

Longing for Rest

Genesis 5:28-32
Halifax: 26 October 2014

Introduction:

Last time in our Genesis series, we took a look at how the Lord preserved a godly seed in the ancient world.

- There were not many of them before the flood, God only saved a handful in those early days...
 - It appears that He did not do nearly as much to restrain man in his wickedness in those days in order that we might see what becomes of us if we are left to go our own way.
 - For example,
 - He gave them very long life—about 12 times longer than we live...
 - And of course death is something that humbles and restrains people, so with the expectation of long life, they were more bold in their rebellion.
 - And there were other restraints that He did not use with them...
 - He did not restrain them much with poverty, but allowed them to prosper...we see how Cain's descendants excelled in various areas.
 - He did not institute a civil magistrate that was authorised to punish sin...that certainly restrains wickedness...
 - And it seems that there were few storms and other natural disasters before the flood.
 - Without these restraining forces, the wickedness of man grew to great proportions.
 - We have seen the wicked arrogance of Cain and his descendants that reaches its climax in Lamech
 - (not to be confused with the Lamech who descended from Seth that we will be looking at today, but the other Lamech in chapter 4)...
 - This wicked Lamech boasted in killing a man who had only wounded him, arrogantly declaring that he would avenge himself seventy-sevenfold—not merely seven-fold as God promised to avenge Cain if anyone killed him!
 - In other words, if anyone so much as displeases Lamech, they will pay dearly for it, 77 times over!
 - And if you look ahead just a little,
 - you will see that wickedness has taken such a hold on the world that Noah and his family are the only family that find grace in the eyes of the LORD when the flood comes.
 - Noah's godly father and grandfather die just before the flood, and all the rest of the world perishes in their sin!

- While this wickedness shows us what is in man when restraint is removed,
 - We saw that it also creates a setting for the grace of God to be magnified.
 - We see in particular how able the Lord is to preserve a godly seed for Himself!
 - It is remarkable to see how this godly line of Seth is able to continue serving the Lord in such an ungodly world!
 - Just think how difficult it would be to continue in your faith if there were no other believers outside your family!
 - But by the grace of God, that is what the few godly descendants of Seth did—they continued in their faith by the grace of God!
- What an encouragement this is for us!
 - If God was able to preserve Seth and these few descendants of his in a world full of ungodliness,
 - surely He will be able to preserve you in our society where you have the benefit and encouragement of other faithful Christians!
 - Yes, we live in a wicked and perverse generation, but at least we are not alone as a single family serving the Lord!
 - There are believers all over the world!
 - But you see the point—even if you *were* the only believing family in the whole world, God’s grace would be sufficient to preserve you.
 - So don’t make excuses for your sin about living in an ungodly age—look to the Lord to keep you.
 - We looked specifically last time at Enoch and how he, as one of the godly seed, was said to have “walked with God.”
 - Walking with God is what made him stand out!
 - Unlike the ungodly world in which he lived, he was in fellowship and communion with God—
 - God made Himself known to Enoch and Enoch lived in a way that was pleasing to God.
 - He knew the promises of God and he believed them and relied on God for salvation and life.
 - He loved God and had a heart to serve Him.
 - We also saw how, with Enoch, God gave a testimony to the saints in the ancient world that those who walk with God in this world will walk with Him in glory...
 - Enoch was able to pass on to glory without seeing death—God just took him...
 - And this showed everyone that there was another life beyond this world.
 - God’s timing was very gracious...this testimony was given at the time the oldest members of society were starting to die of old age—just over 50 years after Adam, the first man, died.
 - In this way, God gave hope to His people.

So that is what we looked at last time in Genesis 4:25 through 5:27.

- Today we are going to pick up at 5:28 and go to the end of the chapter where we will look at another godly descendant of Seth—a man named Lamech.
 - And we will see that just as Enoch's walking with God was an example of what the godly do in a world of ungodliness,
 - so Lamech's hope for God's rest from the curse is an example of the hope of the godly in every age...
- As God's people, we are unique!
 - Even though we live in a world that has been cursed and even though we feel the pains of God's judgements in the world every day,
 - the Lord sustains us and encourages us and gives us hope—right in the midst of His judgements!
 - When we see that judgement is coming, we look to God to sustain us and He does sustain us so that we do not perish with the wicked!

Our scripture reading will be Genesis 5:28-32.

- Please give me your careful attention as I read to you from this text, keeping in mind that it is the very word of God given for our comfort and edification.

