

"False Teachers Judged"

Holiness

Dr. Bruce Bickel

2 Peter 2:4-10

February 12, 2016

Bruce: Good morning, men.

Men: Good morning.

Bruce: Good to be with all of you. Tom, do you want to give us a report on your event last Friday?

Tom: I'd love to. Thank you.

Bruce: Please.

Tom: As you know, I was talking a few weeks ago about having Pat Williams, the senior vice-president and one of the cofounders of the Orlando Magic as a speaker, to present Jesus Christ to businessmen downtown. We had it at the Fairmont Hotel. We had two hundred and eighty men show up. And as we gather right now, about forty men prayed to receive Christ. So we are really praising God for that. We're thankful.

And then, coming up in six months, we're going to have Mark Whitaker, who was the informer on ADM and all the pharmaceutical stuff. He's going to be our speaker. So it's a great opportunity for you to bring an unsaved man to hear the gospel in a non-church environment where they're relaxed. So praise God. It was a great time.

Bruce: Thanks, Tom.

Tom: I appreciate it.

Bruce: Great. Let's pray, gentlemen. Merciful and gracious Lord, with all the things that are going on in this world, we rest in the assurance of Your sovereign grace. We thank You, Father, that You control the world and that we don't. Father, we just pray that we would submit ourselves to the authorities that we have, and that we would entrust that act of submission to Your grace and to Your mercy. Father, superintend what we do this day for Your glory. And may it be so for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Continuing our examination of the theme of Holiness, as revealed to us in the Scripture in 2 Peter, let's turn to chapter 2, looking at verses 4-10. We'll be reading again from the English Standard Version of the New Testament. 2 Peter chapter 2, beginning at verse 4 down to verse 10 inclusive.

"For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell, and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment, if He did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly, if He turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes and condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly, 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 the lawless deeds that he saw and heard), then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, and especially

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those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority." This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Bruce: Amen and Amen. All of us like to find out what's going on in the news through various sources. It may be that you'll read the *Post-Gazette*. It might be that you'll go on the Internet. It might be that you will read *The Wall Street Journal*. But all of us are looking for the latest thing that's going on to keep us up to date, so we can learn something because of what's going on in the present.

Now that may be well and good. But there may be a time when you need to look backwards to see what history has taught us and what we might learn from our mistakes, the things that we should have done in the past but are not doing in the present. And essentially, that's very, very true, especially when you look at the Bible as history. When you look backwards and see the Bible as history, there is a great deal that we can learn.

That's essentially what Peter is doing for us in these chapters. He's going back into history and looking at the revelation of God. Now Peter taught us a couple of weeks ago that his great confidence in living the divine life was because of the process of how God worked through the Old Testament prophets to reveal Himself through what we would call the Scriptures. God used the process of revelation, inspiration and illumination. And Peter says that's why he had such great confidence, because God has chosen in His mercy and grace to reveal Himself to us. And He has done that through the process of divine revelation, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the Biblical writers, and the illumination of the Holy Spirit to the reader who reads the Scripture.

Then he goes into a session last week, where he talked to us about giving us a historical example of the failure of the Old Testament prophets. He said that just as there were prophets in the Old Testament who were giving God's revelation, there will be New Testament teachers. But he doesn't call them prophets. He calls them teachers. And there is a reason why he doesn't call them prophets. You see, the Old Testament prophets were those who were revealing new things to come. The Scripture has been completed. There is nothing that can be added to it. There is no more revelation. There is illumination, but there is no more revelation. And so in the New Testament they are called teachers, not prophets, because the word *prophet* in the New Testament means a proclaimer of truth, not a foreteller of things that are going to come.

And so that's why Peter says this. In the Old Testament they were referred to as prophets. And we discussed how they were failures. And the things that they did were incorrect. We looked at the characteristics of those Old Testament prophets.

And the warning lesson is this. Just as there were Old Testament prophets who failed to teach the truth of Scripture as revealed by God, as there were false prophets, there will be false teachers in the church. That's what he's addressing in the epistle of 2 Peter, because what was currently going on in his life and in our lives, there are people who are false teachers, who are representing the Person and work of Christ. They do it falsely. And he says that is something we need to learn from. And so he gives us a very good history lesson.

