

# You Don't Want To Go Back

2 Peter 2:20-22

The goal of every Christian ought to be faithfulness. You remember the Lord Jesus said in Matthew chapter 25, talking about the judgment that he would say to those on the right hand, well done, good and faithful servant. That's our goal to be faithful. As Paul would say, to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

It's interesting to look at the life of the Apostle Paul. As he neared the close of his life, you remember in Second Timothy chapter four, Paul would say, I'm already being poured out as a drink offering. He would say, the time of my departure is at hand. But then he makes this sobering statement. I have fought the good fight.

I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. That's our goal. To be faithful until death. In our lesson today, I want to look at a passage of Scripture that maybe we ought to think about and consider in a very sobering way. In Second Peter chapter two, Peter talks about those who have forsaken the right way and gone astray.

Many of us have known Christians who at one time had been faithful in their service to the Lord. They had demonstrated they had demonstrated an unwavering faith in the Lord. And then, for whatever reason, they began to slip spiritually, only to become unfaithful to the calls of Christ. And so I like Peter chapter two. Peter again talks about those who have forsaken the right way and gone astray.

And then picking up down in verse 20, he pictures the plight of those who have left the Lord. So what I want us to do is to look at verses 20 through 22 and second Peter chapter two, and talk about the theme today. You don't want to go back. And the idea is you don't want to go back into the world.

Matter of fact, I'd say it like this. You can't afford to go back into the world. So, number one, let's just talk for a moment or two about the escape, as pictured by Peter in verse 20. Peter said, if after they have escaped the corruptions that are in the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now the very graphic picture painted by the Apostle Peter is that of somebody who leaves the world. He or she has come to a knowledge of divine truth. You remember back in chapter one, Peter tells us that God has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness. And the idea is that everything we need to know about life and godly living has been revealed.

Where in the Bible that is in the sacred scriptures. He goes on to say that we have been the recipients of exceedingly great and precious promises. Often you may have heard the statement that there are things that we must all believe in this life. In other words, there are facts to be believed. There are commands to be obeyed.

There are promises to be enjoyed. But as Second Peter chapter one, Peter talks about those who have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. Well, when does that occur? Well, number one, we've got to hear the word of God because you say Paul said, faith comes by hearing. Hearing by the word of God in Romans ten verse 17, the exhortation and second Corinthians, chapter five.

In verse seven, we're to walk by faith and not by sight. Someone said many years ago that faith is what gifts, substance and reality. The things not seen. We have deep and abiding

faith in God. Our faith is in the God of heaven, the one true living God. That faith, no doubt a result of what we see around us, that is, the world itself, lends evidence to the fact that there's a God.

You remember what David said in Psalm in the Psalms many years ago in Psalm 19, the heavens declare the glory of God. The firmament, he said, shows his handiwork. I can know something about the God of heaven. That is, his power demonstrated in the world in which we live in. But I can't know the mind of God separate and apart from revelation, so I can know that there is a God based on creation.

But I can know the mind of God through revelation. That brings me to Second Timothy, chapter three. Paul, in that context said all Scripture, every Scripture, is given by the inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness, sake that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped under every good work. So I need the Word of God to guide, direct, to lead me through this life.

You recall the words of the Psalmist in Psalm 119 and verse 105. The psalmist said, your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light under my pathway. So if I'm going to have faith in God, I've got to know something about this book that we call the Bible. Because again, Paul said, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.

I've got to come to understand that Jesus is who we claim to be. Well, who is that? Well, the Lord Jesus Christ pictured in Scripture as a divine Son of God as deity. You recall Jesus said on one occasion, except you believe that I am. He said, you'll die in your sins unless we come to understand that he is the eternal, self-existent one.

The Lord said, we'll die in our sins. And he said, if we die in our sins where he is, we cannot come. So we can't afford to die faithless, but rather we have to have faith in the Lord. But then the Bible tells me that I'm to repent. Now Peter is talking to people in the first century that had escaped the corruptions that are in the world through lust, that obeyed the gospel.

In other words, they put their faith and trust in Jesus as the Son of God. They had repented of sin because in acts chapter 17 at verse 30, the Bible says, God commands all men everywhere to repent. These folks had repented. Furthermore, they had confessed with their mouth what they had believed in their heart. Well, what was that?

