

Deliverance from Sodom

In his second Epistle, Peter describes the judgments that came upon Sodom, and the way in which Lot was delivered from them:

“... and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; **and delivered Just Lot**, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) **The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations**, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished ... (2 Pet. 2:6-9).

So it is that the deliverance of Lot from the destruction to come on Sodom and Gomorrah, is used to illustrate the point that “the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly”. His was a case in point – his soul was “righteous”, and his character “just”, and so when the city was ripe for destruction, he was led into safety by Angelic hands. The example is particularly relevant for our day, when the judgements of God are to come upon the nations who despise Divine ways, and reject the Lord Jesus Christ. The true believers “wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come” (1 Thes. 1:10). There is a latter day “great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt” (Rev. 11:8), which is to experience the outpouring of Divine Wrath. Our part is to learn from the example of Lot, so that we might be led away before that destruction comes.

Our Old Testament reading for the day describes to us the condition and state of ancient Sodom, in terms which are very applicable to the days in which we live. Genesis chapter 18 gives the Divine assessment that “their sin is very grievous” (vs. 20), and Ezekiel chapter 16 describes what that grievous sin was:

“Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, 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 good” (Eze. 16:49-50).

Notice that the “iniquity” of Sodom is not only the indulgence and promotion of homosexuality. True, the practice is described as an “abomination” in Ezekiel 16, but it occurs last in a list of other iniquities, which we would do well to consider also:

PRIDE

It is written that “all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and **the pride of life**, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (1 Jno. 2:16). The pride of life, then, is one of the three overriding principles by which the world operates. It is further written that: “an high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin” (Prov. 21:4), and again: “Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18) – as is illustrated in the example of king Uzziah.

Another symptom of the pride of life, is the open embracing and acceptance of the abomination of Sodom. Israel had adopted the ways of ancient Sodom, hence it is written, “The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; And **they declare their sin** as Sodom, **they hide it not**” (Isa. 3:9).

This is very much like the world in which we live, where the sin of Sodom is proclaimed and reckoned to be a good thing! The sin is openly performed, and those who object are labelled “homophobic”, and are portrayed as being in the wrong. “Some men’s sins are open beforehand,

going before to judgment; and some men they follow after” (1 Tim 5:24) – so all sins that have not been repented of - both open and concealed – will be judged by the Great Creator. Men are puffed up in their proud exhibition of love, as with a certain case described by the Apostle “And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you” (1 Cor. 5:2). Boasting of their position of love and tolerance, men refuse to separate themselves with the evil and rather become puffed up in their acceptance of it!

FULNESS OF BREAD

It is interesting and significant that “fulness of bread” is given as part of Sodom’s iniquity. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with being rich – Abraham is a case in point. But the problem here, was that they were trusting, and indulging in their riches, to the exclusion of the things of God.

The Genesis account also speaks of the natural prosperity of the place:

“... Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that **it was well watered everywhere**, before Yahweh destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even **as the garden of Yahweh**, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar” (Gen. 13:10).

And Jesus also spoke of this aspect:

“... Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; **they did eat, they drank, they bought, they planted, they builded**; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed” (Lu. 17:28-30).

Again, there was nothing wrong with eating, drinking, planting and building in themselves. But the point was, that in their prosperity, they neglected, and forgot the Divine principles that should have governed their lives. Carrying on with their daily lives to the exclusion of God, the world of Sodom mirrors the world in which we live: fulness of bread and the pride that goes with it characterises our day, as Lot’s.

The principle emerges again with a consideration of the Lord’s parable of the man who built bigger barns: he was rich in material things: yet in his prosperity, he neglected the things which really matter: “but God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and **is not rich toward God**” (Lu. 12:20-21). And the situation remains in our day: we must not allow the “cares and riches and pleasures of this life” to strangle the word-seed in our hearts, to use another of Messiah’s parables (Lu. 8:14).

ABUNDANCE OF IDLENESS

The rich man in the parable referred to above, said “I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry” (Lu. 12:19). Hence taking ease in idleness is often linked with prosperity.

