



these people freed from sin that he declares that if they **“are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning”** (2 Pet. 2:20b). Let’s think about that. What were they in **“the beginning”**? They were lost. What is their condition if they become **“entangled”** and **“overcome”** in sin? Peter says their condition is **“worse for them than the beginning.”** Why worse? Probably because now their condition is not one of ignorance but rebellion and rejection. He continues, **“For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to**

pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 2:20a)—that is, they were saved! We must remember Peter began this epistle by speaking to those who have **“grace and peace”** as a result of the **“knowledge of God and of Jesus”** (2 Pet. 1:2), by which they have **“all things that pertain to life and godliness”** (2 Pet. 1:3) being **“partakers of the divine nature”** in a condition in which they had **“escaped the corruption that is in the world”** (2 Pet. 2:14). In other words, he is talking to saved people. It is to

turn from the holy commandment delivered to them” (2 Pet. 2:21). It is a lie to teach people that once in Christ it is impossible to ever sin in such a way that we can be lost. Yes, we are utterly and absolutely dependent upon God’s mercy and grace for salvation, but God’s grace, as Paul tells us teaches us that **“denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ** (Titus 2:12-13). It is our duty to obey. God’s grace is not a license to sin! We must see in God’s judgments and deliverance in the past the motivation and assurance that moves us to look to the future with obedience and hope.



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Faithful Sayings

BULLETIN OF
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Evangelist:
Kyle Pope

“The Lord Knows How”

By Kyle Pope

Since I was young I have always loved history. I know not all people are this way. To some it is a boring and dusty recollection of times no longer relevant to our own. To me, it has always been a glimpse into another world. It is the closest we can come to seeing an alien and unknown place far different from anything we know, but inextricably linked to why we are what we are. The past is the foundation of why we think, speak, and live the way we do whether we even realize it or not. In Peter’s final letter, which the Holy Spirit has preserved, he appeals to us to appreciate the value of history. But for Peter, it is not because of what history can show us about ourselves or some distant civilization, but what it can show us about God.

The Consequence of Sin

How can we know that there is a consequence to sin? Have you ever thought about that? If you look around at things in the present it’s hard to see this. Some years ago someone on the other side of the country apparently got the number for my debit card. I am told that people sell these numbers and make duplicate cards and then use them to purchase whatever they wish. By the time we realized what had happened the culprit had made about \$400.00 in purchases. When we discovered this, the card was cancelled, the bank credited the money back to my account, but for all I know the person who did this just went on with his or her life with no penalty, free to steal someone else’s identity in the future. From what we can see in the present, it’s hard to always know (as God warned Israel) that human being can **“be sure your sin will find you out”** (Num. 32:23), but here is where Peter shows us that an appreciation of history can provide us with this assurance.

Peter starts with the problem of false teachers. Unfortunately, there have always been those who twist and corrupt sound teaching. Peter tells us in the past, **“there were also false prophets among the people”** and sadly **“there will be false**

teachers among you” (2 Pet. 2:1a). False teachers don’t just do harm to themselves. When they are able to **“bring in destructive heresies”** (2 Pet. 2:1b) unfortunately **“many will follow their destructive ways”** (2 Pet. 2:2a). As a result, not only do they **“bring on themselves swift destruction.”** (2 Pet. 2:1c) but they also cause **“the way of truth”** to **“be blasphemed”** (2 Pet. 2:2b). Why does anyone ever alter and pervert the truth of God’s word? Peter says the problem is **“covetousness”** (2 Pet. 2:3a). People want it to be different than God has said, so they change it and distort it until it looks like they want it to. Is there a consequence for this spiritual crime? The Holy Spirit says, **“for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber”** (2 Pet. 2:3b). He then offers three examples from history to prove that God’s judgment is working and wide awake even though we may not always see it in the present:

Number One: Angels Who Sinned. Peter first appeals to an incident that Scripture tells us very little about. He speaks of **“angels who sinned”** whom God has **“cast down to hell”** (2 Pet. 2:4a). While most English translations use the word **“hell”** here, the Greek word is *tartarus*, which Thayer tells us was “regarded by the ancient Greeks as the abode of the wicked dead” (*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*). While Greek mythology had many fanciful stories about this place and the false god it associated with it, Liddell

and Scott tell us that in later usage it came to refer to “the nether world generally” (*Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*). It is in this sense that Peter uses it in the only example of its use in the New Testament. It is roughly synonymous with the term *hades* used frequently in the New Testament, but more strictly associated that part of *hades* that Jesus describes as a place of **“torments in Hades”** (Luke 16:23). This is not final punishment, or **“hell”** because Scripture tells us it will not be until final judgment that **“Death and Hades”** deliver the dead who are in them, when both are then **“cast into the lake of fire”** which is called **“the Second Death”** (Rev. 20:13-14). Peter tells us these angels are bound in **“chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment”** (2 Pet. 2:4b). Jude speaks of this same incident referring to **“the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode”** whom God **“has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day”** (Jude 6). What was their sin? We do not know, we are told simply that they **“did not keep their proper domain”** but **“left their own abode.”** What we do know is that **“God did not spare the angels who sinned”** (2 Pet. 2:4a). In other words, if even angelic beings who do not follow God’s word are called to account, we can be assured that humans who sin in this life will be as well.

