

An Example of Hope

1 Peter 3:19-22

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, November 5, 2017

If you would, go ahead and turn in your Bibles to the book of 1 Peter. And as you're doing that, this morning we're in a series called, "The Suffering Church" where we're talking about how the church should handle pain and suffering. If you're with us for the first time today, we're talking about trials and hard times because everyone has them, don't they? I don't care who you are, live long enough and you will have a trial, you'll have a hard time, you'll sit in The School of Hard Knocks. Has anybody heard of the School of Hard Knocks before? Is that a Canadian expression? I actually have a diploma from there on the wall of my office. I actually... I do. I have a diploma from The School of Hard Knocks. When I graduated seminary, I went to work for a window cleaning company. And before moving on, they gave me a diploma that said, "This certifies that Jeremy has successfully completed the arduous course of study in The School of Hard Knocks by washing windows, running pressure washers and in general, working himself to death." They didn't go on to say working myself to death for small pay, but they said that as a joke. But some of you are in The School of Hard Knocks for real this morning, Amen? Some of you are getting knocked around by life. You're getting roughed up a bit and this series is for you. That's what we've designed this for: How God presides over The School of Hard Knocks. He's the president and the superintendent.

To say this another way, I read somewhere recently that at the end of your life everything reads like a book. When you get to heaven, everything looks all nice and tidy. You look back on your life and you see how this leads to this and this leads to this and how the pieces fit together like a puzzle, but when you're here on the Earth, you can't see that. When you're here on the Earth, it just looks messy. And this series is for that too. It's for those of you who have messy lives like the rest of us. For those who can't see how the pieces fit. And that's what the book of 1 Peter is about. If you've been with us for the past couple of months, you'll know 1 Peter was written to people with messy lives. It was written to those who couldn't see how things fit together. Verse one of the book says, "They were aliens." In other words, they didn't belong, they didn't fit in in the world they were in. Chapter two, verse 11 calls them, "Aliens and strangers," so that adds to the term. It says in other passages that they were scattered. And the book actually ends in chapter 5, verse 8 with the devil chasing them around. It just goes from bad to worse in some ways. But in light of that, the theme of the book is that God is still sovereign. And that's the point of 1 Peter, in light of all this chaos and messiness and confusion, God is still in control. He didn't drop the ball on us.

And to dive on into our passage like we did last week, I just want to read it to you, and then we'll say a few words about it. It's some pretty deep stuff, but if you would read 1 Peter 3:13-22 and then I'll say a few words about it. In 1 Peter 3:13, it says,

13 Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. "And do not fear their intimidation and do not be troubled," 15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for

the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; 18 and keep a good conscience so in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. 17 For it is better, if God should will it so, that you should suffer for doing right 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's at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers have been subjected to Him.

Now as you can tell by reading this, there's a lot in here. All this stuff about Noah and spirits and prisons sounds pretty wild. So let me just give you some background for this and we'll talk about this passage together. The first verse we read there is considered by some to be the most important part of this book. 1 Peter 3:13 says, "Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?" Some say that's what this is all about. Before this Peter has talked about salvation in chapter one. He's talked about trials in chapter two, trials with the government, trials with marriage, trials in the workplace, and now he sums it all up by saying, "Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?"

In other words, if you do the right thing, if you follow the Word of God in these areas and please Him with your life, nothing can harm you, eternally speaking. And nothing's going to touch you in heaven. Nothing's going to threaten your marriage eternally, nothing's going to threaten you and your job, nothing's going to threaten you in the government. God presides over it all. He wrote the book of life. And then he gives some applications to this in chapter three, just building up to our passage. He says in verse 14, "Do not fear their intimidation and do not be troubled." That's one way you apply this, if nothing's going to harm you, you have nothing to fear. You have nothing to worry about. He says in verse 15, "Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to make a defense." In verse 16, he says, "Keep a good conscience." And then he goes on the rest of the passage to give some examples of what this looks like which is what we're going to talk about today. Starting in verse 18, Peter tells us about two men who were zealous for what is good and came out of it unharmed spiritually.

