

Living Hope, a study of 2 Peter
Wk #42: So Close But Even Worse

Studying verses 20-22 but reading 2 Peter 2:18-22 NKJV

¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ 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. ²¹ 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. ²² 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."

"Pollutions": that which defiles or the foulness of which contaminates

"The knowledge": Greek word **ἐπίγνωσις** (epignosis) generally meaning precise and correct knowledge. Used in the NT of the knowledge of things ethical and divine. In verse 20 it applies to the true knowledge of Christ's nature, dignity, benefits.

"Entangled": to inweave, involve in, to entangle

(Another version to hear the same thing with different words)

2 Peter 2:20-22 Living Bible

²⁰ And when a person has escaped from the wicked ways of the world by learning about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and then gets tangled up with sin and becomes its slave again, he is worse off than he was before. ²¹ It would be better if he had never known about Christ at all than to learn of him and then afterwards turn his back on the holy commandments that were given to him. ²² There is an old saying that "A dog comes back to what he has vomited, and a pig is washed only to come back and wallow in the mud again." That is the way it is with those who turn again to their sin.

Let's take a moment to consider the strength of what Peter is proclaiming. Let's consider the reality of false teachers but also the impact of those who believe the false teachers.

Consider the reality of a personal choice to take a different path because of the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

There is an escape from the polluting contamination of the world.

Ethical and divine things are embraced.

Then there is a change of course.

The defiling pollution becomes like a spider web that overcomes the person.

These are difficult concepts to consider.

Some would say that these people were never saved or born again.

Some would say that these people were saved or born again but then lost their salvation.

My biggest question for us today is on the most personal level.

I am asking you to consider your own life in the same way that these verses cause me to evaluate my own life.

These are verses that should cause each and every one of us to deeply evaluate our faith relationship with Jesus, the Son of the Living God.

Why do we believe and pursue godly things?

Is it for feeling good?

Is it a glorified self help pathway?

Is it the newest thing or fad lifestyle?

Are you learning the ways of Jesus?

Why are you pressing into the knowledge of Jesus?

(read slowly a couple of times)

It would be better for a person to have never known about Christ at all than to learn of him and then afterwards turn his/her back on the holy commandments that were given to the person.

Our mission is to proclaim the good news of Jesus. This was Peter's mission.

Yet Peter through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit says that it would have been better to have never known about Christ!!!!

Perseverance, endurance, and tenacity take on new significance in light of the concept of giving up & giving in to corruption and defilement.

The reinforcing example comes from two animals that were not "pets" in the context of the culture of the day.

Dogs were not typically household pets but half wild animals roaming around the community. Pigs represented filth and were an unclean animal to the Jew. The Mosaic law considered swine ceremonially unclean.

The example refers to an unchanged nature.

Are we truly being changed?

Are we trying to change ourselves or are we allowing God to change us from the inside out?

Let us consider the sober reality of these passages from the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 6:4-6 NASB 1995

⁴ For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.

Hebrews 10:19-31 ESV

¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

²⁶ For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. ²⁸ Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? ³⁰ For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." ³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Let us not be people who get so close but wind up even worse