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Living as Exiles in a Hostile World – The Epistle of 1 Peter

Part 24 – Remember Noah January 29, 2017

Sermon Text: 1 Peter 3:12 - 22

Scripture Reading: Genesis 6-7

Last week we saw that the wicked are going to hear Christ preach to them one last time. Not for their salvation, but for pronouncement of their just condemnation – and all for the glory of God. Christ went to those who were disobedient in the days of Noah –

1 Peter 3:18-20 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 the spirit, (19) in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, (20) 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 water.

So it will be when He comes to judge the world.

Notice once more what else Peter says to us –

1 Peter 3:21-22 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, (22) who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

These verses have without doubt been subject to all kinds of essays and studies and interpretations. But I don't think we need to be left in doubt as to Peter's meaning.

Just as Noah and his family were saved from the flood waters by getting in the ark in the midst of the waters,

so the Christian today is saved by baptism, which is a visible expression of his faith in Jesus Christ, the true Ark of God.

Notice that Peter is very careful to tell us that he is not talking about the mere physical water washing us in baptism, but rather what it represents – namely – our faith in Christ by which we are appealing to God to cleanse our conscience, which is a description of the new birth in Christ by faith alone. He thus rejects the Roman Catholic teaching that the act of water baptism justifies.

Profession of faith in Christ as pictured in water baptism is how we get in the Ark today, kept for that coming final deluge of judgment.

Peter was really taken with Noah and the flood in that day. Let's take the time to read the second and third chapters of Peter's 2nd letter –

2 Peter 2:1-22 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. (2) And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. (3) And in their greed they will exploit you with false words.

Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

(4) For -

if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment;

(5) if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;

(6) if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;

(7) and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked (8) (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard);

(9) then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, (10) and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority. Bold and willful, they do not tremble

as they blaspheme the glorious ones, (11) whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord. (12) But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, (13) suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you.

(14) They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children! (15) Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, (16) but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.

(17) These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved. (18) For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. (19) They promise them freedom, but they themselves are

slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved. (20) For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. (21) For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. (22) What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire."

2 Peter 3:1-18 This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, (2) that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, (3) knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.

(4) They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." (5) For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the

heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, (6) and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.

(7) But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. (8) But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. (9) The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

(10) But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

(11) Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, **what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,** (12) waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! (13) But according to his promise we are waiting for new

heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (14) Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. (15) And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, (16) as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

(17) You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. (18) But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

As elect exiles in a hostile world, we are to be holy, godly, and waiting moment by moment for the day of the Lord, and for the new heavens and new earth. So we diligently obey Christ now, *just as Noah obeyed the Lord all those 120 years while he was building the ark.*

The flood is surely coming. Pay no heed to mockers who deny it. Think often about the flood and Noah. Peter

did and so should we. And one final note regarding the flood – *have you considered what the size of the church was in Noah's time?*

Genesis 6:9-13 These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. (10) And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (11) Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. (12) And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. (13) And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

Eight. That was it. Yet the Lord was faithful to His promise and preserved His people, just as we are kept in Christ. *We should never be surprised nor discouraged when we see the true church growing very, very small. Numbers themselves mean nothing in Christ's kingdom.*

We must never judge something to be of God because it is big or not of Him just because it is small.

So remember Noah.

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. (2) For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. (3) And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, (4) and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, (5) so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

1 Corinthians 1:18-21 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (19) For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." (20) Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? (21) For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.

Isaiah 53:1-5 Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? (2) For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,

and no beauty that we should desire him. (3) He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. (4) Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. (5) But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

Matthew 7:13-14 "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. (14) For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

Dealing With a Hostile World

Finally, let's consider one of Peter's primary themes here – how we are to respond when we find ourselves subject to the world's hatred, which is really hatred for Christ –

1 Peter 3:14-22 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, (15) but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a

reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, (16) having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. (17) For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. (18) 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 the spirit, (19) in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, (20) 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 water. (21) 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, (22) who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

Suffering FOR righteousness. Suffering *because* you are a Christian. That is what Peter has been addressing. A Rome that hates Christ. A master who is unjust. A husband who is disobedient to the Word. These are the kinds of people we must deal with.

Last time we discussed the importance of keeping a good conscience. If we are disobedient to the Lord, if we are lawbreakers, then any suffering that comes our way as a result is not the kind of suffering Peter is addressing. We must strive to be godly and holy so that those not in Christ might be led to ask us to give an account for the hope they see in us. That hope, by the way, is our certain hope of Christ coming again.

And Peter now turns our attention to our ultimate example of suffering for righteousness – the Lord Jesus Christ. Perfectly sinless, yet hated and persecuted and killed by evil men.

*For it is better to suffer for doing good, **if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.***

Christ suffered in accordance with God's will. He was sent to suffer and die for our sins. So He submitted to it. It is not, however, always God's will that we suffer and remain in that suffering. Even in Christ's earthly life there were numbers of times when He did not submit to suffering or even to attempts to kill Him. But He willingly went to the cross.

Sometimes in our lives the Lord chooses to bring us into suffering at the hands of wicked men simply because we are Christians. How do we

know when this is? I suggest that it is when we suffer for doing good, for professing the name of Christ, *and there is no way of escape*. If the Lord provides a way to get out of that suffering, *take it*.

But a slave could not just leave. I suspect that wives in that first century (and even today) could not just leave. And how would anyone have been able to escape from Caesar's rule? How are we to respond to suffering for Christ's sake when there is no way out? Here it is -

(14) But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, (15) but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

Jesus did not raise up an army and lead a rebellion against Rome.

John 18:36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world."

And then these verses are very interesting as well –

Luke 22:36 He said to them, "But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one.

John 18:11 So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?"

There is a time, you see, when we are to resist evil and not submit to its attacks. As I say, you can identify such times by seeing a way of escape. Buy a sword. Lay up resources to escape. *Tremendous harm is regularly done to Christians who are suffering when they are told that it is always God's will for them to remain in it.* Do not make that mistake!

But there are also times when a Christian suffers persecution and there is no way out. What do we do then?

(14) But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, (15) but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

Look at Christ. He suffered and died and was blessed and is now exalted. The same will happen in our case. The Lord will keep us and raise us up on the Last Day, just as Christ was raised. No persecution can steal that hope from us. And it is that certain hope that boggles the minds of the unsaved – especially when they see the Christian hoping in hopeless circumstances.