

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 24 January 2021. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced, and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

“He Is Able to Deliver Thee”

2 Peter 2:7-9

A couple months ago I began to preach through **2 Peter 2**. In this chapter, the Apostle Peter warns Christians that there will be false prophets and teachers who will rise up (oftentimes from among our own churches), and entice many people to depart from the truth. These false prophets are what we call “apostates”—people who “depart” from God and His Word, and who entice others to depart from Him, as well. Regardless of how successful these false teachers may seem to be *in this world*, God assures us that damnation is coming to them. To drive home this point, Peter gave three examples of ancient apostates who departed from God. First, there were the fallen angels who corrupted the human race before the Flood, and who were sent *early* to the abyss of the Lake of Fire. Secondly, there were the wicked people of Noah’s day, who rejected God’s offer of salvation, and perished in the Flood. Thirdly, there were the wicked people of Sodom and Gomorrah, who perished with fire and brimstone from heaven.

Peter makes no apology for saying that judgment *will come* to those who depart from the living God. Here in **chapter 2**, God has set forth these apostates as an everlasting reminder of His wrath against sin. Yet, in this same passage, we find hope. While reminding us of the damnation that is coming to apostates, God also reminds us of the *deliverance* that He gives to His people. In **verse 5**, we read about how God saved **Noah and his family** from the destruction of the Flood. In **verse 6**, we also read about how God saved **Lot** from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Now, in **verses 7-9**, we find that Peter has some words of encouragement for *us*, today! Just as God delivered Noah and Lot, He knows how to deliver us.

But *from what* does he deliver us? Well, first of all, we know that God has already delivered us from the *penalty* of sin, which is eternity in the Lake of Fire. Someday He will also deliver us from the very *presence* of sin, on that day when He will raise us up from the grave, and give us immortal bodies that are free of the sin nature. God has *already* delivered us! Yet, at the same time, we realise that the Resurrection Day hasn’t come yet. God sees the resurrection as though it were already accomplished; but from our limited perspective, the resurrection is still “in the sweet by and by.” For now, we are still living “in the nasty now and now.” In this world, we are surrounded by sin and temptation every day; and we find it difficult to escape its influence. Many Christians find themselves continually discouraged, and frequently stumbling into sin. Can we really overcome besetting sins in our lives? Yes, we can! God has promised a way of escape from temptation. The Lord Himself taught us to pray, **“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”** These are not empty words: they are reality. This is a precious promise from God. Believers *can* be delivered from temptation’s power! That is what we will be talking about today, in this message that I have entitled ***He Is Able to Deliver Thee***.

Read 2 Peter 2:7-9.

I. The position and practice of God's people (v. 7-8)

In **verse 7**, Peter gives us a description of an Old Testament believer named Lot. Peter describes him as **“just Lot.”** This word **“just”** can also be translated as “upright; innocent; righteous,” or “holy.” It is the same word that we find in **Genesis 6**, where God described Noah as a **“just man.”** The Hebrew word *yashar* means “just, upright, or righteous.” Just like Lot, Noah was **“just,”** or “righteous” in God’s sight. That was Noah’s legal position before God. In **Hebrews 11:7**, Paul says, **“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”**

How did Noah “inherit” this thing called **“righteousness”**? Paul said that it was **“by faith”**! Because Noah placed his faith in God, and trusted in God’s promise that a Saviour was coming to take away his sin, God gave him the gift of righteousness. God credited His own perfect righteousness to Noah’s account, as though it were Noah’s righteousness. It was upon this legal basis that God, as Judge, was able to accept Noah, even though Noah was a sinner. Noah’s righteousness wasn’t his own righteousness: it was the righteousness of God’s Son, Jesus Christ. Noah *inherited* Christ’s righteousness!

So it was with Lot. And so it is with every true believer who has ever lived. Make no mistake about it: Lot was far from being a perfect man! He had deep flaws. Nonetheless, he was a *saved* man. Therefore, God called Lot **“just.”** If you are saved, God calls you **“just,”** as well.

Now, in what way was Lot just? First of all, Lot was just in **position**. He was *called* **“just”** because he had been **“justified”** by God. **“Justified”** means “declared to be righteous.”

Read Galatians 3:6-9.

