

Another Saving Ark (Part 1)

I Peter 3:17-22

INTRODUCTION:

This morning we will be reading from I Peter Chapter 3 verses 17-22.

It is estimated that over 100,000 Christians are killed because of their faith each year. There is no way for us to know the vast number of Christians who are persecuted and harmed physically all over the world.

I Peter has much to say about suffering. Here in chapter 3 Peter focuses on suffering for doing what is right. We can understand suffering for doing what is wrong.

- When we did bad things as kids, we were often punished for it.
- When we disobey the law, we are often fined or put in jail.
- If we do not pay our taxes, the IRS will find a way to get them from us.

But it can be hard for us to wrap our minds around the concept of suffering great harm for doing what is **right**. I hope as we walk through these verses today you may better understand the purpose of Christian suffering. When we serve Christ, even if it means persecution for us, we are assured that our faithfulness will not be in vain.

All Stand and Read Scripture

1 Peter 3:17-22 (NASB)

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. 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.

This text contains verses that are hard to understand.

If you read 5 different commentaries on these verses you will most likely get 5 different explanations as to it's true meaning. Among Christians there is almost zero debate concerning the crucifixion and resurrection. But there is a wide range of opinions as to where Jesus went in-between His death on Friday and His resurrection on Sunday.

2 Peter 3:15b-16 (NASB)

¹⁵ ... just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, ¹⁶ as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

Peter tells us that some scripture is hard to understand. He says that some people will misunderstand them and teach false doctrine.

I point this out this morning because this is what many people have said and continue to say about verses 18-22 in our passage this morning.

As we look at these verses, there are many difficult things.

- Peter mentions "spirits who are in prison" and we ask who are these spirits?
- We wonder who went to talk or preach to them. Was it Christ himself, physically or was it His spirit preaching through Noah?
- If they were preached to, what exactly was the message? Was it the Gospel message or a proclamation of Christ's victory over sin?
- That doesn't even get into the issue of "baptism now saves you". What do you do with that?

Because of all of these complexities many have come up with false teachings.

A couple of bad things that have been taught is

- that there is a second opportunity to believe in Christ after death. "After you die, you will have the Gospel preached to you again and you can be saved after death."
- Others have used this verse to say that it is the physical act of baptism by itself that saves.

So if these verses are so complex and hard to understand and there is so much danger of false teaching in these verses, how do we, as we come together to study them, approach these verses?

We must look at these verses in the context in which they were written and interpret them in light of that context. So, what is the main point that Peter is trying to make?

In verses 13-17, Peter has been addressing persecution. A suffering for righteousness sake. He says that we should KNOW that we are secure in Christ and we should, in fact, consider it a blessing when we are persecuted for doing good. When we are persecuted, some will wonder why we believe so strongly, and we must be able to give a defense of the hope that is within us.

If we think about that, that brings us to a question.

Why are Christians to have a hope, even in the midst of persecution and how do I defend that HOPE when I am being wrongly abused?

Well, verses 18-22 answer that question.

That is why verse 18 starts with the word "**For**". Peter says "Defend the hope that is within you. Why do I have such a strong hope? Because Christ suffered once for sin.

The main point in verses 18-22 is to explain **WHY** we have a hope. **For** (Because) Christ has suffered once for sin to bring us back to God.

When we look at these verses, we may ask, "**Why does Christ's death bring me hope?**"

If we are to be able to defend our hope, we **MUST** know **why**.

Prayer

As we ponder the question, "How does the suffering of Christ give us HOPE, even in the face of persecution?", there is one thing that I want you to notice.

BODY:

I. ANOTHER FLOOD IS COMING.

Understand that man is separated from God. Look at what Peter says in verse 18.

1 Peter 3:18a (NASB)

18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, (Why did He suffer?) so that He might bring us to God...

Peter says that Christ has suffered for sins for a purpose: in order to bring man back to God. The Greek word here suggests that we are given a "friendly access" to God. The doors are opened and we are welcomed in.

So, if it was necessary for Christ to suffer to bring us back to God, then what does that tell us about our natural state? It tells us that without Christ, we do not have access. In our natural state, we are separated from God.

In fact the teaching of the whole of the Bible is that man in his natural state of sin is alienated from God. CUT OFF!

Ephesians 2:12 (NASB)

*12 remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, **having no hope and without God in the world.***

The biggest problem with man in his natural state is that he has no right to approach God. We are alienated from Him.

Understand that there is a gap between man and God that we cannot cross.

There is a wall between man and God that we cannot climb.