And last week we looked at the characteristics of the Old Testament prophets. And today we want to talk about judgment. Notice that in verses 4-10 he talks about a logical process. He says this. There is a great history lesson if we understand this. The God who is the same yesterday,

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today and tomorrow is going to bring judgment the same way He did with the Old Testament false prophets as with the New Testament false teachers.

His logic is this. If God did not spare one, or two, or three—and he gives three examples—you can know that he is not going to spare false teachers today, as before. Very logically he gives three examples of how God dealt in the past with ungodliness, unrighteousness and false teaching. And he gives us this lesson today from history. And so he has been using history as a means of warning the church. He warned that just as there were Old Testament prophets, there will be New Testament teachers who do not teach the truth of Scripture.

Now I gave you 1 John chapter 4. You might want to take a look at that, 1 John chapter 4, verses 1-8. The apostle John says this. "*Test the spirits to see whether or not they are from God.*" You shouldn't believe everything that you hear, including what you hear from me. You need to test that with the Scripture. The Scripture is sealed. There is no more new revelation. What we need to have is a lot more illumination, but no revelation.

Now when you look at 1 John chapter 4, verses 1-8, I gave you a quick synopsis of things you need to look at when you hear somebody teaching and preaching. My suggestion would be this. Look at three things from 1 John 4:1-8. Do they confess the Person and work of Christ? Do they confess Christ? What is their view of the Incarnation? When you ask if they understand their view of the Incarnation, do they confess the Person and work of Christ's Incarnation?

Secondly, do they possess the divine life? Does the teacher possess the divine life and give evidence of that by his regeneration? The second word is *regeneration*.

And thirdly, do they confess the authority and sufficiency of Scripture, that is, the sufficiency of revelation? The three words you want to look at in testing the spirits would be these. What do they say about the Incarnation? What do they say about regeneration? And what do they say about revelation? That's the test that we need to take for all false teachers and all teachers in the New Testament era. Look for those three things.

Just to give you another example of how important this is, back in the early 1700s there was an event called The Great Awakening. Jonathan Edwards was asked the question. Was this a valid awakening of the Holy Spirit in the grace of God? Was it valid? They said, "How do you know if these people are preaching the things that are valid from the Scripture?"

To test the Great Awakening, Jonathan Edwards looked at the things from 1 John 4:1-8, the same thing I just gave you. My synopsis would be *incarnation, regeneration and revelation*. Those are the three things we looked at.

Here's the way Jonathan Edwards said it. First of all, he said this. Does the teaching exalt the true Christ? Does it exalt the true Christ, the Person and work of Christ? Is it the God of Biblical revelation or the god of human imagination? First of all, in their preaching, does it exalt the true Person and work of Christ?

Secondly, does it oppose worldliness? What are they saying about the world? Does it oppose worldliness, as contrasted with the divine life that is revealed in 2 Peter?

The third thing that Jonathan Edwards said was this. Does it point people to the Scripture? Does it exalt the true Christ? Does it oppose worldliness? And does it point people to the Scripture?

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The fourth thing that he suggests is this. Does it elevate Biblical truth? And lastly, does it produce love for God and love for people? Does it produce a greater love for God and a love for people?

Now that's what Jonathan Edwards did to evaluate the Great Awakening in the 1700s to see if it was a valid movement of the Holy Spirit. It was not based upon a response of people. It was based upon the truth proclaimed. And remember, the only way you can really manage and estimate and evaluate a true ministry is this. Was truth proclaimed? It's not the response of the audience.

And that's what Peter warns us about, because he says that there are false teachers in our current age, just like there were false teachers or prophets in the older times.

Now we talked last week a little bit about the doom of these false prophets. And remember, Peter's logic is this. He gives us three examples from history about how God dealt with ungodliness and unrighteousness. And Peter's point is this. If God did this for one, and He did it for two, and He did it for three, what do you think He is going to do with number four, four being false teachers? He's going to treat them the same way He treated one, two and three. Now let's take a look at these examples that Peter gives us from history about how God dealt with unrighteousness and ungodliness.