If you are not sure of whether you are on your way to Heaven, I have good news for you: you *can* be saved, and you can be sure of it! God *can and will* “justify” you (declare you to be righteous) *if* you will repent of your sin, and believe on the Son of God. If you will admit your sinfulness, admit that you can’t save yourself by any good work of your own, and believe that Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection for your sins is all that you need to be saved, God, the righteous Judge, will legally declare you to be **“just,”** and will accept you. He will place on you the robe of His own perfect righteousness, as though it were your own righteousness.

In position before God, Lot was a **“just”** man. However, he was also a just man *in practice*. Now, again, this does not mean that Lot didn’t sin. He *did* sin. In fact, as the years went by, he became increasingly worldly-minded; and he made some very bad decisions in his life. His first step in the wrong direction was when his Uncle Abraham offered him the choice of taking his flocks to the Jordan Valley, or to the less fertile highlands to the west of the Jordan Valley. Lot chose the well-watered plains of Jordan; but he really should have let his uncle have the better land. After all, he owed a great deal to his uncle. God had blessed Lot, in large measure, *because of* his closeness to Abraham; and Lot knew this very well. Yet, prosperity and worldly advancement were important to Lot. He selfishly chose the well-watered plain of Jordan; and Abraham, being the gentleman that he was, graciously allowed his nephew to go there, while he and his wife and servants went up into the hills above Jordan.

Lot's next bad decision was to move into the city of Sodom. After he had lived in the plains of Jordan for a while, the city of Sodom (which was a short distance away) began to look attractive to him. To be sure, Sodom offered lucrative business opportunities; but it was an exceedingly wicked place. Lot should never have brought his family near this city. He knew that it was an extremely evil environment. Yet, his desire for worldly gain trumped whatever concern he might have had for his family's spiritual safety. Tragically, Sodom proved to be disastrous for his family. His wife became so worldly-minded, that when the angels warned Lot that God was going to bring down fire upon Sodom, she couldn't bear to leave. (In fact, none of them could.) The angels had to grab them by the hand and *drag* them out of the city. Then, as they were fleeing Sodom, Lot's wife turned around, and longingly looked back at the city (just as God had told her *not* to do); and as punishment, she died by turning into a pillar of salt. Centuries later, Jesus gave the simple warning: ***"Remember Lot's wife."***

However, Lot's wife wasn't the only member of Lot's family that perished. Lot had at least two married daughters, and two sons-in-law, who died in the inferno of Sodom, because they refused to believe Lot's warning that destruction was coming. Apparently, they didn't believe that Sodom deserved God's judgment. They thought their old pop was crazy! As for Lot's two *unmarried* daughters, they did escape from Sodom; but they later committed shameful immorality. How could they do such a thing, after God had been so merciful to them? It's simple: the immoral spirit of Sodom had affected their hearts. Even *Lot* was affected by that spirit. In a moment of fear, he was willing (or, at least, *pretended* to be willing) to sacrifice his own daughters' purity in exchange for his family's safety. Furthermore, Lot was very slow to run from the city. Just like his wife and daughters, he had to be *dragged* out of the city!

Now, to hear this description of Lot, one would think that Lot wasn't even saved. Yet, we know that he *was* saved, because God tells us so! In many ways, Lot failed spiritually. Nevertheless, there *was* some genuine fruit of righteousness in his life. Why? Because he had a genuine relationship with God, by faith. Let's examine the "fruit" in Lot's life.

Read Genesis 19:1-5, 10-16.

Lot's Uncle Abraham was renowned throughout Canaan for his hospitality to the poor and needy, and to strangers; and we see this same character trait in Lot, as well. Thinking that these strangers were men, Lot brought them to his house, gave them food and lodging, and tried to protect them from the wicked men outside. He also tried to warn his daughters and sons-in-law of the judgment that was about to befall Sodom. Now, if Lot had built much higher walls of spiritual protection around his daughters years earlier, they might have listened to their dad that night; nevertheless, he *did* try to warn them. In **2 Peter 2**, Peter points out another evidence of God's presence in Lot's life, as well. He says that Lot's soul was ***"vexed"*** by the grievous wickedness that he saw all around him. **(Read 2 Peter 2:8 again.)**

Lot was deeply troubled by the evil that surrounded him. He never "got used to it." He didn't say, "Well, that's just the way it is these days. *Everyone* is sleeping around with everyone else, and committing fornication, and adultery, and homosexuality, and transvestitism, and paedophilia. *Everyone* is bowing down to idols, and doing child sacrifices to Baal. *Everyone* is using filthy, blasphemous language. *Everyone* is lying, and stealing, and extorting, and cheating, and giving and taking bribes, and practicing witchcraft and necromancy, and

worshipping material things. *Everyone* loves blood, and gore, and violence. Who am I to judge them?” No, his soul loathed the sin he saw around him, and recoiled from it.

