

2Peter 11-11-04a

This is Friday, the 4th of November, 2011. We're less than a week away from the Marine Corps birthday, which I hope you're preparing to observe in a suitably dignified way. We're in the book of 2 Peter, chapter 2, and we will pick up our study in that place as soon as we take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, how grateful we are for your grace and your faithfulness, your long-suffering, your mercy toward us. We are fallen and we express our inadequacy in so many ways, and yet your Holy Spirit and the cleansing blood of the Lord Jesus Christ renew us and restore us and enable us to live a life that is above ourselves, a life that partakes of eternal things, that looks forward beyond and above this mundane existence. And we thank you for the standing that we have in Christ.

We thank you for the transformational nature of that life, that we look the same and we do the same tasks, and yet they have a new meaning and a new purpose and a new goal. We thank you for the passage that is before us in this letter from Peter to the early Christians of his day, and we ask that as we study it together that each one of us will find in it meaningful and applicable truths that will sustain us and help us to grow and become more Christlike in our thinking and in our behavior and prepare us more fully for the good works we are to perform in this life and in the ages to come. We pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, as I said, we pick up in 2 Peter 2, and you'll remember that for the past couple of weeks we have been looking at this interesting stereo view that is given us in 2 Peter and in Jude. God does this on occasion.

You find it in the Old Testament in parallel accounts in Samuel and Kings, in some cases Samuel and Chronicles or Kings and Chronicles. You find it in the Gospels with multiple accounts of the same events or the same teaching. And any time God does this, when he repeats it, by the way, you also find it in the book of Acts, looking at some of the episodes in the life of the Apostle Paul, where it will record it in an earlier part of Acts, and then he will recount it before Felix or someone later on, and you get two or even three different accounts of the Damascus Road episode.

Well, God doesn't do this with no purpose. It's not accidental. It's not just a happenstance.

It's there for a reason, and any time something is reinforced in this way, we want to pay close attention to it. So, if you've gotten the handout from either class here or gotten it off the download folder under the 2 Peter study on our church website, you will see the correlation between Jude and 2 Peter, and the portion we're looking at is verses 4 through 11, which in the New King James says, For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness to be reserved for judgment, and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, the eighth preacher of righteousness, bringing the flood on the world of the ungodly, and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to

destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly, and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked. For that righteous man dwelling among them tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds.

Then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, whereas angels who are greater in power and might do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord. Well, this is a pretty good chunk, but you'll notice in the first half of it there, you see three separate examples of judgment and deliverance.

It's actually two and a half examples. The first one is the angels who sinned, who were put in prison. They were set aside.

They have been segregated in a place of darkness, reserved for judgment. That's one judgment. The second judgment he mentions is the judgment of the flood.

And you remember the imagination of man's heart was only evil all the day, and God looked down and the stench of it rose up in his nostrils, and he got with Noah, told him to make the ark. When the ark was finished, God commanded the animals to go in. God told Noah to go in.

God shut the door. Not necessarily in that order, although the door shutting was last. They sat there for a week.

Then the rains came. Fourteen months later, they emerged from the ark. But in the meantime, all of the civilization around Noah was wiped out.

Animal life, human life, angelic material life, whatever kind of life was there in that entire civilization was wiped out. But he delivered Noah, the eighth preacher of righteousness. Then he goes to the third example, which is Sodom and Gomorrah.

And we know, particularly in the city of Sodom, where Lot dwelt, we don't know a lot about Gomorrah other than it was like unto Sodom, but Sodom is where we have the two messenger angels from God going in, and you know that whole story. The people clamoring to have their way with them, and Lot saying, no, take my daughters, and people turning them down, and it's kind of an ugly scene. And this, of course, is in your mind when it uses the word righteous three different times down here with reference to Lot.

It says, God delivered righteous Lot, for that righteous man tormented his righteous soul from day to day. Well, more about that a bit later. But this is the third example of judgment.

So in the first case, what do we have? We have angels who malfunctioned, and they are taken out of the picture and reserved for judgment. So in this case, the malefactors are removed, and

then the flood comes on the earth, and the people whose imaginations are only evil all the day, they are destroyed, and Noah is delivered. The world of the ungodly is wiped out.

Noah is delivered. So there is a set of angels who are removed and reserved for judgment. There's a bunch of people who are judged at the moment, and then there is Noah who is delivered through the judgment.

