

Vexed Daily and the Bible

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Introduction

"... He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men, for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented (vexed) day after day with their lawless deeds ..." (2Pet 2:7,8). Without this passage, I would have never guessed this about Lot. But, there it is. While my goal is to address sin's vexation dynamic for Christians now, it will be of value to examine Lot more closely and see how his responses in a cauldron of sin might instruct us.

I Am Not a Fan

Everything I know of Lot's behavior I have no wish to promote. I do understand that after Pentecost the Holy Spirit began indwelling believers - a phenomenal asset the pre-Pentecost saints did not know. But, I also know that era included Joseph and Daniel (who we will look at) and others - for whom I have the greatest respect ... and by whom I am humbled. So, my beef with Lot? Well, actually I do not have a beef with Lot. I have beefs.

1. Lot's uncle, Abraham, was the elder and leader of the Haran exit. When both men had prospered to the point the land could no longer support them without *"strife between the herdsmen"* - it was Abraham who sought a solution. He let Lot choose the land he wanted. *"And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere ... like the garden of the Lord"* (Gen 13:7,10). Lot chose that - leaving who knows what for uncle Abraham. Thus, Lot demonstrated his great respect, admiration and gratitude for his uncle, elder, patriarch, and protector ... right?
2. Later, after being captured at Sodom by some warring kings, it was uncle Abraham who came to the rescue. I did just refer to Abraham as protector. There is no record of Lot's gratitude. Possibly just an omission, but ... maybe not. I wonder if Lot joined in the fight for his own freedom and the freedom of those dependent upon his leadership? (Gen 14:1-16).
3. When the angels came to Sodom (following Uncle Abraham's intercession with the Lord to spare the city if ten righteous men were found there ... knowing his nephew Lot was among them), *"Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom"* (Gen 19:1). The elders of a city sat in the gate. Lot had worked his way up through the ranks. This ascendancy was not secured by moral confrontation or challenge. It came by ingratiating and indulgence. Stated another way, there is no evidence ... he was a prophet among them.
4. To his credit, Lot insisted these visitors stay with him (not in the open square) - indeed, a protective deed. For soon *"the men of the city ... surrounded the house, both young and old ... from every quarter"* and demanded sexual access to these strangers. Lot then pleaded they not *"act wickedly"* and, in his righteousness, offered a solution - his two virgin daughters. *"Do to*

them whatever you like” (Gen 19:4,7 and 8). In Lot’s defense ... well, there isn’t any. And obviously his moral clarity and righteous character had really impacted the residents of Sodom over the years. Their response? *“Stand aside! ... This one came in as an alien, and already he is acting like a judge; now we will treat you worse than them”* (Gen 19:9). When these soon-to-be-damned sinners began their assault, the angels dragged Lot back to safety. I would have locked him outside and let them do with him ... as they wished.

I am sure Lot’s *“solution”* to the situation created great love and respect by these daughters for their father. And his wife was surely awed by this righteous demonstration of leadership in crisis. Lot was a real problem solver. I must disclose something. I have two daughters. When I read this account and really think about the situation and his suggested remedy ... I want to ... well, I can not say right here. You would probably decide I am not a Christian - just another hypocrite - and forsake the rest of this article ... and any of my other work. So, it is probably best to leave this matter right where it is. Next point

5. I am grateful for the honesty of the accounts in the Bible. Flaws of those declared *“righteous”* (like Lot) are not hidden, glossed, or justified. Concerning Lot, I would like to believe these were just isolated lapses in a lifetime of otherwise great actions. But, I can’t. You see, when he came to his sons-in-law *“who were to marry his daughters”* with the most urgent message of a lifetime - *“he appeared ... to be jesting”* (Gen 19:14). Any man, who has cultivated even a tiny amount of respect by others toward himself, will never be thought of as *“jesting”* when an emergency of the first order is at hand. Were these sons-in-law aware of Lot’s offer of their wives-to-be ... to all the *“men”* of the city? Was that a big laugh, too? They soon died, and, if instantly, they entered eternity still thinking Lot was a jokester ... and a joke. This one scene alone tells us of Lot’s overall reputation - proceeding from a lifestyle. I wonder how many Christians today are viewed by the unsaved in such a light? Christian chameleons ... and then, when a real life and death message is conveyed, they appear to their doomed hearers *“to be jesting.”*

I enjoy many things in life and I do enjoy laughing. But you won’t find me using God’s word *“for a laugh.”* No flippant prayers, no jokes about Heaven and Hell, or the Pearly Gates, or the devil. I want to be dominated by God and His things, but never become *“overfamiliar.”* You will find humor in my work - but the point behind it leads to substance.

