

## Thankful for God's Power to *Preserve, Spare, and Rescue*

Can two distinct and even opposing views both be accurate?

There are typically at least *two* ways to look at most things. We could talk about *positive vs. negative, conservative vs. liberal, intellectual vs. emotional, humble vs. haughty*, etc. But there is also *love vs. hate, confident vs. fearful, anticipation vs. dread*, and *thankful vs. entitled*. Typically, **what you see depends on where you stand**. Look with me at Rom.2:4-8.

Here we see *two* sides of God: the *kindness, forbearance, and patience* side, v.4; and the *wrath, justice, and indignation* side, vv.5,6,8. Both sides are true and relevant. **Our perception of God is determined by where we stand**. Whether we see (and experience) the *kind, forbearing, and patient* God, or the *wrathful, just, and indignant* God depends not on Him, but us. Whether we are *repentant or unrepentant, persevering or stubborn, doing good or doing evil* determines whether we enjoy His *glory and honor*, or His *wrath and indignation*; for "*there is no partiality with God,*" v.11.

Now consider 2Pet.2:1-10 (with particular attention to vv.4-10). **Note that God:**

1. **Did not spare the angels or the ancient world, vv.4-5a.** God did not *keep or keep from trouble or destruction* (Grk. *phedomai*) the "*ancient world.*" Conservative estimates put the number of people perishing in the Flood at 3 billion (Yes, that's *billion* with a 'b') people! Nor did He *spare angels*, though no indication is given of the number (remember there are *myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands* cf. Rev.5:11) from "*pits of darkness, reserved for judgment.*" *Tartarus* (used only here) may be the same as, or similar to *Hades*- the portion of the place *lost souls* suffer *torment and agony* until the final judgment and its disposition to *Gehenna* (Hell), cf. Luke 16:22-25. The point is: those who *sinned, who were wicked, whose "heart was on evil continually"* (Gen.6:5) were **not spared** from the temporary *agonies* of *Hades*, nor the eternal *horrors* of *Hell* **because of their choices**. They not only *saw*, but *experienced* the *wrath, justice, and indignation* of God firsthand!

**Preserved Noah and seven others (as well as the angels who didn't sin), v.5b.** They were *preserved* (*phulasso-* to *watch* or *guard* to *keep safe*) by the power of God from catastrophe. But this *favor* and *salvation* was not a unilateral act of God. His power was wielded to *preserve* rather than *destroy* because was Noah *righteous* and *blameless* (Gen.6:9), and was a "*preacher of righteousness,*" v.5. **He saw and experienced preservation rather than the destruction because He "walked with God"!** I'm sure his perception of God was very different from the rest of the world- both before and after the Flood, but it was so because of where he *stood* and *walked*!

2. **Condemned to destruction the cities Sodom and Gomorrah, vv.6-8.** These ancient *cities of the valley* (including *Admah* and *Zeboim*, cf. Deut.29:23) were *reduced to ashes* and a *burning waste* as an "*example to those who live ungodly thereafter,*" v.6. They *saw and experienced* God's *justice* and *condemnation* because of their *lawless deeds* (v.8) and *sins* which

were “*exceedingly grave*,” cf. Gen.18:20. These sins are highlighted by *homosexuality*, Gen.19:4-5; *unrepentant insolence*, Gen.19:9a,11b; and *violent intentions*, Gen.19:9b toward God’s *messengers (angels)*.

**Rescued Lot, v.7.** The word translated as *rescue* is *rhoumai*, which literally means *to draw to one’s self*; *to deliver*. Lot was *drawn out* of Sodom and Gomorrah and *to God* in order to *deliver* him. But note *why* this was done. Lot lived *among* evil true enough, however, he was a *righteous man* who *felt his righteous soul tormented day after day* by his neighbors’ *lawless deeds*. **Lot not only *did* right, he *felt* right about *wrong*.** He was neither *ambivalent* nor *inconsistent* in these regards. He was *standing* in the right place, so his *view* of and *experience* with God was very different from that of his neighbors.

**Conclusions- Let’s not overlook the point Peter is making with these ancient examples:**

- A. “*then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, (probably better rendered as *trial*), v.9a.* What or what extent of evil that surrounds you is not important; *where you stand* is! God sees and *knows* everything. He knows not only *what you do*, He knows *how you feel*. Thus, your *view* of and *experience* with God is determined by you, for God never changes nor fails, cf. Jas.1:17. **He will exercise His *kindness, forbearance, and patience (cf. Rom.2:4) to rescue us if we’re in the right place of repentance, persevering, and godliness.*** Noah and Lot unmistakably prove the point. But,**
- B. God also knows how to “*keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,*” v.9.** He knows how to *reserve for judgment* even rebelliously sinful *angels*; He knows how to, and is willing to *destroy an entire population* He has created when they *turn away* from Him; and He knows how to *burn with fire and brimstone* those who choose *evil over good*. **How you see and what you experience in/with God depends on where you stand.**
- C. Indeed, we have many reasons to be *thankful*; and God’s power to *preserve and rescue the righteous from peril and destruction should be paramount among them.*** But to see and *experience* God’s power to *preserve and rescue*, we have to be *standing* in the right(eous) *place*. Which will it be for you? Do you see and will you *experience* God’s *kindness, forbearance, and patience*; or His *wrath, indignation, and justice*?

**What you see depends on where you stand.**