

## **BEWARE OF THE “LATTER END”**

**2Pet.2:20-21**

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The text: “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 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, then, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandments delivered unto them.”
2. Our interest in this study is in considering the truths to be gleaned and developed from this text, all of which are impressive, some of which are encouraging, and some of which are indeed sobering!
3. In view of what we are going to learn from this text, especially about the “latter end,” I’m making an effort to warn one and all to “Beware Of The ‘Latter End’.” As I have said many times, “Be careful about what you want because you will find a way to get it, perhaps even to the loss of your soul!”

### **II. DISCUSSION**

#### **A. FIRST, WE LEARN THE IMPRESSIVE AND ENCOURAGING TRUTH THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO HAVE “ESCAPED THE POLLUTIONS (DEFILEMENTS) OF THE WORLD,” V.20a.**

1. The pollutions or defilements of the world from which one can escape refer to:
  - a. The defilements or pollutions that belong to the world.
  - b. “The vices of the ungodly which contaminate a person in his intercourse with the world.” Vine, III, 192; Vine, I, 282.
  - c. “Vices the foulness of which contaminates one in his intercourse with the ungodly...” Thayer, 414.
    - (1) That which is described in V.10.
    - (2) The verb form means literally to dye with another color, to stain. Sin discolors the soul.
  - d. “World” being, the world of the ungodly, “those in alienation from and in opposition to God,” e.g., Jno.7:7; Gal.6:14; Jas.1:27. Vine, IV, 233.

- e. “Escape – ing -- (flee away from ) the corruption that is in the world through (or by) lust,” 2Pet.1:4). That is, it operates through lust.
2. V.20 speaks of the fact that “**they**” had at one time “escaped the pollutions or defilements of the world.”
  - a. The antecedent of the pronoun “**they**” are the false teachers of the preceding verses (Vv.1-19).
  - b. Even they in their present evil practices could and did at one time in the past “escape” all such things of the world.
  - c. They had at one time been converted to Christ and were at one time faithful to the Lord.
3. They were not, at one time, neither are we, hopelessly ensnared in and marred or enslaved by sin!
  - a. All men who can be brought to repentance by the Word of God can escape the defilements of the world and be cleansed or saved from past sin.
4. The term “escape” does, however reveal and warn of the danger of remaining therein!

**B. WE LEARN THAT ESCAPING THE POLLUTIONS OF THE WORLD IS MADE POSSIBLE “THROUGH THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST,” V.20b.**

1. Cf. 2Pet.1:2-4,8, which declare that those who have “escaped the corruption that is in the world,” have done so “through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,” who “hath called us to glory and virtue.”
  - a. In each case it refers to one’s knowledge of God, Christ, and/or holy things.
2. Then 2Th.2:13,14 reveals the fact that all those who are saved are “chosen of God to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Cf. Mt.1:21; Jno.3:16-18; Ac.4:10-12.
3. In view of this Cf. Mk.16:15,16; Ac.2:36-38; 1Cor.15:1,2; Gal.1:6-9; Ac.22:16; 1Pet.1:22-25; 2Th.1:6-10.
4. Therefore, only through knowledge of, faith in, and obedience to the gospel of Christ can one escape the defilements of the world, or the guilt of past sins! Cf. Jno.8:32; 6:44,45.

5. This among other things by necessary implication denies the scripturalness of infant baptism!

**C. WE LEARN THAT IT IS POSSIBLE, AFTER HAVING BEEN SAVED, HAVING BY FAITH OBEYED THE GOSPEL, AND “HAVING ESCAPED THE CORRUPTION THAT IS IN THE WORLD THROUGH LUST” (2PET.1:4), TO BECOME “ENTANGLED” THEREIN “AGAIN,” AND “OVERCOME,” Vv.20a,b,c.**

1. There is a progression herein indicated from “entangled”, i.e., snared, to that of being “overcome” (present tense”, i.e., in a subdued and sustained state.
2. “The word ‘entangled’ suggests the figure of fish entrapped in a net.” – Guy N. Woods, Comm.
3. The “again” of “again entangled therein” signifies one can once, or at one time, or in time past, be freed from sin’s entangling mesh, then again become entangled or entrapped therein and overcome, and even be enslaved thereby.
4. On the word “overcome” see V.19, which says, “for of whom a man is overcome (emp. mine), of the same is he brought in bondage.”
  - a. Vine, II, 257, says: “In 2Pet.2:19,20 it signifies to be overcome, in the sense of being subdued and enslaved.”
  - b. Thayer, 281, says: It means, “to be conquered by one, forced to yield by one, 2Pet.2:19, absol. Ib. V.20.” (i.e., “in the absolute sense” in V.20)
5. Heb.3:13 warns us that one can “be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”
6. In fact, Satan can work so effectively through the deceitfulness of sin and his ministers that sin gets a tighter and tighter grip!

