

## AN OMINOUS WARNING—AND A COMFORTING PROMISE!

Please take your Bibles and turn to II Peter 2. No intro this morning—we have too much to cover so we are going to jump right in. I do want to remind you, though, what this **book is about**—and **why** we are studying it. The **theme** of II Peter—what the whole book is about in one sentence—is this:

“Pursue spiritual growth to protect yourself from error—and to be prepared for Christ’s return.”

And based on this theme, I **entitled the series**: “II Peter in Three Words: Working, Warning, and Watching.”

We’ve finished Chapter 1—which emphasizes the need to **work on our spiritual growth**—and are now in chapter 2—**warnings** against false teachers.

Three weeks ago, we noted from vs 1 the sad reality that “there **shall be** false teachers among you.” Although that may not mean this **particular church** at this **particular time**, it certainly means that **Christianity as a whole** will be infiltrated by false teachers. Has that happened? It certainly has!

How do we **identify** them? The middle of vs 1 says they come in “privily” meaning **secretly**. They **don’t advertise** that they are teaching falsehood—and **they claim** to be teaching the truth!

So the way to identify them is to examine **what** they teach; **their doctrine**.

**What** do they teach? Mid of vs 1 says, “**damnable** heresies!” What are **damnable** heresies? “Damnable” is often translated “destruction” and is the same word Jesus used in **Mt 7:13** “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, **that leadeth to destruction**, and **many** there be which go in thereat:”

So there are heresies—false doctrines presented as truth—that put people on the **broad path that leads to hell**—instead of the narrow gate that leads to heaven. **Why** is the gate wide and the path broad that leads to hell? Because **false teachers** have taught a **false way** for people to get to heaven—and many have **been deceived by them!**

**What** are the characteristics of false doctrine? Peter gives us one, right here in the middle of vs 1 “even **denying the Lord** that bought them.” What does that mean?

It means they deny their need to **trust in Jesus’ death** on the cross to obtain forgiveness of sins. Instead, they teach that we can be forgiven **by our works!** I said this last time, but I believe it bears repeating: --If you teach that **baptism as a baby** washes away sins, you are denying that **only Jesus’ blood** can save you! --If you teach that **being a good person**...or going to church...or giving money to a church will get you to heaven, you are denying that **only Jesus’ blood** can save you! --And if you teach that **confessing your sins** to a “religious leader” will bring forgiveness of sins, you are denying that **only Jesus’ blood** can save you!

God’s Word is **unmistakenly clear**: the only way we can be forgiven by God is to have our **sins paid for by Jesus!** And Jesus paid for our sins by **shedding His blood**—period!

Pastors are to feed the church of God which Christ “hath purchased with **His own blood**” (Acts 20:28). We are redeemed with the “**precious blood of Christ**” (I Peter 1:19). It is the “**blood of Jesus Christ His Son**” that “cleanseth us from all sin.” (I John 1:7). And Rev 1:5 says Jesus “**washed us from our sins in His own blood.**”

So, **what happens** to those who teach false doctrine? What will their **punishment** be?

### **1. The pronouncement of judgment**

--Notice the end of vs 1 “...and bring upon themselves swift destruction.”

“Destruction”—as mentioned a few weeks ago—comes from the Greek word “ap-o’-li-a” and has two primary meanings. Sometimes it means **utter destruction** or loss; other times it means **eternal misery**; meaning **separation from God** in a place called hell. **Context** determines how it is being used.

**How** is it being used here? Do we see false teachers dropping over dead—physically—when they preach false doctrine? We don’t, do we? So “destruction” has to do with **eternal punishment**—not **physical** loss of life.

What does “**swift**” mean? It doesn’t mean **shortness** of time—it means **suddenness** in time! Their eternal ruin will come quickly...suddenly...without warning.

--Now the end vs 3: "...whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not..." Most commentators suggest that "now of a long time" means **from long ago**. We need to understand that God is **not trying to figure out** what He is **going to do with** false teachers—He has **already decided!** Because He is a **God of truth**, those that **teach the wrong way** to get to heaven—and instead **lead people to hell**—will be **going to hell** themselves!

