

The Lord knows those who are His

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BIG SANDY, Texas—The apostle Paul wrote many helpful words to the younger evangelist Timothy. I especially appreciate some sentences that are found in the second letter in the Bible from Paul to Timothy. The sentences are labeled as 2 Timothy 2:19.

The context is Paul writing about the erroneous teachings of Hymenaeus and Philetus (verses 16-18).

To encourage Timothy, Paul wrote:

- . . . The foundation of God stands sure, having this seal.
- The Lord knows them that are His.
- Let every one that names the name Christ depart from iniquity.

Sheep shots

People sure waste a lot of time trying to do the responsibility of God and Christ.

What do I mean?

Many people from various religious backgrounds (including the Church of God) oftentimes claim to be experts on who is a part of the Body of Christ.

You will hear comments like the following:

- Only people in our church have God's Spirit.
- He is not a Christian or believer.
- He is not part of the bride.
- He is not part of the bride, but he is a bridesmaid.
- He isn't converted.
- He was never converted.

Many people from various religious backgrounds (including the Church of God) oftentimes claim to be experts on who will be in the first resurrection.

You will hear comments like the following:

- He is not a firstfruit.
- He is not part of the 144,000.
- He will have his chance in the second resurrection.
- He had his chance and he will be in the lake of fire.

Why so bold?

Have you ever wondered why people make such bold statements?

They have read some of the verses that identify Jesus as the Judge (like John 5:22, 27 and 2 Corinthians 5:10).

But many use Matthew 7:15-20 to justify their tendency to make such presumptuous statements about people. They quote Jesus saying: By their fruits you shall know them (verse 20).

Many people really believe that this verse justifies their usurping Jesus Christ's responsibility to judge. And you probably can't convince them any differently.

The truth is that everyone will *ultimately* be known by his fruit.

Another truth is that believers would be wise to recognize behavior without making presumptuous statements about a person's standing with God.

- Recognizing behavior is a sign of maturity (Hebrews 5:12-14).
- However, making judgments of a person's standing with God is an act of foolishness (Matthew 7:1-5 and James 2:13).

The real experts

Who are the experts at knowing who is a part of the Body of Christ?

- The Father knows whom He has drawn to the Son (John 6:44).
- The Father knows who has repented and who has received the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).
- Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd of the sheep (John 10:2, 11, 14). The sheep follow His voice (verses 3-4).

Who are the experts at knowing who will be in the first resurrection?

- The Father knows who has His Spirit and those who will be raised from the dead (Romans 8:11).
- Jesus Christ knows those who are His at His coming (1 Corinthians 15:23).
- The Lord knows those who are the dead in Christ who will rise first and those still alive who will be changed (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, he reminded the believers not to be hasty in judgment.

In 1 Corinthians 4:5 Paul said: Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the counsels of the heart, and then every man shall have praise of God.

Sound advice

In conclusion, I will remind you about the last words in 2 Timothy 2:19.

After Paul wrote that the Lord knows those who are His, he wrote: "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

When we let God and His Son do Their job, it helps us to have a clearer focus on our own behavior.

He who has ears to hear let him hear.