6. Even when certain destruction was on the way, and Lot seemed convinced of the same, at the moment of departure *“he hesitated.”* Again, he was dragged to safety *“for the compassion of the Lord was upon him”* (Gen 19:16). Do you think this pillar of the community had any influence upon the making of *“a pillar of salt”*? (Gen 19:26).

7. It appears Lot may have escaped Sodom with a bit more than just the clothes on his back. He remembered to grab *“the bottle.”* Of course, maybe he stopped at the local package store in Zoar before heading to the cave with his daughters. It is at this time, we are made privy to the thinking of his daughters. They decided it was in their interest to get their dad drunk and have sex with him so as to become impregnated. This is stunning on several fronts. For both daughters to collude with no indication of dissension by either - offers a glimpse of the moral conscience Lot had built in his daughters. I understand no one is ultimately responsible for another’s actions -

including one's children - **but not even a thought** by either daughter of the propriety of such a plan? And this was a "*two night stand*" with no record of regret, re-calibration or even second thoughts by either daughter. Additionally, the plan to get him so drunk that he didn't even know he had sex with anybody - did not seem like an obstacle needing address. And he was open to such a plot two nights in a row? Maybe he never sobered up between "*events.*" Ultimately, this tells us more about Lot than even his two stone-cold sober daughters. The result? Moab and Ammon. I wonder, as his daughters began to show, if Lot ever figured out his contribution to this sordid episode? We will never know on this side ... as the activity on these two nights is the last we hear of Lot and his exploits.

The Rebuke

... to me. Lot's fate, is a matter between himself and his Creator. So what if I am not his fan? Who am I? "*(F)or the compassion of the Lord was upon him ... He rescued righteous Lot*" (Gen 19:16 and 2Pet 2:7). God calls Lot "*righteous*" and ultimately, that is all that matters. If God is for him, any damning case against him will not prevail (Ro 8:31). And, as quoted earlier, Lot was "*oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men, for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day with their lawless deeds ...*" (2Pet 2:7,8). A righteous man and righteous soul, who, in Sodom, was ...

"Oppressed" and "Tormented"

He was "*oppressed*" (kataponeo) by the sin around him. This Koine Greek word is an intensive - meaning, "*to exhaust by labor or suffering, to weary out, to overpower, oppress.*" This is also a present, passive participle, telling us Lot was **acted upon continuously** ... by the sin around him.

His soul was "*tormented*" (basanizo) by the sin around him. This Koine Greek word was used for the testing of metals. When applied metaphorically, it means to examine someone by infliction of severe pain - thus, to torture. As an imperfect, this also means **continued action in the past time**. Lot's soul was tormented, agitated, afflicted - vexed day after day, by ...

The Sin Around Him

This is key. There is no indication that Lot's **own sin** oppressed and tormented him ... just the sin by others around him. This lack of recorded vexation is glaring. Solomon declared "*the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil, and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives. Afterwards, they go to the dead*" (Eccl 9:3). That includes Lot ... and you and I. Our personal perversion is part of this sin-vexation equation - and must not be skirted. If it is, we will probably function no higher than did Lot.

Christians now have God dwelling within and that is surely a great asset in this war. "*I will dwell in them and walk among them*" (2Cor 6:16). Part of this indwelling mission includes "*you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations*" (Ezk 36:31). For the rest of this discussion, I am going to include internal sin vexation along with the external - making little distinction between them. I believe they are inextricably linked anyway. Matured sinners "*give hearty approval to those who practice*" sin. Sin does not oppress or torment matured

sinners ... for they “do the same” (Ro 1:32). If a person lacks internal vexation at his/her own sin ... this is the destination.

