

99-03-14a

Let's turn for our scripture reading this morning to Psalm 119. Psalm 119. The reason this is pertinent to our investigations in Genesis chapter 19, I think will become clear as we look at it.

We are thinking specifically about Lot and his situation there in Sodom. Chapter 19 of Genesis concerns itself primarily with the means by which God delivers Lot out of the judgment of that city and all of those cities of the plain. And it makes an issue out of the fact that Lot is in fact a believer.

He is living in this area that has become so wicked that God is going to judge it. And we noted last time the magnitude of Lot's failures as a believer, both in remaining in that place to begin with and even when God graciously delivers him, we see time and again the deficit of faith, the deficit of being attuned to the will and the purpose of God, the deficit of character, the deficit of honor in the example that Lot represents in that chapter. In Psalm 119, the section we are going to read this morning begins in verse 129.

I think comparison and contrast will help clarify for us as we summarize Lot's behavior in Genesis 19. I think we will see the type of heart that a believer should have in similar circumstances and it will bring into relief the observations we've made about Lot. So let's begin this morning in Psalm 119, verse 129.

Your testimonies are wonderful, therefore my soul keeps them. The entrance of your words gives light, it gives understanding to the simple. I opened my mouth and panted, for I longed for your commandments.

Look upon me and be merciful to me, as your custom is toward those who love your name. Direct my steps by your word and let no iniquity have dominion over me. Redeem me from the oppression of man, so that I may keep your precepts.

Make your face shine upon your servant and teach me your statutes. Rivers of water run down from my eyes because men do not keep your law. Righteous are you, O Lord, and upright are your judgments.

Your testimonies, which you have commanded, are righteous and very faithful. My zeal has consumed me, because my enemies have forgotten your words. Your word is very pure, therefore your servant loves it.

I am small and despised, yet I do not forget your precepts. Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and your law is truth. Trouble and anguish have overtaken me, yet your commandments are my delights.

The righteousness of your testimonies is everlasting. Give me understanding and I shall

live. I cry out with my whole heart, hear me, O Lord, I will keep your statutes.

I cry out to you, save me, and I will keep your testimonies. I rise before the dawning of the morning and cry for help. I hope in your word.

My eyes are awake through the night watches that I may meditate on your word. Hear my voice according to your loving kindness, O Lord, revive me according to your justice. They draw near who follow after wickedness.

They are far from your law. You are near, O Lord, and all your commandments are truth. Concerning your testimonies, I have known of old that you have founded them forever.

Consider my affliction and deliver me, for I do not forget your law. Plead my cause and redeem me, revive me according to your word. Salvation is far from the wicked, for they do not seek your statutes.

Great are your tender mercies, O Lord, revive me according to your judgments. Many are my persecutors and my enemies, yet I do not turn from your testimonies. I see the treacherous and am disgusted, because they do not keep your word.

Consider how I love your precepts. Revive me, O Lord, according to your loving kindness. The entirety of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous judgments endures forever.

Princes persecute me without a cause, but my heart stands in awe of your word. I rejoice at your word as one who finds great treasure. I hate and abhor lying, but I love your law.

Seven times a day I praise you because of your righteous judgments. Great peace have those who love your law, and nothing causes them to stumble. Lord, I hope for your salvation, and I do your commandments.

My soul keeps your testimonies, and I love them exceedingly. I keep your precepts and your testimonies, for all my ways are before you. Let my cry come before you, O Lord.

Give me understanding according to your word. Let my supplication come before you. Deliver me according to your word.

My lips shall utter praise, for you teach me your statutes. My tongue shall speak of your word, for all your commandments are righteousness. Let your hand become my help, for I have chosen your precepts.

I long for your salvation, O Lord, and your law is my delight. Let my soul live, and it shall praise you, and let your judgments help me. I have gone astray like a lost sheep.

Seek your servant, for I do not forget your commandments. You think about the attitude of heart expressed in this great psalm, every verse of which in this section makes some

reference to the word of God. And then you turn back to Genesis 19.

You turn back actually to the whole section that we have studied the last six or seven chapters from the time back in chapter 13 when Lot and Abraham separate. And you see the decisions and the priorities that are reflected in Lot's life. This isn't Lot's thinking, is it, in the latter part of Psalm 119? This is doubly puzzling when we turn over to 2 Peter 2. One of the few references to Lot outside of Genesis is found in 2 Peter 2. It's a passage that frankly has puzzled me for some time because after all of the failures and the bad example that we have seen in Lot over the past few lessons, Peter applies the adjective righteous to Lot in this chapter.