That Jesus was who he claimed to be, the son of the living God. I read about the eunuch in Acts chapter eight, verse 37, who acknowledge Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. But we're not done. No, the people that Peter was writing to, they had been baptized into Jesus Christ. Why were they baptized? You remember back in acts chapter two, Luke tells us that the apostles preached the gospel on Pentecost day in the city of Jerusalem in the first century.

The thrust of their message was Jesus pointing people in the direction of the Savior of the world. And Peter is on record as preaching the gospel on that day. And the Bible says he preached about the death, burial, resurrection, ascension of Jesus, his coronation in heaven. In verse 36, Peter said, in all the house of Israel know assuredly that this same Jesus whom you crucified, God, has made both Lord and Christ.

In other words, Jesus was the long awaited Messiah, the Anointed One. Now when they heard this, they were pricked, cut to the heart, and they asked Peter and the apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do? What did Peter tell them to do? Well, they already believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. That's evident based upon the testimony in acts two.

But he instructed them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins. So when they were baptized or immersed in water, what then did they enjoy forgiveness? They were escaping the corruption in the world through lust. Now Colossians chapter one Paul talks about those who have been delivered out of the power of darkness.

That's the world. They've been delivered out of the power of darkness, translated into the kingdom of God's dear son. That's the church, the kingdom, the church and the kingdom. One and the same. You remember in Matthew chapter 16, verse 18, Jesus promised to build the church. In verse 19 he said to Peter, I'll give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

Same institution, church, kingdom. So when we obey the gospel, we become a member of the blood bought body of Jesus. Again, we look at acts chapter two. In verse 41, the Bible says that those who gladly received his word were baptized that day. About 3000 souls added to them. Verse 47 Luke said, and the Lord added to the church daily those who are being saved.

Now to understand that the world in which we live is engulfed in spiritual darkness. John said in first John chapter five at verse 19, the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. In other words, the world that we live in engulfed in spiritual darkness. And yet when we obey the gospel, the light of the power of the gospel of Christ will ultimately lead us to everlasting life.

But we gotta trust in the Lord. We got to put our faith in him. We got to live an obedient life. We've got to be faithful until death. So the people in the first century to whom Peter was writing, they obeyed the gospel. They to escaped the corruption in the world through lust. As a result of having escaped the world.

They were in the church, that is, they were in that divine institution in which the saved reside. Peter talks about in First Peter chapter one, how they had purified their souls in obeying the truth through the spirit. That is, the spirit has revealed God's Word. We have it in book form today. It's called the Inspired Scriptures. As Paul talked about a moment ago.

Matter of fact, Peter would say that holy man of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. This is not just any book. This is the book of all books. This is the inspired word of the living God. So the people to whom Peter was writing in the first century, they had for a second the right way.

They had gone astray. Yes. They had escaped the corruptions that are in the world through lost. Now, having done that, what is the exhortation to every Christian? Well, you remember Paul said in Second Corinthians chapter five, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. All things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new. Think about it like this.

The Bible tells us in acts chapter 18 that Paul spent about 18 months in the city of Corinth. What do we know about the Corinthians? Well, the Bible says that they were steeped in armor and immorality and idolatry. As a matter of fact, in acts chapter 18 at verse eight, Luke said, by way of commentary, many of the Corinthians hearing believed and were baptized.

Well, what kind of lifestyle did those who had obeyed the gospel? What kind of lifestyle had they been living in? Well, in first Corinthians chapter six, Paul said, do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Neither fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, sodomites, thieves, covetous, drunkards revile extortion. But look at verse 11. In verse 11 Paul said, and such were some of you.

It's true. If they were living in the world, but having obeyed the gospel, they had been washed, sanctified, justified. They had escaped the corruptions in the world through a knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now look again at verse 11 and consider carefully what Paul said. He said, and such were some of you. What does that mean?

It means when they obey the gospel, have they been living in fornication? They ceased that sinful activity. Had they been living in idolatry, they quit being pagan idolaters. Had they been living in adultery? They ceased that kind of lifestyle. Had they been living in homosexuality again, they put to death that way of life. Why? Because that's what is involved in Christianity.

You remember Paul said, God forbid that I should glory except on the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified under me and I under the world. Or Paul saying, there is that when he became a Christian, he died to the love and the practice of sin. That's the exhortation we're to be faithful.

