

### Inside this issue:

<i>Hope for the Future</i>	1
<i>Answering a Letter About Apostasy</i>	3
<i>A.M. Sermon Outline: Why Give to the Lord?</i>	6
Duty Rosters	7
Announcements & For the Record	8
<i>At Home</i>	8



### Time of Assembly



<b>Sunday:</b>	
Bible Study	9:00 a.m.
Worship	10:00 a.m.
(every other week)	
Worship	5:00 p.m.
<b>Wednesday:</b>	
Bible Study	7:00 p. m.

## Hope for the Future

By Andy Sochor

Throughout the book of Proverbs, a contrast is made between wisdom and foolishness. Since the wisdom described in the book comes from above, those who follow this and live according to its precepts will be righteous. Conversely, those who reject the way of wisdom will inevitably find themselves engaged in wickedness.

Despite their rejection of godly wisdom, the wicked often prosper in life. They may appear to be better off than the righteous. Not only that but the apparent prosperity and success of the wicked often seem to come at the expense of the righteous.

This sense of injustice is nothing new. We often see those who reject the wisdom from above seem to escape the negative consequences of their sin, laziness, wastefulness, ignorance, and more. The same was true when the wise man wrote the Proverbs. Yet notice what he wrote:

*“My son, eat honey, for it is good, yes, the honey from the comb is sweet to your taste; know that wisdom is thus for your soul; if you find it, then there will be a future, and your hope will not be cut off. Do not lie in wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous; do not destroy his resting place; for a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again, but the wicked stumble in time of calamity. Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; or the Lord will see it and be displeased, and turn His anger away from him. Do not fret because of evildoers or be envious of the wicked; for there will be no future for the evil man; the lamp of the wicked will be put out” (Proverbs 24:13-20).*

In the passage above, Solomon explained that the righteous who follow after wisdom have hope for the future. Therefore, rather than getting discouraged about their current situation (or that of the wicked), there were certain things they were told to do and not do. Let us consider his points and see what we can learn from them.

## Pursue Wisdom

*“My son, eat honey, for it is good, yes, the honey from the comb is sweet to your taste; know that wisdom is thus for your soul; if you find it, then there will be a future, and your hope will not be cut off”* (Proverbs 24:13-14).

When God promised to lead the children of Israel out of bondage in Egypt, He told Moses that He would bring them “to a land flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:8). Honey was universally recognized as a blessing. The wise man’s point was that God’s wisdom is a blessing to those who take hold of it. Obtaining wisdom provides hope for something better—either in this life or (most especially) in the life to come. Therefore, rather than following the ways of the wicked, we need to pursue wisdom so that we can enjoy God’s blessings. Paul reminded Timothy that the word of God was “able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15).

## Keep Getting Back Up

*“Do not lie in wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous; do not destroy his resting place; for a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again, but the wicked stumble in time of calamity”* (Proverbs 24:15-16).

Though the wicked often take advantage of the righteous and elevate themselves at their expense, the wise man warned the wicked that this was ultimately futile. This was because, when the righteous person falls, he keeps getting back up. In contrast, the wicked will ultimately fall since he does not have the same purpose and direction as the righteous person. Even though this was addressed to the wicked, it reminds the righteous not to give up; instead, we must persevere through whatever challenges and hardships we have to endure in this life. The Hebrew writer encouraged his brethren as they were suffering for their faith, *“Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised”* (Hebrews 10:35-36).

## Do Not Gloat Over Your Enemies

*“Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; or the Lord will see it and be displeased, and turn His anger away from him”* (Proverbs 24:17-18).

Just before this, the wise man warned the wicked that they would “*stumble in time of calamity*” (Proverbs 24:16). Yet the righteous person, despite the mistreatment that he may have received from the wicked, was not to rejoice in this. God told the prophet, Ezekiel, *“Say to them, ‘As I live!’ declares the Lord God, ‘I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his wicked way and live”* (Ezekiel 33:11). We are to have the same attitude as the Lord. He is *“not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance”* (II Peter 3:9). Though we may recognize the justice of the wicked being punished for their sin (cf. II Thessalonians 1:6-9), we should not take pleasure in it. Instead, if we are to have the attitude the Lord wants us to possess, we are to *“love [our] enemies and pray for those who persecute [us], so that [we] may be sons of [our] Father who is in heaven”*

(Matthew 5:44-45).

