

18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. 19 After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits—²⁰ to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, ²¹ and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

If I had come into worship today wearing this hat on my head what would you rightly assume of me? That I root for the Senators! Now there are many other signs that give this one away, but If I were to walk around each day having this necklace hang from my neck what would you rightly assume. That I believe in Jesus. There are signs in my house that have bible passages on them, and, don't judge what I'm about to say because they are still up, nativity scenes that show we believe Jesus was born into this world! There are certain things that we do and wear in life that are symbolic of what we believe. Unfortunately it is a common misconception that, baptism is exactly that! Simply a symbol that shows which team you fight for - an outward showing that proclaims your devotion toward God. Peter makes it clear that baptism is much more than just a symbol of my love and dedication towards God, rather baptism is a gift that God gives to us which truly saves!

In order to illustrate the salvation that comes through baptism Peter directs us to the time of Noah and says, **"In it (referencing the ark) only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you."** Sin and corruption had become so great in Noah's time that in order for the Lord to spare his believer's lives from being overcome by such evil, he brought a great destruction! And as the waters of the flood were bringing destruction upon the earth, those very same waters were keeping Noah and his family buoyed up in their football field length ark! While the waters of the flood brought destruction and death for those who rejected God, they saved God's people from the decay and destruction of sin. Peter is illustrating for us that as Noah and his family were saved through water, so believers are saved through the water of baptism which washes away the destruction of our sin!

God was the one who preserved the lives of Noah and his family through the flood, and God is the one through whom the power of baptism comes! If baptism were nothing more than just a symbol of my loyalty toward God, than it would have no ability to be something that works forgiveness or saves, because that would change baptism into an act of works righteousness. But if God says that baptism saves, than it cannot be a work of my own toward salvation! Whether it is an adult or infant who is baptized we see God working salvation in a way that we simply cannot take credit for! If an adult wants to be baptized he wants what God promises that only he can do for him through baptism! When parents bring a child, who by nature is born sinful, to be baptized, they are doing so knowing that there are things that they cannot do for that child that they cannot give their child, but God can! And he promises that he gives them what only he can give, the clothing of Christ! Marking them as a child of God who have been washed clean of all of their sins!

When the water and word of baptism are poured and spoken over us, God connects us so closely to himself that we are now bearers of his name – as God places his name on you he says everything that I have is yours! Now go with my promises and be my representative to this world! Yet how often don't I fail to live out the confidence that the power of my baptism rightly gives to me?

Sin and evil were running rampant in Noah's time, yet Noah continued to trust in his God, he even built a massive ark as people were making fun of him because God told him to! He couldn't see any rain yet, he didn't have a glimpse of the destruction that was coming, he simply trusted God's promise and his patient trust in God payed off as God saved him and his

family. Sin and evil are evident today in our world. As I live in the world as a representative of God's name do I carry out God's commands and promises regardless of the mockery or shame I may face? Or do I tend to forget the strength God promises through my baptism and treat it as if it has no more power than a man made symbol. I'll carry proudly the name of God at church, and in situations that I feel comfortable representing God's name, but when bearing God's name gets tough, when family or friends disagree with what God's word says, or make a mockery of Jesus by their words and actions, I feel ashamed to bear Christ's name. Or do I tend to doubt God's promise of the power of forgiveness worked through baptism as I'm spiralling down a rabbit hole in my own guilt filled mind thinking that there is no way a perfect God could look at me and call me his child because my sin is far too great! Do I trust that my baptism has marked me as a forgiven child of God, as one of the hymns in the new hymnal says my sins they are many, his mercy is more, do I trust that? Or do I weaken God by thinking that the forgiveness given to me in baptism is nothing more than a show.

Imagine how Noah the rest of his life could have looked back on the flood and been reminded of the grace that God showed toward him and his family. Noah had seen first hand that God is faithful to his believers and will carry out his promises to guard and protect those who bear his name! We too have a promise that we can look back on and be reminded that even during the times that I have been unfaithful to my God, he does not leave me! Instead through faith and the promises of my baptism, he assures me that through his once for all death on the cross he has fulfilled your greatest need! A way to God.

Peter articulates for us how that path to God was made possible! **For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit.** Christ suffered for your sin! As we walk through the season of lent we are reminded that we are sinners and deserve the death that Christ died, but we are given an even greater reminder of the evidence of how much that means your God loved you! He willingly became my sin, the righteous, perfect Saviour, became my filth, everything that I cannot stand about my sinful nature Jesus became, so that I can be his righteousness! Clothed in your baptism God fully and freely gives to you the perfection of his Son! He put to death the sin that once was what defined me, and he brought to life a new person! One purchased and won by the blood of Jesus! Your baptism connects you to the death of Christ, you have died according to your sinful nature, and connected to his death you are also connected to his triumphant resurrection! The life he has eternally is the life that he guarantees to you. Sure there may be sinful struggle in my life, but brought to the cross of Christ that sin cannot take away the forgiveness your God has given to you in baptism!

Though we don't look at baptism as simply a sign there is a sign of reminder attached to our baptism. God uses water, so that we have a constant reminder of the love that our God has shown toward us. Every time you turn on the faucet to wash your hands you can be reminded that your God has cleansed your soul! Each time you look at a lake or an ocean you can be reminded that your God has buried your sins at the bottom of something much deeper than even that! Every time you take a shower and you feel the grime washing away and the warm water relaxing you, you have the constant reminder of the cleansing of sins your God has given you, and the comfort you are able to experience knowing you are at peace with God! What a loving God we have, that he would connect our salvation won for us in baptism to the most abundant resource on this planet. So that as you walk through this life you are empowered to live in the forgiveness of sins poured out upon you through your baptism.

Baptism is much more than just a sign of my love toward God, its a sacrament! It's touchable gospel that God gives to his people that promises you daily – even when may seem hard to believe – that your God is pleased to have you as his child and he walks with you each day as you bear his name. It is a promise that every single moment God will remain faithful to you on this earth, but not only that, he will welcome you into your heavenly home with open arms to live with him forever! Your baptism doesn't simply represent sin forgiven, new life and salvation, it assures you those blessings are yours now and forever!