

# Sermon 13, How to Live Under Judgment, Pt. 2: Lot, 2 Peter 2:6-8

Read Genesis 19

**Proposition:** God catastrophically condemned Sodom and Gomorrah as an example to the ungodly, but saved Lot, who shows us the pain and perseverance of life under judgment.

- I. Sodom & Gomorrah: A Good Example for Bad People, v. 6
  - A. God turned them to ashes, v. 6a
  - B. God condemned them to catastrophe, v. 6b
  - C. God made them an example for future ungodly people, v. 6c
- II. Lot: A Good Example for Good People, vv. 7-8
  - A. God Rescued Him, v. 7a
  - B. Lot was Righteous
    1. He Was Distressed by Others' Sin, v. 7b
    2. He Saw and Heard Lawless Deeds, v. 8a
  - C. Lot was his own worst enemy
    1. He was distressed by others, v. 7b
    2. He tormented himself, v. 8c
      - a) By what he saw and heard
      - b) By his choice to reside in Sodom

## Introduction

Dearly beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, this evening we continue our series on “how to live under judgment.” We saw last time that Noah lived in a time when God’s judgment fell on the cosmos, but flourished in his time by faithfully preaching and practicing righteousness. Tonight we’re going to look at the example of Lot, who was also a righteous man living in a time and place where God’s judgment fell spectacularly. How did Lot do it? What does his example show us about living in our time? Obviously, we’re not going to say “Do everything Lot did.” It’s obvious that a lot of what Lot did was awful. But we can learn from him, looking at both the positive and the negative, because our God hasn’t changed. Though circumstances might be different now, God is the same and His commands are the same. He punishes and destroys the ungodly, but He saves His own, even when they’re being stupid.

### I. Sodom & Gomorrah: A Good Example for Bad People, v. 6

We begin by looking at Sodom and Gomorrah. Even today these cities are proverbial for their wickedness. Remember the 1996 book by Robert Bork, *Slouching Towards Gomorrah?* The point of the book, obviously, was to decry the moral corruption of our times. And as we heard in our Scripture reading tonight, Sodom was filled with sodomites so lustful that they were desperate to sodomize the angels who visited the town to rescue Lot. Yes, Ezekiel says that pride

and fullness of bread was the sin of Sodom. But clearly, folks, that was not the only sin of Sodom. Our language, despite attempts to change it, memorializes the corruptions of these cities of the plain.

#### **A. God turned them to ashes, v. 6a**

If you notice, of course, Peter doesn't actually mention the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah. He doesn't have to; we know all about them. They are famous to us, as they were to Peter and his readers. Instead, he only mentions the punishment of being burned to ashes. This is the only appearance of the word "burn to ashes" in the Bible. What had formerly been a city was a little pile of ashes after being blasted by supernatural fire.

What's the point? That God will not tolerate sin forever. God will act against sin in His own good time. And when He does, His action will be final. It will be catastrophic — the word that Peter uses next.

#### **B. God condemned them to catastrophe, v. 6b**

He says that God condemned these cities to catastrophe. The Greek word "catastrophe" is the combination of two words, "down" and "turn." Yes, that's right: to speak in English of a catastrophic downturn is a redundancy! Well, Sodom and Gomorrah, of course, were condemned to a catastrophe from which they never recovered. Even today, they are at the bottom of the Dead Sea, in a notoriously nasty part of the world.

#### **C. God made them an example for future ungodly people, v. 6c**

You see, God made them an example for future ungodly people. That's the key point here. This is the facet of the text that we need to get our mind around. We are inured to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. It's ancient history, literally. We don't think of it as something that we actually need to worry about, or as something that should come to mind when we are tempted to use people like a false teacher. But Peter specifically tells us that one reason God destroyed these cities of the plain was to set an example for future ungodly people. In other words, ungodly people have no excuse. None whatsoever. They cannot claim at the end, when God says "It's the lake of fire for you," that they had no idea. They can't act all shocked and surprised. They were warned. God set up Sodom and Gomorrah, burned to ashes, specifically as an example for future ungodly generations.

