

- 17 This is what the LORD says—
your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:
“I am the LORD your God,
who teaches you what is best for you,
who directs you in the way you should go.**
- 18 If only you had paid attention to my commands,
your peace would have been like a river,
your righteousness like the waves of the sea.**
- 19 Your descendants would have been like the sand,
your children like its numberless grains;
their name would never be cut off
nor destroyed from before me.”**
- 20 Leave Babylon,
flee from the Babylonians!
Announce this with shouts of joy
and proclaim it.
Send it out to the ends of the earth;
say, “The LORD has redeemed his servant Jacob. ”**
- 21 They did not thirst when he led them through the deserts;
he made water flow for them from the rock;
he split the rock
and water gushed out.**
- 22 “There is no peace,” says the LORD, “for the wicked. ”** (NIV84)
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GET OUT OF THERE

You might shout it to a person who was not aware that there was a fire raging just feet away on the other side of the house. You might yell it to a toddler who chases his ball right into the street without a care of what vehicles might be driving along the road. You might plead with your friend who has such potential, but seems to be wasting it in a dead-end job! “Get out of there!!” When someone is in danger, when someone is stuck, it’s a helpful thing to let them know, get out of there.

This morning God calls to his Exiles in Babylon. “Get out of there!” And as we read these words we’ll see he’s calling to us too. **Get out of There!** is God’s warning call for us to avoid the dangers of sin and to get to a place of blessing. We’ll hear his call to us today and we’ll rejoice that he enables us to answer it!

Last week we talked a bit about the massive walls that surrounded the city of Babylon. We tried to understand just how trapped God’s people were and just how much in need of deliverance they were.

This morning God acknowledges that they were trapped, in danger and he calls for them to leave ***Leave Babylon, flee from the Babylonians! Get Out of There!***

Isaiah 48:17-22

And the reason that God had to call that to them, is that he knew that they would grow comfortable there. They would forget that it was God who used the Babylonians to carry out his will. They would begin to think that their God is weak and that the gods of the Babylonians were the strong ones. Slowly the enemy started to look like the friend. Slowly the danger began to look like prosperity.

It was the whole boiling frog syndrome. Now I've never tried this, but you know how it goes: It's said that if a frog is placed in hot water, it will immediately jump out. But if it is placed in lukewarm water which is gradually heated, it will acclimate, never hop out, and slowly boil to death. The exiles were calling their Babylonian prison the new normal. And they were in hot water! If they didn't get out of there and soon, they would die—eternally!

So Isaiah pleaded with them to wake up from the spiritual slumber they were in and to get out of Babylon! "Get out of there!" And he announced that God would help them do it. He would, "***lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations,***" (Isaiah 52:10) that his "***glory [would] be revealed and all flesh will see it together,***" (40:5). He promised that "***those who [would] wait on the LORD [would] renew their strength,***" (40:31) for "***a bruised reed he [would] not break, and a smoldering wick he [would] not snuff out.***" (42:3) And in Isaiah 51:17 and again in 52:1 he cried out, "***Wake, awake!***" And we hear it again in our text, in 48:20, where he says, "***Leave Babylon, flee from the Babylonians!***" "Get out of there!"

And Israel's response? Nothing... nothing! They wouldn't leave! The luxury of Babylon, the comfort of Babylon, the religion of Babylon enticed most of them into staying in the boiling pot of Babylon!

That's why throughout Isaiah 48 the prophet calls them stubborn, unyielding, headstrong, prone to idolatry, deaf, deceptive, and stubborn rebels from birth. All this because Israel refused to listen to the warning to get out of there and so they refused to listen to the Gospel of their salvation; "listen" is the governing verb of the chapter. It appears eleven times in Isaiah 48.

Can't you just imagine the people responding to the prophet? "Isaiah, haven't you heard? Babylon is the political-military-religious superpower of the day. This is the land of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness! Why should we go back to little backwater Judah? Besides, what a huge hassle it would be to liquidate our assets, pack our bags, and pull up stakes just to live in a land devastated by famine and warfare. Get out of Babylon? Isaiah, have you lost your mind?"