## Do Not Envy the Wicked

*“Do not fret because of evildoers or be envious of the wicked; for there will be no future for the evil man; the lamp of the wicked will be put out”* (Proverbs 24:19-20).

It is discouraging when the wicked seem to get away with their evil deeds without facing any consequences. It can even be tempting to engage in the same sinful behavior as they are practicing. Yet the wise man echoed the counsel of the psalmist who wrote, *“Do not fret because of evildoers, be not envious toward wrongdoers. For they will wither quickly like the grass and fade like the green herb. Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness”* (Psalm 37:1-3). The wise man later recognized this truth: *“Although a sinner does evil a hundred times and may lengthen his life, still I know that it will be well for those who fear God, who fear Him openly. But it will not be well for the evil man and he will not lengthen his days like a shadow, because he does not fear God”* (Ecclesiastes 8:12-13). As our text in Proverbs indicates, the wicked’s *“lamp...will be put out”*; meaning that their hope will be cut off.

## Conclusion

While the wicked may seem to prosper in the short term, we must look beyond whatever present conditions exist. There is hope for the future if we will follow God’s word and live righteous lives before Him. Regardless of what may happen in this life, let us continue to pursue the wisdom of God and persevere through whatever trials we may have to face. In the end, we can be assured that *“there will be a future”* for us (Proverbs 24:14). Again, *“It will be well for those who fear God, who fear Him openly”* (Ecclesiastes 8:12).

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## Answering a Letter About Apostasy

By Jarrod Jacobs

I received a letter from a woman asking about the impossibility of apostasy. She believes that once a person has been saved, he can never be lost in Hell regardless of what he may or may not do. She wrote me and asked my position on this. The portion of her letter pertaining to the impossibility of apostasy, and my answer are below for your study. Please study these verses that you might know the will of God (Acts 17:11; II Tim. 2:15).

Her letter to me: *“... Resting the doctrine of eternal security on one scripture passage tears my heart open (II Peter 2:20-21). To think that someone is considered a Christian because he has the knowledge of Christ or having known the way of righteousness is ludicrous. If Peter meant saved brethren why didn't he state so clearly? I have witnessed to countless people throughout my 19 years as born again Christian. Many have received Christ but there have been many that have rejected the truth, they now have the knowledge of Christ and they absolutely know the way of righteousness, but they are lost and without hope. Trying to win these people only becomes harder and harder as their heart turns further from what they know. I am 100 percent certain that this is what Peter (actually God) is saying to us. What scares me is the fact that if you believe you can lose your salvation, what kind of partial salvation do you have? “Not everyone who says ‘Lord, Lord’--if you catch my drift. You know what Ephesians*

2:8-9 says. Will you not be boasting to God that you were able to keep yourself from sinning whatever sin it was that was going to take your salvation away??? Food for thought. By the way, John 10:27-30 clearly states it is Gods job to keep you saved not yours. Read the Lord's prayer in the Garden (it's not your job). With Love, ..."

My response: "Hello, concerning your letter, you said, .... "Resting the doctrine of eternal security on one scripture passage tears my heart open (II Peter 2:20-21) ...." How many times does God have to say something before it is true? If we can find one passage in the New Testament that teaches that a Christian can sin and fall from grace, then the rest of the New Testament must harmonize. There is no contradiction in the Bible.

"Further you state, "If Peter meant saved brethren why didn't he state so clearly?" With all due respect, how much clearer did Peter have to be than to speak of those who "have escaped the pollutions of this world?" This is not speaking of someone who merely heard the truth and then rejected it outright. This is speaking of one who is a Christian. Notice that Peter says, "they are again entangled" (v. 20). One could not become "again entangled" if they had never been untangled, could they? Therefore, the ones under consideration were those who had become Christians, untangled from this world, but then have become "again entangled AND OVERCOME." These people, at one point, knew the "way of righteousness" but they "turned from the holy commandment." This is not speaking of one who was never a Christian, for one who has never been a Christian hasn't turned TO the holy commandment, yet.

