

LESSON 23 (Second Epistle of Peter - Lesson 7). – December 8, 1888.

2 PETER 2 : 10-22.

1. WHAT does the apostle Peter say of the character of the false teachers who in the last days shall cause many to err from the truth? 2 Peter 2 : 10, 12, 13, 14.

2. What shows their contempt for authority? Verse 10; Jude 8, 10.

3. How does their conduct in this respect contrast with that of beings who are really great? 2 Peter 2 : 11.

4. What example of Christ's have we concerning speaking evil even of the wicked? Jude 9.

5. What positive commandment have we concerning our attitude toward those holding high positions? Rom. 13 :1; 1 Tim. 2 :1, 2.

6. Are we at liberty to make an exception in the case of wicked rulers? 1 Tim. 2 : 1, 2; Titus 3 : 1, 2.

7. Whose example does the apostle say these false teachers follow ? 2 Peter 2 : 15; Jude 11.

8. Relate in brief the circumstances of Balaam's connection with the children of Israel. See Numbers, chapters 22, 23, 24.

9. What is said of the instability of such ones, and of their final end? 2 Peter 2 :17; Jude 12, 13.

10. By what means do they allure souls to destruction? 2 Peter 2 : 18.

11. What do they promise those who follow them? Verse 19.

12. Yet into what bondage do they bring their dupes? John 8 : 34

13. To what are people made subject through fear of death? Heb. 2 : 14, 15.

14. What is it that causes death and the fear of it? Rom. 5 :12.

15. Then what is it that brings men into bondage?

16. Who alone can give freedom? Ps. 102 : 19, 20; Isa. 61 : 1.

17. Where alone is true liberty found? Ps. 119 :45; John 8 :32.

18. What profit is it to a man to be freed from the pollutions of the world, if he afterwards returns to them? 2 Peter 2 : 20, 21.

19. Then what should be done by each one who has come to the knowledge of Christ? 2 Peter 1: 10.

NOTES.

"THEY are not afraid to speak of evil dignities." The dignities, or, more literally, glories, here referred to are doubtless supernatural powers, whether good or bad. The Syriac has it, "They shudder not with awe while they blaspheme." The meaning evidently is that these presumptuous, licentious teachers of what they claim is religion, have no regard for authority. This is shown by the first part of the verse, where it is said that they "despise government." There is no special class of people to whom the specifications of this chapter will apply, except Spiritualists. Not that all Spiritualists are actually openly immoral; but there is not one who does not hold to doctrines that naturally lead to immorality. They teach that man is himself a part of God, and so is amenable to no power but himself; that he is a law to himself, and is his own judge. Now it makes no difference how much men prate about culture, refinement, elevation, and morality, when they shut themselves off from the only Source of morality. When men teach 'that the impulses of their own natures are the only, law to be followed, they must eventually land in the pit of corruption.

BUT when men despise the government of God, it is but a step to the despising of all human authority. Indeed, when men do not regard the claims of God, whatever obedience they render to human laws is due solely to fear of immediate punishment. In the Bible, honor to earthly kings is placed next to the fear of God. Says Peter, "Fear God. Honor the king." 1 Peter 2 : 17. And the commandment to ancient Israel was: "Thou shalt not revile God, nor curse a ruler of thy people." Ex. 22 : 28, Revised Version. It is worthy of note that most Spiritualists are open sympathizers with anarchy. Respect for authority is the prime factor in true religion. The man who is not afraid to speak evil of those who are in authority, who rails at those who are in official position, whether in Heaven, or in earthly Governments, is a dangerous man. He may not do any great evil, because of lack of opportunity; but once let him have an opportunity, without the fear of physical punishment to deter him, and there is nothing to restrain him from going to the greatest lengths. It is a bad sign to see a man railing at even a wicked ruler. When Peter wrote, "Honor the king," and Paul wrote, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers" (Rom. 13 : 1), wicked kings were reigning. But they occupied the place of authority, and their official position was to be respected, however wicked they might be.

SAYS the apostle: "They allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error." A man always falls, if he does fall, in the direction toward which he leans. Says Christ: "From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness," etc. Mark 7 : 21, 22. Now with these propensities existing naturally in the heart, it inevitably follows that when a man heeds the words of those who "despise government," he will fall to the lowest depths of vice. So the apostle continues: "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage." These false teachers, and their name nowadays is legion, talk a great deal about "liberty." They refuse to be bound down by laws. They tell their dupes to assert their godlike power and be free. It was thus that Satan tempted Eve. "Ye shall be like God," said he, and he made her believe that the just law of God was arbitrary, and devised solely for the purpose of keeping man in an inferior position. Too late she found out the baseness of such a charge. "The bondage of corruption" is the worst bondage conceivable. Even in this life, men find that liberty is found only in obedience to law. Daniel Wise truly said that "perfect liberty is perfect obedience to a perfect law." Law is the best friend that man has. And "the glorious liberty of the sons of God "will be shared only by such as "keep the law of God." They will have the freedom of God's universe throughout eternity, while to those who seek liberty in following their own devices, is reserved "the blackness of darkness forever."

