

# Freedom, Then Loss

2 Peter 2:1-22

Today, we will again address the matter of the “false teachers” who are among us, their intentions towards us, were they once saved but lost their salvation. And can they possibly cause those of us who listen to their message to lose our salvation? Listen to these words,

<sup>1</sup> But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction. <sup>2</sup> And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. <sup>3</sup> By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber. <sup>4</sup> For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast *them* down to hell and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; <sup>5</sup> and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, *one of eight people*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; <sup>6</sup> and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned *them* to destruction, making *them* an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; <sup>7</sup> and delivered righteous Lot, *who was* oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked <sup>8</sup> (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented *his* righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing *their* lawless deeds)-- <sup>9</sup> *then* the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, <sup>10</sup> and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. *They are* presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, <sup>11</sup> whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord. <sup>12</sup> But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, <sup>13</sup> *and* will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. *They are* spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, <sup>14</sup> having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. *They have* a heart trained in covetous practices, *and are* accursed children. <sup>15</sup> They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the *son* of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; <sup>16</sup> but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. <sup>17</sup> These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness

of darkness forever. <sup>18</sup> For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. <sup>19</sup> While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. <sup>20</sup> For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. <sup>21</sup> For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. <sup>22</sup> But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "*A dog returns to his own vomit,*" and, "*a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.*" (2 Peter 2:1-22 (NKJV))

Here in these twenty-two verses of scripture, we cannot help but see that God's anger has been kindled as He sends this message through the mouth of His servant Peter, pronouncing a "scathing indictment" against all those men and women who would presume to represent God, but are instead "false teachers". In other places throughout these scriptures, God seems to deal with some of the other forms of sin in a more generous manner, but not here. The preaching and the teaching of His word carries with it serious requirements and serious consequences. We are warned in James 3, that

<sup>1</sup> Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. (James 3:1 (ESV))

And God warns further in James 3 of exactly what takes place as we preach and teach, that somehow, our tongues seem to take on a life and a power of their own, and we begin to say things that can corrupt our listeners and lead them astray. He tells us, <sup>5</sup> So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! <sup>6</sup> And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. <sup>7</sup> For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, <sup>8</sup> but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. (James 3:5-8 (ESV))

We cannot imagine ourselves becoming that kind of person, that kind of teacher or preacher, but we can! We can! And so, God warns us against it. The unspoken implication is that when He calls us to teach and to preach, He will equip us with gifts from His Holy Spirit, and we will be able then to teach and to preach rightly.

But the opposite is also true, that if God has not specifically “called” us to teach and to preach, then we will not be properly equipped. And though we may have the best of intentions and would not want to harm anyone with our teaching, without God’s equipping, we are in danger of becoming a “false teacher”, our tongues misused by the evil one to say things like the things spoken about here in our text. And we will surely be held fully accountable as “false teachers” for every destructive word and action and behavior.

May I say again, that this is very serious business to God. This is a direct attack upon His church and upon His children, and He will not put up with it.

Listen first to some of God’s descriptions and warnings regarding those men and women who dare to be “false teachers”!

<sup>10</sup> . . . *They are* presumptuous, self-willed. (2 Peter 2:10)

Verse 12

<sup>12</sup> . . . like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, <sup>13</sup> *and* will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. *They are* spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, <sup>14</sup> having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. *They have* a heart trained in covetous practices, *and are* accursed children. (2 Peter 2:12-14)

Please understand that these “false teachers” will often be well-trained men and women, and they will be trusted by you. They will “feast with you”, take “communion” with you, even perhaps serve “communion” to you, but they are “brute beasts” who “carouse openly, in the daytime”, “carousing in their own deceptions”, having eyes filled with adultery, constantly enticing unstable souls.

Some of these “false teachers” will come to us through the many television and radio programs, and through computer websites, able to stand in front of a microphone thousands of miles away, but still grab hold of us as we sit comfortably in our easy chairs, using words that drag us off into captivity. Verse 18!

<sup>18</sup> . . . they speak great swelling *words* of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. (2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 2: 18)

But also, may we remind ourselves that “false teachers” are not just those people who come in from the outside, but they can often also be our regular preachers and teachers and bible study leaders, raised up right within our own churches.

But wherever they may come from, notice carefully the focus of their teaching spoken about here! One of their most used ploys is to allure us through the lusts of our flesh and through lewdness, and sensuality (verse 18). These are sins that ordinary folks like you and me often have hidden deeply within our souls, secret sins that we actually like and would want to find a way to keep, even though we know they are wrong, sins such as, pornography, secret “hook-ups” at the clubs and sports bars, even homosexual behaviors, and on and on. And these false teachers cleverly devise ways to fit all these sinful behaviors into their theology and make us believe that God will permit such things. But folks, that is deceptive heresy!