This chapter, by the way, is widely misunderstood, 2 Peter 2. It is almost universally interpreted as a description of unbelievers who are attacking and drawing away people in the church when in fact this entire chapter deals with believers, reprobate believers, rebellious believers, apathetic, indifferent, self-centered believers, and heretical, blaspheming believers. But throughout this chapter, everything that is said, all of the judgments that are mentioned, this is all for believers. And you'll see it as we go through this.

And it's appropriate because here we have Lot, in Genesis 19, being saved yet so as by fire, saved by the skin of the teeth, as it were. No matter how great his failures, he does escape destruction. But his end is ignominious.

He has little future. He has little to be proud of. There is little fruit in his life.

As you look at 2 Peter 2, he is referring back to Old Testament days when he speaks about the Lord Jesus Christ in chapter 1 and says that the prophetic word of the Old Testament has been confirmed. Peter is an eyewitness. He has heard the voice of the Lord God from heaven.

And chapter 2 begins, there were also false prophets among the people. And this is back in those Old Testament days when the prophecies were delivered that Peter says are fulfilled. He is an eyewitness.

And you will remember that verse 19 of chapter 1 says, so we have the prophetic word confirmed. It is probably better to translate that as the more sure prophetic word. Peter says that the prophecies of the Old Testament are even more sure than his eyewitness testimony.

He saw Jesus Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. He heard the voice of God on high saying, this is my beloved Son, hear ye Him. On two different occasions, Peter was a witness to the baptism of Jesus when God spoke from heaven.

Peter was the one to whom God was speaking right after at the Mount of Transfiguration. He said, let's build some booths and stay here, which Peter has taken a lot of ridicule for,

but that was actually an astute attempt to apply the word of God because the Old Testament prophecies said that when you see the coming of Elijah, this is the harbinger, the sign of the coming of the kingdom. And Peter says, the kingdom has come.

It took him a while to understand that this was a prophetic revelation on the Mount of Transfiguration, not the actual inception of the kingdom. At the inception of the kingdom, God is going to dwell with man, and it's an appropriate time. Peter is the only one that spoke up and made any application of the word of God at all, and it's a wonderful thing that he said.

And I am constantly surprised at the drubbing that Peter tends to take when people talk about him leaping into the sea or speaking words and getting rebuked. At least he's making an attempt to apply what he knows. Peter knew the prophecies, and he was just a common fisherman, but he had more biblical knowledge, and he was in there making the attempt to apply it.

And the only time he ever gets rebuked is when he tells Jesus not to go to the cross. And Jesus says, get thee behind me, Satan. And so, at any rate, Peter was an eyewitness of these things, and he mentions that.

He says in verse 16 of chapter 1, we're not following some cunningly devised fable. This is the modern take on a lot of what the New Testament says, is that this was a cunningly devised story of Jesus' resurrection and crucifixion and his appearances and so forth, his miracles, and that this Christianity is all built on fables and imagination and so forth. Peter says, we're not following that when we make known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We were eyewitnesses of his majesty. Peter says, look, I was there. I saw these things.

Read the Gospel of Mark, which is basically a setting down of the experiences and the teaching that Peter did as an apostle. Then in verse 19 he says, but we have the even more sure word of prophecy. If you don't believe my eyewitness account, look at your Bible.

Now, if you saw a little commercial or got a flyer rubber banded to your doorknob that said, oh, the apostle Peter is going to be here and tell about his eyewitness experiences with the Lord Jesus Christ, he's going to be down here at 8 o'clock, would you rather go hear Peter speak or would you rather study your Bible? Well, all of us, me included, would run down there to hear Peter. I've got a lot of questions I'd like to ask him. But what Peter says is, my eyewitness testimony is not as great as the sure word of prophecy you have in the Old Testament.

We have the more sure. It's more sure than my eyewitness account. It's the word of prophecy.

And that's why he continues in verse 20 and 21 talking about the nature of the prophetic word that's contained in the Bible. And he says, you do well to heed that prophetic word. Like a light shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your heart.

Some people think that this is a reference to the inception of the kingdom. But this is actually until you... He says, you do well to heed the word of prophecy and put your faith in it until that day star rises in your heart. Remember what Jesus said in John? If you have my commandments and keep them, you're the one that loves me and I and my Father will come to you and make our home in your heart.

This is the day star rising in the heart. He doesn't say the day star rising on the earth. That of course will be the actual inception of the kingdom.

