

# Judgment and Rescue

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[ 0 : 00 ] Last week, we started 2 Peter chapter 2, and that's a chapter focused on exposing false teachers.

! We studied verses 1-3 in detail, and they set up what we're going to look at tonight. So let's go ahead and look at verses 1-3 again. Peter wrote, In those verses, Peter warned us about the false teachers' heresies, their refusal to submit to God's authority, their motivation, and then their ultimate destruction.

We also touched on a few cross-references to show that God will protect true believers from the false teachers. And in our passage tonight, Peter continues the theme of judgment against false teachers.

And this time, though, Peter is going to add his own examples of how God protects the righteous against those false teachers. So with those verses as the background, let's go ahead and look at what we're going to cover tonight.

And we're going to cover from verse 10 all the way to halfway, or excuse me, from verse 4 all the way through, halfway through verse 10. So starting in verse 4, Peter wrote,

[ 2 : 38 ] The verses tonight are tough to break into clean sections because the entire passage is one very long sentence in the original Greek and in the English Standard Version, too.

We're going to break that section into two chunks, though, starting with three different examples. So three different examples are the first things that we'll see tonight.

And those examples come in verses 4 through 8. Peter uses them to illustrate how God has acted in the past. And that first example comes in verse 4.

Peter wrote, For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell, and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment. So the first example Peter cites is the fallen angels.

Peter is vague here about to which specific angels he's referring. Commentators have spent considerable time discussing whether he's discussing the angels who fell with Satan, or whether he's talking about other angels.

[ 3 : 52 ] The most helpful commentary to me on the subject said this, and I believe I put the quote in your handout. It says, Even if we cannot be sure what specific case of sinning angels Peter's talking about here, we can be certain about what has happened and what will happen to those angels.

He's very clear about that. And the first point is that they have been sent to hell. And the word Peter uses here is connected to the Greek mythological location known as Tartarus.

And he's using a word that would have been recognized in the culture of the day as referring to a place of judgment. So just as people today will often use the word hell to describe a difficult period in their lives without reference to the biblical place of eternal punishment, Peter was really using the word here to describe a place of judgment, but without all the Greek mythological baggage attached to it.

So we know that the angels have already been judged. And the second point that Peter is making is that the final judgment is yet to come. So these angels are being held for judgment, and Jude in his book talks of them being kept for judgment just as the righteous are kept for salvation.

The false teachers Peter is fighting are saying that there is no judgment to come, and Peter argues from this example that there is a final judgment, and the fallen angels are evidence of that event, yet they await their final destiny even though they've been punished already.

[ 6 : 06 ] So Peter clearly is describing a temporary confinement or limitation upon the final angels pending that final judgment to come. We really need to remind ourselves from that that God

severely judges all the people who oppose him and his truth, just like those fallen angels and rebellious teachers.

Everybody is going to face divine wrath if they continue to oppose God and his truth. The second example Peter cites is Noah and the flood, and that comes in verse 5.

Verse 5 says, The ancient world refers to the people living at the time of the flood, all of whom were wicked.

So go ahead and flip over to Genesis 6 if you would like. We're going to use several verses from Genesis chapter 6 through 8 to reacquaint ourselves with what happened.

We won't spend too much time explaining the verses, we just want to think about some things from there. The first verses that we're going to look at are Genesis chapter 6 verses 5 through 8.

[7:22] Starting there, it said, The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.

So the Lord said, I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things, and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.

But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. If you drop down just a few verses and look at verse 11, here are verses 11 through 14.

It says, Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted the way on earth.

And God said to Noah, I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make yourself an ark of gopher wood, make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch.

[8:27] And then in verse 17, that's where God said, For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die.

And then if you skip down to Genesis 6, 22 and 7, 1, we see Noah did this. He did all that God commanded him. Then the Lord said to Noah, Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation.

Several times in this passage, we'll see that Noah did everything that God commanded him to do. And if you jump down to Genesis 7, 11, we'll go through verse 16, and it says, And every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, according to its kind, and every bird according to its kind, every winged creature.

They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh, in which there was the breath of life. And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him, and the Lord shut him in.

