

1Peter 11-05-13a

This is the 13th of May, 2011. It's a Friday, and we continue our study in the book of 1 Peter. We're at the threshold of chapter 4. We have just finished our excavation of chapter 3, and we're going to be looking at the first six verses of chapter 4 tonight.

We'll take a moment at the outset to prepare ourselves through prayer to look for the ministry of God's Holy Spirit so that we can learn and remember and make application of this particular set of truths that come from God's Word. Shall we pray? Father, we are in full recognition of what a blessing it is to have the privilege and the opportunity of spending time together in fellowship and in the study of your Word, receiving the blessings that come through the spiritual gifts that you have distributed to each one of us, being encouraged, being edified, being strengthened and built up through our assembly and through our communal and shared recognition of how important it is to learn and grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus through the study of your Word. We thank you for this great letter that the Apostle Peter wrote, that you have preserved it for us and made it available for us to study and to seek to understand.

We pray that as we do so that God the Holy Spirit will superintend and will enable us both at the speaking and at the hearing ends of things so that we are able to see clearly those things that you have for us individually and collectively in this great passage. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, you remember the audience, you remember the situation, you remember the focus of the preceding chapter, chapter 3, where starting with the idea that there is a necessity for all of us to recognize authority. God has built it into human society and all of us are under it to some extent, to a greater or lesser extent. And it requires of us submission which in turn relates to humility.

It's difficult to be submissive if you're not humble. And humble doesn't mean, aw shucks, toe in the dirt, I'm no good, I'm just an old rabbit trapper of some kind, at all. It doesn't mean that we're inferior or that we have to decide that we're less.

Humility is strength under control. If we don't have strength under control we don't have authority. We direct our energy, we direct our effort, we direct ourselves in those places and toward those ends that God has set before us.

And we are good and faithful servants. In many cases we are the ones exercising authority and it still requires that self-discipline. The best way to learn how to lead is to practice following.

And the service academies recognize this. Many training disciplines and training efforts recognize this, that before you can lead you have to learn how to be led. And in that you come to understand the characteristics of good and not so good leaders.

And hopefully you learn by those examples, positive and negative, and become better at

exercising authority. Recognizing that we in turn are under greater authority. So he introduces that and he uses these three emblematic examples.

The servant under a master even if he's kind of twisted. The wife under the husband and then the husband recognizing that even though he has been assigned authority over his wife he has to exercise that very carefully and he has to remember to render the honor to her that she is due which is great. It is the same careful handling that the Lord Jesus Christ gives us as the church, his body and his bride.

And you think about the loving care and the compassion and the tenderness that the Lord Jesus has expressed toward us. That is the model for the husband. And anything that does not comport with that model isn't scriptural, isn't biblical, and isn't legitimate.

And so we see both sides of that in chapter 3. It actually began in chapter 2 and moved through chapter 3. But then we got to this real strange, to my mind, section at the end of chapter 3 where Peter says, For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit. And we're going to see some justification for my emphasis on that. I have tried to suggest that this is not Jesus died in his body but he was made alive by the Holy Spirit or he died physically but he was alive spiritually and he traveled around doing things with his spirit in a disembodied state.

I think that's off the mark. I think it misses Peter's point. And we're going to see as we move forward, any time you're in a letter, any time you're in a section of scripture, context is such a great clue, such a great help in helping us to discard erroneous understandings and faulty understandings.

So we're going to see, I think, tonight some vindication for understanding that Peter is contrasting Jesus' former life in the flesh in his incarnation, in his fallible, fatigable humanity, his flesh that could hunger and thirst and could be so tired that he could sleep through a great storm and so on. He was put to death in that flesh. He bore our sins in his body on the tree.

But when he was made alive and entered into the next and permanent phase of his existence as the eternal God-man, the resurrected Christ, the firstfruits of them that sleep, the victor over sin and death, made alive in the spirit, not just by means of the Holy Spirit, but because we have this Sarx and Pneuma juxtaposition here, these are realms. He was put to death in the realm of the flesh. He was made alive in the realm of the spirit, the heavenly realms, the eternal realms, the realms that we are headed for.

And then it says, by whom or in which also he went and preached to the spirits who are sequestered, to the spirits that are set aside, to the spirits who are under guard or in a separate place, is all that means. Who formerly were disobedient when once the divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah while the ark was prepared. I went through this last time, but let me just try to summarize what I think is going on here and why Peter puts it here.