But there is no place for idleness in the life of the disciple of Christ. It is written that “He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that **diligently seek him**” (Heb. 11:6). Only those who are “diligent” in their seeking of Yahweh will give Him Pleasure. Hence Paul exhorts: “my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, **always abounding in the work of the Lord**, forasmuch as ye know that **your labour is not in vain in the Lord**” (1 Cor. 15:58)

There is always much work to do in the service of Christ, both in ministering to the brethren and sisters - and one area which is also often neglected: “labour in the word and doctrine” (1 Tim. 5:17). Again, Paul exhorts: “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). We must exert much energy in attending to these

things, so that “when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming” (1 Jno. 2:28).

NEITHER DID SHE STRENGTHEN THE HAND OF THE POOR AND NEEDY

Despite their material prosperity, the rich people of Sodom neglected the needs of the poor. The command of Paul for the believers is clear: “no one should seek their own good, but the good of others” (1 Cor. 10:24, NIV). Again, “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (Phil. 2:4). And the Proverb gives the warning: “Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard” (Prov. 21:13).

This was also a problem in the ecclesias to whom James wrote. They honoured the rich, and despised the poor, hence the exhortation was given:

“Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor ...” (Jas. 2:5-6).

They exercised “respect of persons” (vs 1), honouring the rich, and setting at nought the poor. But such is not the way of Christ!

In fact, it isn’t always the case that there is a deliberate choice to neglect the poor – the opportunity to do them good is often itself unnoticed and ignored. Hence in his parable of the Sheep and the Goats, the Lord taught that in neglecting the brethren, they were guilty of neglecting him:

“... then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me” (Mat. 25:44-45).

Notice, they were either to bound up in their own affairs to even notice the opportunity to do good, or they regarded the poor as being unworthy of their help. Either way, they did not minister to the brethren – or subsequently to the Master. Yet the righteous also did these things without even realising it: it was so much a part of their mindset, that they tended to the needs of others, and did not hold back from doing good.

“THEY WERE HAUGHTY, AND COMMITTED ABOMINATION BEFORE ME”

When we think of Sodom, we, perhaps, rightly first think of the sin of homosexuality (Jude 1:7), which is often called “Sodomy”. And as we mentioned above, this aspect of Sodomy is prevalent in today’s society, to the extent that it is not only accepted, but celebrated and promoted, even to children in school! But this practice is only one of the aspects of Sodom’s “iniquity”, there are others to focus on as well, as we have seen above. Whilst we recognise that the practice is condemned in Scripture, we should not focus on a particular group of sinners – we must rather, out of love, present the Truth of Scripture to them: “speaking the truth *in love* ...” (Eph. 4:15), that they, like others – and we ourselves – might repent of sin, and turn to the righteous Ways of the Living God.

The destruction of Sodom was therefore an “example” of the judgements to come upon the world of ungodly man and women. Just as Sodom and her daughters were given over to licentiousness, even so there is a modern-day harlot system which is ripe for destruction: “upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth: (Rev. 17:5). This is “the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt” (Rev. 11:8), which is soon to suffer the same destiny as the Sodomites of old. Hence, the appeal will go out: “... Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities” (Rev. 18:4-5, see whole chapter).

What then, of ourselves? It is written that “the Just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul” (Heb. 10:38-39). Lot’s wife drew back when “Just Lot” was spared and lived because of his faith. We also must not draw back, but spiritually separate ourselves from the society that Messiah is coming to judge:

“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Cor. 6:17-18).

In the few days that remain, there is no time to waste fraternising with the ungodly. We must hold fast, and strive to be a holy people unto the Lord. Though we, like Lot, are sore vexed at the deeds of the ungodly, we look for better days to come. We must heed the example of Lot’s wife: when the angel comes to take us to be with the Lord, we must be prepared and willing to forsake all, and leave everything behind us. All that will matter in that day, will be how we appear before the Son of God. Though we be but a despised minority in this world of iniquity, we look forward to acceptance in his presence, that we will become part of that great multitude that no man can number. Then, we shall receive strength and salvation to live with faithful Abraham in the inheritance promised to him and his Seed.

Christopher Maddocks