But we can have a preview of what kingdom life will be like when we grow, when we have that attitude that we read about in Psalm 119 and begin to experience the indwelling of the Lord Jesus Christ and the indwelling of God the Father. And when that takes place, we're no longer looking at the sure word of prophecy as the light that is shining toward us. Now the light is in our soul.

And this is a natural result of our growth and our progress. We don't have that light shining within us when we're first saved or when we first begin to wake up to spiritual things. Some of us might have been saved as children but we didn't really begin to latch on to our calling and to the opportunity that God has put before us in this life until some point.

But we begin to heed the voice of Scripture and we begin to take advantage of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our souls at some point. I assume that that is true of everyone who's listening to me this morning or you wouldn't be listening. Well, if it hasn't already happened, there is a point at which that light ceases to appear to be a light shining from afar.

It begins to be the light that is shining within our soul. And it's because we have taken in the Word of God and it has done its transforming work. We are transformed and our minds are renewed and the resident treasury of Scriptural truth, divine viewpoint, promises, principles, and doctrine is in our soul and the light begins to shine from within.

It's just like when Jesus says in Revelation 3:20, I stand at the door and knock. He's knocking at the door of a believer's heart. Not an unbeliever.

It's not the salvation appearance. This is a letter to the churches. If any man will hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him and he with me.

The dinner and the feasting is now taking place on the inside. The presence of Christ is on the inside instead of the outside. It's a wonderful privilege and the light moves from

outside to inside.

And it's a wonderful thing to look forward to. And this is what Peter is referring to. He says that prophetic sure word shines like a light and you do well to take heed to it until that light moves inside and the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

The first thing you need to know, he says in verse 20, is that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private origin. It isn't a cunningly devised fable. He's referring back to what he said in verse 16.

It's not just a clever story. Prophecy never came by the will of man. Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

And it's sort of ironic that the very same thing is happening even as Peter writes these words. He himself is being carried along by the Holy Spirit as he writes these words. But he refers back to the days when Isaiah and Ezekiel and the other great prophets delivered their message to the nation of Israel, Moses himself as a prophet.

There were false prophets among the people even as there will be false teachers among you. Notice he doesn't say there will be false prophets among you because he's talking to the church and prophecy is already a gift that is ceasing even as Peter speaks. He says there were false prophets among the people, there will be false teachers among you.

This is one of the overlooked pieces of evidence for the cessation of some of the signed gifts. There will be false teachers among you who will secretly bring in destructive heresies even denying the Lord who bought them. This is a reference to redemption which is something that takes place at the point of salvation.

We know that Jesus Christ is the propitiation not only for our sins but also for the sins of the whole world. But the Bible never says that he is the redemption for the whole world. The work of Christ on the cross in redemption applies only to believers.

What does this tell you about these false teachers? They are redeemed. And redeemed is an adjective for believers. Redeemed, redeemed.

Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Wonderful hymn. And when we use that language we understand that the redeemed are believers.

But in some strange twist of mind people try to overlook the fact that Jesus Christ has redeemed and bought these false teachers. And they will interpret the rest of this chapter as referring to unbelievers because the judgments are so harsh. They say, well, this harsh judgment could not come upon believers.

Well, just think about Lot. They will secretly bring in destructive heresies even denying

the Lord who bought them and bring on themselves swift destruction. This is destruction in the sense of the big bonfire.

Wood, hay, and stubble. Very same thing that Paul refers to when he talks about the people who build on the foundation of Jesus Christ. An unbeliever can't build on the foundation of Jesus Christ.

You go over to Corinthians and Paul says, let each man take care how he builds. And he's talking about teachers. That is specifically, we tend to think that the wood, hay, and stubble is the fruit of the life of any believer or the gold, silver, and precious stones.

And by extension it is. But the immediate context of those statements by Paul is teachers. He says, Apollos and I have laid a foundation.

God gives the increase. People build on the foundation. No other foundation can any man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Let each one take care how he builds. If you build with wood, hay, and stubble, it's all going to be destroyed. That's what these teachers are doing.

Peter is saying the same thing in different words. They're going to bring on themselves swift destruction. That which they build will be destroyed.

They themselves, in the sense of being a dead branch that is broken out of the tree and burned. That's the result and the fruit of the life. This is not a reference to loss of salvation.

They're going to be saved, yet so as by fire. You can go to the context of Paul's remarks. Many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.