That, my friends, is the mark of a true believer. The Spirit of God imparts a sensitivity to sin in the heart of a true believer, and brings about a change of thinking, and a desire to do right. When someone claims to be a Christian, yet doesn't seem to be bothered by the sin of the culture around him, there is good reason to doubt that person's salvation. My friend, do *you* have true, saving faith in Christ? Or is your profession of faith dead, hollow, and empty?

II. The deliverance of God's people (v. 9)

(Read 2 Peter 2:9.) Lot was a **“just”** man. That means that he was saved. Likewise, all we who have placed our faith in Christ are called **“just.”** We have the sure hope of spending eternity with God. This is a wonderful promise! Yet, here in **verse 9**, we are given *another* wonderful promise: “The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations.”

Now, in Scripture, there are three aspects of sin, from which God promises to deliver His people. (You can remember them by the letter “p.”) God delivers believers from the **penalty** of sin; from the **power** of sin; and from the **presence** of sin. The **penalty** of sin is the second death—an eternity of separation from God, in the Lake of Fire. For the Christian, the penalty of sin was removed forever at the moment he was saved. A true child of God no longer has to worry about whether or not he is on his way to heaven. **Romans 8:1** says, **“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”** Every Christian has been delivered, once and for all, from sin's penalty.

However, here in **2 Peter 2:9**, Peter isn't talking about deliverance from the **penalty** of sin: he's talking about deliverance from the **power and presence** of sin. For God's people, the **penalty** of sin has been removed; but sin's **power** and **presence** are still there. Temptation has **power** in our lives because of the Fall. Whether we like it or not, we have inherited Adam's sin nature. Also, because sin has entered into our world, its **presence** is all around us. The sin nature is present in your *own* heart; and it is present in everyone around you. Also, Satan's demons are always standing by to help fan the flames of your lusts.

Sounds pretty hopeless, doesn't it? Do we really have a chance of overcoming temptation, when it is both within and without? Can we who know Christ really overcome the power and presence of sinful ways and habits? The answer to that question is: Yes, we *have* been delivered from sin's power; and one day, we *will* be delivered from its presence entirely!

Now, maybe you're thinking, “Great. That's good to hear, pastor; but I'm really struggling with sin issues in my life. *How*, exactly, is deliverance from temptation possible?” Well, that's what we're about to look at. In next week's message, we will talk about the future day when Christians will overcome the very **presence** of sin. For now, though, let's talk about the **power** of sin. *How* is sin's power broken? How can we be delivered from temptation?

First of all, Christians have **already** been delivered from the **power** of sin **through the blood of Christ**. When we sing “There's power in the blood,” we're not merely singing poetic

words. God's Word tells us again and again, that the power of sin has been *broken* by the blood of Christ! It's a done deal! We do not *have* to sin anymore!

Read Revelation 12:10-11.

In **Romans 6:6**, Paul says that our "**old man**" (the old, sinful nature) has been "**crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.**"

Colossians 2:15 says that when Christ died on the cross, He defeated "**principalities and powers...triumphing over them.**" In other words, the power that our old master, Satan, once had over us has been taken away. Christ defeated sin, *and Satan*, at the cross. This was all made possible by the blood that Jesus shed for us.

Why, then, do we Christians still struggle with sin? It's simple: the *presence* of sin is still with us! We will have the sin nature in us for as long as we are in our mortal bodies. *However*, the good news is that we don't have to *yield* to our sin nature anymore, because Christ has given us the power to overcome sin. We *will* have victory as long as we yield to Christ, and trust in His mighty power. According to **Romans 6**, sin is our master no longer. Before we were saved, we followed the dictates of our sinful, fleshly desires all day long—and we didn't even realise it! We walked "**according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.**" We fulfilled "**the desires of the flesh and of the mind.**" But now, through the blood of Christ, we not only can be *cleansed* from sin when we *do* stumble, but we can keep from stumbling in the first place! As long as we trust in the power of Christ's shed blood, we can overcome sin.

