

A RIGHTEOUS SOUL TORMENTED

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Genesis 19:1-25; II Peter 2:4-9

Satan seeks the destruction of mankind. In the Garden of Eden he promised great benefits for following his instruction, but the result was death and the curse (Genesis 3). He desired to have Simon Peter in order to destroy him (Luke 22:31). Peter describes him as “a roaring lion . . . seeking whom he may devour” (I Peter 5:8).

Satan animates the world system to achieve that objective. Thus, it is filled with promises it will never fulfill. Scripture teaches that “the whole world lieth in wickedness,” meaning, “in the wicked one” (I John 5:19), and that “friendship of the world is enmity with God” (James 4:4). It warns that we are not to love this world system, for it is not of God, and those who love it do not have God’s love (I John 2:15, 16).

Satan’s objectives are served by our fleshly lusts. This anti-Christ world-system is comprised of “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16). Peter therefore warns, “Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (I Peter 2:11).

These three: Satan, the world-system that he governs, and fleshly lusts, converged at Sodom, as they do wherever Satan strives. Every believer should be warned that souls made righteous by Christ are susceptible to these enemies. Lot is an example of a “righteous man . . . vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked (II Peter 2:8, 7).”

Lot was declared righteous by God, yet his soul was “vexed”. Two words are translated “vexed.” One (2:7) means to wear down with labor, and therefore to afflict or oppress with evils; to make trouble for, to treat roughly. This word is used in Acts 7:24, where Moses’ defense of a fellow-Israelite is cited. Moses “avenged him that was *oppressed*, and smote the Egyptian.”

The other word (2:8) describes the testing of metals to determine their purity. Interrogations that apply torture were identified by this word, so it is also used for “torture” or “torment.” It occurs 12 times in the New Testament.

Whereas Satan and the world-system are united to destroy mankind, our natural lusts then join them to “war against the soul.” Even a soul made righteous by God can be tested, tormented, tortured and oppressed by Satan, by the world-system, and by the lusts of the body that houses that soul. The lusts are traitors within the camp. They arise from within to resist and to defeat the soul. Their warfare against the soul is exhibited in Lot.

It was the “filthy conversation (i.e., lifestyle) of the wicked” that vexed Lot’s soul. And that vexing was due to Lot “seeing and hearing” their deeds. We live in a 21st Century Sodom. Our souls, like Lot’s, can be tormented, and rendered spiritually insensitive, both to wickedness and to God, by filling our eyes and our ears with the deeds of this wicked world. Lot’s great failure should warn every believer: “as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (I Peter 2:11). “Friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God (James 4:4).