You think about Lot. Is he a great testimony for being a man of God? By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words. For a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

You look around today, and it's not unique to our generation. It's just easier to see because we have the media, we have television, and we have the Trinity Broadcast Network. You have your various individuals, whom I'm sure you can fill in the blanks with their names, who manifest covetousness, whose message is all about money, who put on sham miracles, and sham protestations of praise toward God.

Praise God. The name of God is used in vain, and the commandment is broken. I'm sure that they are believers.

I'm sure virtually any one of those you want to name on TV, with their fake healing services, their prior research. This has been documented. They go out.

They find people in the crowd ahead of time, and do a little investigation, and then pretend to prophesy, pretend that they are getting a divine revelation of their problems, when in fact they have a staff working ahead of time. They talk to people and relatives and friends, who know those people are going to be coming. They mark them out.

They've got radio transmitters. They've got people sitting in the back saying, go into the fifth row in the seventh seat, and tell the woman about her lame knee, and her mad kidneys, or whatever it is. And they put on as though this is divine revelation.

This has all been documented, documented on some of the famous, supposed television ministers that you see. Why do they do this? Well, look at the gold flashing on their fingers. Look at the gaudy expensive sets.

Look at the TV time that they are shoveling hundreds of thousands of dollars into, to perpetuate this. And look at what is glorified, and what is put forward. Do you see the teaching of the word of God? Do you see the presentation of the gospel? No.

You see these people's carefully clothed hair, carefully made up faces, and expensive suits. And you see them strutting and prancing, and shouting, and watching the money roll into their coffers. You see these fake stacks of prayer requests, all neatly bound with string and so forth.

A lot of those never came through the mail. It's all a sham. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words.

For a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber. For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to, it says hell in the New King James there, but that is actually Tartarus. Tartarus is not hell.

It's not the lake of fire. It is a place where those angels are reserved. God has many places in the heavenly realms.

Remember what Jesus said, in my father's, it says in the Old King James, in my father's house are many mansions. But literally it says, in my father's dwelling place are many locations. There are many rooms.

There are many places for people to dwell. Well, one of those, and not all of those are happy places. We assume that they are all mansions with gold and so forth.

Well, Tartarus is one of those places. One of those dwelling places. We don't all crowd into the throne room of God for eternity.

Jesus is preparing a special place for us to dwell for all eternity. After the thousand years here on earth, and the millennial kingdom and so forth, we are going to have our own places to dwell, and Jesus is preparing those even now. Well, there is a place for the

angels who sin.

These are the angels we studied in Genesis chapter 6, who were tasked with training and supervising the fledgling human race, teaching them skills, governing them, judging them. The word for judge is used in Genesis 6. But they fell victim to lust, basically. They saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful, and they took wives.

They tried to do it the right way. They compromised their divine mission. They intermingled with the human race when they were not supposed to do that.

And those angels sinned. They are separate and distinct from the demons and Satan and his hosts. It's a separate happening in divine history of the universe.

It's a separate group of angels. They are not in league with Satan. They don't serve him.

They don't further his purposes. All of those angels who were sent here by God, as elect, unfallen angels, whatever you want to call them, failed. They fell apart under the pressure of being incarnate on this earth, much like the messengers that visit Abraham and visit Lot.

They had that same sort of corporeal existence here on earth. Women were good-looking back in those days, I guess, to such an extent that they couldn't resist the temptation to marry them. They actually intermingled and had children, which gave rise to the legends of the great men of renown, a lot of the Greek and ancient myths and legends had their origin in these superhuman offspring.

Well, these are the angels who sinned. They were cast down to Tartarus and delivered into chains of darkness. They don't roam the earth.

They don't influence or indwell. They don't possess people. This is something that Satan's minions engage in.

But these are in chains of darkness and are reserved for judgment. God has a separate judgment. Satan and his angels have already been judged.

They've already been found guilty and they've already been sentenced. The lake of fire has already been lit for them. This judgment has not yet taken place.

These angels are still reserved in chains of darkness. God did not spare the ancient world but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly and turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemning them to destruction, making them an example to those afterward who would live ungodly. And, here's verse 7, 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. We gather from Genesis 19 that Lot sat in the gates. He may have even been a judge.

He may have been in a position to exercise governmental authority, judicial authority of some sort. This is typically where the Bema seats were located. It was in the gates of the cities in those days.

So you get the idea that Lot has the same problem as the angels that sinned. He, in exposing himself and intermingling himself with wicked men, instead of being an influence for good as a judge, wound up commingling with them and had vexed his righteous soul. He's declared righteous here because he's a believer.