That's why when Paul wrote to the church at Corinth in verse 58, in light of the future resurrection, Paul said, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. For as much as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. So I've got to equip myself to live a faithful life in Christ.

That's why Peter would say, as a newborn baby, you desire the sincere milk of the word that you might grow thereby. That's why the command would be in Second Peter chapter three, verse 18. To grow in grace and knowledge. I've got to have a working knowledge of the Word of God. I've got to strive to live a faithful life in Christ Jesus.

When confronted with temptation, I respond, as Jesus did, by simply saying it is written or I do as Paul said, and I take that root of escape. Now let's go back and look at our text again. Number one, we talk about the escape. But then secondly, there is the danger of entanglement. He said, if we have escaped the corruptions, if they escape the corruptions that are in the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled.

They're in and overcome the latter and is worse than the beginning. That was just posed there for a moment. Now he's talking about people that, again, were members of the body of Christ, but they had forsaken the right way. They've now gone astray. Well what happened? Well, Peter said they got entangled once again in the world. Have you ever thought about the danger of the world?

In Matthew chapter 13, Jesus presents one of the great parables in his ministry, the parable of the sower. And he talks about that seed falling on different types of soil, and that soil represents different types of hearts. But he said that there is the kind of heart that, having received the seed of the kingdom, which is the Word of God, becomes caught up in the world, the pleasures of the world, the deceitfulness of riches.

That's why John said, love, not the world, neither of things which are in the world. If any man loves the world, he said, the love of the father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life is not of the father. No, he said, it's of the world.

Now listen to him. And the world passes away. Now imagine if you can. Here's a child of God baptized into Christ, a new creation in Christ. Instructed to be faithful till death. And the world begins to mesmerize. Allure. Bait. And later in trial. That's why James said, let no man say when he is tempted, I'm tempted by God.

For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempt see any man. But every man is tempted when he's drawn away by his own lust, when he has conceived breaks for sin. Sin when it is full grown, brings forth death. Now listen to him. Do not error, my beloved brethren. In other words, do not be led astray. The devil is sharp, calculating.

He has a lot of schemes that he uses to try to circumvent the faith of God's people. Paul said, be strong in the Lord, the strength of his mind. Put on the whole armor of God, that you might be able to stand against the walls, the schemes of the devil. I'm not necessarily a great fisherman. I do like to fish, but I understand that those who are good at fishing, they realize that different types of bait or lures are best used with different types of fish.

The devil doesn't use the same bait on you that he might use on me, and vice versa. Nope. The devil understands that we're all unique and different and so he has a lot of lures, a lot of allurements, if you please, that he uses to bait to and trap to ensnare. Taking a lot of people prisoner. Paul talks about in Second Timothy chapter two, those who have been taken captive by the devil to do his will.

Question does the devil have the ability to make this world look appealing and enticing? You remember it was said of Moses that he chose to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin for a season. Can sin be fun? Yes. Can it be enticing? Yes. Look, the devil can make it look so good, so appealing.

And sadly, sometimes Christians get caught up in a lifestyle of sin and unfaithfulness. They leave the Lord. There are things that are in place that ought to help us remain faithful to God. One of which is the Word of God. A second would be remaining faithful in our worship to God. A third would be to stay faithful in the work of God, because as Paul said, evil companionship corrupts good morals.

If we're running with a bad crowd and we're not running with God's people and engaging in the various works of the church. It's easy to get caught up. It's easy to get messed up in this life. So Peter is picturing those who had become entangled in a life of sin. Now listen. Entanglement leads to enslavement. Again, look at what Paul said in second Timothy chapter two.

He's talking about those who have been taken captive by the devil to do his will. Did you know when you go back out into a life of sin that you have become a slave, a servant of that kind of life? Listen to Jesus in John chapter eight. In verse 34, Jesus said that those who commit sin are the bond servants of sin.

That is, they have become a slave of sin. Now in our day, in time, there are negative connotations associated with slavery, servanthood, servitude. Or Jesus is saying is that when you live according to the world and you hook your wagon to the world, that you have become a bond servant to that way of life. Let me tell you what it can become incredibly difficult to extract yourself from that way of life.

