

"The Torment of the Righteous"  
(2 Peter 2:8)

Introduction: I don't know how many of you take the time to read the title of the sermon in the bulletin before it is preached, but if you did this morning, you may have been struck by the title, "The Torment of the Righteous." You may have asked yourself the question, When are the righteous ever tormented? Isn't that word normally used to describe the damned souls in hell, who are being tormented by God as the just consequence of their sins? Yes, that is true. The damned souls are being tormented in hell. However, we usually don't think of the term "torment" in the context of the righteous, especially in our day and age. Torment usually carries with it the idea of a tormentor, someone who is inflicting pain on someone else. That might have been common enough during some of the persecutions which the church has had to endure throughout history, but that is not the case today, at least in our country. But, on the other hand, there is real torment for the Christian today. It may not be in the form of the rack, or other physical forms of torture, but it is real nonetheless.

In our passage this morning, Peter is warning his readers against the very real threat of false prophets and false teachers. He warns against following them, for those who follow them will share in their judgment as well. When the angels sinned, God did not spare them, "BUT CAST THEM INTO HELL AND COMMITTED THEM TO PITS OF DARKNESS, RESERVED FOR JUDGMENT" (v. 4). When those at the time of Noah sinned, God brought a flood upon the world to destroy them. When the evil of Sodom and Gomorrah reached to heaven, God "CONDEMNED THE CITIES OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH TO DESTRUCTION BY REDUCING THEM TO ASHES, HAVING MADE THEM AN EXAMPLE TO THOSE WHO WOULD LOVE UNGODLY THEREAFTER" (v. 6). On the other hand, Peter also encourages his readers by his examples of faithfulness. The angels who did not rebel were confirmed in righteousness, when the others were swept away. God preserved Noah, "A PREACHER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS," when He swept the rest away in the flood. And God rescued Lot and his family, before He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Peter's conclusion is, "THE LORD KNOWS HOW TO RESCUE THE GODLY FROM TEMPTATION, AND TO KEEP THE UNRIGHTEOUS UNDER PUNISHMENT FOR THE DAY OF JUDGMENT" (v. 9). The same things hold true today. There are the wicked, and there are the righteous. The wicked will be reserved for judgment, but the righteous will be rescued from temptation, so that they are not swept away with them in the end.

But seeing that this is true, what happens to the Christian in the interim period, that time between the judgment of the wicked and the rescue of the righteous? What is it that the Christian must endure while he is living among the ungodly? This Peter briefly describes for us in verse 8. And what ~~he~~ tells us is that,

*The Christian must endure a measure of torment to his soul as long as he lives among the ungodly.*

*There are unbelievers all around us. There are more of them by far than there are true Christians. Because of this, our society is as it is. ~~It's~~ because of this, <sup>the</sup> elections turned out as they did. It is not that we are exempt from evil. We still must wrestle with our own wickedness every day. But the heart of the Christian is such that he longs for holiness in himself and in all around him. And when that holiness is not forthcoming, it is torture to his soul.*

*I want us to look at Lot's situation this morning, and to realize that we are in the same situation as he.*

- I. *First, Notice What Kind of a Person Lot Was: He Was Called by Peter, a Righteous Man with a Righteous Soul.*

- A. Remember, Lot Was Not Like the Rest of the World.
1. He was the nephew of Abram, the one who had the promises.
  2. When Abram left Ur of the Chaldees to go to the land which the Lord had promised him, Lot went with him. Moses wrote, "AND ABRAM TOOK SARAI HIS WIFE AND LOT HIS NEPHEW, AND ALL THEIR POSSESSIONS WHICH THEY HAD ACCUMULATED, AND THE PERSONS WHICH THEY HAD ACQUIRED IN HARAN, AND THEY SET OUT FOR THE LAND OF CANAAN; THUS THEY CAME TO THE LAND OF CANAAN" (Gen. 12:4-5).
  3. Being, then, related to Abram, he most likely learned of the truth of how a man is made just before God from him. It is possible that he learned it from others who, if the Bible's genealogies are complete, were still living at that time, such as Noah and his sons. Perhaps even Abram learned that truth from them as well, and it was through these means that Abram found the righteousness of God.
  4. But the fact is that Lot must have known it, for the inspired apostle here calls him a righteous man. And it is impossible that a man may be righteous apart from justifying faith.
- B. No Man Can Be Justified Before God by His Own Works.
1. We saw that two weeks ago when we considered the wonderful truth restored to the church at the time of the Reformation.
  2. It is true that the Bible speaks of a relative righteousness, that is, those actions which appear to be righteous ~~ness~~ when compared to the evil works of man, those which outwardly appear to be good works, even though they lack the inward qualities which would make them truly so.
  3. But the Bible also tells us that "THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE" (Rom. 3:12).
    - a. Adam was a righteous man. That is the way that the Lord made him. But he was the only one.
    - b. After his fall, none of his descendants coming from him by ordinary generation were righteous in themselves. They needed the righteousness of God.
    - c. When we read that Noah, or Abram, or Lot were righteous, we are not to think that somehow they had overcome the obstacles to godliness and achieved some kind of human perfection that God accepted. Apart from the grace of Christ, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE" (Rom. 3:10).
    - d. To be righteous means that in the sight of God, you are doing everything right, exactly the way that God says you ought to do it, without even the slightest failure.
    - e. But we cannot achieve that kind of record by ourselves. If we could have, then our salvation would have been based on our own good works, our own lawkeeping. Christ would not have needed to die. God could have simply set a certain standard for us to achieve to enter heaven. Don't you think that God would have avoided putting His Son through the agony of the cross if it ~~was~~ <sup>had been</sup> possible to do so?
    - f. The apostle Paul writes, "FOR IF A LAW HAD BEEN GIVEN WHICH WAS ABLE TO IMPART LIFE, THEN RIGHTEOUSNESS WOULD INDEED HAVE BEEN BASED ON LAW" (Gal. 3:21). It is not that there was anything wrong with the Law. The problem was, and is, with us. Again Paul writes, "FOR WHAT THE LAW COULD NOT DO, WEAK AS IT WAS THROUGH THE FLESH, GOD DID: SENDING HIS OWN SON IN THE LIKENESS OF SINFUL FLESH AND AS AN OFFERING FOR SIN, HE CONDEMNED SIN IN THE FLESH, IN ORDER THAT THE REQUIREMENT OF THE LAW MIGHT BE FULFILLED IN US, WHO DO NOT WALK ACCORDING TO THE FLESH, BUT ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT" (Rom. 8:3-4).

