

Book: 2 Peter
Series: True Faith vs. False Teaching:
Add To Your Faith, Knowledge
Lesson 10: Great Destruction of False
Teachers
Text: 2 Peter 2:4-10a
Date: Sunday, November 4, 2012

Colonial Hills
ABE
Baptist Church

Key



= Teacher Information



= Discussion Starter

Book: 2 Peter
Series: True Faith vs. False Teaching:
Add To Your Faith, Knowledge
Lesson 10: Great Destruction of False Teachers
Text: 2 Peter 2:4-10a
Date: Sunday, November 4, 2012



TEACHING TIP

While you will be tempted to rush into verses 7-8 in this passage, I encourage you to be sure to teach the whole passage. The truths and principles in those two verses fit into a large point that Peter is making. Nonetheless, you will perhaps find the most profitable and far-reaching application and discussion from those two verses. As usual, you are free to exercise your own discernment as you plan your approach and balance your time.

NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

2 Peter 2:10b-22 – *Grim Details of False Teachers*

INTRODUCTION

The passage to which we turn today is one of simplicity, irony, and contrast. In these verses, we take a tour of history to learn from the past and to glean from others' "mistakes" in particular.

Illustration: At family reunions, it's common to hear a younger sibling jockingly observe that he avoided a lot of difficulty and pain by learning from the mistakes and misfortunes of his older brothers and sisters.

In 2 Peter 2:4-10a, Peter turns in his Bible to the first few chapters of Genesis (chapters 6-19) and learns there a valuable lesson from the example (cf. v. 6) of his ancestors, a lesson that will spare him and us much pain and suffering if we learn it well.

This passage expresses its truth by way of a conditional statement, with the four-fold protasis ("if") in verses 4-8 and the apodosis ("then") in verses 9-10a. In other words, "if" or "since" these four things are true (vv. 4-8), "then" this is true as well (vv.

9-10a). Verse 4 begins with the simple word “for,” connecting it to what comes before in verse 3. Peter has just stated that the “condemnation pronounced long ago [upon false teachers] is not sitting idly by; their destruction is not asleep” (NET). In the next sentence (actually extending from verse 4 to the middle of verse 10), Peter demonstrates how this can be known.

Put simply, it is because this is what God has shown. In other words, verse 3 is true, because history reveals that this is always been how God has governed—His pattern is to punish the ungodly and rescue the righteous. Almost ironically, Peter uses the same logic of the false teachers in 3:2—“since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation”—to demonstrate that since God has always had a pattern of these responses, He still practices these responses. However, the false teachers have “deliberately overlook[ed] this fact” (3:5), for they have rejected the real history of God’s Word and so deny its application to their present situation. Such denial is folly—it doesn’t change the truth; it condemns them under it.

This passage is important for those who think they can “cheat the system.” Many people in our country have lived the American Dream, and they’ve done so without any genuine submission to God. They come to the end of their life filled with pride over their accomplishments, children, etc., and they spurn the warning of these kinds of passages, for, after all, their life seems to argue strongly against it. Others have grown up in churches like ours, but their Christianity has become defined by religion and not a relationship. Externally, life seems to “click” for them, because they’re following the rules and have enough religion to keep things relatively smooth. They also may question the relevance of these kinds of passages, for warnings of destruction seem a little too far fetched for their relatively decent, status quo lives.

In this epistle and in this passage, in particular, Peter simplifies things for us and categorizes all people under two categories—the ungodly and the righteous. And, rather than wondering what the end result will be for all the different kinds and levels of people

that we meet, Peter takes us back to the beginning, asks us what path we have chosen to take, and simply warns us that each path can only lead to one unavoidable destination. Those who have chosen true, precious faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will experience godliness and confidence in their lives and will eventually enjoy complete rescue (cf. 1:11); those who have rejected Jesus’ saving lordship (either as a leader/teacher [immediate context] or follower/learner [necessary application]) will practice deception and debauchery in their lives and will eventually reap a complete and eternal destruction—and this is the way it’s always been.