Did you catch that? Think about it. This is a three-part deal. God looks down and says, this situation is completely messed up.

So He takes the angels who sinned and kept not their first estate, and removes them and sets them aside for a future judgment. Those angels were not judged in the flood, were they? They were set aside. They're going to be reserved later.

In the earth of material persons, there is a separation. Noah is put inside this wonderful floating cocoon and preserved while the world of the ungodly is destroyed and everything associated with it. So you've got removal.

You've got separation and deliverance through a judgment that wipes everybody else out. Second big example. That's why I said it's two-and-a-half.

That's kind of a one-and-a-half judgment there. The second one now is Sodom and Gomorrah. He turns the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes.

And you remember there were actually five cities that were destroyed. But Sodom and Gomorrah, and primarily Sodom is what you end up looking at, the city is destroyed, condemning them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly. He doesn't say that the flood was an example to those who afterward would live ungodly because there wasn't hardly anybody around to live ungodly.

It's Noah and his three sons and their wives, those people. So making them an example to those who would live ungodly afterward and delivered righteous Lot who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked. It doesn't say Noah was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked, does it? It doesn't say that Noah, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds, does it? It says it about Lot.

Well, what is the difference? The two daughters and Lot, and initially Lot's wife, are all dragged out of the city by the angels, right? They do not stay in the city. They stay in a bomb-proof shelter, right? It's different than the Noah judgment. Noah rides out the great storm and subsequent flood for over a year in the ark. He's in the midst of it.

It's all around him. Lot is removed, forcibly removed. You remember the angels have to drag him and his family out before the fire and brimstone falls and reduces the city to ashes.

His wife turns around. They are saved yet so as by fire. It's not a complete success.

Only three of the four of them survive because it's not like Noah's wife could open up a window in the ark and look out and be turned into a pillar of salt. There is no indication that anybody did not believe God or did not want to leave the world of the ungodly in Noah's day. But it's much less clear in Lot's day.

Everybody reading this, everybody hearing this knew the story of Lot. And what sticks in everybody's mind? Not Lot's righteousness. There's no example in Genesis of Lot's righteousness.

So why does Peter use the word righteous three different times? Name for me a righteous thing about Lot. He chose to live among sinners because the grass was greener. He separated from his uncle Abraham.

He offers his daughters to the mad bunch of perverts outside his door. The one good thing you can say about him is he offered hospitality to God's messengers. I suppose that was a righteous thing.

He ends up getting drunk and having incestuous relations with not one but both of his daughters producing the Moabites and the Ammonites which will be enemies and thorns in the side of the people of Israel from then on. And yet he's described as righteous three times. What is Peter's point with all of this? Well, hold all of that information for the moment and let's look at the conclusion.

He says in verse 9, If God did these things in the past, God did not spare the angels who sinned but reserved them. And look at the verbs related to God. It says, If God, in verse 4, right? So what did God do? If God, A, did not spare the angels who sinned.

Verse 5, did not spare the ancient world but saved Noah. Right? So you've got two did not spares and one save in the Noah case. Verse 6, Turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, made them an example, and delivered righteous lot.

Then, verse 9, The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment. And especially, when you think of all of the judgments of the Old Testament that Peter could have brought to mind, he picks these two. He picks the day of Noah and the day of Lot.

He picks the flood and Sodom and Gomorrah. Judgment by water and judgment by fire. To make this point, the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations.

It doesn't say to deliver the godly out of judgment, does it? What are they delivered from? What are they delivered from? You can say it. What are the godly delivered from? What does it say in

verse 9? The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations. The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of what? He has just spent five verses telling us about these awful judgments, but he says, The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations.

Out of the stress of exposure to these evil things. This is Peter's point, which is somewhat surprising when you look at the build-up. You would think the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of fire and flood and disasters designed to wipe out all the ne'er-do-wells.

That's not what he says. So, what light does this put the flood and the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in? How are those examples used? In other words, why did God destroy the world of the ungodly in Noah's day? Not that they were just so ripe for judgment that God couldn't stand it anymore. Why did God judge the entire world of the ungodly and remove the angels who sinned and reserve them for some future judgment? Why did God do that? Because he's delivering Noah and his family out of temptation.

He says, This world is getting too stressful. Its pull towards sin and evil is too strong to leave my godly people in it any longer. I'm going to get rid of this excess temptation.