- g. The Law depends on our own ability to justify ourselves. "HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM" (Gal. 3:12). But it is impossible for us to obey it perfectly, even for a moment.
- h. But what we could not do by our own obedience, God did. He sent His Son to obey for us, and to die for us, in order that we who trust in Christ may have a perfect righteousness, one which is acceptable to God.
- i. Lot was not made righteous or acceptable to God by his own works, and neither can you. You need the perfect righteousness which Christ supplies, and which He offers to you, if you will repent of your sins and embrace Him by faith. This is how you may be truly just before God.

*f. But we see here that Lot was a believer. He had God's grace in his life.*

II. Second, Notice Where Peter Says that Lot Was Living: He Was Dwelling Among the Sodomites Day After Day; and What He Was Exposed to There: Their Lawless Deeds.

- A. It Wasn't Long After Abram and Lot Left Ur, that the Two of Them Separated (Gen. 13).
  - 1. There was no longer enough room for both men to pasture their flocks together. So they decided to separate.
  - 2. Abram told Lot to make the first choice, and whatever he did not choose, Abram would take. Lot looked toward the valley of the Jordan and saw that it was well-watered, "LIKE THE GARDEN OF THE LORD, LIKE THE LAND OF EGYPT" (v. 10), so he chose to settle there, while Abram settled in Canaan.
  - 3. It wasn't long after that that we see Lot living in the city of Sodom.
    - a. Peter says that He dwelt among the inhabitants there day after day.
    - b. And as he did, he saw what they did, and heard what they said, and he didn't like it, for they were <sup>committing lawless deeds</sup> ~~the doers of~~ lawlessness.
    - c. Lawless deeds are sinful deeds, the outright breaking of the commandments of God, or the failure to live up the holiness which He requires.
    - d. We don't know everything that they were involved in, but we do know that there was serious sexual perversion present.
    - e. When the two angels came to take Lot and his family out of the city, the men of the city surrounded his house and demanded that Lot bring them out to them so that they might have sexual relations with them. These men were nothing less than homosexuals, which is a particularly heinous sin in the sight of God. If they were so advanced in this perversion that they would even seek to rape a man's guests, it would not be unreasonable to suppose that they were also involved in many other forms of wickedness as well.
    - f. Lot lived in the midst of a wicked society.
- B. Lot's situation was not unlike what ours is today.
  - 1. We live in a society of increasing wickedness. There is a flagrant disregard to God's Law. Even if they do not know what it is that God commands, there is still an inherent aversion and rejection of them. Men today do not love God, nor do they love their neighbor as themselves.
  - 2. Casting aside the morality of God, they indulge in fornication, infidelity, adultery, abortion, drunkenness, homosexuality, pornography, drug abuse, and many more crimes like these. The majority of men and women may not be homosexuals, as it appeared to be in Sodom, but it ~~is~~ <sup>would be</sup> not unusual <sup>today</sup> for a man to be raped by

another man. There is a great deal of wickedness present. <sup>And</sup> if they don't participate themselves, they enjoy watching it in the movies or on television.

3. This is really a symptom of a much larger problem, namely, that of the Lord giving us over in His anger to our uncleanness, that He might pour out His wrath upon us, as He did to Sodom.
4. It has been said that this kind of sexual perversion is the last sign to appear before a civilization is destroyed, and our society has all the earmarkings for destruction.
5. Today, we are sharing in the sins of Sodom, and if we do not repent as a nation, we will also share in their destruction.