So, lest we find ourselves today presuming upon the grace of God or spurning the judgment of God, let us carefully review God’s pattern in the past so that we respond appropriately to His practice in the present, and ensure that we are indeed recipients of His rescue and not of His wrath.

GOD’S PATTERN IN THE PAST (vv. 4-8)

In verses 4-8, Peter flips to Genesis 6-19 to show four different examples of how God has responded to ungodly people and righteous people.

1. *God condemned the angels who sinned (v. 4).*

Verse 4 reads (lit.),

*For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but
having cast [them] into hell,
He consigned [them] to chains in darkness,
being kept under guard until the judgment...*

Commentators debate which angels this verse refers to—some believe it refers to the angels that fell with Satan (Luke 10:18; Revelation 12:7-9); others believe that it references the “sons of God” in Genesis 6:1-4 (cf. Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Enoch 6:1-8:4).¹ The point of the passage is made either way—some angels sinned, and God did not

“spare”² them. Instead, He cast them into hell³ where they are imprisoned⁴ in chains and in darkness⁵ until the final judgment.⁶

2. **God condemned the ancient world, but protected righteous Noah (v. 5).**

Verse 5 reads (lit.),

...and [if] He did not spare the ancient world, but guarded Noah [as] the eighth, a preacher of righteousness, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly...

The story here comes from Genesis 6, and we’re familiar with God’s judgment by way of⁷ a worldwide flood⁸ upon “the wickedness of man [that] was great in the earth” (6:5). God “spared” none of the wicked, for He said, “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth—both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air” (6:7). However, “Noah [and his seven family members⁹] found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (6:8), for he was a “preacher of righteousness”¹⁰; therefore, God “saved” (KJV) them in the great ark. The word “saved” is a synonym to the word “reserved” or “kept under guard” in verse 4.¹¹ While God keeps the wicked under divine guard so that they cannot escape His judgment, He also guards the godly so that they are not destroyed. Just as the previous verse emphasized that “sinful” angels were punished, this verse details that the “ungodly” were destroyed, while the “righteous” were protected.

3. **God condemned Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 6).**

Verse 6 reads (lit.),

...and [if] by reducing to ashes the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, He condemned [them] to destruction, having appointed [them] to be an example to those who would be ungodly...

Peter flips forward in his Old Testament to Genesis 19:24-28 in which we read of the annihilation of those two great cities because of their unrestrained debauchery. God reduced them to ashes¹² with a great catastrophe (Gk. “destruction” is *katastrophe*). This is the natural condemnation that divinely befalls godlessness, and it ought to be a powerful example to those who want to walk the same paths (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:11). Peterson paraphrases the verse this way, “God decreed destruction for the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. A mound of ashes was all that was left—grim warning to anyone bent on an ungodly life.”¹³

4. **God rescued righteous Lot (vv. 7-8).**

Verse 7 reads (lit.),

...and [if] He rescued righteous Lot, having been worn down by the lifestyle of the ungodly in [their] debauchery...

As with Noah, while the “ungodly” and “debauched” (cf. same word as in 2:2—sensuality “on steroids”) round about were destroyed (v. 6), the righteous man, Lot, was “delivered” or rescued.¹⁴

Now, we must pause for a moment as we consider this last example, for there is both a hopeful consideration and a needed warning here.



What might be the hopeful consideration from the life of Lot?

It may strike the knowledgeable reader as almost unbelievable that Lot could be considered righteous (three times in these two verses), for he often displayed great materialistic and moral weakness.¹⁵ Therefore, we recognize that the Holy Spirit is clearly referring to the work of forensic, positional justification that had occurred in his heart, as it had in his uncle, Abraham (cf. Genesis 15:6;

Romans 4:3, 20-24). This righteous standing before God was evidenced to a degree,¹⁶ but never as obviously as in his uncle. In fact, after the story in Genesis 19:1-8 when he offered his daughters to the lusting Sodomites, many of us probably would have forever written him off as definitely being outside of the life of God and His “divine nature” (cf. 2 Peter 1:1-4). “After all,” we may have added, “you will know them by their fruit!” And, just when we think that we have God’s grace and salvation all figured out, He blows our mind again and calls a seemingly unrighteous man, “righteous.”

