

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

The implications of 1 Cor. 15:2 and Gal. 1:8,9 indict all those preaching eternal security. Such wolves in sheep's clothing (Mt. 7:15) are in serious trouble, especially when Jude 3,4 is also considered:

Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

In Jude's day, those godless men had to secretly slip in among Christians, but in our dark day they are openly preaching the lie of once saved always saved (OSAS) over radio, TV, from pulpits and putting such in print! Sadly, some people who know OSAS is false are even supporting such congregations and ministries with their presence and financial donations! Others promote their deadly influence through their websites by links or article reprints.

Remember, what Jude called a counterfeit grace message and license for immorality (Jude 3,4), is termed in our day *eternal security*. Others sometimes call it once saved always saved or the perseverance of the saints, but it's the same basic lie from the devil, first spoken to Eve in the garden (Gen. 3:4) and afterwards accepted as truth. This teaching led to Adam and Eve's spiritual death. The essence of that sinister doctrine is that a person who has eternal life cannot afterwards die spiritually.

May multitudes in our day become aware of the freedom from sin's slavery found in Jesus' blood through his one and only gospel of grace, and afterwards faithfully work out their own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12), being mindful that a true Christian can go back to their old sinful life, die spiritually and become entangled by sin all over again.

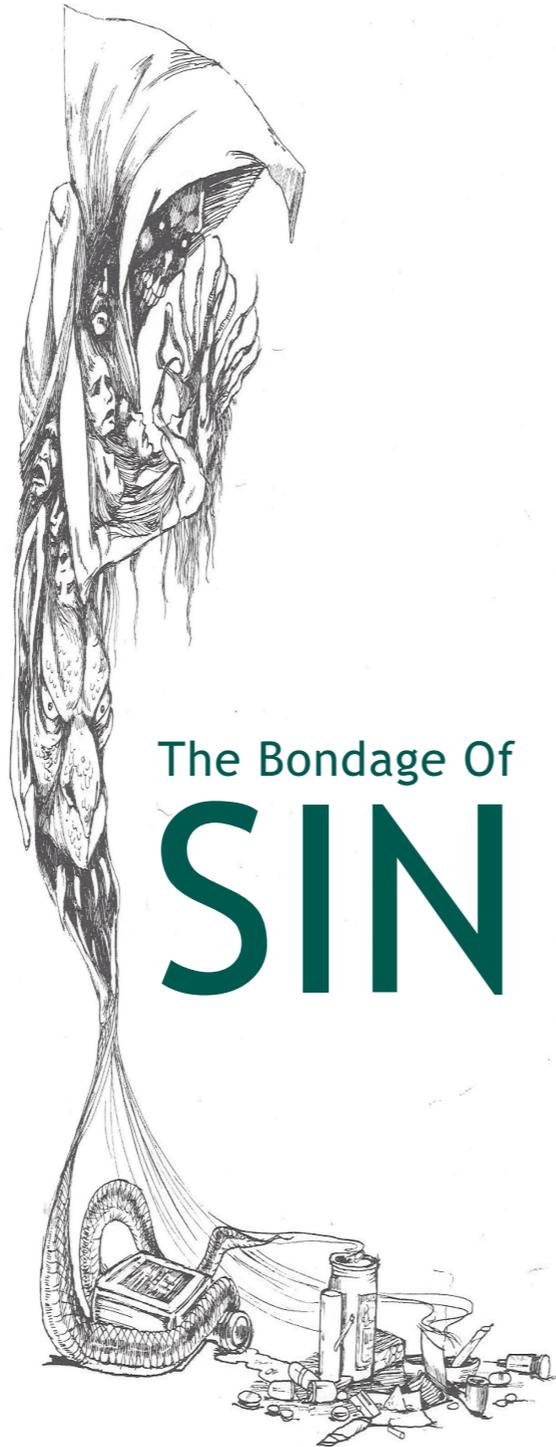
Finally, may the Lord raise up millions, all over the world, who will fearlessly contend for these Biblical truths, like good Christian soldiers, in spite of how they might suffer for obeying the Lord and opposing the popular, false prophets! Precious eternal souls are hanging in the balance over these issues.

Endnote

(1) Though unclear, the sacred command is probably stated at 1 John 3:23: "And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us."

