

“WATERLESS SPRINGS.”
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First Christian Reformed Church
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Scripture Texts: II Peter 2.17-22

Introduction.

One of the most famous movies ever is Wizard of Oz. Since 1939 probably every kid in America has seen it. Last month, Jerry Maren, the last surviving munchkin from "The Wizard of Oz," died at 98.

I remember the first time I saw it probably about 5 years old being scarred out of my mind and running from the room. But all of us now know the deception, how the great and mighty Wizard was a fraud. Toto pulled back the curtain and exposed the wizard to be just an ordinary man.

Appearances can be deceiving. The internet has taken deception and scams to a whole new level. We are constantly being warned that everything is not as it appears to be.

I keep getting those e-mails from Nigeria offering millions of dollars, those phone calls from the IRS or Microsoft Computer Department. Did I mention I got a call last month from my grandson in jail in NYC?

Here is Peter again, not pulling any punches, speaking frankly, and warning us about Christian teachers who are spiritual frauds. Surgery is love, warning about a cliff ahead is love, saying don't go there or do that is love. Whatever saves our souls is love. Peter's letter is love.

In chapter one Peter focused on the *positive*.

II Peter 1:10 Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.

If we rely on the power and wisdom of God we will not fall but will be effective and fruitful.

Now in chapter two Peter focuses on the *negative*, on what happens to those who don't do chapter one, who deny God's power and wisdom and fall into sensuality.

These bad examples are meant to motivate us away from danger and toward truth and light.

Last week's text, vss. 10-16 focused on the character of false teachers, they are arrogant, sensuous, greedy.

This week's text, vss. 17-22, focuses on the teaching of false teachers and its influence on others. It is hollow, deceptive, and in the end eternally deadly.

Waterless springs, clouds of mist, vss. 17.

Their teaching is like a waterless spring to one dying of thirst. It's worthless, it lacks substance. Or it's like a mist that promises thirst-quenching water and gives nothing.

Mist is wispy, unstable, blown here and there. It doesn't hold much water and just a little heat causes it to dissipate.

Both are like desert mirages of an oasis, promising rest, shade and thirst quenching water, but they over promise and under deliver. Neither are life-giving or life-sustaining, like the hollow and deceptive teaching of false teachers.

The darkest judgment is reserved for them, an eternal darkness.

James 3:1 Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

From water and mist to chains and bondage, vss. 18-19.

Vs. 18 Peter reasserts his previous indictment, they are arrogant and sensuous.

They entice and tickle the ears with boastful words and with words meant to appeal to the lustful desires of our human nature.

There are always some who will tell us what we want to hear, that God loves us and won't punish us and judge us, that holiness is no big deal. Everything is OK. I'm OK, you're OK.

Be happy they say, pursue your own happiness. After all doesn't God really care about our happiness and want us to be happy?

They deny the truth, they deny Jesus, they deny the importance of holiness. Based on this they teach a total freedom from any moral restraint. They have turned free grace into license for sin. “God likes to forgive, I like to sin, it’s a match made in heaven.”

They appeal to the sinful, lustful desires of people in order to entice them away from the truth.

Freedom is attractive. Who doesn’t like freedom? We live in the land of the free. We think the greatest freedom is being free to do whatever you want, pursue every pleasure.

What about a train? If a train gets off the tracks is it free? Free to roam the country side and go wherever it wants. A train off the tracks may be free, but the path leads to total destruction and death. It’s freedom becomes worse than then it was on the tracks doing what it was created to do. Nothing good has ever come from a train being off the tracks.

Freedom to sin may feel like freedom but it becomes a bondage that leads to destruction. It is not what we were created for and nothing good comes when we sin freely.

Like to one who cries out peace, peace and there is no peace, so is the one who cries out freedom, freedom, and there is no freedom.

Our freedom has been spoiled and polluted and corrupted by sin. True freedom is only found in following the will of God, doing what He created us to do.

Their freedom leads to slavery, bondage to deeper sin. Their freedom is a lie, a deception.

They twist the truth to the point of leading to destruction.

“The greatest enemy of freedom, ironically, is freedom” (Os Guinness). The greatest enemy of freedom is poorly defined freedom, freedom without virtue.

Peter quotes a proverb: For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.

Addiction to screens and technology are an example. If we can’t stop, then we are enslaved. What has you enslaved? What is your besetting sin? What is your idol? Make it your enemy.

Escape and entanglement, vss. 20-22.

These are Peter's strongest and most serious words. He is warning about the sin of apostasy, of falling away and abandoning the faith completely.

Who are these false teachers and how did they get that way? Peter is bringing to the surface a very serious spiritual and theological issue. Can we fall away from our faith?