(1) While some of the less honest among us may be appalled at this extensive display of God’s gracious justification, most of us recognize a bit of ourselves in this story. Since our salvation was entirely of God in the first place (1:1-4), we should not be amazed at its sufficiency to completely guarantee a believer’s eternal security, even when the production of his life only faintly resembles 1:5-7. This understanding tempers our haste to judge and write off other professing believers whose spiritual growth is minimal or seemingly non-existent; instead, we must use truth (1:12-15) to spur them on to greater gospel production, which will in turn authenticate and embolden their faith (1:8-11).

(2) Furthermore, we live in an equally corrupt society and can identify with Lot’s difficult position. For Peter’s readers, and for us, our “own situations [are] equally soul-distressing as [we] witness the immoral excesses of the false teachers and their followers (cf. 2:18–20).”¹⁷ Nonetheless, since we are “kept by the power of God through faith” (1 Peter 1:5), we have nothing to fear, for our faith is sufficient (cf. 1:1-4).



What is the obvious and necessary warning from Lot’s example?

This justified believer had been “worn down” (v. 7—“vexed” KJV; “in anguish” NET; “oppressed” NKJV, NASB; “distressed” ESV, NIV)¹⁸ and “tormented” (v. 8—so NKJV, NET, NASB, ESV, NIV; “vexed” KJV) by the doctrinal and moral filthiness of those around him. These terms convey “the idea of exhausting someone by wearing him down and deeply troubling his soul.”¹⁹ Lot did not practice “the lifestyle of the ungodly in their debauchery,” but because he had made choices to be near it and not to separate from it (“by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds” NASB—cf. Genesis 13:8-13; 19:1), the life of God within Him was suffocated and silenced (Genesis 19:6-8; 19:30-38), even though it was never surrendered (Genesis 19:18-22). As a result, “the way of truth” was slandered and rejected (Genesis 19:14—his family members died, in part, because of his failure to be productive in his faith), and Lot experienced a “torture”²⁰ of his soul that God never desired for him.

While taking comfort from God’s complete rescue of Lot, we must also take counsel from the spiritual torture that Lot brought upon himself by his bad choices. Ask yourself these questions:

- What choices have I made (choices in which you had biblical liberty to go either direction) that have proven to be unwise, putting me into situations where my righteous soul has been tormented and not productive?
- In what ways am I being “worn down” and “tormented” in my soul by what I am “seeing” and “hearing” from the “lawlessness” of the world around me?

- Has the “day after day” exposure to those things desensitized me to just how oppressive and tormenting to my spiritual production those debaucheries are?
- How should this lesson learned from the example of Lot affect my current and future decisions?

At the very least, Lot is inserted here to serve as an example to any genuine believer who treats this passage lightly (applying only to believers vs. unbelievers) and who never allows this warning to provide wisdom in his daily decisions of truth vs. deception. While Lot was indeed justified, he allowed himself to believe a lie and to resubmit to the lordship of his flesh, and in sowing to his flesh, he certainly reaped corruption (Galatians 6:7-9). Believing friend, do not make that same error as Lot, and refuse to recognize that choices are the steps of life, and steps along the path of deception and error will only lead us to destruction. Lot experienced such destruction in the torture of his soul, the rejection of his family, the death of his wife, and the debauchery of his children. That’s a high price to pay! Learn from his example and choose truth and life.

Transition: Over and over and over again, God’s pattern has been to condemn the wicked and spare the righteous. With these “examples” in mind, we now consider the contemporary application.

GOD’S PRACTICE IN THE PRESENT (vv. 9-10a)

In verse 9, Peter comes to the “then” part of this lengthy sentence.²¹ He has demonstrated from the “more sure Word of prophecy” that God’s pattern has been to judge the ungodly and save the righteous. Therefore, God’s practice today is to judge the ungodly and to save the righteous. Verses 9-10 read (lit.),

*...[then] the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from their tests,
and how to keep the unrighteous under guard
for the punishment in the day of judgment,
especially the ones who are walking behind [their] flesh
in the lust of corruption
and who despise authority.*

1. God rescues the godly from their tests.

The godly should expect to experience tests (like Noah and Lot, cf. 1 Peter 1:6; 4:12), but their Master will rescue them (cf. Matthew 6:13; 2 Timothy 3:11; 4:18).

