

Discerning Truth and Error By Ken Wimer

Bible Text: 2 Peter 2:4-10

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All right. If you will, look in your Bibles with me once again to 2 Peter chapter two. We continue here seeing Peter's description of these false prophets and false teachers that would rise up from among the church, not from the outside, but from within.

It is an amazing thing when you consider how the Lord was pleased to use Peter in preaching the gospel throughout the book of Acts and the wondrous glorious working of the Lord, a very unusual way adding to the church such as should be saved. And now in just a few short years, less than a generation, these solemn warnings that Peter was writing to these who were scattered abroad throughout the world.

I think we tend to like to believe that once the gospel seed has been planted somewhere that it will carry on forever. But such is not the case. It is the Lord's work to do as he will and there may be seasons when he causes that seed to grow and there is brought in a great harvest or there might be times where he will cause the field to lie fallow like I saw driving down to Lafayette this morning. You drive along and here are some fields where the corn is planted and it is already almost up to eye level and then right next to it is a just a field just as bare, dry as can be.

You say, "Well, who determines those things?

Well, it is the farmer. It is the owner of the field and the property and he decides these times and seasons. And I imagine Peter here in his last days being burdened for what he foresaw already happening creeping in to these assemblies of believers that were gathered and his concern that they not be taken away by these false teachers and preachers. And it is a pretty solemn warning when we read in verse four:

For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes

condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly.

We will pause there and just consider these three examples, then, of God's judgments. What are they judgments against? Is it not heresy? Is it not idolatry? Here they are described as ungodly, that word we have seen before meaning having no fear of God.

It really describes people that profess to know God and yet there is no fear of God in their heart. They speak of his characteristics, his grace, his mercy, his holiness and yet in their hearts they have no true knowledge of God and who he is.

The example is given of the angels who at one time were in a perfect state and fell. It is a reminder of who we are in Adam, that at one time when God created him, he was upright, but he sinned and fell away.

Let's be mindful lest we think that would never happen to me. Did you ever hear of people who reason that way? Oh, that wouldn't happen to me.

Well, consider the angels. Consider the world that the Lord destroyed by fire or by water saving only Noah and his family, eight souls that were saved. Perhaps that is the sense there when it says:

"...but saved Noah the eighth..."²

Lest we think that something in him was primary. You know, the eight that were saved. He was the last mentioned.

He was a preacher of righteousness. In other words, as he built that ark in his day he pointed his hearers to the Lord Jesus Christ, what that ark represented. He was a type, a picture of how God saves sinners. And yet he was the subject of mockery in his day

You talk about a man who stood alone, but the Lord saved everyone that was supposed to be saved. That was determined by God to spare them and destroy a world.

Or, thirdly is mentioned here the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. We typically think of those cities in the sense of homosexuality, but as we read over here in the book of Jude, there is a parallel with homosexuality and false religion.

If you look in Jude in verse seven it is almost as if Jude and Peter had collaborated here. But yet we know that each one wrote as the Spirit of God directed him. But we see Jude mentioning the angels in verse six, verse seven, Sodom and Gomorrah. And notice in verse seven how they are described.

"...giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh."³

¹ 2 Peter 2:4-6.

² 2 Peter 2:5.

Other flesh

Isn't that what spiritual fornication is? It is a perverting of the truth for self serving reasons. And it is going after strange flesh. Study that word "strange." Aarons sons were killed for offering up strange fire.

What is strange to God does not appear strange to men. And God let them go on for a good season, a good while before he destroyed them. They were adding wrath to wrath against the day of wrath. And that is how many are in religion today. They don't realize that they are worshipping another God.

All the while mentioning the name of Christ, they are unaware that it is another Christ, another gospel. That word "another" has the same connotation as being strange. It is strange to who God is in his character.

And so it is important for u as we consider our own nature, consider our own flesh, knowing that if God should ever take his hand off of us, we would go the same way. And that it cause us an urgency in prayer to look to this Word and to look to Christ that he would be merciful and keep us.