### III. And Lastly, Notice Lot's Reaction to Their Lawless Deeds: He Was Tormented by Them.

#### A. Living Among the Sodomites Was a Burden to Him.

1. Dwelling in that wicked society day after day was like acid to his soul, burning down to its very core. It was as though his spirit was being oppressed and pushed down to the ground. He abhorred it.
  - a. A true believer, one who has the grace of God in his soul, is burdened by wickedness. He hates it. It is the opposite of what his soul really loves, which is true holiness.
  - b. Yes, it is true that there ~~is~~ still corruption within his own soul which gives him some desire for wickedness, but it is a constant burden for him to bear that as well.
  - c. The true Christian craves righteousness. He seeks it. He will have it. He must have it. He will not rest until he obtains as high a degree of it as possible.
2. Why this righteous man tormented his soul by remaining among them as long as he did, the Lord doesn't tell us.
  - a. Did he fear leaving them, lest they would come after him and destroy him? Usually those involved in such wickedness don't take too kindly to someone bailing out on them.
  - b. Was it that his own corruption was not sufficiently subdued for him to want to leave enough? Isn't that the same problem that we often face when we try and overcome our sins? We don't overcome them because we really don't want to.
  - c. For whatever reason, he did stay, until the Lord had to bring Him out in order to spare him from His own divine and righteous judgment.
  - d. But even if he had gone somewhere else, he would have had to face similar problems, though perhaps not as intense.

#### B. As long as You and I Remain in This World, Our Souls Will Be Burdened with Sin As Well.

1. I am not saying that there is no beauty left in this world. There is.
2. But there is also a great deal of evil, evil which is a burden to the Christian's soul, evil which make\$him long for heaven.
3. It has been said that this earth is the closest thing to hell that the Christian will ever experience. There is a lot of truth in this.
  - a. In hell there are evil men who think evil thoughts and speak evil words. Isn't that true of our nation?
  - b. In hell the wrath of God is constantly poured out on the disobedient and ungrateful. Doesn't the Bible tell us that God daily pours out His wrath on the ungodly even in this life?

- 4. It is for this reason that the Christian is burdened.
  - a. The Christian loves righteousness, not lawlessness. He longs to see the blessing of God on the land, not His curse.
  - b. Isn't your soul burdened by all of the crime and injustice in our country?
    - (i) Aren't you grieved by the rising tide of wickedness?
    - (ii) Hasn't this last election been an indicator to you that perhaps the Lord is moving us closer and closer to judgment? We are thankful for some of the gains, but the losses seemed far greater. There have been more doors opened for sin, and the doors which were already open have not been shut.
    - (iii) The Bible says that the heart of the godly is broken over the sins of others. The psalmist wrote, "MY EYES SHED STREAMS OF WATER, BECAUSE THEY DO NOT KEEP THY LAW" (Ps. 119:136).
  - c. And aren't you burdened by your own sin as well? Don't you hate all the compromises that you have made with wickedness, all of your transgressions of God's holy Law? How many times have you been ashamed to lift your face to God to ask Him again to forgive you for despising Him and His Law? Doesn't the thought of continuing to live in an environment which constantly provokes you to sin torment your mind, especially when you consider that even one unmortified sin is enough to damn your soul forever?
  - d. It is a burden to live in this sin cursed world. It is torment to the righteous soul. The largest burden is that we must remain here until, like Lot, the Lord comes to take us out that we might dwell with Him.
  - e. And so what should you and I do? *in the near future?*
    - (i) We must confess our own sins to the Lord.
    - (ii) We must repent of having lived in the world as though we were of the world.
    - (iii) We must seek His forgiveness for not being grieved as we ought over the sins of our nation, for our being indifferent to ungodliness.
    - (iv) And we must renew our commitment to holiness. We must humble ourselves daily in God's presence and seek for His grace to turn us ~~around~~ and this nation around.
    - (v) We don't know but that God has yet a plan to turn back the rising tide of evil and bring a glorious morning of His blessing and grace ~~to~~ our land.
    - (vi) We must pray that the Lord will send revival. The downward spiral into wickedness that this nation has experienced for the last three hundred years will not be reversed overnight.
    - (vii) We can't wait for four more years and then pray for a week or two before the elections. We need to humble ourselves and seek the Lord today, and everyday, until He hears us in heaven, and answers the desire of our souls, until He renews this land in righteousness and holiness. May God grant to us His mercies, and may His kingdom come fully upon us. Amen.

*But if that burden is not →*

*→ we must thank the Lord if this burden is on us for it is an indication of God's grace in our hearts and we must continue to strive in His power to make His glory known in this world.*

*we need to as low ourselves that we will not allow ourselves to be comfortable in any sin, but that we might see it. Let's abolish it.*