The Necessity of Sin’s Oppression and Vexation

Does any of this material about sin’s vexation “*strike a chord*” with you? It should. Indeed, it must. But our reaction, and action, toward sin does not have to be the same - **must not be** the same - as brother Lot’s. Sin, though oppressive, is not to overcome us. And sin, though vexing, and even torturous, is to be powered through. We are to “*pursue ... holiness without which no one will see the Lord*” (Heb 12:14). In Koine Greek, “*dioko*” (pursue) is often translated “*persecute*.” Christians are commanded to attack a very specific target ... **holiness**. The word, “*hagiasmos*” (holiness) is probably best understood as anything, and everything, that is the opposite of sin. This contention with sin, though not pleasant, is, for the Christian, a sign of salvation. I thank God that sin is often oppressive and torturous to me. This was not always the case as I, too, once “*loved (agapao) the darkness*” (Whoops! Jn 3:18). Now, the call to arms.

Preparation

One reason Lot regularly failed against sin was because did not prepare himself to fight it. He loped along ... and when sin’s assaults came, he had no plan of action. Therefore, he was overcome by it - and became a perpetual victim. This is not God’s will for us. He wants to make us victors ... regularly.

You are engaged in preparation right now. You are applying yourself to a “*means of grace*” by exposing yourself to the this teaching. Even if you dismiss all my points, you are still engaged in spiritual endeavors as you reject and/or counter my points. And benefits will likely continue after leaving this session ... as you ponder these matters. Any time spent in the spiritual exercises of Bible investigation, conversing with God, or speaking of God’s things, strengthens one for sin’s coming assaults. He grants “*solid food*” to “*the mature, who, because of practice, have their senses trained to discern good and evil*” (Heb 5:14). The word, “*trained*,” is “*gumnazo*” (v) and “*gymnasia*” (n) in Koine Greek - from which we get the words gymnasium and gymnastics.

Training: Sin Must Be Defined

The first commandment is to “*love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind*” (Mt 22:37). Anything short of this is sin. James said; “*(T)o one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin*” (Ja 4:17). We are often guilty of sins of **omission** ... and then turn around and **commit** something else. While the most blatant of our sins of **commission** are pretty well understood (murder, kidnaping, stealing, etc.), some are situational. Paul said a Christian can make sin of lawful liberties - when it is known a weaker brother will stumble at their exercise (1Cor 8). Probably the most concise statement about sin is “*all unrighteousness is sin*” (1Jn 5:17). That covers a lot of ground and means ... we sin a lot.

Training: Sin’s Power Understood

Next to God Himself, sin is the most powerful “*force*” in existence. Sin deceives its

victims (Heb 3:13) and blinds them (Mt 23:19 and 2Cor 4:4). It sears the conscience “*as with a branding iron*” (1Ti 4:2), thus callousing affections and hardening the heart (Eph 4:18,19). As a result, “*most people’s love (agapao) grows cold*” (Whoops again! Mt 24:12). Sin enslaves its victims and then escorts them into death (Jn 8:34 and Ro 5:12). And if one exits this life with sins unforgiven, those same sins will constitute an eternal death warrant assigning the perpetrator, body and soul, to a just level in Hell (Col 2:14 and Rev 20:12-15). Even Satan, and the fallen angels, are irreversibly locked in its grip (Heb 2:16). If sane, they would seek God for mercy “*knowing (they) have but a short time*” (Rev 12:12) - and an eternal lake of fire, created by God, awaits (Mt 25:41). But ... they do not. They are not ignorant of this matter. But, like people who are finally unrepentant, they too have been “*melted into **the power** of (their) iniquities*” (Isa 64:7. See also Ro 1:24,26 and 28).

Sin, in its unyielding, iron-fisted, death grip, cannot be broken by those in its clutches (Jn 8:34-36). It is quite instructive that God makes no attempt at reform of those so infected. He implants a new nature as He transfers individuals “*from the domain (authority) of darkness*” into “*the Kingdom of His beloved Son*” (Col 1:13). The call is to then **kill** the sin in one’s members (Ro 8:11-13) as He has come “*to destroy the works of the devil*” - those “*works*” being ... sin (1Jn 3:8). But, even those who have been delivered from sin’s powers can again find themselves entangled in it, and thus re-enter a condition of being “*blind or short-sighted*” (2Pet 1:9). Sin is not ... a toy.

Training: Sin Recognized

One of sin’s great powers is that it often hides itself. People have no idea how greatly they have been affected, infected, and defected by sin. “*I’m not perfect ... I’m just human.*” When sin hides, it lies unrecognized ... and unaddressed. If it remained dormant, this lack of recognition might not be that big a problem. But sin is always on the move ... deceptively enticing, entangling, and subduing its targets. As Cain was being cultivated for the first murder in human history, God graciously warned, “*Sin is crouching at the door and its desire is for you, but you must master it*” (Gen 4:7). But, he didn’t. And after the fact, when God asked about Abel, Cain retorted, “*Am I my brother’s keeper?*” (Gen 4:9). What a base man. Even Judas declared after the fact, “*I have sinned by betraying innocent blood*” (Mt 27:4).