Peter goes into great detail about the destruction of these false teachers, again drawing from history. He gives three examples of God's impartial judgment, three examples.

The first one is this. Of the examples from the past, the first would be fallen angels. Notice that his first example is of the very first transgressors of God's law. Who were the first transgressors of God's law?

Participant: Angels.

Bruce: The angels. They were the first transgressors. Remember, you can read about it in Genesis chapter 6, verses 1-4, Jude verse 6, and Revelation 12 verse 7.

Transcriber's Note: Genesis 6:1-4. *"When man began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. Then the LORD said, 'My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh. His days shall be one hundred twenty years. The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came into the daughters of man and they bore children to them, these were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown."*

Jude 6. *"And the angels who did not stay in their own positions of authority, but left their proper dwelling, He has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the Great Day."*

Revelation 12:7. *"Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven."*

Bruce: Now there are several interesting features about this example that Peter gives us about the first example of the creatures who transgressed God's law, the angels. Notice this. These angels had no tempter. They had no tempter. Adam had a tempter. Eve had a tempter. But the angels didn't. We have a tempter. But the angels didn't.

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We can learn from this example ourselves. We understand that we have a tempter and we've got to be careful about that. But the angels in Peter's example did not have tempters. They were the original creatures who were introduced to the violation of God's law. And Peter's example is that if He dealt this way with the angels, what is He going to do with false teachers in this ungodly world today?

You see, they were angels in heaven. They were the holiest of all the positions. And they were the first transgressors of God's law. And Peter's logic is this in his first example. If God didn't spare these angels, He will not spare these false teachers.

Now that's a very severe warning. One of the things that I always try to remind myself of as I drive over here is to say, "Lord, make sure that I proclaim the truth as revealed in Your Scripture." And then when I drive back from this wonderful gathering of men here, I say, "Lord, if I've said anything which is not consistent with Your revealed will, will You remove that from the minds of those men who I've taught?"

The important thing is this. I know that when I stand before the Lord, one of the things He is going to ask me is this. Why did you say what you said?

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: You see, the first transgressors had no tempter. We have tempters, all kinds of tempters—the devil himself, spiritual warfare, the worldliness around us. We have all sorts of temptations. And Peter says this. If God dealt with the angels this way, what do you think He's going to do with the false teachers of our current age? So if God didn't spare these angels, He's not going to spare these false teachers in our current age.

I think there's another warning for us, a reminder to us. These angels had no outside temptation. Where was their inside temptation? Where was it? It was inside them. It was pride and rebellion. Now men, we have to be careful of that ourselves. Much of our temptation is internal—the lust of the eyes, the pride of life, the lust of the flesh, pride, ego, vanity, rebellion. We've got to be careful, because even though the angels had no outside temptation, they had inside temptation. That was their pride and rebellion. And we have to be careful that we don't have that same thing going on in our own lives. We can learn from this experience. Things may be going well, but we've still got to be alert.

There is no security in your position. The angels were in heaven. There was no security in their position because of their internal rebellion. You and I may have Christian parents. We may be in a church leadership position, but we're still vulnerable. And why are we vulnerable? Not only because of the external temptation, but the internal temptations of pride, ego and rebellion that we have, our vanity and our ego. We've got to be very careful of that.

Also, I think that there is no security in your ministry. The angels worshiped God. They worshiped God and they fell. So there is no security in what we do. We may be doing wonderful deeds of service, but we are still vulnerable. And we are vulnerable just like the angels were. We are vulnerable to the internal temptations that come from inside of us—our pride, our ego and our rebellion.

But in conclusion, for this example Peter would suggest this. Apart from the perpetual miracle of God's grace, nothing can help to keep us from pride and rebellion. That's what we can learn from this example of the angels. They had no external temptation, and yet they fell.

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We may be doing all the right things, in the right location, with the right people. We will still be vulnerable because of the internal pride, ego and rebellion that we have as men and people of this world. We've got to be very, very careful about our own internal temptations that would cause ungodliness. We have all the markings of this angelic sin just as they did. They had no external temptation. We have them, external and internal.