The first one is Jesus. The second one is Noah. If you weren't with us last week, we talked about Jesus. Jesus was zealous for what was good. And He always did what was right in the eyes of God, even though He went through a hard time, even though He went through the cross, which was the most difficult experience in human history, nothing harmed Him. And the same could be said for Noah. We don't talk about this a lot, but there are a lot of people in the Old Testament who were zealous for what was good. They did the right thing in the eyes of God. It's been said that 10% of the New Testament is a quotation or allusion to the Old Testament for this reason. Because they kept the faith, it gives us hope when we read the Old Testament. If you boil it down, one in 22 verses in the New Testament refers to the Old. That's almost one time per chapter. And every book in the Old Testament is quoted in the New Testament but eight books. Judges, Ruth, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles are not

mentioned. But other than that, they're all in here, every one of the Old Testament books, because the Old Testament gives us an example of people who did what was right in the eyes of God. It gives us hope.

Romans 15:4 says, "For whatever was written in earlier times [in the Old Testament] was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures, we might have hope." You see the word "hope" right there in that passage. God put the Old Testament with the new to give us hope. Just out of curiosity, how many of you have ever been encouraged by something you read in the Old Testament? Anybody? We all have, haven't we? How many of you ever been blessed by reading the story of David and Goliath? Talk about someone in a hard time. Ruth and Naomi, Elijah and the prophets of Baal. That's what they're there for. I remember as a kid learning the Old Testament on flannelgraphs. Anybody remember flannelgraphs? Remember those things? I think they come from the Old Testament. They smell like mothballs. You guys know what I'm talking about? It's those - for those of you young people - it's those boards you put Velcro pictures on. I think we lost something spiritually when we lost flannelgraphs. It had a picture of flowers and trees in the background. You put a picture of David and Goliath up there, and little stones going over it, "Kill the giant!" And if you wanted to make it real fancy, you shook the pictures or you turn the lights on and off in the room, that was special effects. You guys tracking with me on the flannelgraph? Well, the teachers did that because the Old Testament gives us hope. They did that because those people suffered, and God brought them through it and He'll do the same thing for you. That's Peter's point in the back half of this passage.

To say it theologically, the Old Testament gives us what is called, "Progressive revelation," or the idea that God progressively reveals Himself to us so that you know more about God in Exodus than you do in Genesis and you know more about God in Chronicles than you do in Deuteronomy. It's not a one-time revelation in the Bible, it's progressive. It's ongoing, it's gradual. He doesn't tell us all about Himself at once. Steve Lawson has called it the "bloody baton" that gets passed down through the ages and goes from runner to runner to runner. And God gave the baton to Abraham who gave it to Moses who gave it to David who gave it to Jesus who gave it to us. We're carrying on what they started. We're continuing the race that they ran. They ran in a suffering world, they ran in a bad time and we're carrying on that tradition.

To say this another way, when we come to Scripture and come to things of God, you have to be careful not to commit (I think it was C. S. Lewis who called it) "chronological snobbery", or the idea that newer is always better. It's not. Not when it comes to God anyways. Some of the people in the Old Testament knew more about God than we do. They didn't have as much revelation, but they had a greater understanding of Him because they suffered. If you just think of the way people suffered in the Old Testament, it would blow your mind. The stories of Job, Abraham, and Moses. I used to think it'd be great to be king until I read the life of David, and then I think, "I don't ever want to be king", have your own son Absalom trying to kill you, chasing you around. That would be the worst thing in the world. And it gave them a depth of understanding that many of us don't have. And you see this here in the life of Noah, that 1 Peter 3:20 refers to "the days of Noah during the construction of the Ark, in which a few, that is eight persons, were brought safely through the water." Peter ties Noah to Christ here to show that Noah suffered tremendously. He went through a terrible time.