This leads directly to a second big problem with sin. The sinner ... often **loves** it. When God took on “*the likeness of sinful flesh*” and “*dwelt among us*” (Ro 8:3 and Jn 1:12), here is what He walked into. “*(T)he light (has) come into the world, and men loved (agapao) the darkness rather than the light*” (Jn 3:19). Men have an unconditional, divine love of God - for darkness ... right? (Enough whoops! For that discussion, get, “***Why Agapao Can Not Mean, ‘The Unconditional, Divine Love of God’ - and Phileo Can Not Mean, ‘Brotherly Love’***” at <http://www.freelygive-n.com>). But agapao for sin does not simply end with agapao for sin. “*For everyone who does evil hates the light*” (Jn 3:20). When God says, “*hates the light,*” He means, “*hates the light.*”

Even those who have been born again (thus indwelt by God’s Spirit [Ro 8:9]), are still internally polluted by “*the old man, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit*” (Eph 4:22). I think that is telling us ... he gets worse. The Christian has a job to do. “*(I)f by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the flesh, you will live*” (Ro 8:13). But if

the Christian's personal love for his/her sin is unacknowledged, denied, or pampered, how can that one engage in missions of search and destroy? With God's assistance, personal sin must be identified, attacked and killed. This is a high call. This is a hard call. Failure in this matter is the root reason Christians do not mature. Sin is easy, and much of it does contain pleasure ... for a season (Heb 11:25). I must recommit myself to this war right now.

If a Christian thinks he/she is exempt from sin, and its power, that, in itself, is a demonstration of its power. To have any hope of effectively dealing with sin's assaults, one must expect, prepare for, and recognize (by God's grace) those assaults - preferably immediately. Sin is aggressive and lethal. Towards sin, we must be equally aggressive ... and lethal.

Preemptive Strikes

As a youth, Daniel "*made up his mind ('purposed in his heart' - KJV) that he would not defile himself*" by violating God's will (Dan 1:8). This was a preemptive strike. When sin reared its head and offered its choice, Daniel did not have to make a decision at that moment. He had already made his decision. Sin was not an option. It appears Daniel adopted this as his standard mode of operation throughout life - and such preemptive strikes against sin ultimately served him very well. Obviously, Lot did not adopt such a tactic. Do we? Do you?

A bit of a different take on this concept is in the chorus of my song, "*The World.*"

*"World, don't bother rejecting me - cause I've already rejected you.
As God opens my eyes - to each of your lies
I keep findin' - myself sayin' - to you - 'World, we're through!
Don't want nothin' more to do - with you.'" ("The World" 1981, #89)*

I reject the world's claims of atheistic origins. I reject the world's assertion that death has always been part of the created order. I reject the world's claims as to what brings meaning to life and fulfillment and prosperity. I reject the world's priorities and philosophies and understandings of man's nature, proclivities and destiny. The world's materials, when weighed, continue to be found wanting in all matters of substance. So, when the world rejects me - **who rejected whom?**

*"I'm leavin' - this system
Its legal thieves and murderous men.
Shake me - from any hypocrisy
So that not even a thought shakes hands with them." ("Your Mighty Mercy" 1983, #152).*

Personal Reckoning

We would do well to accurately assess our personal weaknesses and then establish safeguards designed to keep us out of tempting situations. If a man is highly sexual, is it a good idea to frequent the beach? Would an internet filter be a good idea? I have established some parameters for myself to avoid situations that invite trouble. My natural man **does not like this**. I can talk myself out of these boundaries ... as sin's deceit, and self-deceit, tells me I can stick a toe in the water and be okay. Avoiding youthful lusts will cut down on the number of times I must "*flee from youthful lusts*" (2Ti 2:22). This leads to a very important point.