Secondly, Christians can overcome temptation **through the Word of God**. In **Revelation 12:11**, God says that His people have overcome Satan "**by word of their testimony.**" Is the Word of God really that powerful? Yes, it is! We have simply to believe God's Word, and claim its promises! Peter says that we have been given "**exceeding great and precious promises**"; and by these promises, we have been made "**partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.**"

Our Saviour, Jesus Christ, personally demonstrated the power of the Word of God when *He* was presented with temptation here on earth. Let's see how He did it.

Read Luke 4:1-13.

What did Jesus tell the devil each time he tried to get Him to sin? He said, "**It is written.**" He claimed Scripture! By the way, you'll notice that when Satan approached Jesus the third time, he got sneaky, and quoted Scripture! He quoted **Psalms 91:11-12**—except that he misapplied its meaning, to make it *seem* to support the idea that Jesus should show off His power by jumping off a building! However, Jesus combated Satan at every turn with the Word of God; and He pointed out its *true* sense and meaning.

Brethren, Jesus Christ, our High Priest, was tempted just as you and I are tempted. We cannot excuse our sin by saying that the Lord doesn't understand our struggles. He *does* understand. Of course, sin never had *power* over Jesus, because He did not inherit a sin nature from Adam. And, of course, there was no *presence* of sin in His heart, because He was without a sin nature. However, the *outward presence* of sin was all around Him. He was surrounded by sinners doing sinful things. The *opportunity* to sin was there for Jesus. Satan did his best to throw the

lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life at Jesus. **Hebrews 4:15** says, “***For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.***” Jesus was tempted as we are; but He overcame temptation with the Word of God.

A pastor friend of mine once told me a story about a sin struggle that his dad had in his early Christian life. Shortly after he was saved, smoking was one of his first big struggles. Having smoked for years, it was habitual for him to reach frequently for that pack of cigarettes in his shirt pocket. However, one day he decided to keep a little pocket New Testament in his shirt pocket, instead of the cigarette pack. Of course, there still was nothing stopping him from going and getting his hands on a cigarette packet—*except* for the Word of God. Whenever he began to feel for a cigarette packet in his shirt pocket, and instead found that New Testament, his conscience would be pricked. He would feel guilty about putting the New Testament back into his pocket unread. So, he would stop and read it; and every time he read it, he found divine promises that he could claim right then and there! It was a struggle; but by constantly reading God’s Word, he overcame the smoking habit completely. Once that step of obedience was taken, he was able to move on in his Christian life. (By the way, God later called him to be a pastor; and he served the Lord as a pastor for many years, until his recent retirement. To this day, he is still faithfully serving the Lord.)

How else can we overcome temptation? We can overcome temptation **by the resurrection power of Christ**. **Philippians 3:10** says, “***That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.***” Let’s see what else Paul had to say about the power of Christ’s resurrection.

Read Ephesians 1:19-21 and 3:20-21.

The power by which Christ arose from the dead is the very same power that enables Christians to overcome temptation! Could there be any greater power than the power to raise a dead body back to life? How can you get more powerful than *that*? You can’t! By the resurrection power of Jesus Christ, Christians *can* prevail over the strongest temptations.

Christian, all the power you need to overcome temptation is available in Jesus Christ. You simply need to yield to Him daily (and hourly), and trust in His divine power. **Do you believe in the resurrection power of Jesus, Christian?** You believed in His power to save your soul when you came to Him for salvation; but do you believe that He can give you the power to *live* for Him? The disciples were challenged with this very question after the resurrection.

Read Acts 1:1-3.

