

Do Christians Ever Behave Like Hogs and Dogs?

Keeping the Gospel Clearly of Grace While Exhorting Christians to Live Changed Lives

(II Pet. 2:20-22) “For 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. ²¹For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. ²²But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.”

I. Peter is comparing people who have been misled by false teachers with dogs and pigs.

a. To many commentators, these verses appear to be speaking to born again Christians who have lost their salvation.

b. This is a favorite verse for those who believe that you can lose your salvation.

1. Let us begin a study to see if losing salvation is in view here

2. We can see that Peter clearly believed in the security of the believer (Lk. 10:20; John 13:10; Acts 10:43-48; 11:16-18; 15:7-11; I Pet. 1:23-25; II Pet 1:9; 3:8-13).

c. Some scholars harmonize this passage with Eternal Security by affirming that these deceived people were not true believers. We will see that this is a false conclusion.

II. The False Teachers (Vss. 18-19) cf. 1-17.

a. They speak great swelling words of emptiness.

b. They allure through the lusts of the flesh by means of licentiousness.

c. They promise liberty to these gullible saints.

d. They themselves are slaves of corruption.

e. This passage is speaking of unbelieving false teachers—not all false teachers ... (2:17) “These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them.” However, Christians often do fall into error and represent false gospel and doctrine.

1. Such was the case of the Apostle Peter Himself as well as Barnabas (Gal. 2:11-14).

III. The Deceived Christians: Have these dogs and pigs ever been saved?

a. They have escaped the pollutions of this world (vs. 20) *“If they have escaped the corruption of the world.”* Does this describe a saint?

1. Cf. 1:4 *“Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corrupt in the world caused by evil desires.”*
2. Saints received the divine nature through the seed of the Word of God when they received Christ by faith (I Pet. 1:23; I Jn. 3:9).

b. They have escaped through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (I Pet. 1:3) *“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.”* The word *knowledge* is used exclusively of believers in Second Peter (cf. 1:2, 3, 5, 6).

1. Note the unfruitful Christian in (II Pet. 1:8, 9) *“For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.”*
2. Luke 1:76-77 *“And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of sins.”*
3. I Cor. 15:34 (KJV) *“Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame”*
4. II Cor. 4:6 *“For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”*
- 5: Phil. 3:7-9 *“But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.”*
6. I Tim. 2:3-4 *“This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth”*

c. They are again entangled in the pollutions of the world and are overcome... Can Christians be overcome by evil in this life? Let us look at Lot and some NT examples... Peter urged his believing readers to be diligent to keep from stumbling and falling (1:5, 10; 2:18-22; 3:14, 17). Yet, Peter never questioned the true faith of his readers (1:1).

1. II Pet. 2:7 “and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men...”

2. Rom. 12:21 to Christians: “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” Why such advice if this cannot happen to saints?

3. II Cor. 7:1 (KJV) to Christians: “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” Why would promise possessors ever need to cleanse themselves from filthiness? Christ does the cleaning that saved us but the Christian is to keep himself clean (practical sanctification) in order to avoid the chastisement of God.

4. The Apostle Paul urged the Galatians to not be *entangled again with the yoke of bondage* (5:1 KJV).

5. The Apostle Paul described a committed Christian soldier as one who does not *entangle himself with the affairs of this life*... (II Tim. 2:4 KJV)..

6. Throughout II Peter, the apostle is concerned that believers would fall into a sinful lifestyle through the wiles of these false teachers...1:5 “For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge... 1:10 “Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall,... 3:14 “So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him... 3:17 “Therefore, dear friends, since you already this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position.”

i. Peter is warning Christians of judgment here and now. He does not refer to eternal judgment and condemnation in reference to the deceived saints.

ii. “The latter end is worse than the beginning” refers to a person’s experience this side of the grave. i.e. Matt. 12:43-45 “When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, I will

return to the house I left. When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition [still this side of the grave] of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation.”

iii. Pilate used this turn of a phrase as a reference to a worsening condition on temporal earth this side of the grave...Matt. 27:64 *“So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first.”*

IV. (2:21) *“It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them.”*

a. Turning from the way of righteousness equals turning from the holy commandment... (II Pet. 2:2) *“Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute... (II Pet. 3:1, 2) “Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.”... (II Pet. 3:17-18a) “Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...”*

1. Once a Saint suffers a major fall like this, his sense of well being and his behavior can be worse than if he had never begun the journey of committed discipleship.

b. The path of righteousness equals the road of discipleship and intimate fellowship (Lk. 14:26-33) and not the conversion experience itself. At conversion we receive the very righteousness of Christ (II Pet 1:1) *“Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours:”*

c. Ps. 17:5 *“My steps have held to your paths; my feet have not slipped.”*

d. Ps. 23:3 *“he restores my soul. He guides me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.”*

e. Ps. 25:4 *“Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths (24:10) “All the ways of the LORD are loving and faithful for those who keep the demands of his covenant.”*

f. Ps. 119:35 *“Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight.”*

g. Prov. 28:8, 9 (KJV) *“He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path. (vs. 20) “That thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of righteousness.”*

h. Prov. 4:18, 26 *“The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day...(26) Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm.”*

i. Isa. 2:3 *“Many peoples will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.’ The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem”... (26:7) “The path of the righteous is level; O upright One, you make the way of the righteous smooth.”*

j. Micah 4:2 *“Many nations will come and say, ‘come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.’ The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”*

k. Malachi 2:9 *“So I have caused you to be despised and humiliated before all the people, because you have not followed my ways but have shown partiality in matters of the law.”*

l. I Cor. 4:17 *“For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.”*

m. A Christian cannot fall from salvation but he can fall from the path of righteousness and, make no mistake, it will be Christians who will do this falling. (II Pet. 3:17, 18a) *“Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”*

n. But, if a person knows the way of righteousness in his daily experience, he knows Christ intimately (I Jn. 2:3-11).

V. How can it possibly be better for a saint to not have known the “way of righteousness” than to know it and turn aside from it.

- a. **We are not speaking of the imputed righteousness of Christ. Nothing could be better than this.**
- b. **But, if the “way of righteousness” is the path of righteousness and the path of committed discipleship and of obeying Christ’s commandments to follow sound teaching and godliness, than a person could actually say that life was better before I became a committed disciple.**
- c. **Because we are speaking of the potential calamity and chastisement of God in this life (temporal), a Christian’s life experience can become worse than death itself. How can something in life be worse than death? Check the Bible...(Lamentations 4:6, 9) “⁶*The punishment of my people is greater than that of Sodom, which was overthrown in a moment without a hand turned to help her. Those killed by the sword are better off than those who die of famine; racked with hunger, they waste away for lack of food from the field.*”**

VI. What are the vomit of the dog and the mud of the pig?

a. **In this particular context, it is the error of pure antinomianism. Does a brother in Christ ever error from the truth or return to the sins of the flesh? (James 5:19, 20a) “*My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death*” ... (I Cor. 5:11) “*But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.*”**

1. **Why bother to warn Christians to *Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh* (Gal. 5:16 KJV) if a true believer cannot return to fulfilling the lust of the flesh?**

b. **These proverbial expressions look back to II Peter 1:9 where Peter says that such believers had forgotten that they had been *cleansed from his past sins*.**

1. **Once a believer ceases to walk with Christ and begins to walk in darkness or blindness, he has forgotten who he is and has allowed his old habits to take center stage.**

Conclusion: God intends for backslidden Christians to be more miserable in their current or temporal life’s experience than actual lost people. God will have them conclude that life here on earth was better before I got saved. (Speaking of a this-side-the-grave perspective).