Can Christians fall away from the faith and lose their salvation? Yes.

Can those who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and justified and born again, fall away from the faith and lose their salvation? No.

So does this mean there are Christians who have not been born again and have not received the Holy Spirit? Yes and no. Not to God who sees and knows the heart, but to us who see only the outward appearances, yes.

Jesus said as much:

Matthew 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' 23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

Luke 8:13-14 And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. 14 And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.

Luke 11:24-26 "When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' 25 And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. 26 Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first."

The Bible makes a distinction between those in the covenant, covenant keepers and covenant breakers, those who are in the church, who make a profession of knowing Christ and those who are truly regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

There are members of churches who have been baptized and made profession of faith, people who participate regularly in the life of the church, who give every outward sign of being a Christian, but who have never actually come to a saving knowledge of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. They are not as they appear to be.

1 John 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that it might be plain that they are all not of us.

There are some among us who have shown by their fruit and actions that they were not actually one of us. They had a non-saving knowledge of Christ, they had a head knowledge, not a heart knowledge. Peter describes them as they appear, having knowledge of Christ and the way of righteousness, even for a while escaping defilement.

But why do I say those who are truly saved or born again can't fall away?

In II Peter 1:10 Peter says we can confirm our election and calling. If the elect can fall away then that verse makes no sense. II Peter 2 can't contradict the clear passages that teach the elect are truly secure.

John 5:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

John 6:39-40 This is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. 40 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

John 10:28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

Romans 5:9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

Romans 8:30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Those justified can't become unjustified. Those justified will be glorified.
Those born again can't become unborn again.
A regenerate Christian with the Holy Spirit, can't lose the irrevocable gift.

There is a word of hope here and a word of warning.

Hope to those with a prodigal in their life. There are a number of us here with prodigal sons or daughters, prodigal grandsons or granddaughters.

Jesus is good shepherd, who seeks and saves the lost. If they are elect, if they have been justified, born again, regenerate, then He will bring them home.

Never stop praying, earnestly beseech the God of all salvation. We prayed 20 years for my brother who we think came back just before he died.

Warning. Two proverbs, dogs and pigs.

Some start and don't finish. Some make shipwreck of their faith.

This is like the person who makes resolutions and with great will power keeps them for a season, but then falls, slides back into his old ways.

A good moral person by all outward accounts is not good without Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith. If we stop openly sinning and reform our behavior and act in a manner acceptable to others, we are no better than whitewashed tombs, but full of dead bones.

There is no neutrality in this matter of sin. There is no such thing as an empty house, no unoccupied soul. Either we are with Satan or we are with Jesus. We will be filled with something, either unholy or holy.

There is no more dreadful description of a soul, than a soul that after having seen Christ, after having heard Christ, prefers sin over salvation, prefers vomit over virtue, prefers mud over purity and holiness.

“The more evidence you have of Christ's reality, the more severe your judgment for not repenting. "Everyone to whom much is given, of him much will be required" (Luke 12:47, 48). Peter warns the new converts: if you forsake the way now, after all you have learned and experienced, your doom will be more miserable than the pagans'.

The doctor gave me ten days worth of antibiotics and said, "Don't stop taking them after five days just because your sore throat clears up. If you do, it may flare up all the worse." So it is in the Christian life: if you stop trusting the heavenly doctor and disobey his prescription for your redemption, your latter state will be worse than the former” (John Piper).

This is strong but good medicine to warn us from taking lightly spiritual things, and especially spiritual dangers. There is an enemy of our souls and he comes

often in the form of false teachers. Be warned and be all the more earnest in your fight against sin and evil. Why does the Bible say, put on the armor, resist the devil, fight the good fight, have nothing do to with the powers of darkness, mortify the flesh, be dead to sin?

Beware of any hint of nominal Christianity, of acting, of being casual, of not truly loving God.

Nominal Christianity is a horrible lie and deception.

Make your calling and election sure, examine yourself, produce the fruit of the Spirit in keeping with your repentance and the righteousness that is in you by Jesus.

II Timothy 1:14 Guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

Watch your life and doctrine closely and he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion.

Prayer: Holy Father increase our hope and our joy in the knowledge that our salvation is keep secure in heaven by your sovereign power. Increase our hope and joy in the knowledge that the gates of hell can never prevail against your church. Increase our hope and joy in the knowledge that in temptation you provide a way out and in our sin you lead us to repentance and forgiveness. To any who are in bondage, in chains, trapped, enslaved, show the light of hope and deliverance in the blood of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. Thank you for every provision that enables us to conquer and have victory, not by our might, not by our strength but by your Spirit.