In Genesis 6 it says that in Noah's day "The LORD saw the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and every intent of the thoughts of his heart was evil continually. The LORD was sorry that He made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. The LORD said, 'I will blot out man whom I've created from the face of the earth.'" That was the world in Noah's day. You can imagine what you would read on social media in Noah's day. Imagine what kind of pictures you would see on Facebook. It would be horrendous. It was so bad God was gonna blot it out and start all over again.

The passage also says in Genesis that, "The earth was filled with violence." We don't know what that looked like, but this might be something interesting for you. It could've had something to do with violence towards animals. Genesis 2:15, 16 says, "The Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden and commanded him saying, 'From any tree in the garden you may eat freely ...'", and that's it. In other words when creation started, you could be a vegetarian, you could eat plants but there's no reference to animals until after the flood. And the idea here is that the earth was filled with violence, could mean a lot of things. Violence towards animals, violence towards men. But it was a terrible, terrible world. And God wiped it away with the flood to the point that only eight people survived. I think there's about eight people up in the balcony right now. That's how many people survived the flood.

And the point Peter is making in this passage is that if God could bring good out of a world like that, He could bring good out of a world like this. If He could save Noah and those eight people from destruction, He could save us today. You can look at it this way: the whole earth was saved through Noah; the entire human race was saved through him. Just as Jesus' suffering saved us from sin, Noah's suffering saved us from annihilation. No one ever went through as much pain as Noah did to watch everyone you know die. To watch everything you love drown in a flood of this magnitude would've been heart-wrenching. I mean these people may have been bad, but they were Noah's neighbours, they were his friends, they were his co-workers, and they all died. You can imagine, we get these pictures of Noah stepping off the flood and stepping off the ark and smiling? I don't know that he was smiling. And Peter's point here is that if God could get Noah through that. He can get us through our problems today. He'll be with you in your marriage, in your job and with the government. Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?

And that leads us to our passage this morning, if you're taking notes in 1 Peter 3:19-22, we're going to see some lessons that come out of the flood. I just told you that the Old Testament was given to teach us lessons. It was given for our instruction. And so what are some of those lessons that we learn? Well, let's talk about that this morning. Here's some lessons from the flood. The first one is interesting, they're all kind of interesting but I think the first one might even catch you off guard a little bit, and that is that Jesus is sovereign over the demons. That's the first lesson we learn here from this passage. Jesus is sovereign over the demons. It might sound strange to read about Jesus in a passage on the flood. And to be honest it was a little bit strange studying this.

One commentary I read said that this is one of the hardest passages to interpret in the entire Bible. So I thought we would have a word of prayer and dismiss and I'll see you next week. Another one said almost every word has been differently understood. Martin Luther said he didn't know what it means. It's not very encouraging. John Calvin called it obscure. So this afternoon I actually have my Care & Discipleship Group, so I thought I would let Chris Klaassen answer all the questions and I'd go watch the kids. Chris has made it a point to study this

passage, it's been near and dear to his heart. Just kidding. But I think the main point is clear that the big picture here is clear to see, I think. And that is: Jesus is sovereign over the demons. He rules, and everything they do, He calls into account. And if you would read on in verses 18 through 19 it says this, it says, "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."

That phrase, "in which" in verse 19 sets the stage for this, because it means that Jesus went to the spirits in the Spirit. After doing all this stuff in verse 18, dying for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, Jesus was made alive in the Spirit in which He also went.

In other words this is something that took place between the cross and the resurrection. In that mysterious time when His body lay in the tomb. In those three days of silence, when the whole earth held its breath, Jesus made proclamation to the spirits now in prison. The word for prison here in Greek is *fylakí*, which is another word for hell. Revelation 20:7 says, "When the thousand years are completed, satan will be released from prison." That's the same word here. It refers to the place of eternal punishment, the place of eternal damnation. Jesus went there after the cross. Not to be punished but to punish the demons. Not to suffer, the suffering was over at the cross. Remember Jesus says "It is finished" there. But the idea is that He went to hell to talk to them and tell them what He did on the cross. Peter calls it a "proclamation" here. He says he went and made proclamation to the spirits. "Spirits" is another word for demons. That word "spirits" it's never used for human beings, to my knowledge, it's always used for invisible spirits, angels, demons, supernatural beings.