It kind of seems like, how did we end up in Genesis at the flood with spirits in prison when he was talking about submission and following Christ's example of putting up with suffering. Well, think about that. Remember the earlier part, chapter 2 and chapter 3, it is about being submissive and following authority even if you suffer for it.

That's the whole thing. Servants, serving a twisted master, even if you are suffering for doing good, just stick with it. Don't let that discourage you.

Don't let that deflect you. Wives, if your husband isn't doing right by you, you continue functioning under that authority as unto the Lord. And the idea is, this is what Christ did.

He suffered the just for the unjust. Now, we have the combination of people who are under authority suffering injustice and persevering in that situation because their eyes are on bigger things. Are you with me so far? Isn't that kind of the general flow that we've seen over this last chapter and a half? Wives, you've got your eyes on the Lord.

You're putting up with this. You're suffering. This is not good.

You don't have a great husband. Servants, you don't have a great master. Husbands, maybe you haven't got a great wife, but you're still going to treat her like expensive crystal in fine china.

You're going to honor her because this is what you are called to do. It doesn't matter if she really deserves it. It doesn't matter if you think she merits it or not.

You do it because this is what you have been called to. And it might involve suffering. You might have to be putting up with chafing or some abrasion, some friction, some discomfort.

But you do this because you want to serve God and you want to honor God. Well, how do you make that happen? It's one thing to say we ought to do it. It's something else to find the motivation and find the right frame of mind to be able to do it.

Well, that's what Peter is going to supply us here. He says, look at the Lord Jesus. He certainly suffered unjustly.

He paid the penalty for sins that he never committed. It's the ultimate injustice that he should pay the penalty that you and I merit and richly deserve. He suffered it.

He suffered in the days of his flesh. He was slandered. He was maligned.

He was blasphemed. He was hunted. They tried to kill him on numerous occasions.

He was completely miscast by the leadership as a malefactor and an evil man when he was the most righteous man who ever lived. And he put up with that for his entire earthly ministry, culminating in, and emblematically so, in his trial and scourging and the spitting and the abuse

that he took physically in and through the crucifixion. So that's an example.

Now what about this whole flood thing? Why does Peter take a left turn into spirits in prison? Well, if you understand Genesis 6 differently than I do, then this won't make a lot of sense. But if you are willing to go along with my suggestion to you that in Genesis 6, God has detailed unfallen angels to come down and superintend, to teach man how to be civilized. Here's the wheel.

Here's fire. Here's the lever. Here's how to grow crops.

Here's how to rotate crops, fertilize. Here's how to cultivate. Here's all of the skills that they would not have had in the garden.

Didn't need it. Reach out your hand, pick some fruit, live forever. Go to the tree of life.

By the way, on the tree of life, just as a suggestion, I can't remember who I was talking to about this, probably Patty because we talk about nearly everything, but there seems to be the idea that Adam and Eve were not superheroes. They weren't like the claw man on the X-Men where you hurt him and he just instantly heals and he can't break a bone. He's just God-like in imperviousness.

What seems to be the case is that the fruit of the tree of life had a highly restorative effect. As long as Adam and Eve could go to that tree and eat that fruit, this fixed whatever was wrong with them. Purged out, if they got a virus or a bacteria or an animal bite or a sharp thorn or poison, anything that they might have run into in the outskirts of the garden, this restored them.

It's like they woke up on day one of their creation every morning. That fruit fixed everything. It's like the fountain of youth and the best get-well pill that ever was.

You remember in the curses that God pronounces in the garden, He doesn't say, I blight your flesh, and they start wrinkling and shriveling. He says in the day you eat there, dying thou shalt die, you will surely die. What happened on the day that they ate the fruit? That same day, they were expelled from the garden.

The whirling sword is posted at the gate, because what does God say? Lest he reach out his hand and take of the tree. Now, if the curse is enough to cause man to die, no matter what he does, then why does God say he must be excluded from the garden, he must be walled off from the tree, because the tree is the key. This is the same tree, by the way, that is going to be growing by the river of life in the kingdom of the Father in the new Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven.

That's the tree that has healing leaves that go out to the nation. You get the idea that these people have suffered some discipline, and those healing leaves can fix it. I'm just saying, this is what the Bible says.

