

2Peter 11-11-11b

Let's resume our study now in 2 Peter chapter 2, and we're right at the cusp of the section that we're trying to get to here in verses 12 and following. But we have seen these who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. Now when it says that Lot was righteous, there is a context in which that is said.

Was Lot materialistic when he left his uncle and went down to Sodom and Gomorrah for the green of grass? Of course he was. Did he compromise by continuing to live down there when he had other places he could go that were better? Of course he did. Did he have problems in his family? Of course he did.

And one of the things that came up as soon as we stopped when I mentioned that these daughters had not known a man according to Lot, and yet later on in the context it says that they tried to get the sons-in-law to come out of the city. But you can tell there's something funny going on there. When you get further down in the story, Lot goes up in the mountains with his two daughters and they say, we don't have any hope of offspring unless we have some with our father, because there's not going to be a man.

They had no prospect of pregnancy. Evidently these sons-in-law were of the betrothal kind, where they were more like a boyfriend or a husband-to-be, but they wouldn't follow through. They wouldn't actually marry.

And this is why the daughters are in Lot's house. If they had been married, they would have been in their husband's house. But they're not.

They're in his house. And why is that? Because these guys are not husbands in the full sense of the word. They were either betrothed, but they wouldn't follow through.

It's possible that the same thing happened with Lot that happened with the angels, where there was a favorable... Lot might have been so desperate to get his daughters married off that he said, look, the guy says, I'll marry your daughter if you give me a favorable judgment. And he says, I'll do anything to get my daughters married. They're going to be spinsters and old maids, and I'm never going to have any issue in any descendants.

And this might have been a sham engagement that was kind of on paper only, but at least they were able to go that far. And they said, look, we'll extend the offer of salvation to somebody who's even that loosely connected to the family. Whatever it was, it was not a normal marriage, because what are these daughters doing in Lot's house and not at their husband's house? You know, for this cause, shall a man leave father, mother, and cleave unto his wife? They too have their own household.

And that was not the case. So whatever it is with the sons-in-law, and obviously Lot couldn't get

away with lying about the fact that his daughters had not known a man, because all of these people he's looking at are his neighbors, and they know his history. They say, this man came among us, and now he's judging us either formally or informally.

So it's a tacky, tacky, depraved situation any way you slice it. And the exposure seems to taint Lot and his daughters so that even after they're removed from it, they cannot really escape that tarnish, that infection. But when it says righteous Lot, what is it saying? In the area of being shocked and dismayed at the depravity in this particular area, disrespectful authority, and lust of the flesh, he, of course, doesn't partake of that.

What is his righteous soul vexed by, day by day? It is specifically this immorality of a sexual nature. That's the arena we're talking about. This is the arena in which Lot is righteous, and it is a reminder to us that we have to have a comprehensive view of our life, because in a narrow context such as this, we could say, well, I'm righteous.

When it comes to murder, I'm righteous. When it comes to fornication or adultery, I'm righteous. But I might be totally guilty when it comes to sins of the tongue or other sorts of sins, mental sins of worry or bitterness or insecurity or whatever it may be.

So there can be areas in which we can be declared righteous. You have examples in the news that I won't go into, but right now there are people losing jobs that they have had for decades, and nobody is saying that Joe Paterno wasn't a great coach. When it comes to coaching, he's a legend.

Nobody's saying it's time for you to go because you're not a great coach, at least not at the moment. Why is he losing his job? It's in a completely different area. You can be righteous in one area and be condemned in another.

In the area which Peter is using for purposes of illustration, Lot, up to this point at least, was not tainted. And even when he does become tainted, he, like the Noah situation, is compromised. Small bad decisions lead to larger bad consequences.

But here's the point. This is what I'm trying to get to, and make sure I don't lose my mind here in getting to it. They are presumptuous and 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. It is a dangerous thing to get too condemnatory, even when it is easily justified. What I want to do is talk for a moment about the people to whom Peter is writing.

Because the issue here, the challenge, is in two areas. You know the two areas. What are they? Authority and morality.

Specifically, sexual immorality. The constant thread. The angels didn't respect the authority of

God, who gave them a mission and they departed from it.

The people who were given God's moral commandments and departed from them, their imaginations were only evil all the day. You have the people in Sodom and Gomorrah, who had departed from it, and who were reviling and getting ready to do their worst to dignitaries. The word there is literally doxe, it's from the word glory.