So the idea is that when Jesus left His body, when His body died on the cross, He left His body, and His spirit went here and He told the demons that their work was defeated. He triumphed over it once and for all. Now again, there are different interpretations but that was the best I could come to with this. Peter also ties this into the flood in verse 20 when he says, "In which also He went and made proclamations to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah." In other words these weren't your ordinary demons, these were demons from the days of Noah. These weren't your ordinary bad spirits, these were the worst spirits. The ones who plunged the earth into a flood.

They filled it with violence, they made men's hearts evil continually. They corrupted men's ways, they made God sorry He made them. And Jesus went to these guys and said, "Your work is over. I've defeated it. You guys are the worst of the worst and I destroyed what you did on the cross." And the encouragement we can draw from this is that if Jesus could say this to the demons in Noah's day, He could say it to the demons in our day. If Jesus could say this to the worst of spirits, the lowest parts of hell, He could say it to any spirit we're gonna face today.

We don't know a whole lot about demons in the Bible, we know some things. You actually see them a lot in the Gospels. That's the one time when the Son of God was on the face of the earth. That's when you see the most about demons, which is very interesting. You see it some in the early church, but you don't really see a whole lot about it. But the Bible says demons are real, and it says they're very dangerous. It tells us to be on guard against them. 1 Timothy 4:1 says, "But the Holy Spirit explicitly says that in later times, some will fall away from the faith paying attention to deceitful spirits and to the doctrines taught by demons." The interesting thing about that passage, in 1 Timothy is that demons teach doctrine.

We often think of demons as being the ones that possess the people in the bar or the unreligious people. Paul says demons are very, very religious. They're in the church. They're in the home. They're in the books you read. They're in the songs you sing. And you have to be very careful. 1 John 4:1 says, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God". Test them with Scripture. Test them with the Bible. You can't believe every spirit that comes along. You can't believe every religious idea you hear. You guys understand that there are sincere religious people in hell. Do you know that? They were sincere about it, they were just wrong. They followed the doctrines of demons. John says don't do that. Test the spirits with the Scriptures. 1 Corinthians 10:20 says, "I do not want you to become sharers in demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons, don't mix the two," he says, "Separate from everything that they do." But the point of this passage, in 1 Peter, it's very encouraging, is that as you put all that together, Peter says you can defeat them because of what Christ has done on the cross, that's the idea here. You don't have to be worried because Jesus defeated the worst of demons at Calvary. You don't have to be afraid.

I don't think there's anything more common today than frightened Christians, would you agree? Scared believers. We're scared to go out of our home sometimes, right? I mean we're scared of the news, scared of the TV, scared of what's going on in the public schools, we talked about that some earlier. You know the wrong guy gets elected into office and we fall apart. We think the sky is falling down. We start making end times prophecies, right? The wrong law gets passed and we come unglued. Let me tell you something, Peter says, if the demons couldn't get Jesus off the throne, then the politicians won't do it either. He says, if Satan couldn't defeat Christ at the flood or God at the flood, then the public schools won't do it either. You don't have to be afraid.

I don't want to minimize the problem, or make it sound unimportant but let's keep it in perspective here. This world is not as bad as Noah's world, and if God can bring good through that, He can bring good through this. Amen? If God can take care of him there, He will take care of you here. You're going to be okay. You don't have to go around frightened all the time. You serve a God who is mightier than the demons.