It sounds sci-fi, it sounds some sort of a... All I'm saying is, use your logical powers of deduction and think about that tree. After the fall, God says, we've got to drive the man out of the garden, lest he partake of the tree and live forever as a sinner. So the tree has some kind of sustaining power.

I would suggest that occasionally, some kind of fruit from this tree has come to earth in the intervening years. How is it that Jesus was able to go into the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights without sustenance, and be tested by the devil, and then angels come afterward and strengthen him? Perhaps. It doesn't say.

It's pure speculation on my part. But there are times when a prophet or the Lord Jesus himself has received some sort of seemingly supernatural sustenance that has enabled him to go for days and weeks at a time, and you think, that perhaps is just a suggestion of the power of this tree. Be that as it may, after the expulsion from the garden, now they've got to learn to feed themselves.

They've got to learn to scratch a living out of the dust of the ground, to bear children and raise them in sorrow and so on. So here's the thing. God sends his spirits to judge.

Genesis 6. My spirits will not always judge man in the realm of the flesh. That's what it says. Come on in.

Meet the dog. Come on in, Brian. There are seats right here.

We saved the hard chairs for you. I'm glad you're able to make it. Blessing by association.

But here's my point now. After the fall, after the expulsion from the garden, what is man's situation? I would suggest, my understanding of Genesis 6 is that God sent some unfallen angels down to supervise, to judge, to get human civilization started. Which, by the way, is why after the flood, God says to Noah, from now on, you're going to judge yourselves.

If a man sheds blood, by man shall his blood be shed. Why is it that Cain was not hailed up before a court and charged with murder? Why is it that crimes were not punished in that way prior to the flood? It wasn't in place yet. There was an angelic court.

There was angelic judges. And these angels disobeyed. They miscarried justice.

They took wives of all whom they chose, and this was an exchange of influence for pretty women, basically. This is my understanding. So there was a miscarriage of justice.

Now, everybody is suffering, and man's imagination and his heart grows only more evil all the day. God comes down, and he says, this thing is a stench in my nostrils. I'm going to wipe it all out and start over.

And you have Noah and his family being delivered. Eight souls saved through water, and you start over, and now there is human justice. The reason I'm reviewing all of that is because that's what Peter suggests here at the end of chapter 3. Now, what has it got to do with what he's talking about? What is he talking about again? Function under authority, suffer if need be, keeping your eyes on God's greater plan and purpose, and continue that attitude of submission and obedience.

What happened in the days when these angels were judging? Not only did all the people get disobedient, but their examples and their judges were disobedient. And justice miscarried. They traded, apparently, when it says they took wives of all whom they chose.

When you take a wife in the ancient world, you pay the father. You have a dowry. So he says, look, Ahab, you give me your pretty daughter, and I'll make sure that land deal goes in your favor when it comes up to court.

I'll decide the boundaries in your favor. I'll adjudicate in your favor. You're going to be my quote-unquote father-in-law, so you're going to get whatever you want in court.

And it was a huge miscarriage of justice. People suffered under that. Noah and his family suffered.

Noah was righteous and upright, but everybody else wasn't, and he suffered. So this is an example. And Peter says, look, here's my point to all of you scattered Jewish Christians.

And this is the Holy Spirit's point to us as scattered Gentile Christians, or whatever kind of a stripe of Christian we are. We suffer in this world. We suffer in this society.

Did you see, I was teasing my roommate earlier, because ABC is coming out with some program that's about Christian women, but it calls them a bad name, and there's petitions being signed to not have it go on. We are a pejorative and a byword, and are looked down upon and insulted and compared to the most radical religions that are currently murdering and blowing people up and saying, well, you know, these Abrahamic religions are all the same. We suffer at the hands of the world.

We suffer, and we don't suffer badly. I mean, there's other parts of the world where people suffer grievously, suffer bodily harm, suffer the loss of property, suffer death and bereavement. Our suffering is mostly social, and that's, in my mind, not too hard to bear.

But for our kids, it can be a big issue. For our children going out in the world and being ill thought of, and being disrespected, and being maligned and made fun of, it's hard. It's hard for anybody.