He's been with Lot, he believes in God, but he isn't obedient. And in the same way that these angels sin, Lot winds up sinning. It vexed and tormented his soul from day to day seeing and hearing the lawless deeds.

This is the reinforcement for the idea that he may have been a judge because these court cases are constantly coming before him. He's hearing about their lawless deeds. He sees them, he hears them.

He's oppressed by their filthy conduct. But what does he do about it? He doesn't leave. He just stays there and gets tormented and vexed and he eventually succumbs to their influence.

But God delivers him. 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.

And he goes on here to talk about these. And we're still in the realm of believers. All of the people who have been mentioned here are believers who are delivered out of the destruction of the wicked.

Lot is delivered. Noah is delivered. The angels are delivered.

You notice they were not wiped away in the destruction of the flood. Apparently they were taken and reserved in chains in this dark place. He did not spare the ancient world, but he saved Noah.

He didn't spare Sodom and Gomorrah, but he saved Lot. The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and reserve the unjust under punishment. The problem is if you're delivered and you don't take advantage of God's deliverance.

Lot is delivered out of Sodom twice. Remember Abraham delivered him when he was taken captive by the confederation of kings along with the rest of the population of Sodom. He didn't learn his lesson.

He went right back to Sodom. God delivers him again. We've already seen at the end of chapter 19 what use Lot makes of that deliverance.

God knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations. He also knows how to reserve the unjust for punishment. Lot is a great example of someone who's delivered and doesn't take advantage of that deliverance.

These people are presumptuous, self-willed. They're not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, even angels who are greater in power and might to not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord. One of the marks of people who fall in this category is that they are quick to judge and bad mouth others.

These, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of things they do not understand and will utterly perish in their own corruption and will receive the wages of unrighteousness like those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes carousing in their deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. Their heart is trained in covetous practices.

They are accursed children. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray. You can't forsake a right way unless at one time you were in it.

It doesn't say they never came to the right way or they never chose the right way. They were on the right way and forsook it. They've gone astray following the way of Balaam, son of Baor.

Balaam is a prophet of God who goes astray and ultimately dies the sin unto death. He loved the wages of unrighteousness. He was rebuked for his iniquity.

A dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. Peter's been talking about prophets who speak the word of God. Balaam is one of those prophets who spoke in the Old Testament, who was carried along by the Holy Spirit.

But they are wells without water, clouds and mist carried by a tempest for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness. If you have the word forever there in your New King James, mark it out. It's not there.

The word mists after clouds is there. Wells without water, clouds and mists carried by a tempest. You go to these people who claim to be teachers, who claim to be prophets, looking for the water of the word and all you get is clouds and mists.

It's the appearance of water but you can't drink it. You can't subsist on it. You can die of thirst in the presence of clouds and mist, can't you? Because you can't get enough truth.

You can't get enough water to sustain you. These people have clouds and mists. It's got

some water in it, just like these guys you see on TV.

They'll use the name of God. They'll quote scripture. But it's clouds and mists.

You can't subsist on it. It's not the water of the word. It doesn't wash.

It doesn't cleanse. It doesn't quench thirst. And those who are thirsty can't subsist on clouds and mists.

But those who are not really thirsty and not really looking for the water are going to be satisfied with this empty well. Clouds and mists carried by a tempest. For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lust of the flesh.

How do they bring those big crowds in? You look around on some of these TV shows and the seats are full. How do they attract these people? You think, why can't someone who's teaching the word of God bring in such a big crowd? Why can't a church that focuses on the healthy growth and production of the Christian life, why can't it attract a crowd like that? Well, because the genuine well of water, the genuine water of the word, with its instruction, rebuke, and correction, and the chastising that God does to his sons, people can't take that. They don't want that.

They want someone who will scratch their itching ears. And so, you can bring a big crowd if you're willing to speak great swelling words of emptiness, if you're willing to allure them through the lust of the flesh, if you're willing to promise them prosperity, promise them solutions to their problems, promise them all kinds of things that they're looking for. Why did Lot have such a hard time leaving Sodom? Because the things that he really wanted were there.

He wanted prosperity. He wanted whatever it was he wanted. That's where it was.

That's why he kept going back there. That's why he chose it when he left Abraham. And that's why he went back there after he was captured and taken slave by the confederation of kings.

And that's why even with the certainty of divine destruction and the presence of divine messengers dragging him by the hands, he doesn't want to leave. That's why his wife can't leave. She turns around and gets mineralized, gets petrified, because she can't bear to leave, can't bear not to look back.