There are folks in the body of Christ. They've gotten out into the world. They've immerse themselves in the pleasures and the things of this world. And they're not coming back. They don't want to come back. Why? Because they've gotten so secular minded. They've forgotten the spiritual. And they are so upside down in the world. They're not coming back.

Let me tell you about. Let me tell you about a lady that I heard about sometime back. This lady at one time had been a faithful Bible teacher, a good lady. She and her husband. For as I know, they were faithful in the Lord's church. They were trying to rear their children in

the Lord. And then they got caught up in the world.

And you know, before you know it, you're upside down. You're knee deep in a life of sin. This lady became an alcoholic. Her brother told me that as she neared the end of her life, that he and some fellow elder said in her home, if I recall correctly, and he said they begged her to repent and come back to get restore, to be restored back to the Lord.

And he said with tears in her eyes, she would not come back. Now listen, you talk about a frightening proposition to step outside this realm of existence into eternity, unprepared to meet God. You do not want that to happen. Now, Peter said, the latter end is worse than the beginning. Listen to him. 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 under them.

He said this happened to them according to the true proverb, the dogs return to his own vomit, and the soul that was washed to wallowing in the mire. So we talk about number one, the escape. Number two, the entanglement. Number three, the end. What is the end result of a man or woman? Brother or sister? Member of the body of Christ.

What is the end result of dying? Unfaithful to the Lord? Well, number one, you need to understand something. You need to think about this. Peter said it would have been better for you not to have known the way of righteousness than having known it, and turned from the holy commandment delivered unto you. What he's saying is that you're going to be held accountable.

You have a lot of responsibility. You know, we're talking about opportunity. With opportunity comes responsibility and accountability. There are folks in our world that have never obeyed the gospel. You're going to be held accountable for being a child of God and having left the faith. If I understand something about Scripture, we talk about degrees of reward and punishment.

Those who have known the truth of God abdicated the truth of God. Going out into a life of apostasy.

They're going to suffer. And if I understand what the Lord taught in Luke 12, degrees of punishment, greater on those who left the faith, you can't afford to go back. The theme of our lesson. You don't want to go back. I'm telling you, you do not want to go back into the world. And you certainly don't want to die in that condition.

Now, there are a lot of folks that have left the Lord. Sadly, some have died in that state. You remember in Hebrews chapter ten, the right of there talks about those who have forsaken the Lord. They've willfully sinned. In verse 31, the writer said, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. What do you say now?

The writer is addressing Jews that had obeyed the gospel. That is, they were Hebrew Christians. They had come out of Judaism. They'd obeyed the gospel of Christ. And then, for whatever reason, as incredulous, is incredulous as it may have seemed to us, they were going back to Judaism. They were going back to an inferior system. Some had already gone by going back to Judaism, some were on the verge of doing so.

And so what the writer said in verse 31, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God. What do you mean? It is a thing fearful beyond belief to die unprepared to meet God. Those who apostatize from the truth of God. It's a fearful thing. Now, let me just pause here for a moment.

Ask this question. If you've obeyed the gospel. Are you faithful? Are you living in

compliance with the teaching of the Lord? If the Lord were to come today, what do you say to you? Well done. Good and faithful servant. If you were to leave this world, let's just say that you went to the doctor this week. The doctor said you've got a terminal illness.

Could you echo the sentiments of Paul? When Paul said in the long ago I fought the good fight. I have finished my course. I finished my race. I've kept the faith. Could you say that? Could you say, as Paul did, that there's laid up for you a crown of righteousness? Not if you're not faithful. You can't make that claim.

Look, if you're unfaithful to the cause of Christ, you've got to make your way back to the Lord. Look at Luke 15. The prodigal son. The Bible says in verse 17, after that fella had been out feeding, grazing with the pigs, and you think about how repulsive that would have been to a Jew. And here's Peter talking about the soil that was washed wallowing in the mire.

Here's a South being cleaned up. Goes right back to the pig. Pig pen. Well, the idea is when a person leaves the world, they've been washed, they've been cleansed, and then they go right back into that mud pile. Well, Luke 15, the Bible says it came to himself. That's what you need to do. That light needs to come on and you need to repent of your sins.

John said, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us. To cleanse us from all unrighteousness. My prayer is that if you're a child of God, you'll be steadfast, immovable, that you will continue living a faithful life in God, in Christ Jesus. But if you're unfaithful, I beg you to repent before it's too late.

God bless you.