

Apostasy and Salvation

(An Exposition of 2 Peter 2:18-22)

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Over the years, I have had many people ask me about what is the meaning of 2 Peter chapter two in relation to a person's salvation. This is because many view this section of Scripture as referencing someone who was once saved and then lost, someone who once lived for Jesus, but then abandoned Jesus. As a result of moving away from the truth and into corrupted living, many believe that God removes the salvation He once gave to these people. This has been a long-standing interpretation of this passage of Scripture but it needs to be challenged and the faultiness of this view needs to be exposed in light of what the entire Bible teaches regarding salvation.

The conditional nature and loss of salvation through apostasy can be rejected for several reasons.

1. This view *rejects* the unconditional promise of eternal life that Jesus gave (John 3:16; 6:47; 10:28-29).
2. This view *ignores* the clear revelation that salvation is by grace and not works - the way we live (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).
3. This view *overlooks* that Biblical truth that all Christians continue to persevere in basic truth and godly living and do not apostatize (1 John 2:29; 3:7-9; 5:18-19). In short, no genuine Christian can turn into an apostate as described in Second Peter chapter two. This is because God's Word teaches that His own children will not fully and finally turn away from Him but continue to persevere in key doctrinal truths and demonstrate various aspect of fruitfulness and righteousness in their life.

All those who have the Holy Spirit indwelling them cannot finally and forever turn away from the truth. This is because of the new nature and God's life indwells the believer and remains in the believer ("his seed remaineth in him" - 1 John 3:9) to give the Christian a pull or bent toward truth and righteous living. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would remain in His children forever (John 14:16) to help them and guide them in the truth (John 16:13). The Bible repeatedly teaches that true

or genuine believers will not and cannot apostatize or turn away from the truth and righteous living in a final or permanent way.

Hebrews 10:39 says:

“But we are not **of them** (apostates and nonbelievers) who draw back unto perdition; but **of them** (those who are believers) that believe to the saving of the soul.”

1 John 2:18-19

“Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists (*apostates or false teachers who are against Christ and who have never been saved*); whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but **they were not of us**; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* **have continued with us**: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that **they were not all of us**.”

This reveals that all true Christians that have been saved and born again remain connected with the basic truth, Christianity, and continue to strive to express some righteousness in their life and manifest a varying amount of fruit in their life (1 Cor. 15:2; Eph. 2:10; Matt. 13:23; Hebrews 3:6, 14; 4:14; 10:23, 39; 1 John 2:29; 3:7-9; 5:18-19). A true or genuinely saved believer cannot apostatize like the antichrists (unbelievers) do.

God gives us this wonderful promise in Jude 24: “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling (into apostasy), and to present *you* faultless (through Jesus Christ’s forgiveness and righteousness) before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.” The Bible teaches that God’s people will continue to persevere in their faith in Christ (Romans 1:17) and the basic truths about Christ and Christianity. A true believer will not turn back to finally and forever forsake the Lord Jesus as the only way of salvation. A true Christian will never finally apostatize in doctrine and living.

Second Peter chapter two reveals that an apostate can be someone who often claims to be saved and a follower of Christ while at the same time they *depart* from key doctrinal truth and also deportment (way of living). This is evident since the apostates are identified as enslaved to sin (“cannot cease from sin” - 2 Pet. 2:14) and also teach others errant doctrines and philosophies (“beguiling unstable souls” – 2 Pet. 2:14) which run contrary to truth and which keep people from coming to

repentance and faith in Christ (“and many shall follow their pernicious ways” – 2 Pet. 2:2).

The teachings of apostasy and also the lifestyle of apostates are often addressed throughout the Bible. Peter and Jude give much attention to the false teachings and ungodly lifestyles of apostates. This study from 2 Peter 2:19-22 gives us some vital information on the subject of apostasy and how departure (apostasy) from the truth and righteous living relates to the subject of salvation. This section of Scripture has been a favorite passage used by those who embrace “conditional salvation.” This is the teaching that concludes salvation is ultimately based upon the condition of a person’s righteous living or works and that this salvation can be lost when a person departs from the truth and begins to live an ungodly life.