And that is where verse seven is an encouragement. You know, if you just read verses four through six it is despondent to consider the worlds that have perished in false worship.

I know people today will argue with you. Are you telling me that all of this population, all of this world is going to hell?

Well, the Lord knows those that are his. That is the answer. I don't know. But some that apparently are the Lord's end up going away. Some who we would consider apparently to be reprobate in the Lord's time we find out they were actually one of God's sheep. It was in his time he called them.

Here is an example of Lot in verses seven through nine. How many times have you heard messages preached against Lot? You know, he was a backslider. He chose Sodom and Gomorrha for selfish reasons.

We don't have the time to look into it, but I would encourage you to go back to the book of Genesis in Genesis 18 and 19 leading up to it and read about the decision that Lot had to make. Here was Abraham to whom the land had been promised. And both had flocks. Both had herds that needed to be fed and cared for. The Lord had prospered both Abraham and Lot, but their servants weren't getting along. And Abraham told Lot to choose. He said, "If you go to the west, I will go to the east. If you go to the east, I will go the west."

³ Jude 7.

And you look on a map, there is not much room over there in what is known as Israel today.

But to me, as I read those Scriptures concerning Lot, it was an act of faith that he said to Abraham, "I will move my people east. You stay here."

Why would he do that? Well, he knew that the land had been promised to Abraham. And in looking over the plains, yes, there was the city of Sodom and Gomorrah, but it was a place where his cattle, his herds could be fed and nurtured.

If you are a business man, don't you make business decisions based on what is best for what you have in possession? And so he moved that way.

I don't read anywhere and you can correct me if I am wrong, but you look in Scripture. I don't read anywhere where Lot was chastened by the Lord for setting in Sodom and Gomorrah any more than any of us sitting here would be chastened of the Lord for settling in Shreveport, Louisiana when you consider what is the difference. We live in a world of sinners.

I find just the opposite testimony given here where it says in verse seven:

"And delivered just Lot."

What made the difference in Lot's life compared to the rest of the world in which he lived? The same difference that Noah found in his day when it says Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

Here it says the Lord delivered just Lot. Just in what way? Well, that word "just" means right. It means to be... have a righteous cause. And so Lot did. As he considered who he was in God's purpose, he was one that God had chosen. He was one that looked to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ who would lay down his life and shed his blood for him. Those are eyes of faith that were given to him and so he followed the Lord.

And notice what was in his heart in verse seven. It says:

"...vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked."5

His being there in no way was an identification with those people. On the contrary, he was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked.

You know, some would argue that when the angels came to Lot or to Sodom and Gomorrah to announce the destruction and deliver Lot and Lot was concerned even for those angels, those messengers and brought them into his house and when the people of

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⁴ 2 Peter 2:7.

³ Ibid.

the city knocked on the door they say, well, Lot offered to them his virgin daughters and some argue that that was a sign of how far fallen he was.

But do you know what Lot was doing in offering to those people his virgin daughters? He knew they wouldn't touch them. So far gone they were that when he opened the door and said, "Here, take my virgin daughters," not a one of them wanted them. Lot knew that. that was part or the vexing of his soul with the filthy conversation of the wicked.

In fact, their response to him was, "Who has made you judge among us? Who are you to decide what is right and what is wrong?"

Do you ever get that sort of answer from people today that you deal with? How can you be so sure? How can you stand here and tell me what is right and what is wrong?

People don't want to hear it. It was so in the days of Lot.

And verses eight confirms it.

"For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds."

You know, I know when the Lord has done a work of grace in our hearts, we are more concerned about our own sinfulness. There is no question. But as we live day to day in this world and encounter people who have no true knowledge of God and the revelation of Christ has not been evident in their own hearts, our own souls are vexed, particularly in a day of religion where everybody is an expert on who God is.