Hating Sin

To **dislike** sin is not the same as **hating** it. God **hates** sin (Ps 45:7, Pr 8:13, Isa 61:8, Hos 9:15, Rev 2:6, etc.). Not surprisingly, He calls His children ... to be like Him. "*Hate evil, you who love the Lord*" (Ps 97:10). If we hate something we will not do it. I hate the genre of humor classified as "*bathroom humor*." If you do not know what that is - I hate it so much that I will not describe it. I can not even envision a situation where I might engage in it. My point? If I hated sin - *my sin* - **any sin** - **all sin** - the way I hate that repulsive genre of humor ... there is no telling how God could use me in this life to promote His agenda. "*The eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is **completely** His*" (1Ch 16:9). May God make us like Him, complete with righteous hatreds. What a phenomenal preemptive strike that would be ... indeed, the mother of all preemptive strikes.

Assessing One's Environment

So, did Lot hate the sin around him? Unless a masochist, we know he did not enjoy sin's oppression and vexation. But, he did not hate sin enough so as to shake the dust off his feet and, by faith, **leave Sodom**. He could have left - and looked to God to establish him in some other arrangement. Do you think God would have honored such a determination - or just let him die? There are times we need to leave - as sin is overwhelming our witness and testimony. If we have the liberty before God to walk away from some circumstance we must not allow that option to be taken off the table. There have been times I decided to extricate myself from situations ... and I'm still here. Temporary losses did not include ... abandonment by God. Lot had the same God. Additionally, one must factor in the needs of those under one's charge. Just as Jacob slowed himself "*to the pace of the children*" (Gen 33:14), so we must carefully monitor the well-being of those for whom we are responsible. So, even if Lot could personally handle the sin deluge of Sodom, did he ever consider sin's impact on his wife ... and daughters?

As a personal example, my daughters have attended our public schools. I have monitored their journey and have used its errors (and sin) as teaching tools - whether exposing the flaws of evolutionary science, revisionist histories ... or errant social postures. The goal has been to prepare my daughters to navigate the waters of the world and not be enticed or fooled by its errors - and sin. As parents, we need real-time wisdom from God in these matters. There is no formula. At times, retreat or insulation from evil may be appropriate, while other times call for exposure and confrontation. If our school district was as decadent as some, I may have decided against public schools from the start. Or, if my daughters were "*followers*," that may have changed the decision. Currently, my eldest has graduated from the University of Louisville (English major, French minor) and is married. To my great joy, I have been able to watch God use her (and her friends) effectively in her circles. My youngest is "*in process*." Any prayers on their behalf has this dad's eternal gratitude. I am doing the same toward your children (if you have any) this very moment. God is not bound by time ... and He knows who I am praying for - by name and circumstance. May He touch this moment and make it a place of holy ground ... where these mercy-filled requests are granted.

You know, Lot was so compromised in his sin environment that when God's judgment was to start ... "*he hesitated*." Lot had to be grabbed and extracted (Gen 19:16). This is similar to God's action toward many in the Corinthian Church - some disciplined to the point of death, so

that they might not “*be damned along with the world*” (1Cor 11:32). Sin had become comfortable to them. I do not want to be of that number - the risk or the shame. Do you? “*‘Come out from their midst and be ye separate,’ says the Lord. ‘And do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you; and I will be a Father to you, and you will be sons and daughters to Me,’ says the Lord Almighty*” (2Cor 6:17, 18).

The Truth About a Christian’s Righteousness

Left to ourselves, we will never be righteous - or live in righteousness. “*The Lord has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, who act wisely, who seek after God. They have **all** turned aside; together they have become corrupt ... there is **none** righteous, not even one ... there is **none** who does good, there is not even one*” (Ps 14:1-3 and Ro 3:10,12). Christian righteousness is a gift from God (Ro 5:17). Lot will not argue with this. Do you? Once gifted, the Christian can now do righteousness on a situation by situation basis. Our experiential righteousness is like learning to walk. We make a solid step or two, followed by a misstep. “*A righteous man falls seven times, and rises again*” (Pr 24:16). Seven is a number of completeness. One can totally blow a situation ... yet get back up.

Potential Pitfalls

1. This righteousness has nothing to do with self righteousness. While action, and reaction, against sin is essential, the Christian must never lose sight from whence his/her righteousness comes. The Christian is pursuing and promoting God’s righteousness - not his/her own standards. Therefore, arrogance has no place as the Christian is not the author of this commodity. “*Righteousness belongs to Thee, O Lord*” (Dan 9:7).