Of course, these verses could not be teaching that a Christian can lose his salvation since Jesus and the Bible elsewhere gives the promise of eternal life (John 3:16; 5:24; 6:47; Rom. 6:23) and justification that is based upon the free expression of God’s unmerited and undeserved free grace (Rom. 3:24; Titus 3:5). Salvation is not **CONDITIONED** upon the way we live (Isa. 55:1; Gal. 3:2-3; James 2:23) but the genuineness or authenticity of our salvation is **CONFIRMED** by what we believe and how we live (James 2:21-22, 24-26).

The context of these verses are dealing with apostates who have clearly rejected the Gospel of Jesus Christ and turned away from the truth in relation to salvation and sanctification. These actions demonstrate they were **NEVER** saved. The Bible repeatedly tells us that when a person continues to live unaffected by the transforming grace of God, bearing no *genuine* and *lasting* fruit in life, it is a clear indicator that they were never saved (1 John 3:6-8; 5:18; Matt. 7:21-23; John 15:2-6; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:9-21). Both the teachers themselves and followers or converts of these apostates (those that depart from the historic teachings of the doctrines of the faith) were **NEVER** saved. The primary emphasis is on the teachers of apostasy and their lustful and degrading actions. We will see this throughout the study.

Meet the Apostates

2 Peter 2:1-2 introduces the apostate teachers:

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily (secretly) shall bring in damnable heresies, even

denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.”

Can anyone reading these verses about apostates say with complete confidence that these people were at one time saved and then lost their salvation? The Scriptures clearly reveal that these false teachers were NEVER saved. They are addressed as “cursed children” (2 Peter 2:14) whose “damnation slumbereth not” (2 Pet. 2:3) and to whom “the mist of darkness is reserved for ever: (2 Peter. 2:17). This means that they are damned to hell for their rejection of Jesus Christ as Savior. In short, they were teaching “damnable heresies” (*damning others to hell by their false Gospel and other false teachings*) and they themselves were damned to hell for rejecting the clear revelation of truth.

Does this sound like someone who was once saved? Absolutely not. They are part of that class of people whom Jesus will one day say, “**I never knew you**” (Matt. 7:23). He did not know them at one time and then at one point stopped knowing them as His children. He NEVER knew them. This is the apostate. It is the one who rejects the clear Gospel and demonstrates this by teaching unorthodox teachings and living a committed life to sin and uncleanness.

These false teachers were not at one time saved and then at some point lost their salvation. The record of Scripture clearly reveals that these apostates were always damned and under the judgment of God for their sins and rejection of Christ as Savior. They began condemned and will end condemned to hell. The introduction to this chapter reveals how these apostates totally rejected Jesus Christ as their Savior. Jesus died for them but they refused the offer of His salvation (“denying the Lord that bought them”). To deny something is to disavow and totally reject something or someone. In other words, the Bible is teaching that Christ paid the necessary purchasing price on Calvary’s cross to save these unregenerate people (John 3:15-16; 2 Pet. 3:9). However, this same group of apostates refused to receive the free gift of salvation, denying the redemptive price that Jesus paid on the cross to release them from the penalty and power of sin.

This is why they preached “damnable heresies” (2 Pet. 2:1) and why “they themselves as the servants of corruption” (2 Pet. 2:18) “cannot cease from sin” (2 Pet. 2:14) and why they “live in error” (2 Pet. 2:18) and eventually went back to

outwardly manifesting a life committed to ungodly practices (2 Pet. 2:20), a life that possessed no regeneration or reflection of God's life. It's because they were always apostates and never born again. An apostate or imposter of Christianity (a tare among the wheat – Matt. 13:25) is someone who departs from the primary or key doctrines of the faith and also departs into a patterned lifestyle of unholy living which reflects the unsaved way of life, a life that evidences no genuine and lasting fruit of transformation (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:9-21).

Peter reveals that these people denied what Jesus offered to them ("denying the Lord that bought them" – 2 Pet. 2:1) which was redeeming of liberating salvation from the penalty and power of sin. To deny something is to refuse it completely and want nothing to do with it. The Bible is not teaching that these apostates were originally redeemed or bought by the blood of Jesus Christ and then unredeemed. The Bible knows nothing, nor teaches anything, about someone losing what Jesus had bought or purchased for them and provided for them (1 Pet. 1:18-19). However, the Bible does reveal that people can deny the riches of salvation and liberating redemption that Jesus offers and never become saved. This is exactly what these apostates have done. They have totally rejected the claims of Jesus Christ and not received of His liberating redemptive salvation.