Notice. The second example in verse 5 is the Flood. If God dealt this way with the angels, how do you think He is going to deal with false teachers? He gives another example—the Flood. Look at verse 5. God protected Noah and seven others, but destroyed all the rest of the world.

Now notice. The Scripture says that Noah was called a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. That's Genesis 6 verse 9. Here is the description of Noah—*"a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God."*

Now here he is referred to as *"a preacher of righteousness."* Now Genesis describes his life, but never his ministry. It describes a lot of things about Noah, but never his ministry. There is no evaluation of his own personal ministry. The only observation is about his life. And what does it say about his life? That he was a righteous man, and he was a blameless man among the people of his time. It doesn't talk about anything that he did, but describes who he was—blameless, and he was righteous.

Now a person may be called to preach the gospel and see no human results. But still God will be judging him by his faithfulness.

One of the great theologians of bygone days said this. "The only ability that God requires of us is our availability." It is our faithfulness, not our fruit that God looks at. God is the One who produces the fruit in the first place. We don't do that. He's looking for us to be faithful because fruit will be the result of our faithfulness.

Noah was a faithful man, described as *"blameless, and righteous among the people of his time."* But there is no description of what he did. There's only a description of who he was. Fruit is our comfort. It's not the measure of our success. The measure of our success is our faithfulness, not our fruit, because who is the fruit producer? God is the One who does that.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: I remember years ago I was at a pastors' conference. And there was a wonderful missionary who had spent time in the rain forests of South America ministering to the lost tribes. And somebody asked him the question. A young pastor said, "How many people did you lead to Christ?"

And he said, "None that I know of."

"How many years were you there?"

"Fifty years."

The next question was this. "What did you do wrong?"

And this man was so gracious. If that would have been me, (*laughter*), and that man asked me that question, I don't think I would have had such a godly response.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Because this young buck of a preacher said, "What did you do wrong?"

The man said, "Oh, I did nothing wrong. I just had the glorious opportunity of preaching the gospel for fifty years to a lost tribe."

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Now the rest of the story was this. When he came back five years later, after he had left the jungles of South America, two of the men that he had spoken to about the Person and work of Christ became believers, and they started three churches. And all of a sudden, there were two hundred and fifty converts in those little villages where he preached for fifty years. But he saw nothing.

His point was this. Fruit is the comfort of our ministry. It's not the indication of its success. What is successful in our ministry is our faithfulness.

Now that's what we see in Noah. We have no idea what Noah was doing. But he was a faithful man. He is described as being blameless and righteous. As long as Noah preached, the world was warned, even if no one responded. Do you see that? He was preaching righteousness and building the ark. And the people were being warned. But nobody responded! Was Noah a failure? Absolutely not, because he was successful because of his faithfulness, not because of his results.

God didn't need to give them a warning of His judgment. But by His grace He did. And that was through the ministry of Noah being a righteous man. They didn't give him a warning of their sin. But God gave them the warning of their sin.

Look at Genesis chapter 6, verse 5. The description of the people of the time says this. *"They were only evil continuously."* Notice this. As an act of mercy, God had given them a warning. And what was the warning? The building of the ark. How many years that took we don't know. But there was a warning. And God in His mercy always warns people before judgment. And we do that through the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as we preach it.

If God did not spare those people from their apathy and their disobedience, what do you think He is going to do with the false teachers of our age? He's going to treat them the same way, because God is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.

I think there is also a warning to us from this example that Peter gives us. Are you apathetic? Are you sitting on the fence? Do you see warnings around you about your own spiritual life? Do you ignore them because you're just apathetic because everything is going so well? In America we think that things are going so well. Are we apathetic? There's a warning there for us in part of the history lesson that Peter is giving us.

Do you hear warnings Sunday after Sunday from the pulpit and still not come to saving faith in Christ? Do you still reject Him? Yet you are hearing warnings Sunday after Sunday from the pulpit. History says that God deals with the apathy only one way. He wipes it out. That's the only way God deals with apathy.

Be warned, people. Don't become apathetic because things are going well around you.