--"and their damnation slumbereth not." What does that mean? Simply this—just because their eternal doom hasn't happened yet, it **doesn't mean** that **judgment is sleeping!** **Delayed** judgment doesn't mean **forgotten** judgment. False teachers may **live long lives**—and **even get rich** as they "make merchandise" of people like it says earlier in the verse—but judgment **will certainly come!**

That's important for **us to remember**—and not just because it applies to false teachers! It also **applies to us!** Just because God doesn't **reach into your life** and immediately **smack you upside** the head when you are doing wrong, it **doesn't mean** He is ignoring your sin! Galatians 6:7 "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

How do **we know** God will punish false teachers? Because He has already pronounced His judgment on them!

But...God doesn't **just say** false teachers will be punished—He "proves it," so to speak, by providing three examples, beginning in vs 4. Please follow along as I read through verse 10 (read).

If you were to look closely at the passage I just read, it is one long sentence that begins with vs 4 and ends in the middle of vs 10. Not only is it one long sentence, it is also an "if/then" sentence.

What is an "if/then" sentence? Glad you asked 😊! Here are some examples:

--If you **stay up too late** on Saturday night, **then you will** be tired and probably fall asleep during church!

--If you goof-off at track **practice**, you probably won't do well at the track **meets!**

--If you eat only **junk food**, you will **not be very healthy!**

I think you can see from these examples that the word "**then**" doesn't necessarily have to be present. Back to our text. A theologian by the name of Dr. Thomas Schreiner lays out this passage wonderfully. Although it takes up a fair amount of space on your outline, I think it really helps us see Peter's argument.

If God judged the angels (vs 4), and

If He judged the flood generation (vs 5)                      while at the same time sparing Noah (vs 5),

And if He judged Sodom and Gomorrah (vs 6)                      while at the same time preserving Lot (vss 7-8),

Then it follows that the Lord will **preserve the godly** in the midst of their trials,

And it also follows that the Lord will **punish the ungodly** on the day of judgment.

In a nutshell, then, Peter's argument is this: **because God punished** the ungodly in the past, He certainly **will punish false teachers in the future**. But—thankfully—God also **promises to preserve the godly!** The godly are not judged along with the wicked—they are **delivered** from that judgment.

So we have—in this "if/then" statement of Peter—both an ominous warning—and a comforting promise!

Let's consider next... **2. Previous examples of judgment**

You already know from what we read—and from Schreiner's outline—that Peter gives us 3 examples of God's punishment of the ungodly. You probably also realize that each one of the 3 could be a sermon by themselves. I don't feel led to do that, though, so I'm just going to highlight the general truth from each example, then briefly look at God's protection of Noah's family and Lot.

A. God's judgment of angels shows there is a future judgment in the spiritual realm (vs 4)

As just mentioned, it would be really easy—with a verse like this—to go on multiple "rabbit trails" like:

--**When** did the angels sin—and **what** was their sin;

--And **why did** Peter use the Greek word "tar-tar-owe-sas" instead of Gehenna—the usual word for hell;

--And what did **Peter mean by** "chains of darkness"?

The **main take-away**, though, is this: angels sinned and have been judged already—but **will be judged again!**

What does that have to do with us?

Because although we live in a **physical** body, there is an **immaterial—a spiritual**—part of us that will also face a future judgment! Does the Bible teach that? It certainly does!

**Hebrews 9:27** “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but **after this the judgment:**”

--The judgment is **not death**—the judgment comes **after death!**

Mark your spot here, and turn to Revelation 20.

--In vs 12, we see that the dead stand before God and are judged.

--Now vs 13. Hell—hades; the present dwelling place of souls of the unsaved—**delivers up** the dead in it to be judged. **What** is the final judgment? Notice vs 14-15. They are cast into the lake of fire!