Jesus said in John 5:40:

"And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

These apostates not only denied salvation through Jesus Christ but actually spoke damnable heresies (2 Pet. 2:1), perverting the Gospel message, resulting in people going to hell. Elsewhere Paul says that those who pervert the Gospel are not saved and they are going to hell.

Galatians 1:7-9

"Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

It's very clear that apostates are people who were NEVER the children of God. In other words, they were NEVER saved and they prove this by continuing to live a

wicked and unregenerate lifestyle, which is the result of rejecting Christ as Savior (“denying the Lord that bought them” – 2 Pet. 2:1) and is also evidenced in their teaching of “damnable heresies” (2 Pet. 2:10) and remaining the “servants of corruption” – enslaved to sin (2 Pet. 2:19).

2 Peter 2:19-22 gives the true nature and story regarding apostates and salvation. These people have rejected the clear revelation of the Gospel, salvation, and God’s delivering power over sin. For these reasons they could NEVER be saved. Apostates cannot lose their salvation since they NEVER possessed salvation – “denying the Lord that bought them” (2 Pet. 2:1).

The life and teaching of those who claim to speak for God should be tested by the Word of God.

Isaiah 8:20

“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, *it is* because *there is* no light in them.”

The apostate waters down the truth until, as C. H. Spurgeon said, “There is not enough left to make soup for a sick grasshopper.”

2 Peter 2:1 declares:

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily (*secretly*) shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.”

False prophets and teachers are those who were never saved. They are not people who were born again and then unborn! Again, the Bible knows nothing of a person being unborn! The Bible always identifies apostates as unsaved, unredeemed, and unfit for Heaven (2 Peter 2:3). **An apostate is not a saved person who becomes unsaved; he’s an unsaved person that NEVER was saved.**

2 Peter 2:19-20

“**While they** (*the apostates*) **promise them** (*these newly saved converts mentioned in vs. 18 who were not yet grounded in the faith*) **liberty** (*libertinism - a false type of liberty or freedom*), **they themselves** (*the apostate teachers*) **are the servants of corruption** (*slaves to moral depravity*): **for of whom** (*or by what or whatever*) **a man**

is overcome (a reference to the apostates themselves), **of the same is he brought in bondage** (to sin). **For if after they** (the apostates themselves – looking back to verse 19 – “they”) **have escaped the pollutions** (the moral impurity) **of the world** (through some type of religious or reformation experience) **through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ** (a superficial knowledge of Christ, the Gospel, and its saving power), **they are again entangled therein, and overcome** (by their sin, lustful living, and reckless abandonment), **the latter end is worse with them than the beginning**” (they will be eternally judged by rejecting the light they were given).

Peter is going to teach us that these false prophets and teachers may appear to be religious, reformed and righteous but they continue to manifest their same old perverted ways as “servants of corruption” (2 Pet. 2:19) or slaves to sin and continue in the same type of lifestyle they always possessed (2 Pet. 2:20-21). Why? It’s because they were NEVER born again. They had NEVER tasted and experienced Christ’s liberating salvation. This is what the rest of this study will reveal.

2 Peter 2:19-22 gives the true nature and story regarding apostates and salvation. These people have rejected the clear revelation of the Gospel, salvation and God’s delivering power over sin. For these reasons they could NEVER be saved. Apostates cannot lose their salvation since they NEVER possessed salvation – “denying the Lord that bought them” (2 Pet. 2:1).

Marks of Apostasy

The Bible gives us some specific marks that all apostate’s share which becomes unmistakable evidence or proof that they never possessed salvation.

1. They NEVER possess true liberty.

This proves that apostates, the people represented in this chapter, were never saved. A person who never experiences any true freedom from sin cannot be saved.

Jesus said in John 8:44

“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.”

This is what 2 Peter 2:18-19 is teaching. These particular apostates had the devil as their father and this is why they lived and promoted before others (their converts)

a licentious lifestyle. The apostates are described as people who “walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness” (2 Pet. 2:10), and “Having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin” (2 Pet. 2:14). The fact that they cannot cease from sinning proves that they are not one of God’s true children since the true child of God has a new nature that enables them to have victory over sin (1 John 3:9). It’s very clear that the apostate can never possess true liberty or freedom from sin and therefore proves that he was never saved in the first place.