Genesis 5:28-32: Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and had a son. ²⁹ And he called his name Noah, saying, "This *one* will comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD has cursed." ³⁰ After he begot Noah, Lamech lived five hundred and ninety-five years, and had sons and daughters. ³¹ So all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years; and he died. And Noah was five hundred years old, and Noah begot Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

You can see from this text that when Noah was born to Lamech, Lamech was given a prophetic oracle about his son.

- We are told that Lamech had other sons and daughters, and it is only reasonable to suppose that he had quite a few others—likely hundreds of them...
 - but at age 182, he had this one son that stood out from all the others—a child of hope—a son connected with God's promise of deliverance and salvation for the seed of the woman—those few godly people in the world...
 - Lamech was given hope by God.
 - He was given a special prophecy about this son—that this son would lead the godly to find comfort concerning the curse.
 - Lamech was given hope!
- If you are a true believer, you can relate to Lamech and his hope—
 - though his hope was specific to his day with the coming flood, it is essentially the same hope that God gives to His own people in every age.
 - We shall see that like Lamech, we who believe:
 - Desire to find rest from God's curse as Lamech did...
 - Receive a promise that God will give us rest from His curse as Lamech did...
 - And actually experience rest in the day of God's judgement as Lamech both did and will.

TRANS> Let's look at each of these three realities...beginning with the first...that...

I. Like Lamech, we believers yearn for rest because of the curse.

- You can see in verse 29 how Lamech speaks of finding rest when Noah is born...
 - Look at Gen 5:26:
 - **Gen 5:29: And he called his name Noah [which means rest], saying, "This *one* will comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD has cursed."**
 - Obviously, this comfort in a cursed world of toil is something he wants!

A. Who doesn't want that? Everyone—believer or unbeliever—wants to be delivered from the curse!

1. And we *all* experience it.

a. As Job said,

- **Job 5:7: man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward.**

b. We recently saw, in Genesis 3:17, that God cursed the very ground on account of the sin of mankind...

1) When Adam ate the forbidden fruit, he acted as a public person...

- God had put him in the place of representing us all—all of us who were destined to come from his body...to be born of him...
- And so when he sinned, God responded by cursing the very ground out of which he (and so all of us who come from him) were made.

2) This curse is universal—for it is upon the ground upon which we walk and from which we get our living—

- and even out of which we were all made!

3) This has a huge impact on us....

- Because the ground is cursed, it means that it will not co-operate with us when we try to get our living out of it...
 - God said that we would still get our food from the ground, but that we would do so with much hardship...
 - He said that we would eat from it by toil—
 - There would be thorns and storms and things going wrong in all our labours...
 - And most devastating of all, He told us that we who were made from the dirt would return to dirt—
 - We who were made to have dominion over the earth will come to have the earth take dominion over us. We will rot in the ground!
 - It is the ultimate humiliation—it is on account of our rebellion in Adam against our Creator.
 - If anyone ever asks you how a good God could have made a world so full of death and suffering, you have the answer!

- He did not make the world this way—it is His just and holy response to our rebellion.
 - It is, in fact, *because* He is good and kind and holy and full of love and justice that He cursed the earth...
 - He cannot tolerate what is opposed to goodness and kindness and holiness and love and justice!
 - The world is as it is because God is good and we are not!
2. But of course there is no one who likes the curse.
- a. We toil and labour in an effort to find relief from the curse...
 - The whole health care industry serves this purpose...
 - Much of our farming is connected with trying to get crops to grow better despite storms and pestilence...and then with trying to preserve what we have grown and harvested.
 - And one of the main aspects of our building of houses is to gain relief from extreme weather conditions...
 - b. Yet, despite all our efforts, we still have many sorrows...
 - Nobody wants Ebola or cancer or stillborn children or crop failure or hurricanes that wipe out what they have built or starvation.
 - Everybody wants rest from the toil brought on by the curse!
- B. But the godly seed (like Lamech) *especially* want rest from the curse.
- Before we move on, let me remind you what I mean by the godly seed...
 - I mean God's people—those called the seed of the woman in Genesis 3:15.
 - those He has chosen from the rest of mankind to be redeemed...
 - In the ancient world, it was Adam and Eve and Seth and those named in Gen 5 including Lamech and Noah...
 - It is those in every age who hear God's voice and believe His promises and come to Him for mercy and forgiveness...
 - ultimately, those who repent of their sin and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and so are reconciled to God...
 - those who are pardoned and justified and sanctified and who will spend eternity in glory with God...
 - These are the godly seed and they are distinguished from the rest of mankind...
 - And to return to the point, I am saying that while *everyone* wants deliverance from the curse,
 - the godly seed—like Lamech—*especially* want deliverance.
 - And for good reason!
1. Like Lamech, we who are of the godly seed fully accept the fact that our troubles are on account of God's curse!