--And we **see in vs 10** that the lake of fire is where the **devil and the beast and the false prophet** are. **How long** are they there for? “...they shall be tormented day and night **for ever and ever.**”

Please know that this judgment—also known as the Great White Throne Judgment—is **not for everyone**. It is only for the **unsaved dead**—those who **did not receive Jesus** as their Savior before they died. How do **we know that?**

Because for the **child of God**, Paul tells us in **II Corinthians 5:8** that to be absent from the body is to be **present with the Lord!** He makes a similar statement in **Philippians 1:23** “For I am in a strait [hard-pressed to decide] betwixt two, **having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ**; which is far better:”

--When the **believer's body** dies, their soul—their immaterial part—goes to be **with Christ!**

--When the **unbeliever's body** dies, their soul—their immaterial part—goes **to hell** awaiting final judgment—and the lake of fire!

What about **you? Where** will your soul go after your body dies? There are only two places... Back to II Peter 2. In verse 4, we see that God's judgment of angels shows there is a future judgment in the spiritual realm. In vs 5 we see...

**B. God's judgment on the old world should convince us of the future judgement on the present world**

Just like vs 4, we could take this verse and **go a lot of different directions** with it.

--We could go back to Genesis 6 and look at **the instructions** God gave to Noah on how to build the ark.

--Or we could go to Hebrews 11 and talk **about the faith** that it took Noah to build the ark.

--Or we could discuss the **scientific evidence** that points to a universal flood.

Instead, I want to simply point out this: because God judged “the world of the ungodly” once **in the past**, we should be convinced that He will judge the present world **in the future**. Why? Because **He says He will!** Notice on your outline **II Peter 3:10**. “But the day of the Lord **will** come” (**will**; not may or might)

“...in the which the heavens **shall** pass away” (again, **shall**—not may or might);

“...the elements **shall** melt...the earth **shall** be burned up.”

Just as certain as God destroyed the world once by a flood because it was ungodly, He will do it again by fire!

Now vs 6. **C. God's judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah serves as an example to the ungodly**

--Did God turn Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes? Yes; He did! We read it here—and we read it in Genesis 19.

--Why? Two reasons: 1) Because their actions and activities were ungodly!

--2) To serve as an example to others that live ungodly! It amazes me that some people insist that God only speaks out against homosexuality **in the Old Testament** and that the NT is silent about it. They obviously are unfamiliar with this verse! Or maybe they think that just because God doesn't **turn cities into ashes** now that He has changed His view! Remember...judgment **delayed** does not mean judgment **forgotten!**

Please know that I **am not promoting hatred or death** for those who participate in this lifestyle. They aren't any more hell-bound than the church-goer who says “I **don't need Jesus**; my baptism and good works will save me!” **Both** need to be saved! If not, **both will hear from Jesus**: “Depart from me, I never knew you.”

The flip side, though, is we need to get our view of sin from the Bible—not the opinion polls!

Lastly, let's consider... **3. Protection from judgment**

Does God protect His people from judgment? Yes, He does! How do we know?

Because He protected Noah—and He protected Lot.

We also have—in the beginning of vs 9—a pronouncement that I believe also serves as a comforting promise: “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations...”

So what does that mean? What does **it mean** to “deliver the godly out of temptations”?

The Greek word that “temptations” is translated from has primarily 3 different meanings: 1) a trial (external difficulty); 2) temptation (inward tug to do wrong); 3) a calamity (an event that brings terrible loss).

By process of elimination, we can **cross off meaning #1** because God doesn’t **keep us from trials**—He often sends them our way! We can also **cross off #2** because we do not—and will not—have a **temptation-free life** until we get to heaven! We know that because Jesus was tempted while here on earth.

We also know from James 1:13 that we can be tempted: “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God.” So...it doesn’t mean God will give us a **trial-free**—or **temptation-free**—life.

That **leaves us with #3**—calamity, affliction, ruin. That obviously fits best here—especially in light of the two examples God through Peter gives us.

#### A. God protected Noah in the flood

--Vs 5 again. The world was not spared, but Noah was. Did the flood **affect** Noah? Yes!

He had to build the ark to **escape it**—and the world was drastically changed when it **was all over**. But did the flood **afflict** Noah? No; he was not destroyed in it. He was spared from the judgment God brought on the world. Why? Because Gen 7:1 tells us that Noah was **righteous**—and here in vs 5 we see that he was a preacher of **righteousness**.

