

“An Example to the Ungodly” (An Exposition of 2 Peter 2:1-10)¹

Introduction

A number of weeks ago we looked at the seventh commandment, which is “You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14). We saw that this commandment requires purity in heart, word, and deed, and forbids all sexual immorality, whether in heart, word, and deed.²

We said at that time that there might not be a more needful commandment for the church to recover a clear and right understanding of in our day. *Confusion abounds* on this issue, even in the church. And worse yet, sexual immorality itself seems to abound, even among many professing Christians. This should not be so. In Ephesians 5:3 the Apostle Paul tells us that **“sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness *must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.*”**

And yet we see local churches having events where they speak of “flying their P[ride] flags,” and some even in Reformed churches speaking of so-called “gay Christians.” Brothers and sisters, if *the church* is confused and is compromising in these things, where is the world to turn to find the truth?

And so I thought that it might be needful for us to look at a text of Scripture that deals with this issue, that we might be reminded of the clear teaching of Scripture on these things.

We will be looking at three (3) things in our text this morning. First, the *sin* of Sodom and Gomorrah, second, the *destruction* of Sodom and Gomorrah, and third, the *example* of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The Sin of Sodom and Gomorrah

The *first* thing that we must be clear about is *the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah*. That may seem like a rather obvious point that needs no discussion, but there are many, even in the church today, who seem bent on distorting that very point.

If you have had any interaction with those who seek to minimize the sinfulness of homosexuality, you have probably heard one of the main talking points about why God condemned the cities of the plain to destruction. It is often claimed, despite the clear testimony of Scripture to the contrary, that the sin of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah – the sin for which God turned those cities to ash! - was *not* homosexuality, but *a lack of hospitality*.

I hope that idea seems as ridiculous to you as it sounds. What does our text tell us about this? In v,7-10 Peter writes:

“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); 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.*” (Italics added)

1 All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

2 See Westminster Shorter Catechism Q/A 71 & 72.

Remember that in Genesis 18:20 God said that **“the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave.”** Their sin was *so grievous* that God rained down fire from heaven and destroyed everyone in those cities. And Genesis 19:4–5 then says of Lot's angelic visitors:

“But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house. And they called to Lot, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, *that we may know them.*”

Does that sound like *a lack of hospitality* to you? Did the Lord turn these cities and all of their inhabitants to ash because of a lack of hospitality? Certainly not! *All the men of the city* were seeking to *violently rape* these angelic visitors, thinking that they were mere men. That is how utterly depraved and perverted things had gotten in Sodom and Gomorrah.

There is good reason why the names of those cities is so closely-associated with depravity and perversion, and with the sin of homosexuality. Jude v.7 says much the same thing as our text:

“just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise *indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.*” (Italics added)

How does confusion on such things happen, *especially in the church*? We may think that things in our day are especially bad, and in many ways they are. But this is no new problem; it is *not* unique to our day. For what does Peter tell us in v.1-3 of our text?

“But false prophets also arose among the people, *just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.*” (Italics added)

Peter warned us far ahead of time to be prepared for such things. There have always been false prophets and false teachers who *worm their way into the church* in order to teach **“destructive heresies.”** These are no small issues, but **“heresies.”** Such teachings are utterly *contrary* to and even *hostile* to the Christian faith.

And they are **“destructive”** as well. They do *great harm* to the souls of men and women, especially to those who follow after them. And, to make it even worse, because of such false teaching and its effects on the morality of professing Christians, **'the way of truth is blasphemed.'**

How often are we told the lie that 'what consenting adults do in the privacy of their bedrooms doesn't hurt anyone'? Unrepentant sexual immorality, like all sin, leads to death and judgment. And in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, it led to those cities being turned to ash.

Sins such as these are so grievous in the sight of God that He may eventually judge a place, whether a city or a nation, with destruction. Does that sound harmless to you? Or do we think that God is no longer holy? Do we somehow think that God has changed? Do we believe that God no longer judges nations for wickedness and sin?