And then, take careful note of these next words beginning in verse 20,

<sup>20</sup> For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. <sup>21</sup> For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.  
(2 Peter 2:20-21 (NKJV))

These words speak about a matter that is very sacred to our souls, that of our “eternal salvation”, and once we have gained it, whether or not we can possibly lose it. Let me read those words again. Verse 20

<sup>20</sup> For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. <sup>21</sup> For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. <sup>22</sup> But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: “*A dog returns to his own vomit,*” and, “*a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.*”  
(2 Peter 2:20-22 (NKJV))

Simply put, on the surface, these words can possibly look like “salvation gained” might then be “salvation lost”. Verse 20,

<sup>20</sup> For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.  
(2 Peter 2:20 (NKJV))

These first words are words that we normally ascribe to “real salvation” . . . “escaping the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”. Words like these can challenge our doctrinal beliefs, the belief that once we have truly gained our salvation through faith in Christ, then we are not able to turn away from Christ and lose what we have gained.

Our “Reformed” doctrine firmly declares that to be so, that once we have truly gained salvation through faith in Christ, then we are forever saved and cannot lose it. And we use as evidence, scriptures verses such as in John 10 where Jesus tells us,

“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one (not ourselves nor anyone else) no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one.” (John 10:28-30)

And also the words of Romans 8:29-30,

<sup>29</sup> For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup> And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. (Romans 8:29-30 (ESV))

And also the words of Romans 8:38-39,

<sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39 (ESV))

And there are many other scripture verses like these and they give us confidence that if we do truly receive Christ as our Lord and Savior, then we will be forever His and not be able through some effort of our own or someone else, to lose what we have gained.

But with that being said, how do we deal with these words here in front of us in today's text? Verse 20,

<sup>20</sup> For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. <sup>21</sup> For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. (2 Peter 2:20-21 (NKJV))

May we say again, that while these words here look an awful lot like we can possibly lose the salvation that we have gained, the ultimate truth is, we did not save ourselves, it was the blood of Christ shed there on the cross that saved us. Therefore, if we did not save ourselves, then neither can we cause ourselves to become “unsaved”. The blood-soaked hand of Christ holds us too tightly.

But, if that be so, what is taking place here in these words? Is there a “contradiction” within these scriptures. No, this is not a contradiction! There are no “contradictions” in these scriptures! Let me say that again! There are no “contradictions” in these scriptures! This rather is one of those points of scripture that is part of the “mystery of the gospel”, having an appearance of inconsistency, but not at all being so.

Simply put, while “salvation” truly is an ongoing, life-long and eternal process, there is also one specific distinct point in time when a unsaved person truly surrenders their life to Christ and passes over from death unto life, from unsaved to saved. Regrettably, for those false teachers and for many of the dear souls who sit within church pew each Sunday, that surrender has never truly taken place. They have heard the “truth” over and over again, but have never truly “stepped across that line into salvation”. And they continue to sit Sunday after Sunday in that same pew, thinking that they have Christ as their Savior, but they do not. It is as Jesus explained to one person when a similar circumstance was given. He said in Matthew 7,

<sup>21</sup> “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ <sup>23</sup> And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of iniquity.’  
(Matthew 7:21-23 (ESV))

May we conclude by saying that many people, even the most devout of believers, will at times stumble under the influence of the teachings of “false teachers”, that is simply the way of the desperate heart that is under pressure to find answers to unanswerable questions, like “why does not my son, my daughter turn from their wicked ways and surrender to Christ”, or “how can my homosexual child be saved”? Under those circumstances, many of us will, for a season, reach for, and cling to, wrong teachings.

But such failings will not “un-save” a person. Once we are “saved”, we cannot then be “un-saved”. Rather, it is these that Jesus spoke about in Matthew 7, the ones whom He never truly knew, that fully succumb to the wiles of the “false teachers” and then are

eternally lost. And to those false teachers and to those who follow after them, Jesus will say,

<sup>23</sup> . . . 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of iniquity.'  
(Matthew 7:23)

I cannot leave us with these words that have no hope. So, I will close with these words in verse 9 that do offer hope. Here the Apostle Peter assures us that if God is able to reserve the guilty under punishment until the last days,

<sup>9</sup> *then* the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations.  
(2 Peter 2:9 (NKJV))

Praise the Lord!