Those who reflect the glory of God. Authority reflects the glory of God when it is properly exercised and properly respected. It is one of God's gifts to the human race, is order, hierarchy.

There is accountability, there is responsibility, there is the exercise of authority, and this is what structures civilization. This is what allows for guidance and for accomplishment of the mission. We're not just a big gaggle.

There's not universal equality. We're not communists or socialists, for crying out loud. There is supposed to be an order to things.

Those who have authority and are held accountable for its exercise, that's the nature of things. God is in it, and God's glory is reflected in it, and so when it says they don't hesitate to speak evil of dignitaries, these are lords, kurietetas, and also doxe. So what I want to do is get back to who is Peter writing to? Why is he bringing all of this up? It's distasteful.

There are certain things in the Old Testament that are not my first choice to go back and delve into, and 19th chapter of Judges, 19th chapter of Genesis, these are things I'm not real anxious to go back and wade through, but there they are. Well, why would Peter bring this up? Why would he address these two specific things? Let me give you a little bit of background for the diaspora, these Jewish Christians who like Lot are immersed in a culture far different from anything God would look upon with favor. And I'm going to edit this to the extent that I can, and you can fill in the blanks from your knowledge, and I'm going to draw, I just picked a couple of things at random.

There's a plethora of information on this, so just bear with me, I'm going to get through this as quickly as I can. This is one document that's available if you want to look it up. No doubt you've seen the stereotypical Roman orgy with a half-dozen or a dozen half-naked or naked people in various poses lying around a room, and there's slaves and they're lounging around to music, drinking wine, and having a physically promiscuous time.

I've been in Rome, I've been in Athens, and this is the constant subject of art that's on vases and murals and all sorts of descriptions. This is the typical subject of their art, are these orgiastic get-togethers. Here's what the writer says.

The only problem with this stereotype is, contrary to the idea that it has no foundation or that it is an exaggeration, this is actually a tame example. The specific description would have been a

rather low-end party, one that harmed the reputation of the host. If that's all that was going on, that would have been a very poor, lame party.

Sex was a topic of absolute confidence in the Roman Empire. There was no bashfulness or shyness concerning topics of promiscuity. The city of Pompeii, forever trapped in its status quo thanks to Vesuvius, has given us a glimpse of all of this.

Archaeologists were at first baffled by the displays of what could only be described as pornography on the walls of many of these dwellings. They thought, well, maybe this was a bawdy house or just a stray example of lewd art or something, until it was realized that this seemingly obscene display was actually the menu for one of Pompeii's innumerable brothels. This was consistent with Roman culture, where the capital itself was covered with artwork of attributes of people without their clothes on, gods engaged in activities that I won't mention here.

This was considered to be a sign of bad luck to the holder. If you have ever been in one of these cities, you can get genuine artifacts. There are so many of these in the soil of Rome and Athens that they're basically worthless.

You can get a genuine 2,000-year-old talisman of a male or female god with distorted attributes of gigantic proportions practically for free, because there are just thousands of them. They litter the landscape. They're everywhere.

Sidewalk shops, you can get them for pennies, because there are so many of them that they're not worth anything. Orgies were often thrown throughout the city, ranging from the lowly plebeians to the rich aristocratic patricians who wanted to show off their wealth in what we would see as a vulgar display of fornication. Amusingly, in spite of this rampant physical display of physical pleasures—well, I can't even go into that part, or the next part.

But let me just try to summarize this section by saying that there is an active and a passive role in these particularly perverse relationships. There is someone who is doing something to someone else. So there is an actor, and there is someone receiving the action.

Well, in Rome, it was a sign of virility and masculinity and of status to be the perpetrator rather than the perpetratee. And so the perpetratees were younger. They were slaves.

They were katamites. They were prostitutes of both genders, whatever they were. And this was kind of like driving a nice car.

If you did this in front of your friends or with your friends, this was like playing a round of golf. It was a given. It was a commonplace.

And that's about as much of this as I'm going to go into. It is just grotesque. You cannot believe how—in fact, these writers say repeatedly that we cannot comprehend the different nature of things because this is pre-Christianity or in the early days before Christianity began to take hold.

Christianity is what eventually put a stop to this. It took a few centuries, but eventually there was a moral recognition that took place and brought an end to this. But this sort of depravity is what basically brought the empire down.