**D. WE LEARN THAT ONE ONCE SAVED FROM PAST SIN CAN SO LIVE AND SO SIN AND BE SO OVERCOME OR ENSLAVED BY SIN ONCE AGAIN THAT THE “LATTER END” WITH THAT ONE IS WORSE THAN THE BEGINNING OR THE FIRST, V.20d.**

1. ASV: “the last state is become worse with them than the first.”

2. When we fully understand to whom this refers in this context and what their true spiritual condition or state is, then and only then can we understand the true significance of the expression “the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.”
3. No doubt it refers to those of this whole context. Note various statements about them in Vv.1-3,9,10,12-15,17-19.
  - a. Vv.18-22 obviously speak of and identify the “***they***” and the “***them***” as one and the same, and as the ones of the previous verses of the chapter.
  - b. The “latter end” or “last state”, here spoken of, is the hardened apostate state in which these are enslaved by sin and from which they can’t be brought to repentance that leads to eternal punishment in hell.
  - c. It involves their total rejection of all truths previously held precious that has resulted in their conscience being seared or being past feeling. Cf. Heb.10:26-29; 6:4-6; 1Tim.4:1,2; Eph.4:17-19; even Jude 3,4.
  - d. Such a condition or state leads to their “destruction,” 2Pet.2:1,3.
    - (1) The “destruction” is not extinction or annihilation, as some argue, but ruin, eternal ruin, eternal damnation; eternal punishment, eternal separation from the Lord, Mt.25:41; 2Th.1:6-10.
4. H.A.W. Meyer, Comm.
  - a. “The first,” i.e., the *former condition*, in which they were before their conversion; “the latter end,” i.e., *their subsequent condition*, into which they have come after their falling away, i.e., the condition of complete slavery to the corruption (Cf. V.19), from which there is no hope of redemption: with the thought, Cf. Heb.10:26,27.”

**E. WE LEARN THERE IS SUCH A THING AS ONE ONCE SAVED SO LIVING AND SO SINNING AS TO REACH A SPIRITUAL STATE OF ENSLAVEMENT TO SIN AND SATAN THAT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN “***BETER***” FOR THAT ONE “NEVER TO HAVE KNOWN THE WAY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS,” THAN, AFTER KNOWING IT, TO “TURN BACK” FROM THE “HOLY COMMANDMENT DELIVERED UNTO THEM,” V.21.**

1. H.A.W. Meyer, Comm.
  - a. “To have turned from,” i.e., in the sense of “to turn back to the former things” – the pollutions and defilements or corruptions of the world. Cf. V.22.
  - b. For “holy commandment *delivered* unto them” Cf. Jude 3
2. “These men had thus not always been hypocrites; they had known Christ in the fullest possible sense as their Savior, only to apostatize from the faith.” – Guy N. Woods, Comm.
3. The garments of their robes once made white in the blood of the Lamb, were now, once again, so spotted and so stained by the world’s corruption that their present state was worse than before their conversion to Christ in the first place.
4. Of course, their turning back from, or their rejection of the holy commandment delivered unto them is preliminary to their rejection of and their denying of the Lord himself, which they were presently doing, 2Pet.2:1. Cf. Jude 3,4.
5. “Better” in the sense that in their “first” or former state their conscience was not seared, could be and was reached or pricked by the Word of God revealed by the Holy Spirit through the Apostles of Christ, with hope of eternal salvation; but now just the opposite is the case and they can no longer be brought to repentance, and have nothing but eternal punishment, eternal ruin, awaiting them!

### III. CONCLUSION

1. The two proverbial expressions in V.22 which form the close of this inspired dissertation on these apostates bring out how contemptible is the conduct just described. Cf. Prov.26:11: “As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly.”
2. How can one honestly read this text and still believe and still contend that a child of God can never so sin as to be lost, or continue to believe the doctrine of “Once saved, always saved”! And yet those of Calvinistic persuasion persistently do!
3. Sin is so deceptive and has such a strong pull, especially with the help and evil influence of Satan and his ministers, that we must ever be on guard, be vigilant, as Peter advises (1Pet.5:8) – We must ever beware of the “**latter end**” spoken of in our text, just as Paul warned in Eph.4:17-19.