You know, if you were in a serious case and had to see a lawyer, when you got into the lawyer's office and sat down, wouldn't you be quiet and listen? Or if you had serious case and had to go see a specialist, a doctor, when you got into his office, you wouldn't be telling him what to do and what is right and wrong. You sit and listen. You listen for what he has to tell you.

And yet today with regard to God and Christ and salvation, everybody is an expert. Everybody has something to say. And that is the problem. Scripture say that the law was given that every mouth might be stopped and the whole world found guilty before him. But people like to talk. People like to brag, brag on themselves, brag on their works, brag on their witness, brag on their knowledge of God. And all of these could be described as unlawful deeds just as strange as these in Sodom and Gomorrha that went after strange flesh.

In fact, our Lord in denouncing the cities of Israel in his day, didn't he say that? It will be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrha than for these that had the very God man in their presence and yet knew him not, did not bow.

⁶ 2 Peter 2:8.

But here is the hope in verse nine.

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations."

If we are the Lord's today, he has delivered us. He has pulled us out of false religion. He has pulled us, drawn us aside out of the ways of this world, out of mere professionism. You know, we are not impressed with that when a person just says, "Well, I am a Christian."

That doesn't impress me. Tell me a little bit about the God you profess. Tell me about he Christ you profess.

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations."8

There is a separating out of his people from the world. But it also says there in verse nine:

"...and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."

To be unjust means to be unjustified. It means not to have a ransom. It means not to have a representative before a holy God and no matter how a person tries to fix themselves up, they are unjust still outside of the Lord Jesus Christ, outside of his righteousness being their covering.

And so to me this is a message of hope when I consider myself, because I was in religion. I was in professionism. I was in one that seemed very close to the truth. In fact, the very Bible I hold in my hand is one that when I was at a very young age I asked my parents to get for me. I wanted... I saw my dad up reading early morning. I wanted to read. So I cut my teeth on this Bible. The Lord let me go for a number of years in a false profession and then when it pleased God to reveal Christ in me, he delivered me. He knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation. None of us are godly by nature. But when God is pleased to regenerate this heart and open our eyes to Christ, it gives us that reverence for God and for Christ and causes us to look to him alone and he delivers us out of temptations. He delivers us out of even any desire to go back into it.

Some will look at you and say, "Well, you are cold and calloused, because you won't even give us an ear."

You know, I have been there. I know what the Lord has delivered me from. So I am not going to sit down and listen to your reasons again as to why I should go back to a profession that is not based upon this Word or the work of the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

⁷ 2 Peter 2:9.

⁸ Ibid.

So evil does abound even as it did in Lot's day, so in ours. There are false teachers that increase and it may get to just as in the days of Noah where true worship of the Lord may all but perish from the earth. Christ said when he comes again shall he find faith on the earth? There are some that continue to look for the great awakening and great turning and converting of sinners to the Lord Jesus Christ in the latter days, I, certainly if I am here at that time I would certainly rejoice if that were the case, but everything I read in Scripture is just the opposite, that leading up to the time of Christ's coming that men will wax increasingly cold and indifferent concerning the truth. And we already have concerning Christ. We have the examples here given to us of the days of Noah and of Sodom and Gomorrha.

But I know this. Our God has a people who are chosen of him.

And some say, "Well, I preach that."

If you think that things are drying up like that, "Well, I preach."

Well, the Lord has kept the door open to do so. And so long as he does, by his grace, I shall. But I know in my case and I trust your case before the Lord if he has chosen you and redeemed you, he has called you or will call you. We read that over in Jude if you will look in the book of Jude in verse one. He wrote this. And Jude lived in then same day. And yet it is written for the encouragement of those that are the Lord's.

In verse one it says:

"...to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ." ¹⁰

They are preserved in his person. They are preserved in his work. He is that high priest that laid down his life. And the names of every one of the Lord's people, sinners that were chosen in him from before the foundation of the world and for whom he laid down his life, they are preserved in him. God could no sooner send a person to hell for whom Christ died than he would dethrone his Son. We are preserved in him. But it also says called.