Number Two: The World before the Flood. Not only did God not spare angelic beings who sinned, but He also did not **“spare the ancient world”** when He brought **“in the flood on the world of the ungodly”** (2 Pet. 2:5). Peter here appeals to the worldwide flood brought upon man because it had come to the point that **“the wickedness of man was great”** and throughout the earth **“every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”** (Gen. 6:5). In that great act of judgment only eight souls were saved. In his first epistle Peter called his readers to remember this ominous moment because of what it parallels about baptism, by which one may be **“saved through water”** (1 Pet. 3:20-21). In the next chapter of this epistle Peter will return to this great act judgment, speaking of the time when **“the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water”** (2 Pet. 3:6). When souls ignore the fact that they will one day face final judgment, Peter says, **“they willfully forget”** the realities of the earth’s creation and past destruction (2 Pet. 3:5-6). Why does it matter if one accepts a view that says God did not create the world in six days, but brought man into existence through some system of theistic evolution? What is the danger of rejecting that there was a worldwide flood that demonstrated God’s past judgment on man? Peter shows us that understanding what God will do to the wicked in the future is demonstrated by looking at what God did in the past. It used to be that man looked at the presence of fossilized sea life all over the planet and remember God’s judgment. Is it any wonder that those who reject a belief in the worldwide flood usually also reject a belief in a coming final Day of Judgment?

Number Three: Sodom and Gomorrah. Peter’s final example concerns the Cities of the Plain when God turned **“Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes”** having **“condemned them to destruction”** (2 Pet. 2:6a). Scripture tells us that in

the days of Abraham and his nephew Lot God declared, **“the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great”** proclaiming that **“their sin is very grave”** (Gen. 18:20). From the behavior of its people when the angels came to visit Lot, we know this included homosexuality, but we should not imagine that this was the only sin that led to its destruction. Jude tells us they had **“given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh”** (Jude 7). This description of **“sexual immorality”** involving **“strange flesh (Gr. *sarkos heteras*)”** (lit. **“other flesh”** according to Campbell, Darby, Green, and Young) could have included all types of sexual sin ranging from adultery, homosexuality, pederasty, to bestiality. When Lot first moved to live among them this region was **“well watered everywhere”** beautiful and flourishing **“like the garden of the LORD”** (Gen. 13:10). Now, we believe that the site where these cities once stood rests in desolate and barren terrain associated with the Jordanian ruins of Tal el-Hammam. What does this have to do with us today? Peter says God made them **“an example to those who afterward would live ungodly”** (2 Pet. 2:6b). In other words, we should look through the window of history and see in God’s judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah the assurance that He will one day bring judgment on all men.

These three significant moments in history teach us two powerful things about God. Peter started his reference to angels with the words **“For if God”** (2 Pet. 2:4a) but did not finish his thought until after his reference to Sodom and Gomorrah five verses later, concluding **“then God knows how”** (2 Pet. 4:9a). These great judgments of history teach us first that, **“the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations”** (2 Pet. 2:9b). Although those faithful to God might not see how it is that God’s judgment against the wicked **“has not been idle”** and their ultimate destruction **“does not slumber,”** examples of the salvation of men like Noah and Lot show that God’s people can stay faithful, and God is with them no matter how bad things may get. But not only does God *know how* to deliver the godly but He also knows how **“to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment”** (2 Pet. 4:9c). When the wicked die, they like the angels who sinned will face confinement **“under punishment.”** Jesus taught this of the wicked rich man (Luke 16:19-31). When he died he was in **“a place of torment”** within Hades (Luke 16:28), while the beggar who was also in Hades was **“comforted”** (Luke 16:25).

What Does This Mean to Me?

So, are you now persuaded to love the study of history? If not, I hope you can at least see its value. Particularly because of the fact that Peter’s warnings are not to false teachers alone—they are to us. We can so easily be moved to **“walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness”** (2 Pet. 2:10a). We can so easily come to **“despise authority”** (2 Pet. 2:10b). We want to do what feels good to our flesh.

We want to be autonomous, refusing to yield to God’s word, or godly ordained authority set over us. It’s easy to say to ourselves “no one can tell me what to do!” We may, like the false teacher, **“speak evil of what they do not understand”** unaware that in so doing we, like them **“will perish”** in our **“own corruption”** (2 Pet. 2:12). We, like the world around us can come to have **“eyes full of adultery”** living in such abandon that it is almost as if we **“cannot cease from sin”** (2 Pet. 2:14). What then? Where do we stand?

One of the greatest **“destructive heresies”** this world has ever known has come in the form of a doctrine known as the Eternal Security, or more commonly “once saved, always saved.” It persuades those who believe in Jesus that regardless of whether they have fully obeyed God’s word or not, if they have ever attained any type of belief in Jesus, regardless of whether they strive to live faithfully to God’s word or not, once they are saved they are “always saved.” Peter offers some of the most powerful refutations of this false doctrine ever written.

He speaks of such false promises as **“great swelling words of emptiness”** by which the false teacher may **“allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error”** (2 Pet. 2:18). Doctrines such as this, Peter says allow the false teacher to **“promise them liberty”** when in fact those who would accept such a view **“are slaves of corruption”** (2 Pet. 2:19). Peter says plainly that if people **“after they have escaped the**