2 Peter 2:18 begins by saying:

“For when they (*the apostate teachers*) speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, *through much wantonness* (licentiousness or filth), those (*their converts and victims they are discipling*) that were clean escaped from them who live in error” (*their pagan friends*).

The last phrase “those that were clean escaped from them who live in error” is likely a reference to a group of new Christians who were still in the process of making a final break with their pagan friends and practices (“those that live in error”). They were in the initial stages of just escaping from their former lives of rebellion, worldliness, and licentious living.

Edmond Hiebert writes:

“They apparently are individuals who have just acknowledged their acceptance of the message of salvation, or, having been touched by the preaching of the gospel, are just beginning to separate themselves ‘from them that live in error’.”

It’s these new converts to Christianity who might very well be susceptible to this perverted form of Christian liberty that was being taught by the apostates, an alleged liberty that allowed for lustful living and licentious practices.

2 Peter 2:19 once again gives this information about the apostates:

“While they (*the apostates*) promise them (*these newly saved converts mentioned in vs. 18 who were not yet grounded in the faith*) liberty (*libertinism - a false type of liberty or freedom*), they themselves (*the apostate teachers*) are the servants of corruption (*slaves to moral depravity*): for of whom (*or by what or whatever*) a man is overcome (*a reference to the apostates themselves*), of the same is he brought in bondage (*to sin*).”

Someone advising another person to live free who is already bound to sin is like a 300-pound man trying to sell diet books! It's an absurdity. You can expect nothing but "false freedom" from false Christians who offer false promises. One cannot truly be free unless they themselves are experience freedom from sin's power. These apostates are examples of someone who has never possess true freedom in Christ and therefore demonstrate by their commitment to evil and sin that they never were saved.

Peter reminds us that false teachers with their outlandish messages of false liberty or freedom always seem able to attract a following. They always find converts ("many shall follow their pernicious ways" – 2 Peter 2:2). Sadly, the apostates often win converts to their cause and people follow their teachings and examples by developing a false view of liberty or freedom. The apostates were telling others how they could experience liberty or freedom. But it evidently was a false type of liberty. The word "pernicious" (2 Pet. 2:2) means licentious and indicates that these false teachers were teaching antinomianism (no law) and libertinism (no moral restraints) instead of the true nature of freedom and liberty as taught in the Bible (1 Pet. 2:16). Sadly, these apostates sought to bring their followers into bondage by means of lies, but Jesus brings us into freedom by means of truth. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

2 Peter 2:10 also describes them in this way: "But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness." These particular apostates lived a life of utter uncleanness and believed that they were living the liberated life that the New Testament promises to Christians. However, the liberty that the false teachers were peddling was not true Christian freedom but a type of *license* to do whatever one pleases. It was the philosophy that says "live and let live" or "let me live the way that I want, with no strings attached, and I will finally be free."

The whole liberty scam that is presented by these false teachers is a big hoax. It's the old "hippie philosophy" of false freedom which portrays liberty as abandonment to sin. Or course, those who are bent on living this way give the outward confirmation that they were never saved. A person who is identified as a servant or slave to sin (2 Pet. 2:18-19) indicates they are an individual that has never been born again and received God's new life and nature.

Titus 1:16 reveals this of the apostates:

“They profess that they know God; but in works (*the sinful works that they express through their lives*) they deny *him (as their Lord and Savior)*, being abominable (*detestable*), and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate” (*worthless or unfit for doing anything good*).

Apostates are *professors* of salvation but they never were *possessors* of salvation. There is a difference!

2. They NEVER possess true salvation.

Of course, this is another verification that the people mentioned in this chapter (apostates) could not lose their salvation. **You cannot lose something that you never possessed!** How can a person possess salvation when they reject the Gospel and personal claims about Jesus Christ (“denying the Lord that bought them” - 2 Pet. 2:1)? Peter clearly reveals that these people refused to allow the Lord Jesus Christ to be their Savior. It’s impossible to be saved without embracing the Gospel of salvation (Rom. 1:16). Therefore, these apostates are presented as a group of people who were never saved. They were not saved and then lost; they were lost and never saved.