So you can see the work of the Father, the Son and the Spirit in this deliverance. When it says the Lord knows how to deliver, it is not only with regard to our salvation, but he knows how to deliver in our day to day walk if you look over in verse 24 of that same epistle that we read.

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling..."11

Literally falling away, literally being drawn aside again into the vomit of what he has delivered you from.

¹⁰ Jude 1. ¹¹ Jude 24.

"...and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." 12

What is my hope of being presented faultless before a holy God? Well, it must be in a righteousness no my one. It must be through a faithfulness of a representative, a mediator and not my own.

"Now unto him that is able to keep you." ¹³

That is our keeping. It is in the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And verse 25 sums it all up.

"To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever." ¹⁴

So this is the hope of those that are the Lord's. Things aren't going to get better around us. They are what they are by God's purpose and will. There is a whole world that will perish and clearly the Lord does both when you come back here to 2 Peter two and verse nine

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly." ¹⁵

Those that he has chosen in Christ and Christ has redeemed and the Spirit called, deliver them out of temptation, deliver them out of even desiring to fellowship with those who are of another gospel. And to find their hope and rest in Christ alone.

But also it says in verse nine:

"...to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." ¹⁶

To reserve them. It is not just the passing by, but a reserving. They are locked into this fate of unbelief. No amount of persuading is going to change their hearts and minds. They will do what they do. And God will do what he does.

And so we are called here to carefulness just as much as Lot vexed his righteous soul in living among them from day to day, so we are aware. How can we be? Well, God has given us ears to hear. He has given us eyes to see, discernment, even the least bit of leaven we get concerned over and our desire is the honor and glory of Christ alone.

Now there are two great errors in verse 10 here that I want us to consider, because if we are to be warned and to beware, then Scriptures are clear. And in verse 10 we read:

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¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Jude 25.

¹⁵ 2 Peter 2:9.

¹⁶ Ibid.

"But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness..." 17

So that is the first error. It is a walking after the flesh. And, secondly, despising of governments or dominions or authority.

Over in Romans, the book of Romans chapter eight, if you will look there with me, Paul writes here of those that walk after the flesh. Now on the surface when we read this in 2 Peter chapter two and verse 10 we might think that it is talking about, you know, fornicators and adulterers and these sorts of things, of drunkards, what we think of as fleshly sins. But when you compare how the Scriptures use the word "flesh" it is something that has to do with a spiritual aspect, too, and that is leaning on the arm of the flesh, trusting in the flesh rather than resting in Christ alone. And so either way, whether it pertains to people that are lost and given completely and wholly over to the flesh to live out their lives until they die in their pursuits of the flesh or whether it has to do with unconverted, unregenerate religious people who have the same spirit in them as somebody that perhaps is given over to drunkenness, either way it is living according to the flesh.

In religion there is a lot of talk about free will. There is a lot of talk about what I do, works of the flesh is what Scriptures speak of.

And these are the errors that we are to avoid here in Romans eight and verse four. It speaks of the work of Christ, him coming in the likeness of sinful flesh that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us or by us in Christ our representative who walked not after the flesh. You see that? We don't put any confidence in the flesh.

So he goes on there in verse five.

"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh." 18

Have you ever at and conversed with somebody and endeavored to talk to them about Christ and they keep coming back to what they do or what we have to do, conditional reasoning, conditional preaching, the yes, but... When you tell them that it is by the work of the Lord Jesus Christ alone that we have acceptance before God, these who mind the things of the flesh are going to be uneasy, because they are going to sit and think, no, but I still have my part that I contribute. There is something that I do either to gain or maintain my salvation.

And that is their thinking because they mind the things of the flesh. But those things are contrary to the Spirit of God. They are contrary to the work of Christ.

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¹⁷ 2 Peter 2:10.

¹⁸ Romans 8:5.