Allure her through the lust of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. These false teachers, even believers who have escaped, the ones who live in error, even ones who have begun a path of listening to the word of God and heeding it and growing under it, can be allured back in because it hooks into the flesh. And people who are believers and who begin to grow are suddenly trapped back into Christianity by works, spirituality by committee.

Let's all get together and declare each other spiritual. Let's mentor each other. Let's prop each other up and tell each other how great we are and how much God is blessing through each other.

Let's pat each other on the back. Let's give testimonies. Let's have coffees and brunches and luncheons and invite each other to speak and pat each other on the back and allure through the desires of the flesh.

All of us have a built-in desire for approbation and approval. Well, that's an easy thing to exploit and an easy thing to hook into and to lead believers astray from our calling, which is not outward impact. It's inner transformation.

They promise them liberty. They promise them freedom from problems, freedom from care, freedom from poverty, freedom from oppression, freedom from all whatever it is that's bugging them. But they themselves are slaves of corruption.

Whatever overcomes a person, by that he is brought into bondage. Peter says in verse 19, If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. These are believers.

They are again entangled in them and overcome. The latter end is worse for them than the beginning. Remember the passage in Matthew we looked at last time when Jesus said, In the day of judgment it will go better for Sodom and Gomorrah than it will for Bethsaida and Chorazin and the other cities.

Why? Jesus Christ never walked the streets of Sodom and Gomorrah. The apostles and prophets never walked those streets and proclaimed the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ and of the divine requirement of righteousness. They never got that warning.

These cities did. These cities are composed of believers. They're Israelites.

They're the people of God. They have the prophets. They have the priests.

They have the temple worship. They have the oracles of God. They have Jesus Christ incarnate and his apostles walking among them, proclaiming the word of God, proclaiming the day of deliverance, and they reject it.

That's why their latter end is going to be worse than Sodom and Gomorrah. Sodom and Gomorrah never rejected that word the way these people do. And that's our peril as believers.

If we escape the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and then are again entangled and overcome by false teachers in the church leading us into false Christianity, that's the whole subject of the book of Colossians, it will

be worse for us than if we had never had any teaching, had never come to any knowledge of the word of God. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness. And this is talking about believers.

It doesn't mean it would have been better had they never been saved. But once you learn the word of God, now you're responsible. Now you're accountable.

You've had the light shine. The word of prophecy has shined like a light. And you know that the progress is to bring that light inside, to drive out the enemies and establish the temple of God and the presence of God in your soul.

And if in the light of that calling and in the light of that knowledge you turn away and go back to the comfortable old hail fellow well met, let's all have fellowship and pat each other on the back and be neutralized in the spiritual conflict, it's worse for you than if you had never learned any of the word of God at all. Salvation is not in view here. But responsibility.

From those to whom much is given, much is required. We have been not given just one talent or three talents. We've been given the five talents.

We've seen the word of God. And we're responsible to double that investment that God has put in us. And if we fail, the judgment is great.

It's going to be greater for believers who have known the word of God and have consciously rejected it. It would have been better if we'd never learned it. Because now we're responsible.

Now we're convicted. Of course, the idea is all of this is needless if we just heed the word of God, which is our responsibility. And to fail to heed it, you look at the Israelites.

As we will a little bit later, I'll save that illustration for when we look at them directly. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than having known it to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. This is an issue of obedience.

It's not the word of salvation delivered to them, it's the holy commandment. This is the calling. This is the opportunity.

This is what Jesus died to do to deliver you out of this present evil age. The same thing is mentioned in Hebrews. If after we've been saved and have received the cleansing power of the blood of Christ, we turn away from it, there remains no more sacrifice for sins but a certain fearful expectation of judgment.

We have blunted the force of these warnings by constantly going to these and saying, Oh, Hebrews chapter 6, that's unbelievers. That's not believers. The rain coming off and

on the field and it only produces thorns and thistles, that's unbelievers.

That's the gospel. And they didn't respond. No, it's not.

It's the soil of the soul of believers that produces thorns and thistles when God waters it. When he sends the word of truth and it doesn't produce fruit. Same thing when you get over to Hebrews chapter 10 and chapter 12.

Same thing here. This is Lot's problem. He is the archetype that we're going to see illustrated even more fully when we resume in our second session.

Let's pause here and of course I'm not sure how happy a break we can have contemplating these depressing things, but we are going to take a break and when we come back we'll resume and move forward from Genesis 19 into Genesis 20.