I'm going to deliver the godly out of temptation. Not the only reason, but it is a reason that we don't often think of. We think, well, those awful, only evil all the day, wicked imagination people, God had to destroy them with the flood.

One of God's motivations was to clean the world up for Noah and his family. It is a blessing on Noah to get rid of the evil. Look at Sodom and Gomorrah.

If he leaves Lot and his family in there any longer, there won't be any righteous left in there. And this is why Peter says righteous, righteous, righteous three times about Lot. Not because he is a paragon of virtue, but because of the people in that area, he's the only one that has any righteousness at all.

He believes in the Lord God of Abraham. He is saved. And to preserve him, God wipes out these cities.

I will speculate that if Lot and his family had not lived in Sodom, these cities would not have been destroyed. They were chosen because these five cities of the plain were impinging on both Abraham and Lot. Abraham is far enough away that when God judges them, the benefit to Abraham is great, but Abraham is not in any danger.

Lot is right in the midst. So God has to drag Lot out of there, you remember, at Abraham's request, and then judge them because of their proximity. Let me ask you this.

Were there Chinamen in Abraham's day doing all kinds of pagan things and slaughtering infants and doing whatever they do in China in their pagan culture? Were there not other civilizations in Abraham's day that were doing heinous things? Was there not child sacrifice? Was there not

homosexuality? Were Sodom and Gomorrah and those other three cities the only places where there was heinous evil? These cities are marked out for judgment because they are a threat to the people of God if they continue to grow. And remember, they had a chance. You say, well, that seems so cruel.

God just wiped them out. Do you remember Abraham's campaign against the kings? And Abraham delivered these people and worshipped God with Melchizedek and said, I will not even take a shoestring in terms of payment from you guys. Did they know about the God of Abraham? Did they have a chance to say, I want to know more about Him? This looks like a God worthy of worship.

Look how He has empowered this amateur to defeat these professional soldiers and these kings. He delivered them. He gave them a beautiful picture of the gospel in delivering them from bondage, delivering them from captivity and slavery.

They got the gospel. And what was their reaction? It drove them deeper into perversity, deeper into evil. And God said, your time is up.

But it is their contact with Abraham and with Lot that brings about their judgment in the same way that contact with Noah and Ham, Shem, and Japheth, their families, required the judgment on the earth. So, Peter says, God knows how, the Lord knows how, to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment. And notice again, he doesn't say what you would expect him to say.

I would expect, after these verses, that he would say, the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of judgment and how to judge those ungodly pagans, those ungodly perverts, those ungodly rejecters of God and His salvation. He'll deliver His people out of judgment and He'll judge the fire out of the rest of them. He doesn't say either thing.

He's delivering the godly out of temptation and He is reserving. Guess what? The people that were wiped out in the flood haven't really been judged yet. Their judgment is future, right? They will all stand at the great white throne of judgment.

The angels who kept not their first estate, they have not been judged yet. Their judgment is still future. The people that were destroyed by the fire and brimstone and volcanic whatever it was that hit Sodom and Gomorrah and the rest of those cities, sunk down below the Dead Sea or on the edge of it, depending on who you listen to, those people, their judgment is still future.

What happened to them in this life? Their life was ended early. How many of them would still be alive today if those judgments had not happened? How many people from Noah's day would be alive today if God had not sent the flood? They would have lived a few dozen or hundred years longer, right? They had built long lifespans back in the flood days. They'd all be dead anyway, right? So, dead sooner, dead later.

When you're living a godless life, it doesn't really matter. So, how is that a judgment? Everybody dies. Lot died.

Noah died. Ham, Shem, and Japheth died. Everybody descended from them down to the current generation has died.

So, in what sense was the death and the flood? Lots of people drowned. Lots of people died. Look at all the people in Vesuvius and Pompeii and what's that other city nearby? Herculaneum.

Those people died in a fiery judgment, you could say. Well, no. These people have not really been judged yet.

Those judgments of the flood and of Sodom and Gomorrah were a benefit to God's people so that they could get a fresh start, potentially. And what do they do with it? Well, what's the first thing Noah does after he gets out of the ark and gets busy planting a vineyard? What happens? He gets drunk. Something bad happens and you have the curse on Canaan, the curse of Ham, right? What's the first thing that happens after Lot gets out of Sodom with his two daughters and they're hiding up in the cave? What happens? Lot gets drunk and there is another episode of the procreative kind and you've got the Moabites and the Ammonites who are products of incest.

