

"Judgment Inevitable" - 2 Peter 2:4-11

Our text this morning is in 2 Peter, Chapter 2. We're continuing our brief study of this wonderful letter, but I would like for you to turn first to Psalm 94. Psalm 94 is on page 685 of our red pew Bibles. Psalm 94, reading from verse 1:

O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongs— O God, to whom vengeance belongs, shine forth! Rise up, O Judge of the earth; Render punishment to the proud. LORD, how long will the wicked, How long will the wicked triumph? They utter speech, and speak insolent things; All the workers of iniquity boast in themselves. They break in pieces Your people, O LORD, And afflict Your heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger, And murder the fatherless. Yet they say, "The LORD does not see, Nor does the God of Jacob understand." Understand, you senseless among the people; And you fools, when will you be wise? He who planted the ear, shall He not hear? He who formed the eye, shall He not see? He who instructs the nations, shall He not correct, He who teaches man knowledge? The LORD knows the thoughts of man, That they are futile. (Psalms 94:1-11)

It is easy to be frustrated when you see the state of the world today. Evil seems to triumph over good. Those who bully, lie, and stimulate fear and hate seem to gain power and influence. One might wonder if there is any use in serving God. Does He even care what's going on?

Do you believe that Almighty God is omnipresent? Do you believe that God transcends His universe, that there is no place you can go to escape His presence? Do you believe that God is omniscient, that God knows all things, even the secret thoughts you harbor deep within?

I hope you do, because that is who God is. But so often we human beings act as if the Lord does not see. We act as if the Lord cannot hear. We act as if the Lord does not understand our secret motivations. The Bible tells us clearly that that sort of attitude is foolish.

The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." (Psalms 53:1)

***The LORD knows the thoughts of man, That they are futile.
(Psalms 94:1-11)***

It is bad enough when any Christian acts as if God is not aware of his or her actions because we are held accountable for how we live before Jesus Christ. Yes, Jesus has paid the penalty for all our sins. If we accept by faith His sacrifice, we are saved and have been set free, but we have not been set free so that sin can abound. We have been freed from sin's slavery. We no longer have to live for the devil. We no longer have to live for the flesh. We need to live lives that bring honor and glory to our Lord Jesus Christ.

So it's bad enough when any Christian acts as if God just doesn't care. But it is much, much worse when a so-called Christian teacher utters falsehood. God is not pleased with preachers who speak insolently. God is not pleased when false teachers boast in themselves. God is not pleased when they covet filthy lucre, prestige, power, fame and fortune. God does not take kindly to those who exploit with deceptive words. Their judgment is inevitable. For a long time, their judgment has not been idle and their destruction does not slumber. (2 Peter 2:3) We concluded with that statement last week, if you recall.

Now let's turn to 2 Peter, Chapter 2. We're picking up Peter's words with verse 4 this morning.

For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)—then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord. (2 Peter 2:4-11)

Here, Peter is supporting the point he made back in verse 3: Those false teachers who draw us away from the truth of the Bible will be judged. It is inevitable, so inevitable that Peter speaks of it in the past and present tense. Their condemnation is not idle. Their destruction does not slumber.

Peter supports his assertion with one long conditional statement. A conditional statement is an if ... then statement. If the condition is true, then the conclusion must be true. He turns to Biblical history for three assertions. Three examples from history that prove his point. Let's take a closer look at each of them, beginning with the judgment of angels.

Angels are created, spiritual beings. God created them in great numbers prior to the creation of our universe. One of those created angels is named Lucifer. The name Lucifer means "the morning star". The sense is that he shines brightly. Many people are mistaken about this, as we have bought into a sort of cartoonish characterization of the devil. But the Bible tells us something quite different:

For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. (2 Corinthians 11:14)

Satan was one of the most beautiful, powerful angels God ever created. God speaks to him through the prophet Ezekiel.

"You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. (Ezekiel 28:14)

Satan was placed by God into a highly privileged position, but that wasn't good enough for him. At some point he rebelled, wanting to be exalted himself, to be made equal to God.

"Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; (Ezekiel 28:17)

When Satan rebelled, he took one third of the heavenly host with him. We read about that in Revelation.

*And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. **His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth.** And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. (Revelation 12:3-4)*

Now, the Revelation is highly symbolic, so it can be a little challenging to interpret, but Bible scholars agree that the great, fiery red dragon is Satan. And when it says “His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to earth,” it is speaking of the angels that joined the Satanic revolt.

By the way, the Child mentioned in verse 4 is none other than Jesus Christ Himself. Satan has always been opposed to Jesus.