The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

That leads us to our *second* point, *the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah*. In v.6 Peter reminds us:

“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”

How seriously does God take this sin? What did He do when this grievous sin took such a complete hold on a place? He *utterly destroyed* it. In Genesis 19:23–28 we read:

“The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zoar. 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. But Lot’s wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the LORD. And he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the valley, and he looked and, behold, the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace.”

The Lord *utterly destroyed* those cities, **“all the inhabitants”** and even **“what grew on the ground”** (v.25). There was nothing left.

And is this earthly destruction not a picture of the eternal condemnation of the wicked and unrepentant in *Hell itself*, which is described as a **“lake of fire”** (Revelation 20:15)? Peter himself, in the next chapter of this very letter tells us: **“But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.”** (2 Peter 3:7) And in 2 Thessalonians 1:6–10 the Apostle Paul writes:

“since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.”

We may react at times with horror at some of the earthly judgments of the Lord against the wicked. Some professing believers seem so embarrassed by them as to explain them away in order to try to minimize the offense. But these things are just *a faint picture* of the judgment to come on the last day, when the Lord Jesus returns in glory to judge the living and the dead!

And so *we do no one any favors* when we cave in to the pressure of the world around us, or to the influence of false teachers in the church, so that we minimize or explain away either *the heinousness of those sins* that God calls *abominations*, or the severity of His just judgments against those very sins.

What would we think of a doctor who lied to a patient who had a terminal illness, and told him all was well? And worse yet, what if that doctor knew that there was a cure, but withheld it from his patient, for fear of offending him? We would rightly despise such a doctor!

But *how much worse* is it for us who know the truth to explain away or minimize the sins of those around us, even of those whom we love, for fear of offending them? Are we more worried about *them* being offended, or *them offending God* and bringing judgment upon themselves if they remain in an unrepentant state?

The Example of Sodom and Gomorrah

That brings us briefly to our third and final point, which is *the example of Sodom and Gomorrah*. In v.6 Peter tells us that **“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.”**

Jude v.7 says nearly the exact same thing, telling us that **“just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.”**

God's severity in judgment toward Sodom and Gomorrah is in some ways *a mercy and kindness toward all who will heed the example and warning* of that awful judgment. It is as if it were a flashing red warning light standing in the way of danger, if we would just heed it.

Warnings of judgment are *implied offers of mercy* to those who will repent and believe on Christ for salvation. That was *the lesson of the prophet Jonah*, wasn't it? The message that he was given to proclaim to Nineveh was one of judgment and destruction, not unlike what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah, and yet when they repented of their wicked ways and turned to the Lord, what happened? God showed mercy upon them!

What does Paul say about these things? In 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 he admonishes us:

“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”

He says, **“do not be deceived.”** Many will tell you that you can just go on and on in your sins, and all will be well, that we all just go to heaven when we die. Paul tells us that **“the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God.”**

The sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, sodomites, drunkards, and the like, if they remain unrepentant, will *not* inherit the kingdom of God.

But notice what Paul says in v.11: **“And such were some of you.”** There were some in the church in Corinth, who could read that list of sins that Paul mentioned in v.9-10 and remember that that is what they used to be – *that was them* before they came to Christ by faith!

Some of them *used to be* fornicators, adulterers, idolaters, drunkards, and even effeminate and sodomites, but God in His mercy in Christ saved them from their sins! They were now trophies of God's grace, conquered and freed by the gospel of Christ!

The Lord Jesus came to save sinners, *even sinners like those!* God in His mercy *grants repentance and faith in Christ* to even such as these, so that he can say that they are no longer those things, but they **'were washed, were sanctified, were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.'**

That same grace and mercy is offered in the gospel to all who will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! He died on the cross to pay the full price for the sins of all who will believe, so that we might be freely forgiven and reconciled to God.

Have you repented of your sins? Have *you* turned from your life of sin and turned to Christ by faith for salvation? If *so*, praise the Lord for His mercies! And if *not*, turn to Christ today and live! - Amen