There's something incestuous that happens in Noah's household immediately after the elimination of the godless on behalf of the godly and the same thing happens with Lot. What is the lesson here? God knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation. The question is, do the godly know how to avoid temptation themselves? Because Noah and Lot both get in trouble right after those judgments that were designed to free them from the oppression of the ungodly.

And what does it tell you? What does it tell us? Not only is the problem in the external world, God can remove the evil from around us, there is still evil within. There is still evil in the household, right? There is still evil in the soul. God got rid of everybody that could tempt Noah and temptation sprung up in his own household.

And when I say Noah, you know what I'm talking about. We went through that in Genesis. Mrs. Noah, Ham, whatever went on there.

There are two almost equally valid understandings of what went on after Noah got drunk. The uncovering of the nakedness and walking backwards with the cloak and all of that. One of two things is true of that.

But it is very similar when you get to Lot and his two daughters. There is a very unauthorized union that takes place in both of those cases and all of the external pressure is gone. But they carry the taint and they carry the pull and the drawing power within.

This is a warning for us. There is no more susceptible time for a failure than right after a

deliverance or a success. And you get the idea that instead of thanking God and having a focus on God for his grace and his faithfulness and his preservation, your mind is elsewhere.

And by the way, in both cases, the abuse of alcohol is involved. So, the first thing is God delivers the godly out of temptations but he can't deliver temptation out of the godly. Secondly, he says, reserve the unjust under punishment for the future day of judgment.

They will be reserved for a future day of judgment. God knows how to do both. And what does this say? We need patience in the face of persecution, adversity, harassment, just the knowledge and the contact with those who are practicing evil, who are tearing our country apart, who are tearing our culture apart, who are tearing our families and our children apart with their efforts.

We have to be patient. Vengeance is mine. I will repay, saith the Lord.

And we look at these examples and we know that God certainly knows how to judge both in time and in eternity. And this has to be real to us. We have to calm ourselves.

We have to stabilize ourselves, not get bitter, not get uptight, not get distracted, not enter into sin ourselves because we are fuming and angry at the actions of others. And where is the root of this? Peter is going to give the key right here in verse 10 and 11. Especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority, presumptuous self-willed.

These two things seem to go together. There is a dedication to the satisfaction of the flesh and there is a flippant, rebellious attitude toward authority. I will gratify myself and I'm not listening to anybody that tells me any different.

Don't tell me what to do. I'm going to do what pleases me. These are two sides of the same coin and they are rarely found apart.

Anybody who is extremely self-indulgent, puts themselves first, is going to diminish any other authority, any other force or rule or policy or moral or ethic that tells them they can't do what they want to do to please themselves. So they walk according to the flesh in the uncleanness of desire. Unclean desire.

There is plenty of wonderful, wholesome desires and then there are illicit desires. Immoral desires. And they walk in these.

It's not a lapse. It's not a one-time oops. This is a practice.

This is a habit of life. This is an attitude that they have embraced. Walking in the scripture always means this is a pattern.

So they have a pattern of walking according to the flesh and the unclean desires and they despise authority. Now, self-satisfaction and disrespect of authority. Does this occur anywhere in

our world today? Can we look around anywhere and see a great dedication to I want to do what I want to do and a disrespect for any authority that says don't do that? Well, of course, it's ubiquitous.

It's everywhere. And our culture has not only moved away from discouraging this sort of attitude and behavior but to actively encouraging and fostering it. We will look at a few of the specifics of this and we will see what Peter is giving us by way of application.

What have we done so far in this passage? In these verses, 4 through 11, we have observed what Peter tells us, what he pulls from the Old Testament examples. We've taken a very careful look at what he said. That's our observation.

We have interpreted it. We have looked at what it means, what God does with the godly, what He does with the ungodly, when judgment is going to actually take place, what the purpose of their judgment in time typically is. Judgment in time is not to give them their just desserts.

It's to get them off the planet so that the godly can continue, right? Judgment is still future. That's our interpretation. And we also know the hazards for the godly who are delivered and those external temptations are removed or distanced.

And yet the godly can still fail from within, right? Well, what is the application? Why does Peter give us this information? What are we supposed to do with it? We're going to pause here and take our break. And when we come back, we will look at that and see why he has suddenly decided to talk about these two facets, self-satisfaction and rejection of authority.