We in our understanding of God and in salvation are brought to see by his grace if we are the Lord's, that it is Christ's work, not mine. It is what he did, not what I do. It is his sacrifice, not my sacrifices that have given me that right standing before God.

And in verse six of Romans eight there is a very strong statement. It says:

"For to be carnally minded is death." ¹⁹

It is an evidence of spiritual deadness to constantly be thinking in terms of what I must do to find acceptance before a holy God. But to be spiritually minded is what? Life and peace. That is an evidence of life. It is an evidence that peace has already been established between God and that sinner through the reconciling work of the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

So this is an error that we are to beware of and we are to mark, we are to mark those that walk contrary to this truth that, you know, our salvation, our forgiveness, our justification, our peace, our hope of glory is all in the Lord Jesus Christ outside of ourselves.

The second error that we see here in 2 Peter two and verse 10 is those that despise dominion or authority. Notice it is not despise governments as if it was in the plural. But despise government.

So, again, we see it is speaking of those whose flesh is at enmity with God. And that is what we are by nature until such time as the Lord is pleased to call us by his Spirit. We could talk here about those who advocate for man's free will, so-called, versus God's sovereign will. There is no such thing as man having a free will. It is bound. It is in bondage to his nature. We are all born in this world being falling creatures in Adam and so our will is not free. Left to ourselves, we would always choose what is contrary to the will of God. And so there are many enemies and we were at one time enemies. Let's not forget that, enemies of the absolute sovereignty and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Is that not what they cried in Christ's day? We will not have this man to reign over us.

So we need to beware of those who maybe even subtly and sometimes slyly will slip in some argument for something in man that kind of triggers God's grace or at least has a contribution in any way.

In reality they despise government, They despise the Lord Jesus Christ and his sovereignty. They cannot tolerate the preaching of the sovereignty of God in salvation or the fact that salvation is in his hand and his alone. That is like trying to take something away from a young child that is dangerous to him. It might be a sharp knife in his hand.

That child is going to fight by nature. He doesn't see the danger, like people today don't see the danger of holding to a view of some how having a free will. What it is, is a denial

¹⁹ Romans 8:6.

of God's Word. God's Word is an authority. And if you want to see people wiggle and squiggle. You know, they have been taught to just kind of pick and choose verses out of the Bible that they think support their view of the exaltation of the man. But when you begin to show them passages of Scripture like Romans nine, Ephesians one and make it plain that this matter of salvation is entirely in Christ's hands and he saves whom he will. You know, it is not a matte of them having accepted Jesus as what it is preached, but whether he will receive them

And to be shut up completely to God's judgments in this matter. You know, we don't try to persuade people that they are the Lord's or not. We don't know, but what we do is point them to the Word. And tell them to deal with Christ as he is set forth in this Word.

You know, Paul in Galatians where it says that when it please Christ to reveal Christ in him, he didn't consult flesh and blood. He knew who it was that was dealing in his heart. It was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

In fact, that was his first words out of his mouth, wasn't it? Who are you, Lord? Lord?

Here was a man that was taught in theology and yet didn't know God. He thought it was based upon the righteousness that he had to work out and suddenly he came face to face with God and truth in the Lord Jesus Christ. And he was brought to bow and to own him.

And this is an error which is prevalent throughout false doctrine. It leaves just a little bit of room for man. And in preaching they want to hear something of man exalted, something of man that is put alongside and rivaled with the work of Christ. We dare not.

Here it says in verse 10:

"Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities." ²⁰

Presumptuous, bold, daring in their profession. Not fearing to speak of holy things in the most common manner. It is a light thing. It is a joke.

If you have ever been around, you know, one of the group of professing Christians and to hear how they make light of the things that to you are precious, does it vex your soul like Lot in his day? It should. There is no reverence of fear of God in their hearts for their words.