- a. You can see that Lamech does this—
- When he speaks of our troubles in Genesis 5:29, he uses language that shows that he acknowledges that they are from God...
 - He says straight out that the comfort he anticipates will be on account of **the ground which the LORD has cursed.**
 - It is not just that things have randomly gone wrong—it is that God has cursed the world.
 - Clearly, Lamech is thinking of the words of God that are quoted in Genesis 3:17 when God said to Adam,
 - **Gen 3:17: “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life.”**
 - Lamech even picks up on the special vocabulary that God used to pronounce the curse—
 - He uses the word *toil* which is only used in Genesis 3:16 & 17—
 - in 3:16 to refer to Eve’s *sorrow* in bringing forth children
 - and in 3:17 to refer to Adam’s *toil* in making a living from the earth.
 - Lamech is definitely referring to God’s pronouncement of the curse and acknowledging that the toil and sorrow is from God.
- b. Many people deny that our troubles are as a result of God’s curse!
- They acknowledge that there are troubles, of course, but they deny that it is from God’s judgement.
- 1) Some deny that God has cursed the ground because they want to think “better” of Him than as a God that would curse the ground...
 - While this sounds kind on their part, it is in fact a blasphemous insult against God!
 - There is no defect in God for having cursed the ground; it is rather an act of highest virtue!
 - As I said before—it is **because** He is good that He does not tolerate evil—
 - It is **because** He is good that He lashes out with destructive blows against that which is contrary to love and goodness and justice and purity and holiness and righteousness!
 - It is blasphemy to say that He would not judge if He were good! He judges because He is good and we are not.
 - 2) Other people deny God’s judgement in bitterness and anger against Him.
 - They reject Him because they despise His authority and they want to exalt themselves against Him.
 - Denying His judgement is a way of trying to dismiss Him.

- 3) Of course we are all uncomfortable with the thought that God would be incensed with us...
 - It is bad enough to have the toil and trouble of the world to deal with—but it is even worse to think that it is sent from God.
 - But Lamech, and all the godly seed, accept the fact that God did curse the world in His wrath.

 2. This acceptance that the curse is from God makes the godly seed want deliverance all the more
 - a. When you accept the fact that the curse is an expression of His displeasure, it makes you desperate to be delivered!
 - It makes you realize that if you do not make peace with Him, things will only get worse.
 - You realize that if God is displeased with us now, things are only going to get worse for us if we don't reconcile with Him.
 - You realize that the toil we experience in this present world is just a harbinger of the judgement that is to come!
 - b. Like Lamech, all the godly see that the world is headed for a worse judgement, and we don't want to be crushed by that judgement.
 - We believe the ancient prophecy that the serpent and all his wicked seed will be crushed—that it is going to be much worse than it is now if nothing is done.
 - Lamech knew this from what God had said after the fall about the crushing of the serpent's head...
 - And he could see how the world was not reconciling with God...how wickedness was growing! Judgement was inevitable.
 - We are told that his godly grandfather, Enoch, had preached that God was coming with ten thousands of His angels to judge—
 - This was a prophecy of the flood—
 - It may not yet have been revealed as a flood, but simply as a terrible judgement;
 - but Lamech yearned for the godly seed of his day—the ancient church that he was part of—
 - He yearned for her to be delivered from that judgement.
 - He knew that if the church perished, God's promised deliverance, the seed of the woman, would never come.
- So you see how the godly desire deliverance from the curse more than others.
- They fear God.
 - They know that He is a consuming fire that devours His adversaries and they must find escape—they must find deliverance.