According to the Global News website, one in five young people in Canada suffers from stress. And if you increase the age and go to adults it comes to about four in five. This is a stressed-out nation which is interesting to me because I think Canada is great. I guess it's the snow, right? Is the snow so stressful? Or is hockey stressful to watch because those dudes beat each other up the whole time? According to one website the only countries that are more on edge than Canada are South Korea and Australia. Let me tell you as a Christian you don't have to be on edge because Jesus is Lord. You don't have to be afraid of what's going to happen because you know what's going to happen. Jesus will win. He's on the throne and nothing's going to take Him off of it. A friend of mine was standing at a Civil War monument in Chattanooga, Tennessee and he was telling me about it and he said the cost of the victory was very high. See all the death toll, the cost was high. And I said, "Yes it was, but thank the Lord we don't have to fight it again." Friends, Peter says the cost of this victory was high, very high, but you don't have to fight it again. You have to fight sin but you don't have to kill sin, Jesus has already done that on the cross. You have to fight the demons but they're as good as dead. Jesus made sure of that. So you don't have to be stressed out.

You don't have to be worried about it. I can't think of anything (as I was studying this passage) ... again there's a lot of things to wrestle with in here, but I think it's a good point... I don't think

there's anything more dangerous than a demon. Can you guys think of anything more dangerous than a demon - more evil? Peter as he is going through this passage says, this is the most extreme thing I can think of, as far as suffering goes;. suffering from a demon or something like that. And Peter says if Jesus can defeat that, He can defeat anything. If He can defeat the demons in Noah's day you have nothing to worry about. You're going to be fine. Like you guys, I know what it's like to watch our culture go to rot. You watch all these things happening and you wonder where it's going to end up. Right? Am I the only one? Does anybody else not live in a cave? What's going to happen to our kids? You guys think about that? Kids, grandkids. What kinda world are we going to give them? You ask those questions? Let me tell you something, we're gonna give them a world where Jesus is sovereign. Amen? What are we going to leave behind? We're gonna leave behind a Saviour that's going to conquer anything they're going to face. We're gonna pass the bloody baton on to those who come after us and God will be faithful to them, the same way He's faithful to us.

And that leads to the next lesson we learn here from the flood and that is that Jesus is sovereign over society. If He's sovereign over the demons it only makes sense that Jesus is sovereign over the society that they control. He's sovereign over culture. I hear so many people say today that culture is going to rot, it's going to hell in a hand basket, and maybe that's true but Jesus is still sovereign over it. He's still in control, and the passage here actually says He's saving people out of it which is what Peter says next if you read in verses 19-20.

It says, "In which also He went and made proclamations to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah." That last phrase there is interesting, "kept waiting in the days of Noah," because according to Genesis 6:3, God waited about 120 years to flood the earth. He said something along the lines of, "My patience will not endure forever with men, their time will be 120 years." So from the time He said He would destroy the earth until the time He did it was about that long. And because of that, the passage here goes on and says, "A few people, that is eight persons, could be brought safely through the water." In other words, Peter says they survived because God waited. They made it through the flood because God held off the waters for their sake. Apparently Noah took that time to talk to his wife and talk to his kids, tell them what God had said and convinced them of what was going to happen and as a result, eight of them trusted Him, got on the ark and they were saved.

And Peter goes on to apply this to us when he says in verse 21. He says, "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". I need to tell you like every other passage in this, every other verse in that passage, this one has been disputed, but the idea I think is clear. Just as the ark saved Noah, so baptism will save us. Not physical baptism, but spiritual baptism.