2. God condemns the unrighteous unto punishment.

The unrighteous cannot “cheat the system,” for God’s practice is to “reserve” or “keep them under guard” (John 3:36) until their verdict is rendered and their sentence commenced on the “day of judgment” (cf. Matthew 7:13-23; 25:31-46; Revelation 20:11-15).²²

The last two phrases highlight the particular ungodly people that Peter is addressing in this epistles—the false teachers who play “follow the leader” with their sexually immoral lusts (2:2) and who despise Jesus’ lordship (2:1).²³



Application: What other Biblical examples could Peter have used to make this point? *open discussion*

How did God’s pattern and practice encourage David in Psalm 34?
open discussion

CONCLUSION

It is important to note as we close that both groups—the godly and the ungodly—are in danger. Noah and Lot, who both represent the righteous, needed to be “saved” and “delivered.” So, both groups are in danger of God’s judgment, but only one group is rescued. The one group is rescued because they are righteous, but they are only righteous because of the One who rescues them.

Romans 7:24—*“O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

Romans 11:26—*“And so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written, ‘There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.’”*

Colossians 1:13—*“[God] hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.”*

1 Thessalonians 1:10—*“Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”*

It is because God did not “spare” Jesus, but “delivered” Him up to be condemned, that He can “spare” those who are “delivered” through the righteousness of Jesus Christ. This, then, is the greater conditional statement! “If” He “spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, [then will] He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32). Indeed! We have complete confidence in God’s pattern, practice, and power to forever rescue the righteous and condemn the unrighteousness, because of what we see at Calvary. In that example, we have hope today in our tests and we can expect deliverance today in our temptations. If you are “in Christ,” then your destiny is secured and His sufficiency for your needs today is unhindered.

Therefore, preach to yourself His goodness (1:1-4), add to that message the practice of developing and displaying His character (1:5-7), and enjoy a vibrant and confident life before Him (1:8-11) that is a foretaste of the complete rescue that He has accomplished on your behalf.

On the other hand, if you are not truly “in Christ,” God’s present practice mirrors His past pattern, and you are admonished to “kiss the Son, lest He be angry and ye perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little.

Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him” (Psalm 2:12).

ENDNOTES

¹ “The explanation in relation to Genesis 6:1–4 is best because (1) it was common in Jewish literature (Enoch 6:2; 1QapGen col. 2), (2) the three examples (angels, Flood, and cities of the plain) all come one after another in the early chapters of Genesis, and (3) the angels referred to here in 2 Peter are confined to ‘gloomy dungeons.’ Apparently some fallen angels are free to plague mankind as demons while others such as these are imprisoned. The connection with Genesis 6:1–4 provides a reason for this phenomenon” (Edwin A. Blum, “2 Peter” In , in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Volume 12: Hebrews Through Revelation*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981], 278).

² Cf. the usage of this word in Acts 20:29; 2 Corinthians 1:28; 13:2. Contrast the way it is used in our passage with the way that it is used in Romans 8:32—just as God “did not spare” these angels who sinned, He “did not spare” His Son who became sin for us and was “given up for us all” so that we might be spared and justified (Romans 8:33–34).

³ The Greek word here is *tartaroo*, which literally means “to hold captive in Tartarus” (BDAG). Tartarus was “the subterranean abyss of Greek mythology where demigods were punished. It is mentioned in the pseudepigraphal book of Enoch as the place where fallen angels are confined. It is found only in its verbal form in 2 Pet. 2:4 meaning to cast into or consign to Tartarus. It is part of the realm of death designated in Scripture as *Sh’öl* (7585) in the OT and *Hádēs* (86) in the NT. These angels are being held in this netherworld dungeon until the day of final judgment. Peter’s usage of this term is not evidence either that Christianity was a syncretistic religion or that Peter himself believed in the pagan myths about Tartarus. Peter has adapted a word and not adopted a theology” (Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, electronic ed. [Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000]).