That means that the patrons of gay bars should recognize that what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah is coming for them. That means that the passers of pro-abortion legislation should recognize that what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah is coming for them. But brothers and sisters, we in here who don't go to gay bars and who don't pass pro-murder legislation — is this passage relevant to us? Of course it is! You see, ungodliness is not confined to the world out there, outside the four walls of our holy church. Ungodliness is a problem in your heart and mine. How do we get our cold hearts to wake up and realize that Sodom and Gomorrah stand as examples to all sinners, us included? We have to pray for awakening. We have to pray that God would make this message relevant to us. And we have to actually think about it. Make the connection in your mind. "I want to eat too much ice cream. That is the sin of gluttony, which

was also one of Sodom's sins. God destroyed Sodom. I should refrain from that second bowl of ice cream because of the example that Sodom is to me."

Do you actually think that way? You should. You should turn away from sins like lustful looks, bad attitudes, unforgiveness, harsh words to your children or parents, and so on, because you recognize that God punishes sin and you don't want to offend Him or to feel His punishment! The fear of God means that your heart is actually afraid to do anything that offends Him. This is based on loving Him, but a good hard look at what He's done to judge and destroy the ungodly doesn't hurt anything.

So actually confront this example of Sodom. Think about it. Hard. Recognize that what God did to Sodom He is still more than capable of doing today. He doesn't regret, doesn't repent, doesn't change His mind. God is not apologizing to Sodom and Gomorrah anytime soon. He's never going to apologize. And perhaps that's the thing that you and I need to be most careful about, the sin we're most tempted toward in the evangelical church. Does the message you preach suggest that God is on the point of making reparations to the Sodomites? Saying He's sorry to Gomorrah? Does your personal attitude toward sin, your own and your society's, give the impression that the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was right, or does it imply that the destruction of these cities was wrong? Brothers and sisters, if you are ashamed of God's judgment on the sodomites who swarmed Lot's door and wanted to bugger the angels, then in this era where the sexual revolution is really getting going you are going to be an angel-buggerer next. Mark my words. God gave those faggots exactly what they deserved, just as He will do to all contemporary faggots and to all sinners of whatever flavor. Your pet sins and my pet sins are not exempt. They can be forgiven but they cannot be ignored.

Sodom and Gomorrah are good examples for bad people. They are good examples because they show what God is like. He is a God who hates sin and punishes sinners. You ignore Him at your peril.

## **II. Lot: A Good Example for Good People, vv. 7-8**

But Sodom is not the only example in the text before us. Lot, too, stand as an example. He reveals to us the flip side of the truth about God's character that we just saw. That flip side is simple: The God who judges is also the God who saves. God's wrath that reduced Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes sent angels who literally took Lot by the hand and pulled him out of the city.

### **A. God Rescued Him, v. 7a**

Yes, that's right: God rescued Him. That was the key point about righteous Lot. God rescued him, delivered him, from the destruction that overtook his city. So how do we live in a time of judgment? We live trusting in God's deliverance! God pulled all the righteous people out of Sodom before destroying it. Now, God won't always do this. He has made it clear that oftentimes the righteous suffer along with the wicked; indeed, in historical terms the rescue of Lot and Noah from the fate that drowned the wicked was exceptional. More usually God's people suffer right alongside the wicked. But the point here, of course, is that God can and does rescue when it suits His purposes. We know that salvation is not primarily for this world, but for the world to come

— and thus, the salvation with which God saves His people will likely be redemption to a better world and eternal life there. But though Lot was saved from sin, he was also saved in a temporal sense. God rescued him from Sodom.

### **B. Lot was Righteous**

But in addition to what we see about God — that He rescues His people — we should see two things that Lot teaches us about how to live under judgment. First, to live under judgment you must be righteous. If you're not, then you'll perish with the wicked for sure. I mean eternally perish, not just temporally perish. Well, Lot was righteous. And I want you to see that his righteousness showed itself in distress over sin.

#### **1. He Was Distressed by Others' Sin, v. 7b**

Lot was worn down and oppressed by other people's sin. That is how we know he was righteous. If you're righteous, then sin is uncongenial to you, oppressive to you. I remember going once to a party hosted by a friend of mine who was back from the Marine Corps on leave. The whole thing was one extended time of crude joking. I hated it. I stayed for the meal part of it just for old times' sake, because I loved this friend, but the longer I was in his company the more I felt my righteous soul vexed by what I was experiencing. By the grace of God, I have never been invited to or present at such a party again.

