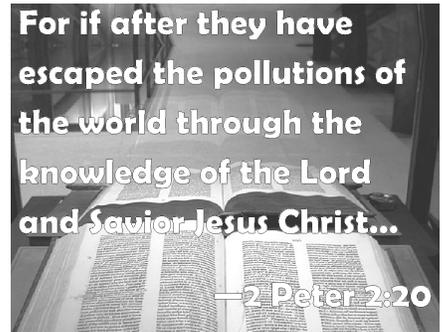


A Study of The Epistle of 2nd Peter
Theme: “Grow in Grace and Knowledge”

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Lesson: 16 Chapter 2:20-22 Date: 11-14-21



BIBLE TEXT and STUDY NOTES

(20) For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of **our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

(Mt 12:45; Php 3:7,8; Heb 10:26,27)

(21) For it would have been better for them never to have known **the way of righteousness** than after knowing it to turn back from **the holy commandment** delivered to them. (22) What the true proverb says has happened to them: “The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire.”

(Prov 26:11; Ezek 18:24; Mt 28:20; Lk 12:47,48; Ac 9:2; 18:25; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22; Rom 7:2; 1 Tim 6:14; Heb 6:4-6; 10:26,27; Jas 4:17)

LUTHER’S WORKS – VOLUME 30

20. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overpowered, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

Here St. Peter shows why they are servants of perdition. “**The knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ**” means knowing what He is, namely, **our Savior**, who forgives us our sin out of pure grace. Through this knowledge we escape wickedness and the defilement of the world. But when they have escaped this in Baptism, they are later thrown back into it again. Then they give up their faith and return to their own deeds. For where there is no faith, there is no spirit; but where there is no spirit, there is nothing but sheer flesh. Consequently, nothing that is pure can be there either.

This is what has happened so far in Christendom. First Rome heard the Gospel in its purity; but later it departed from this and clung to works, until every abomination arose there. Therefore “the last state has become worse for them than the first.” The result is that now they are worse heathen than they ever were before they heard the Word of God.

21. *For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them.*

22. *It has happened to them according to the true proverb, The dog turns back to his own vomit, and the sow is washed only to wallow in the mire.*

St. Peter took this saying from Prov. 26:11, where we read: “Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool that repeats his folly.” Through Baptism these people threw out unbelief, had their unclean way of life washed away, and entered into a pure life of faith and love. Now they fall away into unbelief and their own works, and they soil themselves again in filth. Therefore this verse should not be applied to works; for little is accomplished if after confession one says and commands: “Henceforth you must be chaste, gentle, patient, etc.”

But if you want to become pious, you must ask **God** to give you a genuine faith, and you must begin to desist from unbelief. When you receive faith, then good works will come automatically, and you will lead a pure and chaste life. Otherwise you will preserve yourself by no other means. And even if you are able to conceal the knave in your heart for a while, yet he will finally emerge.

This is the second chapter of this epistle. Here the apostle has foretold that we would be deceived so deplorably by our teachers. To be sure, we have been warned sufficiently. But we paid no attention to this. Therefore it is our fault that we have not taken hold of **the Gospel** and that we have deserved such **wrath of God** because of our way of life.

As a rule, we are all glad to hear the pope, together with priests and monks, attacked and censured. But no one is willing to be reformed as a result of this. It is not such a trifling matter that one has to laugh. No, it is so serious that the heart should fear and tremble. Therefore we should tackle it earnestly and ask **God** to turn His anger and such a plague away from us. For this misery did not come upon us unexpectedly; it was inflicted on us by **God** as a punishment, as Paul declares in 2 Thess. 2:10–11: “Because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore **God** sends upon them a strong delusion, to make them believe what is false, etc.”

For if the punishment had been extended only to the destruction of the false teachers, it would still be slight when compared with the fact that they have had the rule and have led the whole world to hell with them. Therefore the only remedy for this evil is this, that we attack the matter in a Godfearing and humble way, confess our guilt, and pray **God** to take the punishment from us. With this prayer we must assail the false teachers. Otherwise one cannot get the better of the devil.”

LIFE APPLICATION

“If, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of **our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.”

Why is this so?