⁴ Literally, “guarded”—cf. the usage of this word in Matthew 27:36; Acts 16:23.

⁵ Cf. Jude 6, 13; 2 Peter 2:17.

⁶ Cf. Revelation 20:1–3, 10, 14

⁷ Our verse says that God “brought” a flood upon them. This is the same word used in verse 1 (false teachers “bring upon themselves swift destruction”). Therefore, we are reminded that such consequences are not arbitrary or uncommon, but are the very natural and sovereign responses of God to that which violates His nature and rule.

⁸ Gk. *kataklusmos*—cf. Matthew 24:38f; Luke 17:27.

⁹ His wife, his three sons, and his three daughters-in-law.

¹⁰ “Noah was a herald (*kēryx*) of righteousness. This could refer to his preaching activity not recorded in the OT or to the fact that his lifestyle condemned sin and proclaimed righteousness to his contemporaries (Gen 6:9)” (Blum, 278).

¹¹ Cf. the usage of this term in Luke 2:8; 8:29; Acts 12:4; 23:35; 28:16.

¹² “This word is cited in MM (p. 632) as being used in Dio Cassius (66.1094) of Vesuvius’s erupting and Lycophron’s ‘being overwhelmed with ashes’” (Ibid., 279).

¹³ Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2005), 2 Pe 2:6.

¹⁴ “The Lord was willing to spare the city if as few as ten righteous inhabitants could be found [cf. Gen. 18:23–33]. But when even that minimum could not be met, the Lord destroyed the wicked populace. As in the previous illustration of the Flood, Peter comforted his readers by reminding them of those who escaped punishment. During the Flood, God graciously preserved Noah and his family. In this instance, during the demolition of Sodom and Gomorrah, God rescued righteous Lot, along with his two daughters” (John F. MacArthur, Jr., *2 Peter and Jude*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary [Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2005], 90).

¹⁵ “Those who are familiar with the Genesis account may wonder why Lot is designated as righteous no less than three times in verses 7–8. After all, when he first appears in Scripture, Lot is described as implicitly superficial, selfish, and worldly (Gen. 13:5–13). During the events of Genesis 19, he displayed unambiguous moral weakness and incredibly poor judgment when, in place of the visiting angels, he offered his daughters to the lusting Sodomites (vv. 6–8). Later, he hesitated when the angels urged him to leave the city immediately (vv. 15–22). Even after he escaped God’s wrath, he displayed shockingly sinful behavior, including drunkenness and incest (vv. 30–35)” (Ibid.).

¹⁶ “To be sure, Lot also showed several signs of the Holy Spirit’s work in his heart. For example, his reverence toward the holy angels who visited him provided a stark contrast to the perverted advances of his neighbors (Gen. 19:1–8). And, although he was initially hesitant to leave the city, he ultimately obeyed God’s command and even warned his sons-in-law about the impending doom (19:14). Furthermore, when he finally left, he obediently refused to look back (cf. 19:17)...His abhorrence for the sin of those around him was a sure indicator that he was a believer (cf. Pss. 97:10; 119:7, 67–69, 77, 101, 106, 121, 123; Prov. 8:13; Rom. 12:9). At times, Lot might have been materialistic and morally weak, but he did not want any part of the sensual conduct that characterized Sodom’s unprincipled culture” (Ibid.).

¹⁷ Ibid., 91.

¹⁸ Cf. the usage of this word in Acts 7:24.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Cf. the usage of this term in Matthew 8:6, 29; Revelation 9:5; 11:10; 12:2; 14:10; 20:10.

²¹ Verses 4–10a are one sentence in the Greek.

²² “Immediate judgment of sinners is only the beginning. Temporal judgments, death, and ‘being in torment’ in Hades (Luke 16:23) do not exhaust the divine wrath. A great Judgment is yet future (Rev 20:11–15) followed by the ‘second death’ (Rev 20:14)—the lake of fire” (Blum, 279).

²³ The word for authority is *kuriotes*, which is the verbal noun idea of *kurios*, meaning “lord/master.” The *kurios* (lord) practices *kuriotes* (lordship).