Teenage years are vulnerable, and it's a natural instinct to fit in, to want to be accepted, to want to have some friends and have a social life, and it is hard. It's really hard to fit in now without

compromise and without exposing too much and doing too much and participating in too much and saying and getting into conversations about things that would have just been shocking to military men in earlier days. But that's the kind of world we're in.

Well, that's how it was before the Flood, and it got so bad that God eventually judged it. And what did he do? He delivered the righteous through that judgment. And this is Peter's point in taking this seeming left turn.

He says, you know, the Lord Jesus himself suffered unjustly at the hands of unrighteous men. And by the way, after he was vindicated, he went and gave it to these angels that messed up and were disobedient. In the days when there was all kinds of injustice and Noah's family was delivered.

So there's this common thread of suffering under bad authority and being vindicated ultimately. That to me is the thread. That's the common denominator.

And he says now in verse 22 that Jesus Christ has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God. Jesus has been vindicated. And these angels and authorities that have fouled up, whether they are unfallen angels, whether they are disobedient angels, whether they are fallen angels, the Lord Jesus Christ is over all of them.

What is the suggestion? What is the implication that Peter is making to these persecuted and harassed and maligned and ill-treated Jews of the Diaspora? You just be patient. The deliverance of God is coming. God vindicates the righteous.

You concentrate on being righteous. You concentrate on separating yourself from sin. And you too, like the Lord Jesus Christ, will be vindicated.

You too, like the family of Noah, will be vindicated. And that's the thought that ends chapter 3. So now we move into chapter 4. Let's take a look at just these first six verses. Therefore, therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, you remember I pointed out he died in the flesh but he is made alive in the spirit, right? Well this is the exact same phrase.

And this is why I think we understand it as realms. Christ suffered for us in the realm of the flesh. He suffered the whole time he was here.

His righteous soul was vexed from the time he was small. From the time he heard at his mother's knee that all those babies had been slain because they were looking for him. At the age of 12 when he went down to the temple and confounded the doctors, as they used to like to say.

And then when he began his earthly ministry for three years and was roundly repudiated, rejected, maligned, and excoriated by all of the people who were supposed to know better. And was ultimately tried and crucified unjustly. Christ suffered in the realm of the flesh.

And it says, arm yourselves also with the same mind for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. Another great crux interpretatum. Suffering in the flesh, you cease from sin.

This is where they get the whole hair shirt flagellation crawl up the steps of the high mountain, you know, and your bloody knees. God will be impressed you've suffered in the flesh. God will forgive your sins.

Some people understand it that way. Verse 2, that he should no longer live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men. See that in the flesh again? Same phrase.

Third time. No longer live the rest of his time in the flesh. Actually, that's the fourth time.

Christ suffered in the flesh. Arm yourselves with the same mind for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin that he should no longer live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. In fact, let's just stop with those two verses.

Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, he's our example. We've just referred to it. Arm yourselves with the same mind.

The word translated arm yourselves in Greek is haplesasthe. Arm yourselves haplesasthe. This is a really interesting word.

Haplizo or haplizomai, which is kind of a rare form that Peter seems to be employing here. But haplizo, we get the word haplite from this, talking about the ancient warriors. And the haplites are a really interesting group of warriors.

But that's the verb here. Arm yourself. Haplizo in its root original meaning means to prepare or to be prepared.

To prepare yourself. But because it came to be associated with the haplites, it took on this arm yourself idea. But if a military guy is going to prepare himself, what's he going to do? Put on his helmet, grab his weapon.

Put on your body armor. You've got the defense and you've got the offense. Arm yourself.

Here's some information about the haplites. Haplites weren't regular Roman army. They weren't regular Greek army.

They were reserves. They were national guard. They were citizen soldiers.

They only armed themselves when the occasion called for it. They didn't walk around in their armor. They didn't have this as a uniform or a daily attire.

They donned it when the alarm went out. Hey, we need some guys. There's a threat.

And they would keep this stuff. They would buy their own. They equipped themselves.

The Greek city-states, the Athenians or the Spartans or whoever, didn't have a treasury that they bought this stuff. These guys had to arm themselves. They were primarily spearmen.

They didn't have any weapons. Their method of engagement was not individual. They weren't like a Roman that had a little handy, move-it-around shield that could go up and down and to the left and right and high and low and a little short machira that they could jab and thrust and do all kinds of maneuvering.