Jude described these same apostate people in his letter as “sensual, having not the Spirit (Jude 19). These are unsaved people who never possessed the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:9

“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

This means that the Holy Spirit never indwelt these apostates and gave to them both eternal life and a new way of life. In short, they were not God’s children. Some conditional salvationists suggest that the apostates mentioned in 2 Peter were once saved and then lost because they Scripture says they have become accursed children (“cursed children” - 2 Pet. 2:14). The reasoning is that these people had to be previously saved since they are identified as God’s children. However, this is vain reasoning because the Bible teaches that the devil has always had his own children and people who have repeatedly rejected the salvation through Jesus Christ (John 8:44) as these people did (2 Pet. 2:1). When a person denies Jesus Christ, who died

on the cross to pay for his redemption, it means that they are the devil's children – not God's children. As a result, they are “cursed children” – the devil's children!

2 Peter 2:20 needs to be reiterated about the apostates:

“For if after they *(the apostates themselves – looking back to verse 19 – “they”)* **have escaped the pollutions** *(moral defilement and depravity)* **of the world** *(through some type of religious or reformation experience)* **through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ** *(a superficial knowledge of Christ, the Gospel, and its saving power), they are again entangled therein, and overcome* *(by their sin, lustful living, and reckless abandonment), the latter end is worse with them than the beginning”* *(they will be eternally judged by rejecting the light they were given).*

If these false teachers did not possess the Holy Spirit and were unsaved, then how could Peter say these same people had escaped the defilements of the world by possessing what appears to be a “full knowledge” of the “Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?” Some suggest that Peter was teaching that they actually were saved and born again Christians at one time and then lost their salvation. However, Peter's descriptions of these false teachers in this epistle, especially in chapter 2, definitely portray them as unbelievers. It seems very unlikely that now, at the climax of his exhortation, he would focus on the possibility of these same people being Christians.

The oft-repeated error which states these false teachers were once saved and then lost cannot be substantiated by the description of these people. Peter previously spoke about the apostate's lifestyle which is bound to sin and ongoing unbelief. Such expressions as “denying the Lord,” “bring upon themselves swift destruction,” “walk after the flesh,” “cannot cease from sinning,” “there damnation slumbereth not,” “shall utterly perish in their own corruption,” sporting themselves with their own deceivings,” “live in error,” “cursed children,” and “to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever” (2 Peter 2:1-17) are conveying the reality that these apostates were never saved but confirmed in their unbelief and unregenerate lifestyle (Romans 1:24). Peter previously condemned and confirmed these apostates in their unbelief and sinful depravity and slavery. Therefore, in 2 Peter 2:20 he is not concluding that these men were actually saved at one time and then move back into their state of apostasy.

Those who believe that loss of salvation is what Peter was talking about in this verse and in verses 21 and 22 have to deal with an insurmountable problem. That problem is that such an interpretation makes Scripture contradict Scripture (John 3:16; 5:24; 10:28–29). It's very clear that Peter is teaching that these false teachers were always unsaved.

Since this is true, we must explain how these apostates can experience what appears to be a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and also escape from the immoral vices of this world, which is the same promise that was given to all genuine believers (“having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” - 2 Peter 1:4). Apparently at one time in their life these false teachers made a false profession of faith in Christ that was designed to get them into the local churches. Jude says they had crept into the churches unnoticed (“For there are certain men crept in unawares” – Jude 4).

Paul speaks of these same apostates and false teachers “who came in privily (secretly) to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage” – Gal. 2:4). These false teachers had to make a false profession of faith in Christ and initially portray to others a false expression of outward deliverance from sin's power. This is how they got into the local churches. However, what they said and showed before others was all sham and counterfeit experience.

Warren Wiersbe observes:

“But these apostates did have a ‘religious experience!’ And they would boldly claim that their experience brought them into fellowship with the Lord. They would be able to explain ‘the way of righteousness,’ and would use the Word of God to support their teachings. If they had not experienced some kind of ‘religious conversion,’ they would never have been able to get into the fellowship of the local assemblies.”

It would seem that at one point the genuine Christians may have accepted these false teachers as orthodox Christians because of the outward show and pious impression they made upon many people. The terminology of “having escaped the pollutions of the world” (2 Pet. 2:20) suggests that these apostate at one time experienced some type of outward *reformation* in relation to their personal lives. They actually professed to be Christians. This is understood in the phrase “through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” In other words, they made the

outward claim that they had a relationship with Jesus Christ and called themselves a Christian. They seemingly got started on the right track. Others were impressed with some of their new behavior patterns and lifestyle changes.