The first example was the angels. We have to be careful about our own inward temptations, our own pride, vanity and ego, which could be our tempter. The second thing we need to understand is the example of Noah. The culture was very apathetic. Everything was just going on so well that they were not followers of Christ who heard the warning. Men, we need to be careful about the warnings that God gives us through the Scripture and through our preaching.

The third example comes from Sodom and Gomorrah. You can read about that in Genesis 19. The total destruction of these cities was ordained by God to bring home to succeeding generations that unrighteousness will end in ruin. Unrighteousness will always end in ruin.

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False teachers and false believers ultimately produce suffering and disaster, then and now. False teachers and false behavior produce disastrous results in our cities.

Now these cities were known for their influence and the softness of their morality. What does that describe?

Participant: America.

Bruce: Pittsburgh! Unfortunately, that's correct. But you see, these cities were known for two things—their affluence and the softness of their morality. They also felt they had outgrown God. God is no longer needed. They found out the mistake when it's too late, and so will we. Well, Lot's deliverance from the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah is a wonderful picture of God's mercy. It's a picture of salvation that God secures. Look at the Genesis account of Lot in Genesis 19. Let me walk you through some of the situation with Lot, because the real highlight of all of this particular example is not the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, but the fact that God is merciful to save one, to rescue one.

Notice this. In Genesis 19, verses 10-14, he was a man of the world who strayed away. He strayed away from his relationship with the Lord. He was a man of the world.

In chapter 19 verse 1 he was hospitable. In chapter 19 verse 6 he was weak. In chapter 19 verse 8 he was morally depraved. In chapter 19, verses 33 and 35 he was drunken. In chapter 19 verse 16 he was so deeply embedded in Sodom that he had to be dragged out and rescued.

Now Genesis 19:19 emphasizes that Lot's rescue was entirely due to the unmerited favor of God. What does that say about you? Has God rescued you?

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: From where does it come? From the unmerited favor of God. That's the example of Lot. The whole city was destroyed. But there was one elect person whom God was pleased to bring out of that situation because of His grace. The whole point of this example of Lot in being rescued is the mercy of God. God is judgmental and deals with the people of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their unrighteousness and their ungodliness. But at the same time you see Him being merciful for the one, and that is the rescue of Lot.

One thing we can say about Lot. The sinful conditions around him troubled him. Are we really troubled by the sin that we see around us? Or have we become just so complacent because things are going so well? There is something we can learn from Lot. Are you tormented by your own personal sin, as Lot was?

The standard Biblical example that is given to us in 2 Peter about Lot is that when a man's conscience becomes dulled to sin, and apathetic about moral standards, he is no longer willing to look to the Lord for deliverance. When we become soft in morality, we're no longer looking to the Lord for deliverance.

Now notice verse 9 of our passage that we read today in 2 Peter chapter 2. Peter introduces his main point in this particular section of Scripture, which is not only about the judgment of God, about righteousness and holiness. It's also showing in the rescue of Lot that His rescue of a lost sinner is an act of mercy, not merit. It's an act of God's mercy.

Look at verse 9 of 2 Peter chapter 2. *"Then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment."* If God has been pleased to rescue you or me, it's the result of His unmerited favor. It's not because of our merit. That's the example that we can learn from the history of Lot.

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But what about some conclusions for our future? Do you understand the three examples? What I'm trying to do is to teach you the history lesson, men, of how God dealt with those three examples historically, because the history of the world is really His story. And we can learn a lot from those individual things, about ourselves where we are, and how we need to seek the Lord in all the things that we do, and not to become like the angels and be tempted internally, not to be apathetic like the people of Noah's time, or to be morally incompetent and morally softened in our Scriptural understanding, but to apply our morality in our current lives and to be rescued like Lot. And the whole point of the story of the rescue of Lot in verse 9 is an act of His mercy, not our merit.

So thus the conclusions. I'm going to read something from one of my favorite Puritan writers about conclusions for the future concerning God's glory. Now look at 2 Peter chapter 2, verses 9 and 10.