"Again, you say, "What scares me is the fact that if you believe you can lose your salvation, what kind of partial salvation do you have? "Not everyone who says 'Lord, Lord'--if you catch my drift.' Yes, I catch your drift. Now, if someone starts off right, doing the Lord's will (Matt. 7:21), but stops and starts following his own way instead of the 'way of righteousness' (II Peter 2:20), what then? Will he be saved, anyway? If someone turns their back on the Lord, after having been a "born again Christian" for some time, what then? Will God have to just shrug His shoulders and accept that person, anyway? Concerning partial salvation, I have no knowledge of that. The Bible talks of salvation (Titus 2), and that is what I have."

"You know what Ephesians 2:8-9 says. Will you not be boasting to God that you were able to keep yourself from sinning whatever sin it was that was going to take your salvation away???" "No, I will not boast. I have no room for boasting, for "when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which is our duty to do" (Lk. 17:10). When we do exactly and only what God says, we have no room for boasting in any form. I can avoid sin through with the help of Almighty God (I Cor. 10:13), and not by my own power."

"By the way John 10:27-30 clearly states it is Gods job to keep you saved not yours." "I have read John 10:27-30 just as you suggested but found no statement akin to what you said. The words "hear," and "follow" are verbs of action (v. 27). Christ is saying that one who continues to "hear my voice" and continues to "follow me" are those who have eternal life. Now, what if one stops hearing Christ? What if one stops following His word? Are they saved, anyway? If one is lost in Hell, is it God's fault? Remember: II Peter 3:9."

"Food for thought." "Let me give you some food for thought concerning whether or not a Christian can so sin as to be lost in Hell. Besides II Peter 2:20-21, which we have dis-

cussed, consider and study the following.

1) Paul wrote to the Galatian CHRISTIANS and said: “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:4).

2) Jesus said: “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jn. 8:31-32). What if one does not continue in His word? What of those DISCIPLES in John 6:66?

3) Paul said: “But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (I Cor. 9:27).

4) Paul wrote to the Galatian CHRISTIANS and said: “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal. 6:1). Why would he be worried about this if it is impossible for a Christian to so sin as to be lost? Why is he concerned if, as you said, it is God's job to keep you saved?

5) Paul told Timothy: “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (I Tim. 4:1). Now, when one departs from the faith, will he go to Heaven or Hell? Remember, you cannot depart from a place you are not. (They could not “depart from the faith” unless they are a part of “the faith,” i.e., Christians.)

6) Paul told Timothy that some: “Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith.... For some are already turned aside after Satan” (I Tim. 5:12, 15). Doesn't this explain it very clearly? Some had cast off their first faith (i.e., Christians) and faced damnation. Need we consider any more? Isn't this the exact thing that Peter was saying in II Peter 2:20-21? Of course, it is.

7) The Holy Spirit says: “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb. 3:12). Again, one cannot depart from God unless he/she had been in a close relationship with Him (i.e., Christians). This is a warning of what could happen if they were not careful.

“I hope that these passages will help you in your study. Please feel free to write back, and in your next letter, ... tell me what you did to become a “born again Christian” as you so state. Have a good day.”

Addendum: The woman wrote me back one more time. In her letter, she never discussed a single Scripture I presented. In fact, she made the point of saying she would not use any Scripture. Her attitude was that we ought to just “agree to disagree.” Sadly, I have not heard from her since.

Brethren, there are still many people honestly searching for the truth. Let us be aware and searching for them. Jesus met some who refused His teaching (Jn. 2:24-25, 6:64). Yet, this did not stop Him from preaching the word to whomever would listen (Lk. 19:10; I Tim. 1:15). Jesus taught the parable of the Sower (Matt. 13) for this reason. Yes, there are those who are searching for people to justify their beliefs; but there are many more searching for the truth.

With this in mind, let us open our Bibles, and open our mouths to speak and teach the truth to friends, loved ones, and even strangers with whom we come in contact every day (II Tim. 2:2).