Now, Peter tells us that God did not spare these angels who sinned. John’s Revelation confirms this:

And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Revelation 12:7-9)

I could spend weeks preaching about this, especially with regard to the timing, Satan’s activity on the earth and so forth, but the key point is that from the moment Satan and his angels rebelled, his judgment has been inevitable. Isaiah speaks of this:

"How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.' Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit. (Isaiah 14:12-15)

The amazing, crazy thing is, all of Satan’s angels, who are called demons in the New Testament, are absolutely aware of their fate. When Jesus met the Geresene demoniac on the East side of the Sea of Galilee, here’s what the demons said:

"What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?" (Matthew 8:29)

Demons know who Jesus is. They most certainly believe in him. James says, “Even the demons believe, and tremble.” (James 2:19) Yet there is no hope for them. Their judgment is inevitable!

The second example Peter gives is of the ancient world of Noah. That is, the antediluvian world, the world before the flood.

... and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; (2 Peter 2:5)

God has already brought judgment on the world by water. Evidence for the flood is all around us, despite the claims of many in secular science. The flood was absolutely devastating and it changed everything. The Bible doesn’t tell us how many people were on the earth at the time of the flood, but a number of folks have used population dynamics studies to make an educated guess. If the population growth in Noah’s time was the same as it is now, there would have been around 750 million people living when the deluge started. But remember, their life-span was much greater than ours, so it is entirely possible that there could have been upwards of 4 billion people alive. Of all of those, only 8 were spared. Only 8!

Our God is a God of love, a God of grace, a God of mercy but for those who foolishly refuse the conditions of His grace, judgment is inevitable. Our God is also a God of wrath. There is only one way to avoid His judgment.

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. (John 14:6)

The work of God is to believe in the One He sent. (John 6:29) Jesus came to earth and died on the cross to save sinners. You must turn from your sin and turn to the cross. Confess Him with your mouth and believe He was raised from the dead. All who call on the name of the Lord will be saved and His name is Jesus.

If you refuse to believe the Gospel of Christ, your judgment is inevitable.

Then Peter moves on to the example of Sodom and Gomorrah. These were ancient, prosperous cities in the days of Abraham and Lot. They were wicked cities. Their culture reveled in many of the same abominations we see in our culture today. Ezekiel identifies their depravity:

Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw fit. (Ezekiel 16:49-50)

They had a successful culture, a prosperous economy. They were proud of what they had accomplished. They had plenty to eat. They had plenty of free time. Doesn't that sound familiar? They were obscenely self-centered. Their agenda was to do what made them feel good and never mind the poor and needy among them!

You can read the account of God's judgment of those cities in Genesis, chapters 18 and 19. It is really an icky story. Two angels visited Lot, but the men of the city demanded that Lot turn them over. Their intent was homosexual gang rape.

Their judgment was inevitable.

God rained fire and brimstone down on those two wicked cities. They were utterly destroyed! As Peter says, God turned ...

... the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; (2 Peter 2:6)

Do not believe for one moment that our God winks at sin. Every sin, no matter how trivial it seems to you, will be judged and the sentence will be carried out and the wages of sin is death. (Romans 6:23) This is not just the death of your earthly body, but a forever death of the most excruciating agony in the pit of hell.

Oh, my friends, this should cause you to tremble! The demons know enough to tremble. Hell is forever and hell is more horrible than you could possibly imagine. It is the eternal sentence for every sin and every sinner. That is really bad news, because we're all sinners.

... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Romans 3:23)

The punishment for your sin will be carried out. It is inevitable. The only question is, are you going to endure this punishment, or will you let Jesus take the hit for you? You see,

... God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

And yes,

... the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

Have you accepted the gift? Will you accept the gift? Can you believe that Jesus Christ died for you? Can you believe that He rose again and lives right now at the right hand of the Father? Will you confess your sins and turn to the cross of Christ?

He who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. (Romans 10:13)

God's judgment is demonstrated in history, but His grace and His mercy are also on full display. God destroyed the world by water, but he provided the means to save Noah and his family. God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, but he saved Lot and his family, well, except for his wife. That's a story for another day.

Peter says God ...

... delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)—(2 Peter 2:7-8)

Wait a minute ... righteous Lot? When I read Genesis, I don't get the impression that he was always such an upstanding guy. But when you believe God, it is accounted to you for righteousness.

... then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. (2 Peter 2:9-10a)

God knows how to deliver the godly. If you trust the Lord Jesus Christ, you are covered by His righteousness. He took your sin upon Himself, and imputed His righteousness to you in return. So God knows how to deliver you, Christian! No matter how dark this world gets, no matter how depraved our culture becomes, no matter how shrill the rantings of Satan's servants, you will be delivered. And the unjust are reserved for punishment on the day of judgment.

Their judgment is inevitable.