Ellen White Notes Compiled:

#1, #2 The apostle Peter distinctly points out the class which will be manifested in these days. 2 Peter 2:10-14: "But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord. But these, as natural brute beasts made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption, and shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the daytime. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you; having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls; a heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children." {RH, April 15, 1875 par. 2}

God, in his word, has placed his stamp upon the heresies of spiritualism as he placed his mark upon Cain. The godly need not be deceived if they are students of the Scriptures and obedient to follow the plain path marked out for them in the word of God. {RH, April 15, 1875 par. 3}

#3 "The teaching of every true ambassador for Christ is a most solemn, serious matter now. We are engaged in a warfare which will never close until the final decision is made for all eternity. Let every disciple of Christ be reminded that "we fight not against flesh and blood; but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." O, there are eternal interests involved in this conflict, there must be no surface work, no cheap experience, to meet this issue. 'The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust to the day of judgment to be punished:....whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord.' {KC 34.5}

#4 As a people we must stand as did the world's Redeemer. When in controversy with Satan in regard to the body of Moses, Christ durst not bring against him a railing accusation. He had every provocation to do this, and Satan was disappointed because he could not arouse in Christ a spirit of retaliation. Satan was ready to misinterpret everything that was done by Jesus; and the Saviour would give him no occasion, not the semblance of an excuse. He would not turn from His straightforward course of truth in order to follow the wanderings and twistings and turnings and prevarications of Satan. {9T 239.3}

We read in the prophecy of Zechariah that when Satan with all his synagogue stood up to resist the prayers of Joshua the high priest, and to resist Christ, who was about to show decided favor to Joshua: "The Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" Zechariah 3:2. {9T 240.1}

#5 The original apostasy began in a disbelief and denial of the truth. We are to fix the eye of faith steadfastly upon Jesus. When the days come, as they surely will, in which the law of God is made void, the zeal of the true and loyal should rise with the emergency, and should be the more warm and decided, and their testimony should be the more positive and unflinching. But we are to do nothing in a defiant spirit, and we shall not if our hearts are fully surrendered to God. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore

to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor." "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work." {An Appeal to Our Ministers and Conference Committees, 10.1}

#6 He bids Titus to instruct the church that while they should trust to the merits of Christ for salvation, divine grace, dwelling in their hearts, will lead to the faithful performance of all the duties of life. "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men. For we ourselves also were sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men." {RH, April 26, 1881 par. 16}

#7 "Six days may work be done; but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord: whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed." Those who, having once observed the Sabbath, refuse to acknowledge its claims, and dishonor their Creator, that they may do their own work, are classed among those who "have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness." {Ms113-1899}

#8 This is intended as a warning to the people of God living in the last days. If they follow after righteousness and true holiness, if they keep all of God's commandments, Satan and his agents will not be permitted to overcome them. All the opposition of their bitterest foes will prove powerless to destroy or uproot the vine of God's own planting. But Satan understands what Balaam learned by sad experience, that there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither divination against Israel while iniquity is not cherished among them; and his power and influence will ever be employed to mar their unity and defile the purity of their characters. His snares are laid in a thousand ways to weaken their power for good. God has blessed his commandment-keeping people, and all the opposition and falsehoods that may be brought against them will only strengthen those who stand firmly in defense of the faith once delivered to the saints. But if those who profess to be the depositaries of God's law become transgressors of that law, his protecting care will be withdrawn, and many will fall through perverseness and licentiousness. Then we shall indeed be unable to stand before our enemies. But if his people remain separate and distinct from the world, as a nation who do righteousness, God will be their defense, and no weapons formed against them shall prosper. {RH, November 10, 1885 par. 21}

#9 "These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity," boasting of their light, their knowledge, and their love of the truth, "they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. {Ms9-1880}

There are many who profess to know Christ, "but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." "These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they

feast with you, feeding themselves without fear; clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots." There are many who can make excellent speeches, speak smooth things, and prophesy deceit; but they are not to be received simply because of their smooth words and fair speeches. It is an easy matter to talk. The question is, What fruit do they bear unto holiness? It is the fruit that testifies to the character of the tree. To say and to do not is to be as a tree full of pretentious leaves, yet barren and fruitless. The punishment that awaits the hypocrite will be unmingled with mercy. Those who profess to know Christ, and in works have denied him, have passed themselves off as gold, but in the sight of God they have been as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. In professing faith in the gospel, the hypocrite may gain the confidence of men, but nothing short of doing the sayings of Christ will give him an entrance into the strait gate, into the way cast up for the ransomed of the Lord to walk in,--the only way that leads from earth to heaven. {ST, July 18, 1892 par. 3}

#10 "These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity," boasting of their light, their knowledge and their love of the truth, "they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error." {5T 145.2}