That's really analogous to the later kind of warfare that the Americans introduced. You remember the British were marching around in these nice formations. The Americans were all hiding behind trees, picking them off.

And they said, well, that's not very sporting, old chap, while they were dropping by the hundreds. Well, same thing. The Romans learned that this whole formal method of going en masse isn't really working.

Let's split these guys out and let them really get with it. Well, this is earlier. The hoplites are Greek, not Roman.

This originates back around 700, 600 BC. And so what they did is they said, we're not going to send these guys out. They don't know how to fight.

They're not experts. So we're going to pack them into big squares called a phalanx, big lines. And they're going to reinforce each other.

So you had this great big, in fact, the hoplites are named for their shield, came to be known as a hoplon. This is your preparation. This is your main thing.

You're going to go forward. This is early equivalent of a tank. We're going to put this great big shield.

Everybody wears it on his left arm. And everybody's got this big honking long spear under his right arm. And we're going to line you guys up.

And you're going to march forward with these shields. And you're just going to pull your way into the enemy and stab him with these spears. Well, here's the thing.

You can't really, with a big long, I mean, some of these spears were as long as 18 feet. It's a long, now not all of them were, but at a point in time they actually had them that long. They kept thinking longer is better.

You know, these guys got a 10-foot spear. We got a 12-foot spear. 14-foot, it was, what do they

say, mutual assured destruction or what do they do? It was an arms race.

You got a 14-foot, we got a 16-foot. We got an 18-foot. So they just kept going longer and longer until it just became impractical.

And then the Romans came along and said, you Greeks, no wonder we licked you. Here's a way to do it. And they improved it.

But here's what they did. They had these great big shields on their left arm. They had these great long spears on their right arm.

Well, they had to line them up because you can't protect the right side of your body with this spear. You can't, if you drop your spear, you're helpless. You can't just hunker down.

You're not going to be effective. So you jab and thrust with this big spear and you rely on the guy to your right to overlap you. The shield covers two of you.

So this guy standing here is protecting his left half and he's protecting the right half of the guy to his left. The guy to my right, I'm being protected by the overlap of his great big shield that's on his left arm and I'm jabbing between my shield and his shield. Well, what they discovered very quickly is that when they would march forward with these phalanx formations, these things inevitably drifted to the right.

You'd say, okay, men, forward march. Well, they were going on a right-hand diagonal. Can you think why? Hey, you're getting away from me.

I want to get behind your shield. Come back, Fred. I'm open here.

So they kept moving to the right trying to stay behind their neighbor's shield and so these things would always drift to the right. Well, these guys over here, they're drifting to the right and so these things would slide and they would have these kind of rotating battles because everybody's trying to stay behind the next guy's shield. But here's the thing.

When you say, hoplido, prepare yourself, arm yourself, and you start thinking about the hoplites, Peter is living in Roman days. Why doesn't he say, grab your machaira? Why doesn't he say, all of the armor that's in Ephesians 6? He says, hoplido, yourselves, plural. This is a group effort.

You pick up your shield and arm yourselves. You're looking out not only for your own interests but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you.

Remember, Paul says the same thing. Let this mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus. But when you arm yourself, you're not just arming yourself.

You're protecting the guy on your left. It's a collective. It's a cooperative.

The hoplite was useless standing by himself. He was only useful in formation and everybody had to stick with it. If one guy fails, you've got to break in the line.

You've got to close up that line. You've got to stay together. You've got to maintain your fellowship.

You've got to maintain your assembly, your integrity, because you're hoplidzoing. It's not just you. You're not off there on your lonesome arming your mind.

You're arming yourselves. You are getting together as a unit and hoplidzoing. It's a beautiful picture because you can't do it alone.

You're not an island. The Lord Jesus had to do it by himself. We don't.

We're given fellowship. We're given ourselves. If it's a servant and a master, if it's a husband and a wife, you've got to look out for each other.

You've got to be thinking about the person that's on one side or the other of you, not just yourself. Look out for one another. It's a beautiful, beautiful picture.

Well, it says arm yourself with something. We're going to pause here and take our break, and when we come back, we're going to see, okay, I get the hoplidzo picture, but what exactly is this shield? What exactly is this spear? What is it I'm arming myself with? What is it we're doing together and collectively in our fellowship? Peter tells us in this very next phrase. It's a great thing, so we'll look at it as soon as we come back.