Let me see if there's a part of this other article that I can read. Talking about Pompeii again, this is a completely different article. The ubiquitous nature of sexuality shocked the archaeologists who first discovered it in Pompeii.

How could Romans be so frank in this area, leaving these obscene pictures and depictions and things around where children would see them and so on? How could Roman women be so forthright about these activities? Most disturbing of all, how could Romans freely engage in same-sex or group activities as they are depicted in these portrayals? The pornography of Pompeii has to be placed in the context of early imperial society. Remember, Rome was a republic, and then when you get to around the time of Christ, it shifts over to being the Roman Empire, and you've got the Caesars and so on. The wealth of Rome's increasing empire had made some people very rich and given rise to what social scientists call conspicuous consumption.

Their newfound riches and opulence fueled this and sustained it. The well-to-do wanted to advertise their financial situation, and in imperial Pompeii, as elsewhere in the empire, having these explicit frescoes in your house and having these activities go on at your parties was considered a mark of luxury and refinement. It became politically correct.

You're on the cutting edge. You're trendy. You're with it.

You're in the now to be of the silk. Well, you can see analogies in our culture to the beginnings of this. That explains the wealth of displays.

Even local plebeian taverns tried to lend themselves an air of elegance with these crude frescoes on their walls. By the way, our word pornography was coined by the archaeologists who found this stuff at Pompeii and couldn't find a way to describe it. That's how this word pornography came into the English language.

It was coined by the archaeologists looking at these shocking displays at Pompeii. They looked at pleasure in this area, you can't believe how I'm having to edit this, as a gift from Venus and Cupid or cultic deities like Dionysius. Who could begrudge the gods their gifts and their influence? This is a gift of the gods.

They gave it a religious connotation. The idea that these displays and objects and activities could ward off evil spirits reached its height. Every street corner and doorway seemed to have had a representation of these exaggerated physical attributes.

I say all of that to say this. This is the culture, this zenith of depravity and disgusting, overtly

immoral and celebrated activity is what these Jewish Christians got dispersed into. That's what they are contending with.

They're immersed in it. They're surrounded by it. This is why Peter says Lot's righteous soul was oppressed.

He was being worn down by the day-to-day sights and sounds of things around him. These are the sights and these are the sounds. It's not rampant gossip.

It isn't abuse of business, bad scales and cheating people. It's not bad business practice. It's not economic hardship.

It's not persecution of an overt spirit. Because you're a Christian, because of your spiritual beliefs, we're persecuting you. What their challenge was, we can't get away from this.

We have no choice but to live here. Here we are in this sewage of immorality. Peter says, look, if God looked down and saw the angels who really launched this sort of thing with their immorality back before the flood.

If God wiped it out in the flood and started fresh with Noah, although it wasn't long before it reared its ugly head again. If God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for the same thing, although it wasn't long before it reared its ugly head. In the background of this, Peter's overt argument is, God knows how to deliver the godly out of this kind of temptation.

Sometimes the removal can be pretty violent and pretty stark and pretty sudden. Noah is floating for 14 months in a wooden box. Lot is dragged out with his two daughters by these angels.

There's fire and brimstone coming down. And you think, well, this is not necessarily being wafted to heaven in a fiery chariot. This is kind of a rough go.

But God knows how to deliver the godly out of this kind of constant exposure. This wearing, morally dangerous constancy of exposure. But God knows better because they are presumptuous and self-willed and not afraid to speak evil of authorities, of dignitaries.

Whereas angels do not. Even the angels who are greater in might and power don't do this sort of thing. They know better.

But they are very circumspect. And what is Peter saying to these people? Your solution is not to form a movement. Don't go out with picket signs and say, we're going to stamp out all of these illicit practices.

We're going to get rid of it. You're a minority. And even though you are God's children, and even though you have righteous souls, leave the remedy of this to God.

God knows how to do two things. How to deliver the godly out of this. And how to justly punish

those who are perpetrating it.

So the dealing with it belongs to God. And this, I think, is a strong argument against some of the rather misguided efforts that Christians have engaged in. It raises a big question.

In what sense are Christians to be salt and light in a society? Do you go out and become the moral majority? Do you try to go out and picket abortion clinics? It always kind of struck me that there's a whole lot more brothels in any given town than there are abortion clinics. And Christians never go picket the brothels. They picket the abortion clinics.

And you think, well, you know, why is that? But I digress. So there is this very practical truth for us. Because we look around in our day, and we find perversion being celebrated.