"If only [they] had paid attention to [God's] commands, [their] peace would have been like a river, [their] righteousness like the waves of the sea. "

But are we really any different? Our bondage began with just one more drink, one more lie, one more fling, one more glance. But "one more" always longs for one more, and then just one more. And slowly the temperature creeps up and we barely even notice... until it's too late. The boiling frog syndrome unleashes its hypnotic power over us!

Sure, being obsessed—with pornography, or money, or gossip, or food, or people's approval, or work—is a strange place to be in, *at first*. It's crushing to be trapped beneath tons of collapsed hopes and shattered dreams. But in time, we become used to living in destruction and death. With each

Isaiah 48:17-22

passing day, it becomes easier to deny that I am stuck on stuff that kills and steals and destroys. We are in hot water! This is why God cries to us, “**Leave Babylon, flee from the Babylonians!**” “Get out of there!”

That’s what God always does: He calls people out of darkness and into his wonderful light. He called Abraham and Sarah to get out of Haran because it was the center of moon worship. He urged Lot and his family to get out of Sodom and Gomorrah because it was the center of sexual perversion. And he called Israel to get out of Egypt because it would be their spiritual ruin. “Get out of there!” he cries, “Before it’s too late!”

And he calls us to “Get out of there!” too! Get out of that pot before it boils you! Kill that pet sin, now while you can, before it grows to be a monster that consumes you! **“If your hand or your foot causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.”** (Matthew 18:8-9)

And our response? Too often . . . nothing! “Oh, Jesus! You’re overreacting! This isn’t that big of a deal. I’m comfortable. And it’s not like I’m boiling... yet.” And when we don’t heed his warning to “Get out of there!” we don’t listen to the Gospel of our salvation either. And we deserve to have God forever to say to us of his heaven, “Get out of there! You cannot come be where I am.” We deserve hell.

And deep down, we know we’re thirsty. For **“There is no peace... for the wicked.”** But we’re thirsty, not for “one more” of the same, but for something different. We know that our pet sins are salt water in the desert. They don’t quench or satisfy. They kill. And they leave us trapped in a basement of guilt and shame, of death and despair that we can’t get out of on our own.

So we’re thirsty for something more. We’re thirsty for a clean conscience, for a fresh start, for a loving, tender hand to reach into our basement and get us out of there. And that’s exactly what God has done!

He didn’t *just* cry “Get out of there!” When he saw us trapped under a mountain of sin, trapped under a pile of our own making, he didn’t just *say*, “Get out of there!” but he came *to get us out of there!* He came to rescue us from our sin, from death, from hell. He came to rescue us from us!

Listen to these beautiful words in Isaiah: ***I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins*** (Isaiah 43:25) ***I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist*** (44:22). These great and precious promises are found, fulfilled, and come to fruition in Isaiah’s Servant, Jesus our Lord, the one murdered for us to get us out of there.

And he did everything for our salvation and he did it all alone. When he was arrested his friends ran for cover and got out of there. His countrymen clamored for his death because they wanted him out of there! And his own Father abandoned him on the cross and got out of there! And Jesus suffered for you. He bled for you. He felt the thorns and the nails and the spear and *the hell* for you. He died for you. He rose for you. And he came for you to get you out of there—out of your sin, out of the shame,

Isaiah 48:17-22

out of the guilt, out of hell, and one day soon, out of death, out of the grave, out of this world and into his heaven!

He got us out of there. And he'll get us out of here. When we believe that, our thirst is quenched. Our peace is like a river because our righteousness—the righteousness Jesus gives us—is like the waves of the sea.

And now we view our pet sins differently. We don't want to feed them anymore, but we want to *slay* them. We don't want to get back in the pot of warm water. But we want to continue to "Get out of there!" every time we slip back in. We want to, "***Leave Babylon [and] flee from the Babylonians!***" We want to go and leave our life of sin! (John 8:11) We want to go and live for him!

And we want to tell others too. We want to warn them, "Get out of there!" as we sound the warning cry of the Law whenever we see them slip into the pot of warm water. And we want to tell them of God's grace that gets them out of there! We want to... ***Announce this with shouts of joy and proclaim it. Send it out to the ends of the earth [and] say, 'The Lord has redeemed his servant Jacob.*** In his name dear friends, thank God that **He Got you Out of There!** Amen!