"The faithful will be delivered out of that hour of trial which will come upon all the earth." Revelation 3:10. *"When the returning Lord will test the quality of every Christian man's service."* 1 Corinthians 3:13. *"Meanwhile, no temptation from within, or test from without, is too great to be endured. For God not only regulates the test. He gives His people the strength to face it."* 1 Corinthians 10:13. *"Note that God delivers the man out of, not away from trial."*

He delivers us out of the trial, not way from it. That means this. We are still going to be in the midst of them, but we are going to learn to manage them through His grace.

Christianity is no insurance policy against the trials of life.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: God allows them to befall the Christian. He meets us in them and delivers us out of them. Furthermore, the examples of Noah and Lot are instructive for showing how God delivers the God-fearing, as opposed to the ungodly, from tests. Neither had an immediate deliverance.

Now this is an important feature that we need to understand from this lesson. Neither Lot nor Noah had an immediate deliverance away from their trials or their tests. Noah had to help himself by building an arc in obedience to God's instructions, despite the anger and frustration of his neighbors. Lot had to endure long years of suffering and recrimination for his foolish decision to go and live in Sodom. Yet, at the time of His choosing, God delivered them from both. God may allow us to face long years of waiting before He intervenes. But He knows well how to deliver the godly. He can be relied upon.

That's a summary of verse 9. *"Then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment."*

There's a lot we can learn from this lesson. In summary, we can learn this. Concerning the ungodly, the immediate judgment of sinners is only the beginning. Death, the torment of Hades, does not exhaust the divine wrath. The great judgment is yet future. Revelation 20:11-15.

Transcriber's Note: Revelation 20:11-15. *"Then I saw a great white throne, and Him who was seated on it. From His presence earth and sky fled away. And no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne. The books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it. Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire."*

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This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

Bruce: Followed by the second death of Revelation 20:14, which is the lake of fire.

You and I might have to go through a lot of difficulties in our lives while God is rescuing us. He's rescuing us *from* the trial, not away from the trial itself. The trial might still be there, but He is rescuing us by His grace.

And the second thing is this. We need to understand that if God dealt with one, two and three, He'll deal with false teachers.

So consider these three examples collectively. And we can see the wonder of God's character. We see three examples of sin in this history lesson. We see the wonder of God's justice in those three examples. God did not spare them. That's the wonder of God's justice.

We also see the wonder of God's wrath. God cast them into hell, we're told. And you also see the wonder of the final retribution. They are still awaiting their final judgment.

But you also see the wonder of His mercy in verse 9.

Godliness consists of a direct and devout admiration of God and a sincere imitation of God. That's what godliness is defined as—a devout admiration of God and a sincere imitation of God. For those who are godly, God knows how to rescue them. And the question is this. Where are you and which is it of you? Are you part of the ungodly or part of the godly? God knows how to deal with both sides. Because of one and two and three, the ungodly will experience the same thing as they did in God's wrath and God's judgment. But also, In God's meercy, He knows how to rescue us from our trials and our temptations.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: May it be so that we will always trust God in His mercy, because He can be relied upon. Through God's grace, let's just trust Him in our trials.

Also, we've got to ask ourselves, friends, are we apathetic? Are we slack and slow in our morality in our culture? Those are the things we can learn from history. We've got to go back in history to find out what we can avoid, because we have not done things well in the past. And the God who is consistent, the God who is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow, knows how to deal both with the ungodly and the righteous. May it be so that He will fulfill His sovereign grace in our day and age.

Let's pray. Father, there is much we can learn from this passage in 2 Peter. What are our inward temptations that cause us to sin? Do we know what they are? Do we recognize them? Are we avoiding them? Can we flee to Your rescue and mercy because of them? Secondly, are we apathetic and slack in our morality in our individual lives? Would you rescue us from them, Father, because of Your mercy? And thirdly, Father, we realize this, that if You choose to remove us from our trials and temptations, that may not happen immediately. I*n the midst of that we just need to be faithful. Would You just give us the grace to be faithful so that You will be honored by the way that You will rescue us from the temptations of this world and bring glory to Yourself? And all the Brave Men said, "Amen." (*Applause.*)