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The Bondage Of SIN

Throughout the Bible, one can read of man having the rule over fish, birds, living creatures (Gen. 1:26) and people ruling over other people (1 Sam. 14:47; 2 Sam. 19:10), but then we come to other verses which show that sins can rule over people:

Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then will I be blameless, innocent of great transgression. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer (Psa. 19:13,14).

Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me (Psa. 119:133).

The Hebrew word for *rule* is *mashal* and means:

to rule:--(have, make to have) dominion, governor, X indeed, reign, (bear, cause to, have) rule (-ing, -r), have power.

The Wicked Are Slaves Of Sin

There are only two types of people, the wicked (or lost) and the righteous (or saved). Regarding the former, Proverbs 5:22 declares that they are take[n] (KJV) or ensnared (NIV) by their sin. That word ensnared in the Hebrew is *lakad* and means:

to catch (in a net, trap or pit); gen. to capture or occupy; also to choose (by lot); fig. to cohere:-- X at all, catch (self), be frozen, be holden, stick together, take.

Notice the clarity of this verse:

The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him; the cords of his sin hold him fast (Prov. 5:22).

The Hebrew word for *cords* means:

a rope (as twisted), espec. a measuring line; by impl. a district or inheritance (as measured); or a noose (as of cords); fig. a company (as if tied together); also a throe (espec. of parturition); also ruin:--band, coast, company, cord, country, destruction, line, lot, pain, pang, portion, region, rope, snare, sorrow, tackling.

Other similar verses can also be cited:

... the wicked are ensnared by the work of their hands (Psa. 9:16).

Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn his ways and get yourself ensnared (Prov. 22:24,25).

The images of their gods you are to burn in the fire. Do not covet the silver and gold on them, and do not take it for yourselves, or you will be ensnared by it, for it is detestable to the LORD your God (Deut.

7:25).

Verse 26 gives the remedy for coveting silver and gold on idols:

Do not bring a detestable thing into your house or you, like it, will be set apart for destruction. Utterly abhor and detest it, for it is set apart for destruction.

Another example of idolatry ensnaring those that are involved in it is found in the same OT book:

And after they have been destroyed before you, be careful not to be ensnared by inquiring about their gods, saying, "How do these nations serve their gods? We will do the same" (Deut. 12:30).

The imagery of these Scriptures shows the powerless spiritual condition the unsaved are in (Rom. 5:6), that is, as a captured victim ensnared by cords (or ropes) of sin. Beyond all of that he is also a slave to sin.

Jesus Will Set You Free

In the following passage, the truth (which sets one free from sin) is equated with the Son, that is, Jesus Christ Himself:

Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?" Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:31-36).

The Apostle John went into specifics about how this freedom from being a slave to sin occurs:

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood (Rev. 1:5).

In other words, we must contact the blood of Christ to receive freedom from sin's slavery. This means that people who never get Biblically saved have been lifelong slaves of sin, even though they might not be aware of it. While certain sins clearly enslave, like drunkenness, homosexuality and pornography, other sins such as lying, fits of rage and discord are not so apparent, but can still be spiritually fatal (Gal. 5:19-21). But regardless the sin, Jesus' precious, cleansing blood is the only remedy for sin's spiritual bondage. Moreover, one contacts Jesus' blood at salvation by coming to know the Lord Jesus in a personal way and simultaneously escapes sin's bondage:

... escape the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 2:20).

The same Greek word translated *escape* in that verse is also found in 2 Pet. 1:4. Clearly, it is Christians who escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires:

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires (2 Pet. 1:3,4).

Captive To Sin Again

It is very important to stress the fact that even a person who has once been freed from the controlling power of sin by Jesus' blood, can become a captive to sin again. Consider the words of the Apostle Peter to Simon, who previously came to the point of believing, which merited Christian baptism (Acts 8:13):

Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin (Acts 8:22, 23).

That Apostle also wrote of this same possibility occurring to those who had been truly saved. In 1 Peter, his audience was already born again (1:23) and redeemed by Jesus precious blood (1:18), but such would not, in itself, prevent them from becoming captive to sin again, as occurred to Simon (Acts 8:13, 23). Consequently, there has to be free will and human responsibility involved in staying free. Instead of conforming to the evil desires we had when unsaved, Christians are commanded to be holy in all you do:

As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:14-16).