Have you ever stopped to think that Christ’s ministry *started* with a forty-day period, and *ended* with a forty-day period? That is no coincidence. In Scripture, the number 40 is symbolic of a time of trial or testing. Obviously, the first 40 days of Jesus’ ministry was a time of trial for Christ. For forty days, He fasted and prayed, and was tempted by the devil himself. (Of course, Jesus passed the test with a score of 100%!) But what about the last 40 days—those 40 days between Jesus’ resurrection and His ascension back to heaven? Was this *another* time of testing for Jesus? No. Christ had already passed the test, and defeated Satan. That last forty days before Christ’s ascension was a time of testing and trial for His *disciples*. During that time, Jesus appeared to hundreds of His disciples, and challenged them to test

Him, and prove that He was truly risen. He challenged the doubting Thomas to touch the scars in His hands and side, and to see that He was alive. He challenged the 11 Apostles to touch Him, and to eat meat with Him, and to see that He wasn't merely a spirit, but flesh and bone. He put Peter to a test, too. He asked Peter whether he truly loved Him; and when Peter said, "Yes, Lord," Jesus simply replied, "**Feed my lambs.**" Three times Jesus repeated this command; and then, He informed Peter that one day he would die a martyr's death. He didn't tell Peter when, or how, he would die; but in the meantime, He told Peter, "**Follow thou me.**"

By the end of those 40 days, these men had been utterly transformed. They weren't running and cowering from persecution anymore. They were powerhouses! They turned the world upside down for Jesus Christ. Why? Because they had seen the risen Christ, *and knew He was alive!* Every time they were tempted to settle back into a lazy, passive, weak, non-committal, fair-weather, "I'll try" Christianity, they remembered that **Jesus is alive!**

Jesus is still alive, brethren; and He lives *for us!* At this very moment, He is sitting at the right hand of God in heaven, where He is interceding and pleading for us. We who know Christ as Saviour are going to stand before His judgment seat one day, and give account to Him; but until that day, He has given us all the power we need to live for Him. We don't have to stand before Him in shame because we did very little for Him. The power by which Christ arose from the dead is the same power that can enable us to live for Him. You don't have to see Jesus in the flesh, as the disciples did, in order to be totally sold out and committed to Jesus Christ. You simply need to see Him with the eyes of *faith*. Jesus said, "**Blessed is he that hath not seen, and yet hath believed.**" Christ has given every Christian His indwelling Holy Spirit to empower us to serve Him. Do you believe this, Christian?

All this power is at the Christian's disposal. Sadly, though, we often do not avail of God's power, because we become too attached to things of this world. When this happens, there is a tool that God often uses to deliver us from destructive temptations: and that tool is **pruning**.

Read Genesis 19:15-16, 24-25.

God delivered Lot from temptation *by pruning* him of all his worldly wealth! The Lord literally dragged Lot out of Sodom, and then burned everything he owned to ashes. Lot had been a very wealthy man; but not anymore! Lot lost all his possessions. Now, we might look at this as God's *punishment* upon Lot; but here in **2 Peter 2:7**, God calls it *deliverance!* The destruction of all Lot's earthly possessions was the deliverance that God provided for Lot. Lot loved things of this life, and didn't want to let go of them; so God *relieved* him of those things. In a moment, God took away the worldly possessions that had so crippled his spiritual life.

Sometimes, when our hearts become filled with worldliness, God has to use circumstances in our lives to break us of our love for this world—to wake us up. He does this because He loves us. He does this so that we might once again see our need to trust in His blood, and His Word, and His resurrection power, so that we can overcome sin.

Conclusion: If you know Christ as Saviour, you are "justified" before God. You are accepted in His sight, because Christ has paid your sin debt in full. However, are there things of this world that are stunting your spiritual growth? If so, don't keep hanging onto them! Don't make God have to show you His mercy by *chastising* you. He's going to prune you, even when you *are* walking closely with Him.

He does that regularly. However, let it not be in *chastisement* that He prunes you. God has promised a way of escape from temptation. The Lord promises, ***“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”*** Christian, are you trusting in Christ’s power to deliver you from temptation? Are you trusting in the power of His blood? Are you trusting in the power of His Word? Are you trusting in the power of His resurrection?

Perhaps you are not saved. If so, I urge you to place your faith in Christ! Today’s message about deliverance from temptation cannot even apply to you if you have not been saved. You can’t even begin to overcome sin in your life until you own Jesus as your Lord and Master. If you want to be saved, and be freed from the chains of sin in your life, won’t you respond to Christ’s call today?