Just a few more verses to look at here. If you go down to 7, 22 to 8, 1, we see, everything on the dry land, in whose nostrils was the breath of life, died.

[10:11] He, talking about God, blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things, and birds of the heavens. They were blotted out from the earth.

Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark, and the waters prevailed on the earth 150 days. But God remembered Noah, and all the beasts, and all the livestock that were with him in the ark.

And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided. So Peter summarized all that and more when he wrote verse 5 of 2 Peter chapter 2.

And again, here's that verse one more time. Peter said, If he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah a herald of righteousness with seven others when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly.

So let's spend some time looking at verse 5 itself. Verse 5 shows us that, by human standards, Noah was one of the least successful preachers of all time.

[11:10] Peter calls Noah a herald of righteousness. And most commentators understand righteousness to refer to God's justice in dealing with the ungodly. And certainly Noah proclaimed such a standard.

But Jewish tradition also taught that Noah preached repentance. And in emphasizing God's righteous judgment of sinners, Noah also invited the people of his age to repent and to enjoy God's

forgiveness.

In other words, to enjoy his saving righteousness. And this fits with what Peter said about God's righteousness in verse 1 of 2 Peter chapter 1 when he talked about righteousness being a gift received by believers.

Those who enjoy God's saving righteousness repented of their sins and turned to God, acknowledging his righteous judgment against them. But the ungodly refused to hear God's words of judgment against them, insisting, as Noah's contemporaries did, that any notion of a future condemnation is laughable.

Let's talk about why I said by human standards Noah was one of the least successful preachers of all time. How many non-family members repented and turned to God after Noah preached to them? [12:20] Zero. None did. Noah preached for many years while he was building the ark, but he saw no other converts other than his family. Everyone that Noah preached to perished in the flood.

And flood translates the Greek word kataklusmos, and I bet you can figure out what that equates to in English. It equates to cataclysm, and the Genesis account, along with the current geological evidence, indicates that the flood truly was cataclysmic in every sense.

We saw that because of man's sinfulness, God destroyed every person and every land animal except those that were in the ark. He covered the entire planet with water, even the peaks of the highest mountains were covered.

So that flood came down on the ungodly, and looking at the Greek word translated as ungodly gives us even more insight into just how sinful the people were.

Because ungodly is the one word characterization of humanity then, and it's a term that refers to a complete lack of reverence, worship, or fear of God. So the early church fathers used it to describe atheists and heretics, and false teachers of Peter's time, the ungodly of Noah's day, showed their ungodliness through their rebellious immorality, and they eventually brought God's judgment upon themselves.

[13:46] The flood functions well as an example because it includes the whole world. Notice in verse 5 that Peter uses the word world twice in that verse, and he's really talking about the universality of the judgment, and that universality of the judgment in Noah's day functions well to give an illustration and preview of the universal judgment at the end of the age.

None of the ungodly will escape that judgment either. Verse 5 so far definitely is a verse with gloom and doom, but Peter also offers hope because he reminds us that Noah and his family survived. But look closely at verse 5 again. Does verse 5 say that Noah and his family survived because Noah was such a skillful builder? It says that Noah survived because God preserved Noah. So here's an amazing encouragement for believers. Here's the wonderful demonstration of God's grace in the midst of dealing with the most sinful people. And that encouragement is that God protected Noah.

One of the most comforting doctrines in Scripture is that once we belong to God, once we've been called to be His and received His saving and forgiving grace in our lives, then we're held secure by Him.

[15:05] And we looked at these same cross-references last week to make this point, but they're worth hearing again. One of them we've heard a lot lately, and it's Philippians 1.6. And we know in Philippians 1.6, Paul wrote, And I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

And Jesus taught the same doctrine of eternal security. These verses are John 10, 27-30. Jesus said, My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father who has given them to Me is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

I and the Father are one. Thinking back now to what we talked about when we talked about the ungodly living in Noah's time, Noah gives us an example of how to deal with the ungodly among us today.

And is it fair to characterize a lot of the people living in our world today as ungodly? I think it's safe to say that most people living in our world today are ungodly.