Just as the ship carried them through the waters, so baptism will carry us through a dark society. Peter actually clarifies what he means when he says, "Not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience". It's not referring to physical baptism, that doesn't save you. He's not referring to the flesh or removing dirt from it. He's referring to something deeper. An appeal to God for a good conscience. The idea is that when someone is saved, they are baptized in their conscience, baptized in their soul. When you become a believer in Jesus Christ, your soul goes down into Christ like a body goes down in the water and it comes up to live a new life. That's what saves you. That's what gets you through a hard, dark, evil society. You can

baptize a cow physically, but that won't save it. I don't really know how you could baptize a cow, they're kinda heavy, aren't they? But I guess you could. You can remove the dirt from its flesh, but that's not what this is talking about. This is deeper than that. And the point is that Jesus is sovereign over society. He has given men a chance to repent and be baptized in their souls. 2 Peter 3:9 interestingly says, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient towards you, not wishing for any to perish but all to come to repentance." And that's what Peter is saying here.

If you watch the news and you wonder why God doesn't do something, this is why. Because He's giving men a chance to repent. That's why. If you turn on social media and you wonder when this madness is going to end - "Why does it keep going on, why doesn't God rend the heavens and come down and say, 'Enough!'" Because He doesn't wish any to perish but all to come to faith in Christ.

Another way to say this is, that as bad as it gets, God is still saving people from the badness. As rotten as our society is, God is still pulling people out of it like He did in the flood. I just told you that you don't have to be afraid and you don't because of what's happening today. But things are bad. You could say what you want about the people in Noah's day but we're not too far behind them. We're catching up.

I was looking this up online this week and it's estimated that there are 15,000 nuclear weapons in our world today, and that's enough to blow up the world, I think it said, four times over. The world in Noah's day was filled with violence. Our world today is filled with nuclear bombs. And so also you can add to this, that it's been estimated that the last decade or so is one of the most violent decades when it comes to persecuting Christians. Something like 100,000 Christians were killed each year for the sake of the gospel. And more were brutalized and tortured, and the question you have to answer when you see that kind of stuff is, where is God? Why doesn't He do something? Well, He is doing something, He's waiting. What's He waiting for? He's waiting for men to be saved. And if you wonder why doesn't He stop it? Listen, if He stopped it, and here's the kicker, if God stopped it, then every lost person you know right now would go to hell and stay there forever. That's what would happen if God rendered the heavens and came down. Every unbeliever you know would be damned for eternity. And in His mercy and in His kindness and in His grace, He is waiting because He loves them, not because He doesn't love us but because He loves others, too, and He's drawing them to Christ. Aren't you glad God didn't rend the heavens and come down before you got saved? And don't you think we could be more patient for others to come to Christ, as well?

But the point in a lot of this, the application is, you don't have to be afraid. We know we just celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, of a time when just a handful of men changed the course of history. One of them, he's kind of my favorite, is John Knox. You guys have studied John Knox before, but he's called the "Fiery Scotsman" for his temper and his passion for Christ. The most interesting thing about John Knox is that he died of natural causes. He was so passionate, you would've thought that guy would've been killed. But when he started his ministry, there were only 12 Protestant ministers in Scotland, and when he died, there were 700. And he was largely responsible for that. He turned things around. He would pray, "Lord, give me Scotland or I die." And he was so forceful about it that he made Queen Mary cry. A very dangerous thing to do. You don't want to make the queen cry. But in private conversations, he

was so forceful that you don't need the pope, you don't need the mass, you just need Christ to be saved. He was so passionate about that, that he made Queen Mary weep about it.

But he could talk like that because he knew what Peter is saying in this passage, "Jesus is Lord." He knew Jesus controls society. He said, "God plus one equals a majority." If you have God on your side, you win. Period. He said, "Live in Christ, die in Christ, and the flesh need not fear death." As a matter of fact, on his tombstone, someone even wrote that, "Here lies a man who never feared nor flattered any man," because he knew that Jesus was Lord over society.

That leads to one more lesson we learn from the flood, tying all these together, and this just flows out of the other ones. Peter ties it all off as one more lesson from the flood and that is that Jesus is sovereign over everything. You get that point from all this passage here. If He's sovereign over the demons and He's sovereign over society, then like John Knox said, He's sovereign over everything. One author said, "There's not a square inch in the whole of creation over which Christ does not say 'mine.'" And that's what Peter says next in verse 22. If you want to read starting in verse 21 down, he says, "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, who is at the right hand of God".

