

February 19, 1986

Rev. R. S.

Dear R,

Hello, and Lord bless you. Received a copy of your latest "Teacher"; which ministry I appreciate and recognize the value of. As you may know, I usually agree with you, and certainly regard you as sound in doctrine.

In this instance, however, as a friendly critic, I disagree with your interpretation of II Peter 2:20-22. I don't know if you have received any similar reaction from anyone else yet, but I believe I can show why the interpretation should be the other way.

Certainly, I have no problem that the passage does not teach the possibility of loss of salvation, nor does any other scripture.

I can also see the difficulty with the specific grammar in question, and that many times it is hard to be positively settled about the literal importance of certain seemingly key words or phrases.

But, maybe it will help a little to say that concentration upon grammatical details, can sometimes cause us to lose sight of the main context, theme or subject of the passage. If one verse, or passage of scripture should not be used independently, or with too much weight, to establish doctrine--words and phrases can be even less conclusive to base interpretation on.

Once the true interpretation of a doctrine, i.e., false teaching, apostasy, and the like is established by study of all the scripture on the subject--then, any seemingly questionable or difficult passages must be subordinate to, and governed by, that proven criterion.

Why, after the first eighteen verses are entirely occupied with descriptions and warnings concerning false, apostate teachers, would the attention suddenly switch to their victims and characterize them with the same scathing, condemning language--especially if they are true believers; which is possible--but not certain, from verse 18?

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For, if those in verse 1 deny the Lord that "bought" them, are professors only and not truly redeemed, they can just as well be professedly clean escaped in verse 18, and in the same supposed way have escaped the pollutions of the world in verse 20, and likewise "turn" from the holy commandment in verse 21,

The language of verses 20-22 is typical reference to apostasy, and God's special judgments ordained for it.

You asked the question, that if the pig returning to the mire refers to false teachers, how can his latter end be worse than the first, etc? Another scripture which makes reference to the latter end being worse than the beginning, is Matthew 12:45. This is definitely applicable to the subject in question. In fact, the terminology and meaning is strikingly similar in II Peter 2:20, and Matt. 12:45.

The Matt. 12:43-45 passage describes a case of self-reformation, or a false religion or cult. Such persons apparently open themselves up to increased demonic influence or possession. In which case, his latter (earthly) end would be worse than his former state. The same type of result is indicated in the II Peter example, but an additional consequence applies because of the apostasy involved. That is, the latter "end" refers also to the final judgment which God has specified for false teachers who ultimately blaspheme the Lord by their words and deeds.

In either case, earthly or eternally, it would have been better for them not to have "known" the way of righteousness, etc.

While surely, some phrases mentioned, etc. have certain application as warnings to believers--the interpretation is a description of false teachers, with corresponding warnings and judgments.

Forgive me if I sound dogmatic, or too critical. I do not mean any of this in any unduly authoritative way, but rather to help prevent an erroneous interpretation, which I know you would want to do.

Please let me know what your conclusions may be after thinking over what I have offered, or referred to.

Meantime, keep up the good work!

Sincerely, in the Lord

Everett

Everett Falvey