[16:20] So let's talk a little bit about how Noah dealt with the ungodly. Noah preached with his speech as he pleaded with people to repent and to join him in the ark. He also preached through his lifestyle and the way he continued to obey the Lord in the midst of the ungodly people.

And this is the idea picked up in Hebrews 11, 7, where Noah is commended for his faith. Listen to what the writer of Hebrews said about Noah. This is Hebrews 11, 7.

It says, By faith, Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear, constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this, he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

Earlier, we discussed how, by human standards, Noah was one of the least successful preachers of all time. We see here that God saw things differently because Noah's lifestyle condemned the ungodly and made Noah an heir to righteousness.

So like Noah, we should take the matter of preaching through our way of life seriously. Our obedience and our day-to-day living for the Lord is a serious matter. And so often, Christians don't really stand out from the crowd and so the appeal for righteousness that we make is rarely seen or heard because our lifestyle often contradicts the words that we say.

[17:42] The third example that Peter cites is Sodom and Gomorrah, including Lot. So listen to verses 6 through 8 again. Peter wrote, If by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes, he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly, and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked, for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard.

At one time, Sodom and Gomorrah were the main cities of the Jordan plain or basin, and they were located in the valley of Siddam, also known as the Salt Sea, and that was near the southeast corner of the Dead Sea.

Before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Genesis favorably describes the area as fertile, an ideal place for raising crops and animals. So listen to Genesis 13, 8 through 12.

These verses describe just how fertile the land was and how Lot, Abraham's nephew, found himself living there. Starting in Genesis 13, verse 8, it says, Then Abram said to Lot, Let there be no strife between you and me and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are kinsmen.

Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right, or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left.

[19:13] And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt in the direction of Zor. This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.

So Lot chose for himself all the Jordan Valley, and Lot journeyed east. Thus they separated from each other. Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom.

And then Genesis 13, 13 goes on to say this, Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord. Because of their sin, God decides to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.

Several chapters later, God tells Abraham what he's about to do, and Abraham intercedes on behalf of the people. And notice before, when we looked at it, this was before Abraham's name changed.

These chapters are after Abraham's name changed. These verses are Genesis 18, 23 through 26. And they say, Then Abraham drew near and said, Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?

[20:21] Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city. Will you then sweep away the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked.

Far be that from you. Shall not the judge of the earth do what is just? And the Lord said, If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake.

In the following verses, Abraham continues to negotiate the number of righteous people needed to spare the city. He drops the number from fifty to forty-five, then to forty, then to thirty, and then to twenty.

And finally, when we get to verse thirty-two of Genesis chapter eighteen, we see this. Then he, talking about Abraham, said, Oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak again but this once.

Suppose ten are found there. And he, being God, answered, For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it. So when God sends two angels disguised as men to look for the righteous, Lot spots the strangers.

[21:29] And we see that in Genesis chapter nineteen. So we'll spend a little bit of time in Genesis nineteen, so if you want to, go ahead and flip over to Genesis nineteen. We're going to read quite a

few verses there.

We'll start with the first three verses of Genesis chapter nineteen. And Genesis nineteen, one through three say, The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom.

When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and bowed himself with his face to the earth, and said, My lords, please turn aside to your servant's house, and spend the night, and wash your feet. Then you may rise up early, and go on your way. They said, No, we will spend the night in the town square. But he pressed them strongly, so they turned aside to him, and entered his house. And he made a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. So it starts out really well, but then if you read on through verse eleven, you see this. It says, But before they laid down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man surrounded the house.

[ 22 : 38 ] And they called to Lot, Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them. Lot went out to the men at the entrance, shut the door after him, and said, I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly.

Behold, I have two daughters who have not known any man. Let me bring them out to you, and you do to them as you please. Only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof.

But they said, Stand back. And they said, This fellow came to sojourn, and he has become the judge. Now we will do worse with you than with them. Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and drew near to break the door down.

But the men reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them and shut the door. And they struck with blindness the men who were at the entrance of the house, both small and great, so that they wore themselves out, groping for the door.