2. “*The triumphing of the wicked is short*” (Job 20:5), but, in this age, the wicked ... often do triumph. This is really hard to take. This has afflicted the saints from Cain forward. After one case study on the prosperity of the wicked, Asaph said, “*Behold, these are the wicked; and always at ease, they have increased in wealth. Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure, and washed my hands in innocence. For I have been stricken all day long, and chastened every morning*” (Ps 73:12-14). After Job presented a series of bitter complaints on this same matter, Elihu warned, “*You were full of judgment on the wicked; judgment and justice take hold of you. **Beware lest wrath entice you to scoffing***” (Job 36:17,18). And there is the pitfall ... scoffing. The danger for the saint is anger ... at God. We know the godless only triumph if God allows it. “*You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above*” (Jn 19:11). As we witness, or are the victim of, the destruction these triumphs so often inflict - this is really hard to take. We are tempted to scoff ... at God - and His true concern over sin. For example ...

At the risk of inserting bottom of the birdcage material, my country recently elected, as President, the most extreme abortion advocate this industry has ever produced. He tried his best to stop the “***Infant Born Alive Act.***” This law requires that medical attention be given an infant who survives the abortionist - and exits the mother alive. In adamant opposition, he asserted this interferes with the original decision of the mother, and unduly complicates the situation by calling in a medical professional seeking to save the doomed infant. The injured baby must lie unattended until it dies. The moment this “*man*” was elected ... my response? “*The babies are dead. If You*

don't care, why should I?" In the next 4 years, he will replace several Supreme Court justices, as evil as himself, to life-time appointments ... and doom the entire next generation of hapless preborns. And embryos will be put on the fast-track for cannibalization. My wrath ... enticed me to scoffing at God. I immediately moved to kill it - and here is one way how.

"I am ... the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?" (Jer 32:27). At any moment, and in any number of ways (Job 33:13-30), God can reveal to the participants of this unequaled evil, of their coming abortion appointment. They are advancing toward an eternal abortion from life ... by the God of life. However, they will never expire, and their surroundings will make them long for their saline solutions. But such warning visits are designed by God to turn the most adamant pro abortionist ... into a pro life zealot of the first order. God specializes in turning Sauls ... into Pauls. Such turns often create fearless converts - exposing the internal dynamics and cruelties of causes they once embraced. In this instance, we would find former abortion advocates attacking the industry and philosophy with lethal accuracy. This is my prayer ... hope ... and expectation - and probably the biggest tool to deliver me from enticement to scoff. Another tool, is that for the finally unrepentant, I do know *"their end"* (See Ps 73:17-20).

3. *"Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles lest the Lord see it and be displeased and He turn away His anger from him"* (Pr 24:17, 18). This verse does not say, *"if your enemy falls"* or *"if he stumbles"* ... but *"when."* When *"when"* comes, God measures me. Ultimately, God takes *"no pleasure in the death of the wicked"* (Ezk 33:11) ... but die each one will. *"It is appointed for men to die once, and after this comes judgment"* (Heb 9:27). It is an astoundingly *"dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"* (Heb 10:31).

God calls us to develop great skills in our attitudes, responses and actions with the unrighteous. *"Have mercy on some who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear (great caution) hating even the garment polluted by the flesh"* (Jude 22,23). Here are **three** different procedures - all dependent upon the discerned need of the moment. On the other hand, Jesus once commanded, *"Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine"* (Mt 7:6). The only pearls I possess are God's words. And Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wished, *"those who are troubling you would even mutilate (castrate) themselves"* (Gal 5:12. Also see Phil 3:2). And we are warned, *"Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals'"* (1Cor 15:33). These postures, in the right times and places, **are** righteousness. But, there is more.

The breaking of the fifth seal in Revelation reveals *"the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and because of the testimony which they had maintained."* These martyred Christians are in Paradise, now freed from the plague sin ... internal and external. Their request of God? *"(T)hey cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?'"* These intense requests receive no rebuke from God - in fact, quite the contrary. *"And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, should be completed also"* (Rev 6:10,11). This is astonishing. For these saints, an eternity of bliss and incomprehensible promise stretches before them. They had, under the greatest of

pressures, successfully “*finished the course*” (2Tim 4:7). One might expect, “*Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing*” (Lk 23:34). But this circumstance called for a different, righteous response. We need real-time wisdom from God on a case-by-case basis in our execution of righteousness. My personal appeal is that God would make my “*forehead as hard as their forehead*” (Ezk 3:8), and, at the same time, cultivate the heart of a “*gentle ... nursing mother*” when that is indeed the call of righteousness (1Thes 2:7). Boy, do I need help.