Yes, the Bible states the apostates had “knowledge” (vs. 20) and that they knew the righteous way (“know” - vs. 21). However, we must remember that UNSAVED people can possess a superficial knowledge about Jesus Christ, the Gospel and His delivering power, but NEVER embrace its message and receive of the new life and delivering power that Christ wants to give to them. They are described elsewhere as “Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:7). Although it initially appeared that had a saving knowledge about Jesus Christ, they NEVER did come to personally embrace the truth as their own. These apostates possessed a *head* knowledge about Christ and the Gospel but not a *heart* knowledge of the truthfulness and reality of the delivering message of the Gospel. The Bible reminds us that “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness” (Rom. 10:10).

All of the previously revealed facts demonstrate that the false teachers did not embrace the truth that Jesus Christ offered to them (2 Pet. 2:1-2). We must remember that just because somebody has “knowledge” or knows the truth about Jesus Christ and His delivering power does not mean they possess true saving knowledge and faith in Christ. So what kind of “knowledge” did these apostates have? What did they know? We can be sure that they knew about the Gospel, salvation through Jesus Christ and His delivering power over sin, but nothing in the text says they embraced Christ as Savior and received His delivering power over sin. Knowing about something and receiving it are two different things (John 1:12). People might “know” what to do but then reject it and turn away from it (John 3:36; 5:40).

Jesus taught in John 3:19:

“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

The experience of the apostates is brought out when they are said to have “escaped the pollutions of the world” (2 Pet. 2:20). In the case of the apostate or sham and counterfeit Christian, this is called *reformation*, which is man’s futile efforts and attempts to try and improve himself morally and ethically. The experience of the

apostates was not *regeneration* or a new way of life given through the supernatural new birth that Jesus promised (John 3:7). Instead, it was a superficial experience and pseudo faith that was not expressed in Christ.

2 Peter 2:21 goes on to say that these false teachers or apostates actually knew the truth but turned away from it and were never saved (“known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them”). Again, they knew about the Gospel and promise of God’s delivering power which results in a righteous life but nothing in the text says they personally embraced the saving and delivering message of the Gospel in their own hearts and lives.

Hebrews 10:26 describes these types of apostates:

“For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.”

In a similar way, Peter reminds us that the apostates willfully rejected the Gospel and the delivering power over sin which the Gospel offered to them. They knew the truth but decided against the truth and went back into their original belief system and lifestyle.

To “turn” as stated in 2 Peter 2:21 or turn back (Heb. 10:38-39) means to depart from key doctrinal truths (1 Tim. 4:1) and go back into a committed lifestyle of sin without possessing any signs of regenerating life (Titus 1:16; 1 John 3:8,10; Matt. 7:20) is the mark of all apostasy. The apostate forsakes the truth, defects from God’s standard, and does not embrace it as his own. This verse describes the perversion and defection of the false teachers. They professed the Christian experience (the way of righteousness) but the unchanged nature of their lives demonstrate that they ultimately had chosen to reject Christ (Heb. 10:26–31).

All of their superficial efforts to reform themselves (“escape the pollutions of the world” – 2 Pet. 2:20) ultimately result in nothing more than temporary and superficial moral reform through religion, the religion of nominal Christianity, which is devoid of genuine repentance and faith. We will deal with this in our next point. So all of the temporary reformation and talk about salvation, Christianity, Christ, and freedom was nothing more than an outward show and plan to get the apostates

rooted in the church assemblies and where they could begin to unravel their blasphemous teachings.

Jesus warns in Matthew 7:15:

“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”

This is similar to what the apostates were doing in Peter's day. They appeared as sheep but were wolves in sheep's clothing. Peter is also teaching that very same thing that Paul warned about long ago regarding false teachers.

Acts 20:28-31 warns:

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.”

Deception is a key strategy of apostates and apostasy. They will say and do things which might mark them as one of God's sheep. They will tell you that they are a Christian and have been delivered from sin's power (“escaped the pollutions in the world” – 2 Pet. 2:20). They will appear to have “a form of godliness” (2 Tim. 3:5) about themselves but eventually their true nature will come out in their teaching and conduct. They will, as Peter reminds us, “turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them” (2 Pet. 2:21) to prove their words were empty, their reformation was temporary, and that they were a counterfeit. In short, they were never saved. This is because “in works they deny him” to be their Savior and Lord (Titus 1:16).