At daybreak, the angels warned Lot that they were about to destroy the cities. They told Lot to take his family and leave. So let's rejoin the narrative in verse 16.

[ 23 : 43 ] Talking about Lot, it says, But he lingered, so the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, the Lord being merciful to him. And they brought him out and set him outside the city.

And as they brought them out, one said, Escape for your life. Do not look back or stop anywhere in the valley. Escape to the hills, lest you be swept away. So jump down to verse 23 of chapter 19 now.

And here are Genesis 19, 23 through 25. It said, The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zohar. Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven. And he overthrew those cities and all the valley and all the inhabitants of the cities and what grew on the ground. So with that, let's go back to 2 Peter then and look at verses 6 through 8.

So like Noah and his family, Lot and his daughters were the only inhabitants to escape. All of the other citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah were obliterated, this time by incineration and asphyxiation rather than drowning.

[ 24 : 51 ] Peter says that God condemned the cities to total extinction and some translations say destruction rather than extinction there. Either one of them is a good translation because the word rendered extinction or destruction is the Greek word catastrophe.

And I bet you can figure out what English word comes from the Greek word catastrophe. It's the same word, it actually just transliterates over perfectly and it indicates complete overthrow and total ruin.

So the devastation was so thorough that it reduced those cities to nothing more than ashes. God's judgment was so complete there that the remains remain undiscovered today and we still don't know the precise location of where those cities were.

But verse 7 brings us back to the same hope that we saw in the Noah example. Before all of this destruction Peter reminds us that God rescued righteous Lot.

Rescued is a good description of what happened to Lot there but after what we read about in the scripture there in Genesis does it sound odd to call Lot righteous?

[ 26 : 01 ] I mean think about what we saw when we first saw Lot in scripture he was described as superficial selfish and worldly because when Abram at the time gave him his choice of where he wanted to go he picked the best for himself and then if you remember what we read in Genesis 19

he displayed moral weakness and incredibly poor judgment when in place of the visiting angels he offered his daughters to the lustful sodomites and later when he hesitated to leave after the angels urged him to leave the city immediately the angels had to drag him and his daughters out of the city and out of the house and even after that we know that he displayed shockingly sinful behavior including drunkenness and incest later on in Genesis so how could a guy like that be considered righteous?

Well like his uncle Abraham Lot was righteous in the sense of being a believer to whom God was crediting righteousness by his faith and this didn't mean that either Lot or Abraham was free from sin what it meant was that God imputed his own righteousness to them because they were true believers and in fairness to Lot he also showed several signs of the Holy Spirit's work in his heart for example he had reverence toward the holy angels who visited him and that provided a stark contrast to the rest of the people of those cities and although he was hesitant to leave the city he ultimately obeyed God's command and even warned his sons-in-law about the impending doom and when he finally left unlike his wife he obediently refused to look back notice also the evidence of Lot's heart that Peter gives us in verses 7 and 8 Peter says Lot was greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked he also says that he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard so he had a lot of flaws but he was righteous in God's sight and we should see a very important secondary point here if God can rescue someone like Lot God can rescue any of us no matter what we've done or will do so that's worth hearing one more time if God can rescue someone like Lot he can rescue any of us no matter what we have done or will do so let's recap where we are now in Peter's lengthy if then statement remember this is all just one sentence that we're working our way through everything we've read so far has been leading up to Peter's main point of this section and Peter's main point is that the ungodly and the godly will have two different endings so two different endings is the second thing we'll see tonight so as we think about the two different endings let's just summarize where we are Peter has said if God did not spare the angels if God did not spare the ancient world but preserved Noah and if he rescued Lot but destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah he said all of those if statements and now we finally get to the then statement here it is in verses 9 and the first sentence of verse 10 actually the first line of verse 10 it's all at one sentence and starting in verse 9 it says then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority so look at verse 9 again then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials the word rescue there picks up the same verb that was used with reference to Lot in verse 7 and it overlaps with the meaning of preserved when Peter talked about Noah in verse 5 the word trials here has to do with what godly people experience as they live in this fallen world in this context the focus is on external situations that are difficult and could lead to sin and here in 2nd Peter the difficulty coming from outside is the false teachers that Peter has been talking about so those who are godly and righteous will be prevented from committing apostasy and God will guard them so that in the end they will not forsake God all the godly will be preserved by the Lord he will keep them from apostasy just as he guarded