To be righteous means to be declared “right **with** God”—and **by** God. To be declared **right** with God, we need to understand that we are **wrong** with God. Not only that, but we need to understand that **all of our efforts** to be right with Him—all our “righteousnesses”—are as filthy rags and are offensive to God.

But we can **become right with God**—and **declared right by God**—when we **accept God’s way** to be right with Him! And that “way,” of course, **is Jesus Christ**! He Himself tells us that in John 14:6 “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.”

What about **Noah**, though? How could he be declared righteous when Jesus had not yet come to earth to die for our sins? Although salvation in the OT is a bit too much to tackle in the little time I have left, I feel it necessary to say these two things:

1) Salvation in the OT **did not come from keeping the commandments** because no one **ever could** or **did**. And, salvation **did not come from sacrificing animals** because the blood of bulls and goats don’t wash away sins. Salvation in the OT was the same way it is for us now—**by faith**. And the **object of faith** was the same. Their faith—and our faith—**is in God** and what He has said. The difference between Noah and us is in what God had revealed **to him** compared to what He has revealed **to us**.

2) I have a quote on your h/o from **John Whitcomb** that I believe explains it better than anyone else I’ve read on this: “Saving faith before the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) involved a heart response to whatever special revelation of God was available at that time in history (cf. Romans 4; Galatians 3; Hebrews 11).”

Pretty safe to say that if Noah believed that God was going **to destroy the world** with a flood—when it had never rained before—and that the **only way to avoid being destroyed was to build** in ark in the way God said, Noah would have had no difficulty whatsoever in **trusting Jesus for the forgiveness of sins** if he had known that is what he needed to do!

#### B. God removed Lot from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

In vss 6-8, we have the example of Lot. He is similar to Noah in that he is **called righteous**—which is hard to imagine based on what we read of him in the OT—and he was delivered **by God** from God’s judgment. But **the way** he was delivered was different than the way Noah was delivered. Noah went through the flood in the ark. Lot, on the other hand, did not go through the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah **by hiding out in a bunker** that God told him to build! Instead, God **removed Lot** from the city before turning both cities into ashes!

So—based on the examples of both Noah and Lot, “delivering the godly out of temptations” sometimes means protecting us **in the midst of God’s judgment**—and sometimes it means **removing us from God’s judgment**. In either case, the godly—meaning God’s children—are not treated by God the same way that the ungodly are!

The importance is not so much in **how** God does the delivering—as it is in **who** He is delivering! **Who does** God spare? The righteous...the godly...those that belong to God.

**How do we** become righteous? How do we become someone who belongs to God—meaning a child of God?

The ark serves as a wonderful picture of how to become a child of God. Back in October during our 9:30 Bible study hour we were talking about the ark, and I posed this question: **How is Jesus like the ark?**

--The ark saved Noah from God's judgment; Jesus saves us from God's judgment.

--The ark has only one door; there is only one way to receive salvation and that is through Jesus.

--The ark was planned by God; Jesus coming to earth to die in our place was planned by God.

--Noah and his family had to **get in the ark! Knowing about** the ark and **seeing the ark** was not enough. We need to receive Jesus for ourselves; He needs to become ours. We need to "get in" Jesus.

--Noah was invited into the ark by God; God invites us to trust Jesus.

--**The invitation** to enter into the ark **didn't last forever**—and our invitation to trust Jesus will end some day. If we die before we receive Jesus as our Savior, it will be too late! The invitation will be over!

What about you? Has there been a time in your life that you "got in" Jesus by personally receiving Him by faith as your Savior?

So what would God have us do in light of what we've heard this morning?

1. First, are you saved...are you born again...are you a child of God...do you belong to Him?

--You are either **in Christ**—and will be spared judgment for your sins;

--Or you are **not in Christ**...and are yet in your sins...and will spend eternity separated from God!

2. Second, we need to **believe that there is such a thing** as false teachers! Not all churches **are the same**—and not all churches **teach the truth!**

3. Third, we need to **read and study God's Word**, so we know the difference between a false and true teacher!

4. Fourth, we need to do our best to **warn our friends and family members** to stop listening to false teachers.

5. Lastly—if you are a child of God—be thankful that you will not go through the judgment for your sins—or the judgment that will come upon the earth!