Some Other Points About This Vexation

God, “*who cannot lie*” (Tit 1:2) declares that a Christian’s personal sin is fully expunged by the blood of Jesus Christ the moment one receives/calls upon/believes in Him. He has “*cancelled out the certificate of death, consisting of decrees against us and which stood against us; and He has **taken it out of the way**, having nailed it to the cross*” (Col 2:14). Death no longer has a rightful claim to the Christian, as was seen by Jesus’ challenge to Martha at her brother Lazarus’ death; “*(E)veryone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?*” (Jn 11:26). Earlier, when contending with Pharisees, He asserted, “*if anyone keeps My word, he will never see death*” (Jn 8:51). This is on the heels of this promise from our Creator (for whom “*it is impossible ... to lie*” [Heb 6:18]), “*He who believes on the Son **has eternal life***” and, “*he who believes **has eternal life***” (Jn 3:36 and 6:47). In both of these verses, the verb “*has*” is “*echei*,” a Koine Greek, present tense verb, which means **continued action in the present**: “*has presently, and continues to have ... eternal life.*” This makes sense because if one **has**, by God’s decree and promise, eternal life, that one can never ... not have it. If eternal life could be lost, one never had it in the first place. So, what does this have to do with sin’s daily vexation? Well, ... a couple more things, and then you’re free.

1. This present situation ... is a strange work and circumstance. It may not seem so now ... as this is the only life we have ever known. But, a trillion years from now, when we look back, I wonder what we will think of this few-year span of foulness? With a trillion years of living in the “*new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells*” (2Pet 3:13) - engulfed by righteousness (internally and externally) all that time - and knowing that unending trillions of years stretch out before us ... what will we think of this slice of our existence?

2. With this in mind, the Christian has now been granted a once-in-eternity opportunity to forward the agenda of God in a hostile environment. Sin’s oppression and torment, vexation and power, and its triumphs and confrontations, will be restricted to this “*present evil age*” which “*is passing away*” (Gal 1:4 and 1Jn 2:17). And those “*whose portion in life is of the world*” (Ps 17:14) will be proven to be like the residents of Noah’s day, who “*did not understand until the flood came and took them all away*” (Mt 24:39). “*(H)er multitude, her din of revelry, and the jubilant within her ... descend*” (Isa 5:14). We must take advantage of this opportunity now. Each second that passes finds salvation (deliverance) nearer to us “*than when we believed*” (Ro 13:11). We cannot stay here - we only go through this once - and when it is over ... it’s over.

Conclusion

The Bible’s core material is timeless. Things outside of us change (this “*writing*” is a long

way from ink on papyrus), but internal human dynamics do not. When Solomon asserted, “*there is nothing new under the sun*” (Eccl 1:9), he was referencing man’s conduct, impulses, motives, internal rationales and attitudes. The condition of man in sin, and the manifestations of the perversities from it, are as predictable as the sun’s rising and setting. Names, faces, languages, places and external trappings change ... but sin’s dynamics - internal or external - do not.

You know, I would not be surprised if God so arranges things that one of the first people I meet in glory ... will be Lot. If so, **he** will be the first to condemn his dereliction toward family and those in Sodom - loathing his failings, cowardice, unfaithfulness ... sin ... and assert, “*You don’t know the half of it.*” When thinking of all who perished around him, and his role in their life, I suspect he will be wishing he had been a Jonah, or Daniel, or Joseph, or Shadrach among them - not Lot. If remorse over these matters at that time is still unresolved, he will likely be so overwhelmed, that my objections to his performance will be irrelevant. He sinned against the Lord (Ps 51:4). Even if I want to comfort and encourage him, my efforts will mean nothing. Comfort can only come from One place.

I believe there are Christians - right now - who fall far from God’s will and design for them ... yet, will ultimately be found in Him. In other words, there are probably some “Lots” around. This is simply an observation and should not be used as grounds for expectation of such grace. In fact, presumption of such grace ... probably excludes one from it. But, I know you do not want to be of that number. After all ... you have read this. May you be found praising the living Creator as He graciously works in you - so that you are indeed ... “*vexed daily*” by sin.

* * * * *

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