ILLUSTRATION:

It would be easier for us to swim around the world in the oceans or to jump across the Grand Canyon than for man in his natural state to enter into the presence of God. It cannot happen.

We know that we are separated from God. We are separated because of sin.

Peter said that **Christ died once for all for** WHAT? For SIN. He died **in order that He might bring us to God.**

Christ had to die for our sins because sin separates us from God.

When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, they did not run off from God, God drove them out of His presence. Then He stationed the cherubim on the East side of the garden with a flaming sword so they could not get back in.

If we try to approach God in any way other than through Christ, there is a cherubim with a flaming sword that says, "Get your sinfulness out of my presence!".

Why is it that sin separates us from God? The simple answer is that God is a Holy God. John revealed a picture of heaven showing the holiness of God.

Revelation 4:8 (NASB)

⁸ And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say,

"HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME."

There is not one fiber of His being that can tolerate sin. He is 100% pure!

James 1:13-15 (NASB)

¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. ¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. ¹⁵ Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

God is so separated from sin that He cannot even be tempted by it. He hates sin with all of His being. That is why He will not allow sin to be left unpunished.

Romans 2:5-8 (NASB)

⁵ But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, ⁶ who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS: ⁷ to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; ⁸ but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.

Paul warns us that many are storing up wrath because of our sin and stubbornness to repent. Peter compares it to the flood in Noah's day.

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*.

God waited. But there came a day when the waiting was over. Noah and his family entered the ark and God closed the door and the entire earth was flooded. All mankind died in the flood except for Noah and his family (8 persons).

Understand that because of our separation from God, **there is another flood coming!** Because of our sin and God's hatred of sin, **there is another flood coming!**

It is not another flood with water, but a flood of wrath! Just as in the days of Noah, God is saying, "You had better get in the ark, there is a flood coming".

Did you know that YOU are in the scriptures? Let me read a passage written by John of a future event where we are all included.

Revelation 20:11-15 (NASB)

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of *them* according to their deeds. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

John said he saw a great white throne with God sitting on it. Inhabitants of earth and heaven tried to flee from His presence, but there was nowhere to hide. Books were opened and everyone stood before God and were judged according to their deeds as they were written in the books. Everyone who faced God, both great and small, and did not have his name written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

The lake of fire is what we call HELL. It is an eternal place. The torment is forever.

We like to sing Amazing Grace.

When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun, we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we first begun.

Know this that those who are cast into the lake of fire, when they have been there ten thousand years, they will also still have eternity in front of them to suffer God's wrath.

Revelation 20:10 (NASB)

¹⁰ And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

As long as heaven lasts, so will hell. There is a flood coming. It is going to be in Hell, an eternal Hell.

Hell is horrible beyond our ability to imagine.

In Revelation 20:10 that we just read, it says that they will be tormented.

Matthew 13:49-50 (NASB)

⁴⁹ So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, ⁵⁰ and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Weeping and gnashing of teeth!

Understand that the all powerful and infinite God will turn his anger in full force and pour it out with all that He has upon the sinners. We cannot imagine what the horror will be like!

If we could only have a glimpse of what hell was really like we would never use the word casually again. If we had a glimpse, we would never again call a thing "hell on earth" for it is nothing compared to hell.

There is a flood of God's wrath coming in hell. We cannot understand the Christian's HOPE in this world until we realize that we all deserve that end.

As we look at chapter 3, we not only see that there is a coming flood, but next week we will see that **there is another saving ark and a safe deliverance from God's flood of wrath.**

II. THERE IS ANOTHER SAVING ARK (Part 2).

III. A SAFE DELIVERANCE FROM THE FLOOD (Part 2).

CONCLUSION:

God is a God that hates sin with all of His being, but He is also a God of grace and mercy. Are you willing to suffer harm for doing what is right? Are you willing to face the horrific persecution that may come your way in the future?

Can people in the world look at your life and see a living hope in you? Are you able to defend the hope that is within you when the opportunity arises?

John 10:27-28 (NASB)

²⁷ My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; ²⁸ and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.

If **you** are one of His sheep, **you** will hear his commands and follow them. **We** follow Christ because He first loved us and taught us how to live. When **you** live according to His plan, **you** will **KNOW** that you are one of His sheep and your name will be found in the Lamb's book of life. You will receive the blessing of eternal life with Him!

If you have not accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, do it today. Don't wait until you have cleaned up your life. **You don't clean yourself up to come to the Christ; you surrender yourself to Christ, to let Him clean you up!**

God be with You.