You know, let's laugh about things that are laughable. But when it comes to a matter concerning the holy God and the state of sinners being lost and condemned who have a false hope, it is no laughing matter. Let's not be enabling people and entertaining people on the road to hell. Would that God would grant us the Spirit of Lot to be vexed in our righteous souls from day to day with their unlawful deeds. There is nothing more unlawful than that. It would be better to be a bank robber and be condemned of that than

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²⁰ 2 Peter 2:10.

to stand before a holy God as a self righteous Pharisee, because that self righteousness is nothing but a cloak.

But there is a lot of presumption in profession. There is a lot of presumption in religion. Presumption and people are locked into it. They walked an aisle. They said a prayer. They learned some truth, some doctrine. And you can't shake them out of it. They are locked into it. They are sure of heaven as their own name. That is a statement that you hear over and over again. I am sure as heaven as my own name.

You know, I heard a grace preacher telling a story of a man that was on his death bed. And when I first heard it I thought, well, that sounds like a good profession. But the more I thought about it, the more it bothered me. And this was a close acquaintance of mine that was telling a story about a man that lay dying, one of his members to whom he preached for years. And the preacher asked him. He said, "Well, tell me about your hope for glory."

And the man said to this preacher, "Well, if you have been telling me the truth, I have a good hope."

At first when I heard that I thought, well, you know, that sounds good. But afterward it bothered me. What do you mean, if you have been telling me the truth? Where is that persuasion of the Spirit in your own heart? And we are to be discerning of what men preach to us, but we are not to put our hope upon a man telling us.

Paul said that the gospel that he learned and preached, no man taught him. It was taught of the Spirit of God took this Word.

And I am, you know, I am responsible to declare the glories of Christ from this Scripture, but I would be the first to tell you don't believe because I do. Unless the Lord has been pleased to give you that persuasion in your heart, believing something or saying something acting a certain way simply because this is what Ken says, that is no hope of glory. This has to be Christ revealed in you, the hope of glory. And I would hope that if I stood and asked somebody about their hope of glory upon their death bed that it would be because of what Christ has taught them. I would like to hear that.

What has Christ taught you of himself?

But there is a lot of presumption today. You can see also there in verse 10 selfwilled. See, this fits, the walking after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness. There is nothing more unclean than to think that our flesh has something to do with our acceptance before a holy God. May the Lord deliver us from any such thought.

But such are those that are yet without Christ, yet in darkness, yet lost. They are self willed.

When the Spirit of God is pleased to do a work they become God willed. In other words, they understand what God has been pleased to do.

And then, finally, it says here:

"...they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities." ²¹

The name of God just rolls off their tongues carelessly. We see a lot of that today. A lot of frivolity. They use the word "God" or even "Jesus" as a common word, a common name. They will swear by it.

Have you ever heard anybody say, "Oh, Buddha"?

Try... if you really want to start a fight try saying, "Oh, Muhammad."

You know, there is people today that will start a fight over using the names of their particular gods and yet we live in a society where young kids learn to use the name of the Lord in vain. And they hear all about him. The speak of the Lord Jesus Christ as if he were the next door neighbor. In fact, they rarely call him Lord.

I get a little concerned. And I can understand, you know, because we all do it to speak of Jesus, but you look principally from the time of his death and resurrection all the way through the Scriptures, it is always the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a name there to be honored and yet we live in a day where, as it says here, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities, even make jokes about it.

Well, the reason is beaus they don't really know who he is. They have not seen who he is. And should the Lord ever do a work of grace in their heart, that frivolity will be replaced by reverence, by a holy awe and humility. We dare not speak presumptuously of things we don't know and sometimes it is better just to be quiet than to try to add our ignorance to what we don't know.

So these are things that we are taught to beware of and errors that we are to avoid. And, again, I would say even as we saw in verse one. These are things that rise up among you, among us. And may the Lord grant us wisdom discernment to exhort one another while it is day and may he be pleased to do that true work of grace in our hearts to know Christ and truth.

All right. Let's take our hymn books and sing hymn number 294.

²¹ Ihid