That phrase "at the right hand of God" is another way of saying at the highest place in the universe, at the place of power. In ancient times, the King's right hand was reserved for the most powerful person in the kingdom. Peter says, "Jesus is at the right hand of God." He went from the cross, a humiliating, shameful, terrible cross, to the right hand of God, and He's there today. And he goes on and says, "Who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him." He mentions that last phrase as if to say, in case I missed anything, in case I forgot anything, Jesus is sovereign over all of this, angels, authorities, powers. That's an inclusive way of saying, "the scope of creation". Peter's point is that Jesus is bigger than anything you're going to face. He's bigger than the authorities, He's bigger than the powers. He's bigger than the angels, bigger than the demons and you don't have to be afraid.

One author says, "You don't have to hold onto Him because He's holding onto you." And nothing, I repeat nothing, will snatch you out of His hand. Because His hands are bigger. And maybe some of you need to hear that this morning. You know in your mind ... maybe some of you are trembling and you feel like you're holding, just barely holding onto the robes of God and like you're going to lose your grip. Let me tell you something, if you're a Christian, you're not holding onto God's robes, God is holding onto you in the palm of His hand. And nothing will ever get you out of that palm.

I just told you about John Knox and all the work he did in Scotland. Another interesting figure when you think of church history was Hudson Taylor. He was the president of China Inland mission. And like John Knox, when Hudson Taylor went to China, there were almost no Christians there, and when he died there were thousands of them. But at one time, things got so bad in his ministry that Hudson Taylor told his wife, he said "All we have in this world is 25 cents and the promises of God." And I heard that story and thought maybe some of you are like that this morning, all you got in this world is 25 cents, all you've got is a few crumbs, a few pennies, scraps. Can I remind you that you still have the promises of God? Can I remind you that

you still have Jesus Christ? You have all this stuff we're talking about in this passage. You have One who is in control of the demons, control of society, He's in control of everything.

Listen, things are bad in the world right now and it seems like things are going to rot. It seems like things are going to hell, but don't forget Jesus defeated hell. That's a promise of God. Things are demonic right now, but Jesus defeated the demons and you can too if you trust in Him. Will you do that today? He came to help you through the hard times. He came to get you through the school of hard knocks. Peter says "Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?" The answer is nobody, absolutely nobody. And Jesus came to show you that, so did Noah. No one can harm you if you rest in His hands. Let's close in a word of prayer and thank Him for that this morning.

Father, we do come to You this morning, trembling in many ways at our world and the things we see around us. We pray for this regularly Lord, but we pray for it regularly because things are getting worse, or they seem to be. But Your word promises us that even though things are worse, You are better still and You will keep getting better in our lives, as believers. And, Lord, we rejoice in that. I pray for my friends here this morning, those who are going through a tough time, those who are seeing the world go evil, and they're thrown in the midst of it. They see it their workplace. They see it in their home. They see it in their neighborhood. Lord, may You give them confidence to go out as these people did in Peter's day and proclaim truth in a dark world. May You give them confidence that they serve a Saviour who defeated all this evilness and death and disaster.

Lord I pray if there is any here this morning who have not trusted in Christ that they would come to a passage like this, or just come to the Bible in general and say "That is a wonderful promise, but I don't know it. I can't claim that," and may You draw them to salvation in Your Son. For those who are already saved, Lord I pray You would give them confidence this morning that they would stop trembling and start trusting in You. And knowing that You are stronger than anything they'll face, and You are a good, good God. Father, thank you for waiting for us to be saved. Thank you for waiting to save the lost who are among us today. Thank you that You are so much more gracious and patient and kind and loving than we are. And Father as You wait, would You help us to wait on You, and to trust in You, and to give You glory as we go out from here this morning? We pray in Christ's name, Amen.