II. And the good news is that God promises rest to His people from the toil of His curse.

A. Lamech receives God's promise of rest from the toil of the curse in his day!

1. There is the general foundational promise of Genesis 3:15 that the seed of the woman will crush the head of the seed of the serpent...
 - In that promise is the assurance of complete victory for the godly seed...
 - It is a promise of coming rest from Satan and the curse that he brought us under...
2. But in all honesty, when Lamech looked around him it did not appear that the godly seed would prevail!
 - The Lord Himself tells us that there was great wickedness in the earth.
 - Lamech could find it in his own heart—but as one who was born again he had at least been brought to repentance and had God's law written in his heart...
 - But he had seen how few had listened to his godly grandfather Enoch's preaching.
 - There was no fear of God—there was violence and there was immorality, and Lamech was alone.
 - Even most of his children were drawn into the rebellion—
 - We know that because only Noah was left among the godly once Lamech and his father Methuselah had died.
 - It is often that way for us too...
 - We are told that Christ will reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet...
 - But we look around and it does not look like He is gaining the mastery.
 - It looks more like the church is being trampled.
 - We need encouragement, just as Lamech did!
3. And encouragement was just what God gave him!
 - He encouraged him with a special prophecy about the son that was born to him when he was 182 years old—
 - that God would send comfort to the godly remnant through him.
 - Lamech received the promise and he named his son accordingly!
 - He named him Noah, which means *rest*, because he believed that God would give the rest from the curse that He had promised.
 - He took heart that even though God's judgement would come, Noah would lead the godly seed to God's rest in the midst of the judgement!
 - Somehow, God would bring them through to victory!
 - The wicked would be crushed, but the godly delivered!

- B. Our gracious LORD makes a point of bringing special promises to His people when His judgement is approaching.
1. With Lamech, we see the beginning of a pattern that will continue all through history...
 - That God brings special promises to His people that they will find rest in the very midst of His judgement...
 - He comes to them with promises that He will bring them through and they hear His promises and believe them—like Lamech did...
 - Even when it does not look like the promise will be fulfilled!
 - He has given promises like that to His people in every age.
 2. Just think of all the times that God has brought these promises to His people in the face of coming judgement.
 - a. He did it when Israel was in Egypt and God was bringing destruction on the Egyptians as a judgement against their idolatry...
 - He sent the ten plagues, and with many of them, the promise was given that only the Egyptians would experience the plague...
 - The judgement would fall, but God’s people would be spared.
 - Interestingly, this was not so with all the plagues, for we are called to taste the curse along with the wicked...
 - Our crops fail and we experience bereavement and sickness and all sorts of suffering just as others do...but the Lord does not bring us final judgement.
 - And so with many of the plagues God promised Israel that they would not be struck...He deliberately did this to make a distinction between His people and the Egyptians.
 - The most famous of all was the tenth plague when the first born son in all the land of Egypt was slain by the angel of the Lord.
 - But Israel was promised that their sons would not be slain.
 - God promised that He would accept a lamb slain in place of their firstborn son.
 - This promise is like the promise to Lamech that even though judgement was coming, the godly would find rest.
 - b. God brought similar comfort when He brought judgement upon Israel herself when she had become wicked—
 - when most of the nation was unregenerate and not of the godly seed.
 - The Lord told them through His prophets that judgement would come—
 - that Jerusalem would be destroyed and that the throne of David would fall.
 - He told them that they would be taken into exile in a foreign nation.
 - The ungodly in Israel did not believe what the prophets said—they were drawn to those who denied that God would judge...

- who said, “God would never do that—He is a God of peace—His temple is in our land.”
 - But for those who believed, God gave a special promise...
 - He assured them that His people would not be utterly wiped out but that He would bring a remnant through the exile and then restore them again to His land...
 - They were given a special promise that God would bring them out, that He would pardon their sins, that He would write His law in their hearts, that the promised Messiah would still come!
 - They had the promise of deliverance from the curse—from the toil that the LORD would bring on them.
3. And then when Jesus came—it was the same...
- John the Baptist announced that the kingdom of God was at hand.
 - He proclaimed the good news that the Messiah had come—that Jesus of Nazareth was He and that He was establishing God’s kingdom of righteousness.
 - But he also spoke of judgement that was already at hand...
 - That in establishing this kingdom, the Messiah would also judge Israel for not repenting.
 - Jesus also proclaimed this judgement which fell in 70 AD...
 - But there was a special promise to those who believed that they would be spared from the judgement...
 - John told them to flee from the wrath to come...
 - And Jesus told them that when they saw armies surrounding Jerusalem they should flee and that they would be spared.
 - They were given a special promise of deliverance in that great judgement—an ark like Noah’s ark—a place of refuge.
4. But now most importantly of all, we have the special promise of rest from final judgement...
- Jesus often spoke of the final day of judgement—
 - He warned that those who would not repent and enter His kingdom by faith would be crushed by that judgement...
 - He described a place of everlasting torment where there was unending weeping and gnashing of teeth...
 - But Jesus gave a special promise to those who repent and come to Him for salvation and new life...
 - He told us that we will not come into judgement, but find mercy!
 - In John 5:24, for example, He says,
 - **Joh 5:24: Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.**

- We will find rest and comfort in the day that others find torment and everlasting pain!
- Do you see Christian—you who believe?
 - There is a promise of rest for the people of God—rest from the toil of the curse!
 - Even rest from the toil we experience now—
 - It will end—the toil will end—
 - An even greater judgement will fall, but the godly will find God’s rest in that day!
 - Lamech will find final rest in that day too!

