something, it shares a truth in story form.

This is an actual happening. So it's interesting here that we find out that those who died, trusting in the mercy of God, even in the Old Testament times, were taken to this place, which Jesus referred to as Abraham's side, but he referred to the other thief on the cross as paradise. Remember he said to that thief, this day you'll be with me in paradise, right? But the other man who rejected God's mercy was put into this place of torment where he awaited judgment. So where did the spirit of Jesus go after he dismissed his spirit from his physical body, dying on the cross, he went to Sheol and there proclaimed himself to be the savior and the fulfillment of God's plan of redemption.

And this proclamation was made to both sides, to those who died trusting in the mercy of God and to those who died rejecting the mercy of God, including those, he says, who disobeyed during the time of Noah while the ark was being constructed. And the reason that I had you circling the word proclaimed in your Bible is because it's a very important word. It might be translated preached in your Bible, but proclaimed is better because the word that we typically use that we translate preached speaks more of speaking evangelistically. This is not that, this is not an evangelistic proclamation. This is simply a message.

Jesus went and proclaimed in the sense of giving a message. that He is Messiah, He is Savior, and He passed that message along. And so He emptied paradise that day, because you do know that nobody went to heaven before Jesus, before His death on the cross. Do you recall that? If you read carefully through John chapter 3, you will hear a statement where our Lord said, nobody has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven, the Son of Man.

Well, that was pre-cross that He spoke that. Post-cross, we now, believers in Jesus, who have put our hope and faith in Him, when we are absent from the body, we are immediately present with the Lord. And now people are in heaven, because the way to heaven has been opened, because the price has been paid, the purification for sins has been given. In the Old Testament, sins were atoned for, they were covered. When Jesus died on the cross, He paid for all of the sins that had ever been committed and ever would be committed, all in one fell swoop.

And now the way to heaven could be open, and it is open, praise the Lord. Now, the last thing we're going to look at here is just those last couple of verses, well, verses 21 and 22 particularly, where it speaks of baptism. And I want to talk about these, because it's important that we have clarity here. In verse 21, it says, baptism which corresponds to this, and the this was the waters of the great global flood, okay? Now He's relating it to baptism, and He says, baptism which corresponds to this, He says, 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, and so forth and so on.

And the reason I'm emphasizing the wording of that verse very carefully is because there are some who have read that verse, and they've come away with the idea that water baptism is what saves you. In other words, it is required to be saved. But Peter is talking about the spiritual reality behind the physical act of water baptism, and that's why he's very careful to include the words, not the removal of dirt from the body. In other words, it's not the literal immersion of the body into water that saves you. Can I just tell you this?

There is nothing that can be done to your physical body that will save you, okay? Remember what Jesus said to Nicodemus? He said, flesh gives birth to flesh. That's all it can do, and the flesh is dying. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to Spirit, right?

And you'll remember elsewhere, even Jesus said in, I believe it's John chapter 6, He says, the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are Spirit, and we need to understand the spiritual dynamic behind it. Peter is making a connection with the global flood and water baptism, but he's careful to say it's not the removal of dirt from the body. If that's what saved people, we'd go around tying people up with duct tape and throwing them in the river, and just telling them, you'll thank me later, right? I mean, if that's all it took.

There is the spiritual dynamic behind it whereby we must be born again by putting our faith in Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross, and Peter knew that. He understood that, and he's not telling us otherwise. Peter understood that it's a spiritual rebirth, and that this physical body is something that we're going to set aside. It is always and always will be the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that saves you, and that's such good news. And you know, when people ask me about that, and they do from time to time, I always point to the thief on the cross, and you know, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom, and Jesus said to him, sorry bud, you're not gonna be able to get down and get dunked, so you're not gonna be able to go.

Tough luck, huh? Anyway, it's not what he said, is it? This day you'll be with me in paradise. Yeah, that's an important thing to remember. So here's the deal, though, and you gotta understand this.

We've had 2,000 years to muck up the idea of what baptism is and isn't, and now whenever we talk about water baptism, or we see water baptism, or I do a water baptism class before we have a water baptism here, I always have to explain what water baptism isn't. I love talking about what it is, but I also have to talk about what it isn't, and the reason I have to do that is because there's been all this teaching

swirling around where people have gotten away from a simple faith and the finished work of Jesus Christ, and they've put it on their own actions. And they came to the place of believing because somebody told them that if you get dunked, you'll be saved, and that's what their hope is in. How do you know you're saved? Well, I got baptized.

And then we got to go back to school. We got to go back to the Word of God. We got to go back to Ephesians 2, 8, and 9. It is by grace through faith you have been saved, and this not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, lest anyone should boast.

It's not about you. It's about what He did that saves you. Amen? Let's stand together. If you need prayer, you're invited to come up as we as we're closing.

Father, we thank you so much for your Word. Your Word is true. Your Word is a living hope, and that living hope has been conveyed to us in such a powerful and wonderful way. And I thank you for that, my Father. And I thank you, Lord, that that hope is something that people can see and recognize in our hearts.

And I pray also that we would take seriously the exhortation of Peter to be prepared to share that hope with others, to tell them about the hope that we have, and what words are we going to use, and how are we going to say it, and how are we going to express that with kindness and respect. Help us to do that, Lord, so that we can share that life with those who have yet to come. We praise you and thank you for the time that we've spent together. We pray a blessing, Lord, on our week as we think about these things and put them into action. In Jesus name we pray, and all God's people said, Amen.

God bless you.