In spite of what is said about these apostates, it should be observed that this Bible passage uses no terminology affirming that these apostates were at one time true Christians. The terms such as “sons of God,” “children,” “born again,” “regenerate,” “redeemed” are never mentioned. Therefore, when the Bible says they have “escaped the pollution of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (vs. 20) it does NOT suggest that the converts once possessed

salvation and then lost it through a state of apostasy and sin. It simply means that the false teachers had made some kind of profession of faith regarding salvation and passed through a superficial new experience in their life that was obviously short-lived.

3. They NEVER possess true repentance.

Here is more proof that verifies that these apostate people were never saved.

2 Peter 2:22 goes on to say:

“But it is happened unto them (the false teachers or apostates) 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” (*mud, dirt, filth*)

When a person claims to be saved and goes back to living like they did before their alleged conversion, without any signs of regenerating life, it indicates that they NEVER truly repented over their sins and were saved (Luke 13:5). Like a dirty dog or pig (unclean animals from the perspective of Jewish law), they go back to their original state and live as they always lived, following the dictates of their sin nature (Ps. 26:11).

Dogs and pigs follow their natural instincts and unchanged condition. In a similar way, unsaved and wicked people follow the dictates of their sinful and depraved natures. One can NEVER turn an unclean animal into a clean animal. This is impossible according to Jewish law and according to the nature of the animal kingdom. A dog or pig is always a dog or pig.

As previously stated, the apostates themselves claimed to have passed through a type of moral house cleaning (“having escaped the pollutions of the world” – vs. 20) which may at first seemed to be genuine and real. But in the end the true nature of the person comes out. This would be similar to trying to give a bath to a dog or pig and putting a blue ribbon on him for the county fair. The animal looks good for a certain period of time but eventually goes back to what it always truly was. Once again, in 2 Peter 2:20 we are reminded that these apostates knew the way of true freedom and salvation but then become “entangled” (hopelessly trapped like a fish in a net) in the ways of the world and once again go back into their same old lifestyle.

Peter first uses the illustration of a dog and pig to prove his point. A dog returns to his own vomit which is a practice that is disgusting and reflects the unchanged nature of the dog. The sow might be cleansed by external washing but it turns again to the mud. Furthermore, a pig returns to its mud hole and slop. The same is true regarding those who are apostates. They clean up but end up going back to the same disgusting practices and the same licentious living. It demonstrates that their nature was NEVER changed. In other words, they were NEVER saved and born again which means they did not receive the life-transforming power of Jesus Christ to deliver them from sin. This is why they go back to the same old vomit and pig-pen way of life.

The point is rather obvious. A dog and pig do not change their true nature and neither does someone who follows apostasy and lives in open rebellion against God. Since these people do not possess a regenerating nature and new life in Christ, they go back to the same lifestyle they had always lived.

Jesus identifies this same type of person in Matthew 13:20-21:

“But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.”

In Matthew 13:22 Jesus then says:

“He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.”

Jude 1:12 says something similar:

“These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots.”

Similar to the apostates that Peter describes, all of the efforts of the people described in Matthew and Jude, which attempted to improve their lives, ultimately resulted in nothing more than temporary and superficial moral reform. Again, this is the type of reformation that is represented in the religion of nominal Christianity, which is devoid of genuine faith and repentance. Today people try to conform to

the way of Christianity through reformation and rituals but they lack true repentance and regeneration.

The apostate's nature was NEVER changed because they were NEVER born again. They NEVER possessed repentance and regeneration; therefore, they did not change *who* they were are and *how* they lived.

Albert Barnes states:

“This passage [2:20–22] is often quoted to prove the possibility of falling from grace, and from a very high degree of it too. But it is one of the last passages in the Bible that should be addressed to prove that doctrine. The true point of this passage is to show that the persons referred to never were changed; that whatever external reformation might have occurred, their nature remained the same; and that when they apostatized from their outward profession, they merely acted out their nature, and showed in fact there had been no real change.”