Noah and Lot so that they did not depart from him so we need to remember that God's in full control of all events he delivers the godly out of but not away from their trials that's interesting to think about isn't it that God delivers the godly out of but not away from their trials on the other hand we see that God holds the unrighteous for the coming day of judgment and that could be translated as keeps under guard too and of course that coming judgment is the great white throne judgment and the lake of fire so meanwhile God continues their punishment in this life and in Hades after death until that judgment comes and two particular groups are singled out for judgment here those who live in unclean lust and those who hold authority in contempt and we saw in verses 1-3 that these characteristics are two primary characteristics of the false teachers you know the judgment is no doubt harsh and it's something that should bother us when we see the talk of judgment but Charles Spurgeon wrote this about the judgment and he puts things in perspective with it he said the Lord knows how to deal with the unjust in the next world as well as in this oh that dreadful thought trouble not yourselves about it except to flee from the coming wrath raise no perplexing questions in your mind the Lord knows how to deal with the unjust in the world to come and that dealing shall be according to the strictest rule of justice the judge of all the earth shall do right men shall not be able to accuse him of injustice he will deal with them as the God who cannot err so we should do all we

can to try to help the false teachers and other non-believers see the error of their ways and turn to God but if they refuse to turn to God we need to remember that God is going to do right in his final judgment because he can never make a mistake so let's think about what we should learn from these verses and I have a couple of quotes from Paul Gardner in your handout he makes some bold statements that should challenge all believers first and he said we need to recover a conviction in the modern church of the certainty of judgment on the final day just as the false teachers of Peter's day denied Christ's second coming and the finality of judgment on that day so we are surrounded in our generation by people saying similar things as we look at this evil world with all its sin we must live and work in it while remembering that its days are limited when we preach righteousness like Noah through our lives and with our lips let us do so with an urgency that is well aware of what the future holds for those who do not repent but then he adds the positive thing that we should take from these verses he said we being believers need to find real comfort and joy in the verses we have read

God has made covenant promises to all who have faith in him and trust in Christ and he will keep these as faithfully as he kept them with Noah and Lot the righteous are the people who belong to God and all who do belong to him will be protected by him this is the encouragement of these verses when you think about it sometimes the trials of this world and the evil with which we're surrounded seem rather overpowering many Christians these days seem so pessimistic about life and the world in which we live but we need to remember that we're God's people through faith in Jesus Christ and this is God's world and he remains sovereign so we need to look forward to that sovereignty of which we see evidence even today in our own lives and we need to look forward to that sovereignty being manifested in the whole world one day and we should look forward too to the great day of Christ's return and to the time when there will be a new heaven and a new earth which will be the home of righteousness Charles Spurgeon said this about

[ 34 : 39 ] God's protection of his people he said gold is tried in the furnace good things are tested and proved and godly men are tempted and afflicted and tried very often very few of them shall get to heaven without passing through the trying waters and testing fires else to them the promise of Isaiah 43 2 would not be true so here is Isaiah 43 2 that Spurgeon was referencing Isaiah 43 2 has God's words here and it says when you pass through the waters I will be with you and through the rivers they shall not overwhelm you when you walk through the fire you shall not be burned and the flame shall not consume you did you hear how the verse says when instead of if when it talks about trials what can we expect from that yes we can expect that trials will happen but we can also expect that God will deliver us from those trials and that should make us more willing to take the gospel to the ungodly so think about the examples we saw from

Peter tonight Peter has shown us someone whom God protected from the waters and he also has shown us someone whom God has protected from the fire so in other words Peter has shown us that the words of Isaiah 43 2 are true here's that verse one more time when you pass through the waters I will be with you and through the rivers they shall not overwhelm you when you walk through the fire you shall not be burned and the flame shall not consume you in other words as Peter said the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials Thank you.