We find it is almost a status symbol to be tolerant and to be welcoming and embracing. And churches have fallen into this. There are many denominations and many churches within those denominations that wear their acceptance of perverts into their fellowship as a badge of honor.

We're not benighted and backward and Puritan and straight-laced. We're all about the love of Jesus. And they take one side of the gospel message and the biblical message that God is grace and God is love and God is compassionate and forgiving and we should be the same.

And without a balance and without discernment and without an understanding of what they're doing, they are embracing and encouraging and approving these sorts of things. So this is why the passage is here. This is a daily reality for the people to whom Peter is writing.

You are in the midst of the depraved. So what do you do? You concentrate on preserving your soul, because if you don't, you're going to be Lot. If you don't, you're going to be Noah.

And this exposure can easily move from outside to inside, just like that false teaching that he talked about earlier. Remember, it was alongside and then it was in. And there is an implicit warning.

Peter is careful. He is trying to encourage these people and he doesn't say, you know, watch out that you don't become like them. But his examples make that point for him, don't they? But he says, commit these things to God.

God knows how to do two things. He will take care of the ne'er-do-wells, and he will also take care of the do-wells. And what we have to concentrate on is being a do-well, being the godly and being the righteous.

God will ensure that justice is done. God will effect deliverance. God will effect protection.

God will effect provision. And God will take care of these others. You see what happened to the world before the flood.

It was washed away. You see what happened to these arrogant, flippant, perverse types that were outside Lot's house. They were gone very soon thereafter.

God will take care of them. We have to concentrate on remaining righteous and remaining godly. So this is what these people out in the Roman Empire, surrounded by these talismans and tokens and overt expressions, they're trying to raise their children in these towns where there are these explicit frescoes and these awful depictions of males and females in states of undress with grotesquely exaggerated features and this constant, you know, every party to take.

What if you get invited to a party by a client? You're trying to be a Christian Jewish businessman out here, and your client says, Well, Tobias, I'd like you to come out here to this party. And you know by going you can improve your business chances, but also by going, here's going to be all of this rife perversion going on around you. And so when you decline, ah, well, so much for you.

You're on the outs. You're not going to have that hail fellow well met. What is this going to do? Well, this requires faith.

I've got to trust God that God is going to enable me to make a living and to provide for my family, despite the fact that I cannot cultivate relationships with anybody because everybody considers it normal and beneficial and a sign of respect to come out and engage in these. And this is a commonplace. We cannot even imagine, as gross as our culture has gotten, it's nothing like it was in the Roman Empire in the days that these people lived.

And so Peter says, Look, let me give you some sound biblical guidance, some truth from God about how to behave. You've got to commit this to the Lord God in heaven. And it takes two areas.

Whether it is authority above or authority below, don't get into this speaking ill thing. This will hook you into and suck you down with these people faster than anything. We have to remember the thing we saw in 1 Peter, disinvest.

He says, If you even connect to this verbally, you'll go down with that ship. Let it go. The angels say, The Lord is going to rebuke you.

And we get this in our corollary to Jude. So we have got to let it go. We've got to not even connect to it mentally.

God knows how to deal with this. I've thought this often when I get robbed. It's happened a few times.

And I think, you know, you feel so helpless. You're violated. Here's something that belongs to you.

And somebody has taken it. I can't find them. I can't threaten them.

I can't get my stuff back. I can't rebuke them verbally and tell them what I think of them. But I have found great comfort personally.

And God knows exactly where they are. So I pray two things. I have a two-edged imprecatory prayer for thieves.

And this is it. I pray, first of all, Lord, I pray that the things that these people took will be a curse and a rot and a rebuke and a source of unhappiness. That it will radiate problems for them from now on.

And they will know that it is this specific thing and this specific action that has caused them no end of trouble and problems and make them sorry that they ever even thought to take it. And secondly, use that misery and use that discomfort to bring them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ or if by some chance they are a believer, to bring them back to yourself. Use this as a change point, as a turning point.

Bounce them against the hard rock of this act against one of your own and taking provision that you have made and gifts that you have given and they have taken it and it is an offense against you and make them miserable over it and use that misery to bring them to yourself. Use it as a turning point. Help them to come to you because isn't this what God wants? It is not the will of God that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

So I get great satisfaction out of praying that they will be as miserable as they can possibly be. And I also get great satisfaction in asking God to use that misery as a means of showing them the emptiness of that way of life and the futility of that sort of action and bring them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Wouldn't it be great to meet somebody that robbed you years down the road and they said, you know what, in a way robbing you was the best thing that ever happened to me because that made me so miserable I had to go on a spiritual search and I found the Lord Jesus Christ.