4. They NEVER go to Heaven.

2 Peter 2:21

“For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, (*a designation for the body of truth for Christianity which includes the Gospel message and its delivering power - 2 Pet. 2:2, 15*) than, after they have known it (*superficially without embracing its saving and transforming message*), to turn from the holy commandment (*the ethical teaching of Christian truth*) delivered unto them.”

This gives to us a final confirmation that the apostate people mentioned in this chapter and section of Scripture were NEVER saved. Why does Peter say “For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:21) and that their “latter end is worse with them than the beginning” (2 Pet. 2:20)? It's because of the greater damnation and judgment they will receive for rejecting the light of revelation they had. The false teachers had thrown away their chance for deliverance by rejecting the Gospel message and as a result become entangled and overcome again by the defilements of the world (2 Pet. 2:19b).

Peter then reminds us that their first state was eternal damnation without having heard the Gospel, but their last state in suffering greater eternal damnation since they have rejected the Gospel. This is because greater privilege results in greater

responsibility and greater punishment if one rejects the light given to them. Scripture teaches degrees of punishment in hell due to one's knowledge and rejection of the light received (Matt. 10:15, 22; 23:14; Rev. 20:13). The Bible states the apostates had "knowledge" (vs. 20) and that they knew the righteous way ("know" - vs. 21). However, they rejected this light and therefore will be judged in a greater way for rejecting the light of revelation they possessed (Romans 2:4-5).

As we have seen, the apostate may at one time appear to be genuine, reformed, and possess a fiery zeal for the Lord (2 Pet. 2:20), but eventually their bubble pops and they go back to their old ways of living and reject the clear revelation that was given to them. The result of this departure or apostasy confirms their lost estate: "the latter end is worse with them than the beginning" (2 Pet. 2:20). This certainly means that the apostate does not enter Heaven upon his death. They were unsaved at the "beginning" before hearing the Gospel and God's deliverance but now they will be damned in a greater way for hearing and rejecting the truth.

Peter says "they bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Pet. 2:1) and "their damnation slumbereth not" (2 Pet. 2:3) because of their ultimate rejection of the Gospel light and the confirmation of their unregenerate lifestyle in sin. In simple terms, a person who has NEVER been saved and who has been confirmed in their unbelief (Rom. 1:24) cannot go to Heaven. They are going to hell.

This reminds us of our Lord's parable in Matthew 12:43-45:

"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth *it* empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation."

The truth Jesus taught parallels what Peter has written. *Temporary reformation without true repentance and rebirth only leads to greater sin and judgment.* Wiersbe again comments: "Reformation cleans up the outside, but regeneration changes the inside. Sinful tendencies do not disappear when a person reforms; they merely hibernate *and get stronger*. Holiness is not simply refusing to do evil things, since even unsaved people can practice self-control. True holiness is more than conquering temptation: it is conquering even *the desire* to disobey God." This is

something the apostate can never do nor experience since he does not possess God's regenerating life or the new birth and nature (2 Cor. 5:17).

These false teachers or apostates had heard the Gospel, knew the gospel, and could even speak the Gospel message, yet they never embraced its saving message and delivering power from sin. Their alleged conversion and faith was empty and untrue since they had "believed in vain" (1 Cor. 15:2) and since "the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Heb. 4:2).

This is why 1 John 2:19 reveals: "They went out from us, **but they were not of us**; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

John's point is that the apostate was NEVER one of God's children. He does not become a child and then lose his birthright. No, he never became a child of God (John 1:12). They never were "of us" (the true children of God). This is because God gives the promise that He will never allow His children to apostatize in total unbelief and rebellion against His ways ("keep them from falling" - Jude 24).

In conclusion, we must remember that living a godly life is the PROOF of one's salvation (Eph. 2:10) – not the WAY of salvation (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5). On the other hand, possessing a consistent pattern of ungodly living without bearing fruit (transformation of living) does not result in the LOSS of one's salvation; it becomes the PROOF that one never had regeneration or salvation and that their faith was "dead" or not real (James 2:26). This is what James, Peter, Paul, and Jude reveal about apostates and all unbelievers. Their faith is not real, their reformation is phony, and their fruits (the overall lifestyle characteristics and beliefs) reveal their true identity and nature (Matt. 7:16, 20). As a result, Jesus will one day say to them, "**I never knew you**" (Matt. 7:23).