

LIBERTY IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

2 Peter 2

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)— then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord.

But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error.

While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

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What got my attention with this passage of Scripture, aside from the fact that we hadn't looked at this chapter yet, is that Peter gives us two prime examples of God's people, in this case Noah and Lot, of having to endure living righteously in a completely unrighteous environment. But with God all things are possible! This isn't one of those feel-good passages of Scripture that will, as the saying goes, "warm the cockles of your heart". I won't waste time in explaining the derivation of that expression, as mostly its origin is uncertain. But a more common expression that we get, from the Word of God (ah, that's what we want to look at), is what the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, saying, "For the time will come when they will not endure **sound doctrine**, but according to **their own desires**, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers in accordance with their own lusts." (**2 Timothy 4:3**) That could pretty much be summarized by saying that those teachers are preaching something other than the Righteousness that is in Christ Jesus, of which we are believing in AND are then living our lives according to, from the beginning of our new life in Christ through eternity. In Christ alone, right? The Apostle Peter proclaimed as much saying, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (**Acts 4:12**) Therefore, as there is no other means of salvation or righteousness (that is, what makes us right in the sight of God), that we can muster up within ourselves to please God, the same goes for after we have believed on and received Christ, for HE IS OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS! That is the gospel, or good news, that is in Christ Jesus!

Our role in that is in trusting God (meaning believing God according to His Word) and then obeying Him. That is spelled out for us in **Ephesians 2:8-10**, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God [which we must take hold of], not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." That is where we find the true liberty that God has foreordained for us, as His creation and as His children, as He desires and expects to be our Lord, our God, our Savior, and our Heavenly Father! There is then,

liberty in Righteousness, in Christ Jesus, praise the Lord!
"Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed."
(John 8:36) As the Apostle Paul told the church at Corinth, in **1 Corinthians 1:30**, that God through Christ, is our Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption. Our passage of Scripture in **2 Peter** is similar to Paul's warning, as mentioned, of those teachers who tickle the ears as it is put in the NASB. "But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you [yes, even to this day], who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom **the way of truth will be blasphemed** [IN CHRIST JESUS]. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber."

For the good news, of which the Apostle Peter begins this epistle, he says, "To those who have obtained like precious faith with us **by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ**: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to **life and godliness**, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory (out of the darkness and into His marvelous light-**1 Peter 2:9**) and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be **partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith **virtue** (moral excellence), to virtue **knowledge**, to knowledge **self-control**, to self-control **perseverance**, to perseverance **godliness**, to godliness **brotherly kindness**, and to brotherly kindness **love**. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. (**2 Peter 1:1-9**) Sounds pretty similar to the fruit of the Spirit that Paul spoke of, "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (**Galatians 5:22-23**)

In this day and age, with all all the forms of communication that can present themselves to our eyes and our ears, we of course have to have it established within us, in our hearts and minds, to let the Word of God speak to us and to literally become us. How many of you miss a day of spending time in the Word of God and you recognize that something is not quite right, or that you begin to long for a time in reading and studying the Scriptures, God's Word. If not, you don't know what you're missing. What a precious thing that is, to spend time with God in His Word. If you do experience that, it is most certain that it is the Spirit within you, that "partaking of the divine nature", as He is wanting to spend time with you and to have

His Word become you. We are told what the Scriptures are for. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for **instruction in righteousness**, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:15-17) That way of truth that is blasphemed, is then speaking contrary to the truth that is in Christ Jesus and according to His Righteousness.

As Jesus tells us in **John 14:6**, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." The Apostle John tells us, "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son." (2 John 1:9) John could have also phrased it as follows, "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the [TRUTH] does not have God." Jesus prayed to our Heavenly Father, just before His arrest and then crucifixion, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be **sanctified by the truth**." While Jesus was speaking then of the disciples or apostles, He continued by praying, "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me." (John 17:17-21) To be one in Christ, in His Truth, His Word, in Him. That leads us to the door of what is the doctrine of Christ. That doctrine of Christ can be summed up in what Jesus said was the great commandment of God, to love God with all of our heart, soul, strength, and mind, and then the second commandment that is like it, to love our neighbors as ourselves. (Mark 12:30-31). Matthew's account of Jesus saying that has Jesus concluding, "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 37:30)

Of Christ Jesus, we also realize then that He IS the Word of God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was **life**, and the **life** was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it...He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:1-5, 10-13) There's freedom, liberty for us in that! The Word of God has been recorded for us in what is our Holy Bible, His spoken Word, His Truth in order to give us the knowledge and understanding of the liberty that is in the Righteousness of Christ Jesus! God, through Christ, also gives us the Holy Spirit to lead us into all

Truth, as Jesus had promised. (**John 16:13**) That Truth then, that is in Christ Jesus, gives us two most precious of gifts, beyond the gift of salvation that we have through Christ. First is we receive the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth. Jesus tells us how that takes place, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." (**John 14:23**) The second of what is the most precious of gifts from God through Christ is we have the **Word of God**, the Holy Scriptures, to which we are led by the Holy Spirit into all truth, of which will make us complete and thoroughly equipped for every good work. Another most precious of gifts that we have is the body of Christ, other brothers and sisters in Christ. We are each given varying gifts, talents, and personalities, as the Apostle Paul tells us, "for the **equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ**" (**Ephesians 4:12-13**), as we are all partaking of His divine nature! We are not of course supposed to be tearing one another down, kicking someone when they are down, but encouraging one another, edifying one another, helping one another, to bringing us into the unity of the faith in Christ. Yet there will always be those who will be opposed to Christ Jesus and His Righteousness. There will always be those who will preach another gospel besides the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The gospel or good news of Jesus Christ, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him **should not perish** but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him **might be saved.**" (**John 3:16**) Jesus continues, explaining, "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God." (**John 3:18-21**) What we find from our passage of Scripture in **2 Peter 2** is that there will be some who won't flee from the light but will stand and oppose it. Just as Jesus dealt with the scribes and the Pharisees, just as the apostles dealt with their own opposition. But those that oppose the doctrine of Christ aren't really opposing us, but Christ Jesus and His Righteousness. Best that we can do for them is to pray for them, as God truly desires for none to perish but that all will come to repentance turning to Christ Jesus for His Righteousness and His forgiveness of their sins. For whom the Son sets free is free indeed! There is truly liberty in the Righteousness that is in Christ Jesus!