TRANS> God brings that special promise to you!

III. So Christian, it is your great privilege to experience God’s promised rest from the toil of the curse!

A. You can experience the subjective peace that comes from believing the promises even now, when judgement is drawing near!

1. That is what Lamech did—

- If he had not believed that God would give His people rest—that He would deliver them from the coming judgement that would destroy the world...
 - Lamech would have been swallowed up with despair...
 - But instead he believed the promise and he was comforted by believing that comfort would come for all the godly...
 - He believed that God would bring His church through the coming judgement—as small as that church was!

2. You can see that God’s judgement is coming—you know that it is...

- But it is for you to believe the promises instead of freaking out!
 - Do you see?
- But how do you get hold of those promises? How do you stir up and strengthen your faith?
 - ANS> You use the means of grace that God has given you!
 - Spend time reading God’s word—read with hunger—listen to sermons with proper preparation and zeal—
 - believe the threats but also believe the promises of God to those who repent and look to Jesus.
 - And pray!
 - As Jesus said, prepare for judgement by “watching and praying that you may not enter into judgement...”
 - Cry out to God for mercy and deliverance—not just for you—but for all His people—pray that we will not enter into judgement!
 - And encourage each other as you see the day approaching...

- Preach the promises to each other, and receive encouragement from each other...
- Keep pointing each other to God's faithfulness and to the promise that we will not come into judgement but will find rest in that day!

TRANS> And as you do this, you will be able to find comfort and rest in the face of coming judgement...just as Lamech did...

- But of course such subjective peace would do you little good if it were not also true that you really will come into that promised rest...
 - It is one thing to be comforted that you will find rest—it will be quite another to actually experience that rest!

B. And I declare to you that you **will** actually *experience* God's rest in the day of judgement.

- He will lead you through His judgement and into His rest!
 - just as He preserved the church (which was only Noah's family) in the ark so that they had rest when the great flood came...
 - They experienced what was promised to Lamech...rest from the curse.
 - just as He preserved Israel in Egypt at the Passover when Moses led them to God's rest even in the day that the death angel came to kill the firstborn...
 - Moses led them to the place of rest from that curse.
 - and just as the remnant (the godly seed) was preserved from idolatry in the days of Elijah...led by Elijah and the company of prophets...
 - and just as the remnant was brought safely through the exile—led by men like Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel...
 - and just as the remnant was saved when most of the nation had rejected the Messiah...led by Jesus and His apostles into saving faith...
 - and just as a remnant was carried through times of persecution when many in the church denied the Lord...led by men like Polycarp and Justin Martyr...
 - and just as a remnant according to election was brought through the times of heresy in the early church when Arius arose...led by men like Athanasius...
 - and just as a remnant was brought through the great apostasy of Rome in the reformation—led by men like Wycliffe and Luther and Calvin...
 - and just as God is preserving a remnant today in times of the rejection of the authority of God and of the scriptures as His holy word—led by men like Machen, and John Murray and R.C. Sproul and Sinclair Ferguson.
- God has always been faithful, and even now if you are being spared from the apostasy of our day,
 - you are experiencing God's rest in the time of His judgement.

C. But ultimately, there is the judgement at the last day!

1. Jesus has told us that He will come to the earth in all His glory with the holy angels with Him,

- and that He will summon all those that are in the graves as well as all who are yet alive on earth to come before Him and He will separate the sheep from the goats.
 - And in that day, He says that the wicked will be sent away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.
 - That day is coming and you will be on one side or the other of His judgement.
2. And I tell you that there is only one way to find rest in that day...
- Rest will be found in Jesus Christ—
 - You will not be brought to judgement if you are resting in Him.
 - He has already been crucified for our sins and now there is no condemnation for all those who are in Him.
 - If you come to Him now and are trusting in Him, you will not perish in the Lake of Fire, but you will be given everlasting life.
 - The toil of God's curse will be over for you forever.
 - In that day, you will enter into God's promised rest.
 - The judgement that destroys others will not destroy you.
 - Lamech was ultimately looking to that rest.
 - He saw that Noah would lead the tiny remnant through the coming judgement (the flood) that the Lord might bring His church to its final resting place.
 - The church could not be destroyed because God had plans to bring the Messiah, and then to bring her into His final rest.

Conclusion: Are you longing for this rest with Lamech and with all the godly who have ever lived?