

Text: 1 Pt 3.21

Way back in my one year of Hebrew, as we got started with the language, our instructors kept saying to us, “you guys aren’t out of the woods yet.” They meant that our confusion was temporary, and we would get it eventually.

One day, one of the guys asked, “How will we know when we get out of the woods?” The answer was, “You’ll know.”

And we did know. A few weeks later, we were out of the woods and the crazy language started to make sense.

Now in 1 Peter, we’ve been way down in the weeds (to mix metaphors), wrestling with very difficult bits. Hard to see our way through all this.

Guess what? We aren’t out of the woods yet!

We still have one more very difficult bit to understand.

Read 1 Pt 3.20-21

Here is our title:

How Baptism Saves You

I admit that is more than a little provocative. Lest anyone think I’ve lost it, the experience of baptism itself doesn’t save you. Physically, all that happens is you get wet. Symbolically, though, baptism is tightly connected with our spiritual salvation from sin. We are going to work through the text to see just how that is so.

Proposition: As Noah was brought safely out of death, so the believer is brought safely out of the baptismal grave by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I. The logic of our passage

- A. “for” – the passage gives us a reason for confidence when persecuted (18)
 - 1. For Christ died (as our substitute)
 - 2. For Christ intended to bring us to God
 - 3. For Christ achieved this by dying and rising

In other words, since Christ likewise suffered unjustly, and rose again, and we are now in him, we are already on the winning side: persecution cannot harm us.

- B. “in which” – the resurrected Christ declared victory for us over our great enemies: the spirits in prison
1. These spirits were disobedient, active during the building of the ark
 2. These spirits are imprisoned, held for their great rebellion, until the coming judgement
 3. The Lord, by the resurrection, proclaimed victory over them

In other words, our greatest enemies are defeated by the resurrection, our minor enemies cannot defeat us by persecution.

- C. “in which” – the mention of Noah reminds Peter of another picture of victory that corresponds to the story of Noah

So now we are talking about victory, and we will see what our passage is about.

II. The concept of type and antitype

- A. The word “corresponding” (“the like figure” κλι): *antitupos* (antitype)

1. We recently saw the term in Heb 9.24:

Heb 9.24 For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a *mere copy* of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

2. Definition:

“A type may be defined as an exceptional Old Testament reality which was specially ordained by God effectively to prefigure a single New Testament redemptive truth.”¹

- a. Caution: only two seen in NT

- 1) Tabernacle/Temple seen as a copy of the true temple in heaven
- 2) Something to do with the flood is the type of which something to do with baptism is the antitype

¹ F. Duane Lindsey, “Leviticus,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 166.

- b. Beyond this, interpreters need to be careful about types/antitypes (but beyond scope of our message tonight)

B. Identifying the type

1. “Corresponding to that”

- a. “that” is a relative pronoun neuter singular (21)
- b. “water” is a neuter singular noun – closest possible antecedent (20)
- c. “in which a few...” is a relative pronoun *feminine* singular – not likely the antecedent [distance, doesn’t agree in gender] (20)

2. “Corresponding to that, baptism...”

- a. Somehow, baptism corresponds to water
- b. Problem: the waters of baptism itself doesn’t save anyone (this is good theology and the testimony of other passages)

C. What happened to Noah and company?

1. They built an ark and got inside
2. In the ark, they were *brought safely through the water*
3. The waters delivered destruction to all other men on the earth at the time
4. The ark brought them safely through the water

D. How does baptism correspond to that?

1. Notice the dashes in the NAU:

1 Pt 3.21 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,

2. They indicate a parenthesis

Corresponding to that [the waters of the flood], baptism now saves you ... through the resurrection of Jesus Christ

3. The logic:

- a. The waters of the flood brought on death || the waters of baptism symbolize death

Rm 6.3-5 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? ⁴ 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. ⁵ ¶ 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,

- b. Jesus described his death in terms of baptism

Mk 10.38-39 But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” ³⁹ They said to Him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized.

Lk 12.50 “But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!

- c. We baptize with the language of death:

- 1) “buried *in the likeness of his death*”
- 2) “raised *in the likeness of his resurrection*”

- d. Thus, just as the ark carried Noah and family through the waters of death

- e. So, Jesus carries us through the waters of baptism

- 1) We die in him
- 2) And we live in him

Baptism saves us because we are in him.

E. The quick (parenthetical) clarification

1. Negatively: not by the physical act of baptism “washing of dirt from the flesh”

2. Positively: but an appeal to God for a good conscience
 - a. The word “appeal” only occurs here in the Bible
 - b. Root has the idea of “questioning” — hence translation as “appeal”
 - c. Yet we aren’t appealing for a good conscience with baptism
 - d. The word also has the concept of “pledge”

“Apparently the word was sometimes used in a technical sense to include both a question and answer associated with the sealing of a contract. Probably the baptismal candidate in Peter’s day was questioned and, in response, made his confession or pledge (perhaps that Jesus is Lord), thus ‘sealing’ the covenant with God. That seems to be the way the word is used here.”²

- e. Thus: baptism is our positive affirmation (our pledge) about what has already happened in our spirit through faith

III. How the antitype connects to the theme

- A. Remember the first point: our confidence in the face of persecution flows from Christ’s victory over sin and persecution by his resurrection
- B. We are saved from death through Christ’s resurrection
- C. So... Noah pictures our victory over sin and persecution as symbolized by baptism

The passage is about victory through Christ’s resurrection

Conclusion:

Proposition: As Noah was brought safely out of death, so the believer is brought safely out of the baptismal grave by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

² Robert E. Picirilli, “Commentary on the Books of 1 and 2 Peter,” in *James, 1, 2 Peter, & Jude*, ed. Robert E. Picirilli, The Randall House Bible Commentary (Nashville, TN: Randall House, 1992), 184.