You could embrace that person. You could easily forgive them and say, look, if taking the stereo out of my car brought you to Jesus Christ, take the whole car. Seriously.

But this is the way we have to apply the kinds of things that Peter is giving to us here. This is practical truth. Peter is not an embellisher or a teller of idle tales.

He is speaking to people who desperately need this truth to live in the environment in which they are immersed and they are trying to raise their children. They are trying to live a life under the Lord. And he says, look, this isn't the first time this has pertained.

This goes back to the earliest days of history and look how God has cared for His people. Look at Noah and his family. Look at Lot.

And Lot survived. But also look at the dangers inherent in that situation. It is a hard thing not to be infected, not to be tainted.

So when he brings up these examples, he doesn't say, look at the Israelites who came out of Egypt and got delivered from all that Isis worship and on worship and whatever else. He uses specific examples. And he's going to use another example as we go forward.

When he says, these like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed speak evil of things they do not understand. They are causing destruction. They are causing harm.

They are wreaking havoc. And they don't even understand what they're doing. And will utterly perish in their own corruption.

And this isn't something we should be happy about. What a tragedy that a soul made in the image of God, that someone that the Lord Jesus Christ died to save is going to perish mired in their own corruption. It's tragic.

And we should be in prayer for these people. It's easy to look and condemn the actions and so on. But look at the people that are involved.

The Lord Jesus Christ shed His blood for every single one of these people. And who is going to pray for them if we don't? They are going to receive the wages of unrighteousness as those who counted pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you.

This is the old song. I've quoted it a dozen times. They smile in your face all the time.

They're trying to take your place. Backstabbers. They carouse with you.

They're trying to get you to join the party. And these people that Peter is writing to have to make this decision. How much contact can I abide with these people? To what extent can I even engage in business or engage in social contact? Because their whole lifestyle is so characterized by this depravity and perversity.

Well, Peter is going to talk about that in this next section. And we're going to get some very helpful truth from God on how to live our lives in the midst of the kind of culture that we have become so used to it that we almost have to remind ourselves of how bad it has gotten. Because it inured to it.

After a while, I mean, how many four-letter words are going to be said on the TV before we switch it off? We say, well, you know, if I switch it off every time I hear a four-letter word, I can't watch anything. Well, there you go. An awful lot of good books.

And I've been doing a lot more book reading these days because there's very little on the

television that you can even watch. And even if you're watching something good, then you've got to mute the commercials and turn your eyes, avert your eyes from the commercials. It's just horrific.

And in every other area of life, you know, you can't listen to drive time radio because people are making racy comments and innuendo jokes. And you're trying to get the traffic and these guys are cracking wise and making these crude references. It's everywhere.

In the workplace, in the educational environment. Where can you go and get away from this? Well, fellowship of church is one place. And speaking the truth to one another in love is a wonderful respite and refreshment and oasis from the desert of what is around us.

But Peter is giving us very practical, very timely, very applicable truth that we must take to heart if we are not going to fall, if we are not going to fail. And it is easy to fail. It is hard to persevere.

But that's why God leaves us in this world because as we do see our faith tested, it produces patience. It produces steadiness. It produces direction and commitment and the kinds of things that we are going to need in the days that remain to us in this life and in the ages that are coming up.

God is hardening us. He is tempering us. You don't get a hard tempered blade without heating it white hot and then jamming it into the water.

It is a trauma. It is a trial by fire. But look at what it produces.

And that sharp sword of the Word of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit is our strength and our armament, both defensive and offensive. And Peter is wasting no words here. Every single phrase, every single idea that he introduces is essential for these people as much as it is for us in this day and time.

So we'll pick up here in the middle of chapter 2 next week and we'll close now in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for providing for us these essential doctrines and principles and promises that are so essential to our spiritual health and sustenance. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will minister them to our souls, encourage us, strengthen us, and sustain us for the tasks we have been assigned.

May each of us find personally as well as collectively as a group the strength and the shining light of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who endured so much for us that we can endure these things for Him and for you and that our lives as a result will reflect your glory both now and in the ages to come. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.