No doubt some of you work among lawless and evil people. You deal with them every day. You may have them in your own family, encounter them at home, at holiday parties, at school, and in other institutional and informal settings. If there are people whose lawless conduct oppresses and wears you down, you're not alone. You stand with Lot as a righteous person in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Don't give up; don't surrender to their wickedness. Above all, don't join them in it to try to lessen the agony of being around their odious perversity. Lot stayed righteous in Sodom. You can too, because you serve the same God.

#### **2. He Saw and Heard Lawless Deeds, v. 8a**

Still, to highlight the difficulty of Lot's situation, Peter emphasizes by repeating a second time that Lot saw and heard some awful things. We can only imagine what life on the streets of Sodom was like. Clearly the things recorded in Gen. 19 sound worse even than dens of iniquity like San Francisco and Las Vegas in our own day. The point is simple: If you're going to be righteous in a time of judgment, you're going to be living in an R-rated world. Don't expect everything to be a nice cuddly G. The Bible certainly isn't, and Sodom certainly isn't. We may not have slouched onto Sodomite Road in downtown Gomorrah quite yet, but we already sometimes see and hear lawless deeds even in our pleasant suburbia. Believe me: it can and will get worse unless the Holy Spirit brings us revival.

### **C. Lot was his own worst enemy**

But we must also recognize that Lot was his own worst enemy. What do I mean by that?

#### **1. He was distressed by others, v. 7b**

Well, there are two Greek words in our passage that describe his experience. The first is passive; it says that he was distressed, that he was worn down.

Lot suffered lots. (Sorry.) He did not enjoy the experience of life in Sodom.

## **2. He tormented himself, v. 8c**

But that said, the passage goes on to use an active word, a word that says he tormented his righteous soul. Who tormented Lot? Lot did. He was his own worst enemy! He tormented himself.

### **a) By what he saw and heard**

Yes, the passage tells us that he tormented himself by what he saw and heard day after day. There was no getting away from the corruption that surrounded him.

### **b) By his choice to reside in Sodom**

But why was there no getting away from it? Because he had chosen to reside in Sodom! Brothers and sisters, Lot had moved East, away from the presence and promise of God, and taken up residence in Sodom. He picked it, and by his choice he ended up tormenting himself day after day.

So how about you? Are you willfully putting yourself in harm's way? Are you embracing moral hazard out of sheer cussedness?

Exhibit A here is not bad neighborhoods so much as bad television shows. Do you expose yourself to the lawless conduct of the wicked day after day on your TV, computer, tablet, and phone screens? Do you choose to reside in the seamier neighborhoods on Netflix, Amazon, Hulu, basic cable, and the rest of our smorgasbord of debauchery? Lot tormented himself. He vexed his righteous soul by what he saw and heard. How about you? Do you torment yourself? Are you choosing to live around debauchery?

And what if you work or go to school with the wicked? How should you handle that? Pursue righteousness. How do you do that? By trusting in the character of God. He rescued Lot even while destroying Lot's place of residence. And He can and will rescue you even while destroying your place of residence. If you can avoid living with the wicked, do so. The lesson Lot teaches is that you aren't going to convert Sodom by moving there; instead, Sodom will probably do a more thorough job catechizing your family than you will, and your time there, and its aftermath, will be very unpleasant and wearing. Living in Sodom, in other words, is probably a bad idea! But if you're there, recognize that God has a way to deliver you. He knows how to get you out of Sodom, and He will in His own good time.

So how do you live under judgment? Well, mentally prepare. Think about the reality of judgment. Get to know God as judge, as destroyer of wicked cities. And if you know, as we all have to know, that your city is ripe for judgment, recognize that living there will be unpleasant. It might well cost you your family. It will certainly cost you peace of mind. But God's salvation is even mightier than His judgment. He knows how to save. And if you put your trust in Him, He will. So pursue the righteousness that was Lot's secret to living when in a city under judgment. You won't find it in self-righteousness. You won't find it in a holier-than-thou attitude. You will find it in only one place — in the arms of Jesus Christ. Trust Him; find righteousness in Him. And you may someday get to stand on a hill and watch Sodom burn. Amen.