In this age of corruption when our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour, I see the necessity of lifting my voice in warning. "Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." There are many who possess brilliant talents who wickedly devote them to the service of Satan. What warning can I give to a people who profess to have come out from the world and to have left its works of darkness? to a people whom God has made the repositories of His law, but who, like the pretentious fig tree, flaunt their apparently flourishing branches in the very face of the Almighty, yet bear no fruit to the glory of God? Many of them cherish impure thoughts, unholy imaginations, unsanctified desires, and base passions. God hates the fruit borne upon such a tree. Angels, pure and holy, look upon the course of such with abhorrence, while Satan exults. Oh, that men and women would consider what is to be gained by transgressing God's law! Under any and every circumstance, transgression is a dishonor to God and a curse to man. We must regard it thus, however fair its guise, and by whomsoever committed. {5T 146.1}

#11 "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage." Verses 12-19. {Ms9-1880}

I see the necessity in this age of corruption, when our adversary the devil is as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour, of lifting my voice of warning, "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." There are many men with brilliant talents who wickedly prostitute them to the service of Satan. What warnings can I give to a people who profess to have come out from the world and to have left its works of darkness? What warnings can I give to a people whom God has made the repositories of His law and who like the pretentious fig tree flaunt their apparently flourishing branches in the very face of the Almighty, yet bear no fruit to the glory of God? They cherish impure thoughts, unholy imaginings, unsanctified desires, and base passions. {Ms9-1880}

#12 These words offended the Pharisees. The nation's long subjection to a foreign yoke, they disregarded, and angrily exclaimed, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest Thou, Ye shall be made free?" Jesus looked upon these men, the slaves of malice, whose thoughts were bent upon revenge, and sadly answered, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." They were in the worst kind of bondage,--ruled by the spirit of evil. {DA 466.2}

#13 That he might accomplish his purpose of love, he became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. "As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." {SW, October 22, 1907 par. 2}

#14 "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. . . . Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. . . . Even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." Adam's fall in the Garden of Eden caused all to sin; but in the Garden of Gethsemane Christ drank the bitter cup of suffering and death, that whosoever believes in Him may not perish, but have everlasting life. {ST, June 13, 1900 par. 6}

#15 Sin always brings darkness and bondage; but right-doing will bring peace and holy joy. {Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists, 158.1}

#16 In the years that followed the occupation of the Promised Land, the beneficent designs of Jehovah for the salvation of the heathen were almost wholly lost sight of, and it became necessary for Him to set forth His plan anew. "All the ends of the world," the psalmist was inspired to sing, "shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Thee." "Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God." "The heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth Thy glory." "This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord. For He hath looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death; to declare the name of the Lord in Zion, and His praise in Jerusalem; when the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord." Psalm 22:27; 68:31; Psalm 102:15, 18-22. {PK 370.1}

Christ was fulfilling the commission given Him of His Father, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me," He said, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison for them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, ... to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that he might be glorified." {Ms128-1899}

#17 But not so did prophets and apostles regard the holy law of God. Said David, "I will walk at liberty; for I seek thy precepts." [Psalm 119:45.] The apostle James, who wrote after the death of Christ, refers to the decalogue as the "royal law," and the "perfect law of liberty." [James 2:8; 1:25.] And the Revelator, half a century after the crucifixion, pronounces a blessing upon them "that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." [Revelation 22:14.] {GC88 466.2}

The means by which we can overcome the wicked one is that by which Christ overcame,--the power of the word. God does not control our minds without our consent; but if we desire to know and to do His will, His promises are ours: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching." John 8:32; 7:17, R. V. Through faith in these promises, every man may be delivered from the snares of error and the control of sin. {DA 258.5}

#18 The prayers of congregations may be offered to God with a round of ceremonies; but if they are offered in self-righteousness, God is not honored by them. The Lord declares, "I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works; for they shall not profit thee." In spite of all their display, Satan comes in with a troop of evil angels, and takes possession of the garnished habitation. The apostle writes, "If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they had known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." {RH, December 12, 1899 par. 7}

Those who have not sanctified themselves to the Lord are of the class who profess righteousness, but who do not maintain good works. These are brought to view in the first chapter of second Peter. There are many like the scribes and Pharisees, who, lacking these things, are "blind, and can not see afar off," who have forgotten that they were purged from their old sins. Because they do not gather with Christ, they lose their impressions for good. Unfaithful stewards, they do not guard their own house. If those who have been under the special conviction of the Spirit of God, who have known the truth, and understood the reasons of our faith, would be blessed by the means provided at infinite cost, they will not cease their fervent prayers until the Sun of Righteousness abides in their hearts by faith. {RH, December 12, 1899 par. 8}

#19 Sanctification is believed by many to be instantaneously accomplished. "Only believe," say they, "and the blessing is yours." No further effort on the part of the receiver is supposed to be required. But the Bible teaches that sanctification is progressive. The Christian will feel the promptings of sin, but he will keep up a constant warfare against it. Here is where Christ's help is needed. Human weakness becomes united to divine strength, and faith exclaims, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." [1 Corinthians 15:57.] Paul exhorts his brethren, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;" [Philippians 2:12.] and concerning himself he declares, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." [Philippians 3:14.] The successive steps in the attainment of Bible sanctification are set before us in the words of Peter: "Giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity." "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." [2 Peter 1:5-7, 10.] This is a daily work, continuing as long as life shall last. {The Spirit of Prophecy Volume Four, 300.1}