Be Holy in All You Do

Peter knew a real Christian could once again conform to the evil desires he had when he lived in ignorance. The preventive is to be holy in all we do. Christians are in a constant, day in and day out battle with sin. This and more are clear from the following:

In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood (Heb. 12:4).

In Peter's second epistle, he wrote about certain false teachers, who have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam (2 Pet. 2:15). Besides being covetous, they were also guilty of mental adultery (v. 14 cf. Mt. 5:28). Hence, Peter declared them to be slaves of depravity [again]:

They promise them freedom, while they themselves

are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him (2:19).

But that is not all the Apostle wrote about those apostates, that is, Christians who leave the straight way (or faith):

If they have escaped [past tense] the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command(1) that was passed on to them. Of them the proverbs are true: "A dog returns to its vomit," and, "A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud" (2 Pet. 2:20-22).

Not only did Peter know the believer's security was conditional, but he boldly and unequivocally taught that a true Christian can leave the straight way. Some, however, refuse to accept this Scriptural fact and in opposition to it parrot: They were never really saved to begin with. To live in the straight way carries the same benefit as having escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But such a person, who departs from the straight way, will then become entangled and overcome by sin's corruption again! It is about such former Christians, who turn their backs on the sacred command that Peter stated:

It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them.

The Danger of Backsliding

In other words, do not backslide or sin's entanglement and slavery will be worse than it was before initial salvation! But if backsliding has already occurred, one can get saved (and freed) again, according to the Biblical record:

For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found. So they began to celebrate (Lk. 15:24).

Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins (James 5:19, 20, NKJV).

You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. And if they do

not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again (Rom. 11:19-23).

He Will Not Spare You Either

Sometimes in a feeble effort to save the false teaching of eternal security, proponents of such will try to dismiss Rom. 11:19-23 as only referring to Israel. By doing this, they somehow overlook the following two clauses from that passage: (1) if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either and (2) kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.

Dear reader, do not be deceived by the false grace message of OSAS (once saved, always saved). We must endure to the end for salvation's sake (Mt. 10:22), be faithful to the very end of our lives, so we won't be hurt by the second death (Rev. 2:10,11), and hold firmly to the end to share in Christ (Heb. 3:14). Furthermore, John wrote:

See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he promised us—even eternal life (1 Jn. 2:24, 25).

According to true grace teaching, eternal life is a hope (Titus 3:7), yet to be reaped (Gal. 6:8,9), in the age to come (Mk. 10:30), for only the ones who persist in doing good (Rom. 2:7) and don't grow weary and give up (Gal. 6:9).

The Devil's Captive

The apostle Paul also noted the spiritual captivity that an unsaved person is in. Hence, he informed Timothy how God's truth is to be presented to those who oppose him:

And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will (2 Tim. 2:24-26).

Remember also that all unsaved people are controlled by the sinful nature:

For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death (Rom. 7:5).

John also mentioned the spiritual bondage of the unsaved, termed the world in 1 Jn. 5:19:

We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

Paul also wrote of a Christian's past life of being a slave to sin, but went further to explicitly state that they have been set free from sin:

You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life (Rom. 6:18-22).

Today's False Gospel

Why then doesn't today's Gospel deliver this same kind of power and benefit, that is, freedom from the being a slave to sin? The answer is simple. What is often presented as the Gospel in our dark day is not the real Gospel! It is another gospel, like the kind condemned in Gal. 1:8,9. The true Gospel has repentance attached to it (Acts 20:21; 26:20; 2 Pet. 3:9; etc.), which means a turning away from sin (Mt. 12:41 cf. Jonah 3:10). Furthermore, godly sorrow precedes true repentance which leads to salvation (2 Cor. 7:10 cf. James 4:8-10)! Finally, according to 1 Cor. 15:2 and Col. 1:22, 23, the true gospel message also includes a conditional security for the believer:

By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

Only a trusting, submitting and enduring faith in Jesus will save one's eternal soul from the fires of Hell. A Christian's faith must continue to the end of his life to inherit the kingdom. This, however, doesn't always happen:

They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away (Lk. 8:13).

holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme (1 Tim. 1:19,20).

Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some (2 Tim. 2:17,18).