

INTRODUCTION

Dogs are interesting animals. If you're a dog lover, you know different dog breeds have their own unique personalities. For instance, how many dogs does it take to change a light bulb? A Golden Retriever, the fun, laid-back breed says: The sun is shining, the day is young. We've got our whole lives ahead of us, and you're inside worrying about a stupid burned-out light bulb? A Border Collie, known for its intelligence says: Just one. And I'll replace any wiring that's not up to code. A German Shepherd says: I'll guard the light bulb while you decide. Back off! A Toy Poodle says: I'll just blow in the Border collie's ear and he'll do it. By the time he finishes rewiring the house, my nails will be dry. A Rottweiler says: Go ahead! Make me change it! A Shih-Tzu says: Puh-leeze, dah-ling. Leave it for the servants. A Labrador Retriever says: Oh, me, ME!!! Pleeeeeze let ME change the bulb! Can I? Can I? Huh? Huh? Can I? A Jack Russell Terrier says: I can reach it! I just KNOW I can reach it! Another twenty jumps, and it's mine, ALL mine!! And a hound dog says: *Zzzzzzzz*.

Perhaps you've heard about some of the newer breeds of dogs. For instance, what do you get when you cross a Pointer with a Setter? A Pointsetter—a traditional Christmas pet. What do you get when you cross a Pekinese with a Lhasa Apso? A Peekasso—an abstract dog. What do you get when you cross a Newfoundland with a Basset Hound? A Newfound Asset Hound—a dog for financial advisors. What do you get when you cross a Terrier with a Bulldog? A Terribull—a dog that makes awful mistakes. What do you get when you cross a Bloodhound with a Labrador? A Blabrador—a dog that barks incessantly. An finally, what do you get when you cross a Malamute and a Pointer? A Moot Point—a dog that really doesn't matter.

In this passage we are going to read about sick dogs and slimy hogs. Remember, the Apostle Peter is describing false teachers who are counterfeit Christians. He employs several graphic word pictures to describe them. Let's start reading in II Peter 2:17:

“These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them. For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him. If they have escaped 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 that was passed on to them. Of them the proverbs are true: ‘A dog returns to its own vomit,’ [Proverbs 26:11] and ‘A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud.’”

When I first read those words as a teenager, I remember thinking, “gross!” But before your turn your nose up at the words about sick dogs and slimy hogs, you need to know the Bible is not a sanitized scripture that was written using only pleasant words so it wouldn't offend people. It's a real book about real people who had real issues. It never glosses over the stories of incest, rape, murder, drunkenness, adultery and deceit. It never avoids earthy language, even if some people with delicate tastes are offended. If a prudish Sunday School teacher had been trying to write a

nice, clean copy of the Bible, they never would have included this reference to dog’s vomit and hog slop. But there are some important spiritual lessons we can learn from them. Dog puke and hog mud are filthy and disgusting. The point is they represent sin. Sin should be as horrid to us as dog vomit and a putrid pigsty.

Vomit is filth that comes from within and mud is filth that comes from the outside. If we’re going to live holy lives, we must learn to deal with the same thing—sin that comes from our fallen nature within, and sin that comes from the fallen world around us. With this introduction, let’s learn three spiritual lessons from this passage. In each lesson, we’ll answer a question and examine a spiritual truth.

1. A LESSON ABOUT SECURITY—A BELIEVER OR A MAKE-BELIEVER?

Peter is warning about the presence of people who claim to be followers of Christ, but they are only make-believe Christians. Growing up in South Alabama, I can remember playing with my best friend Forest (his last name wasn’t Gump). Our favorite games involved “make-believe.” I’d say something like, “Let’s make-believe that I’m a cowboy and you’re an Indian.” Or “Let’s make-believe that I’m a cop and you’re a robber.” Make-believe is fun for kids, but some people grow up and instead of being a real believer they are make-believers.

God wants you to have a sense of security when it comes to your salvation. In other words, God wants you to *know* without a shadow of a doubt that you’re saved. Peter writes that these counterfeit Christians are like springs without water; like clouds without rain. Wells and springs give the promise of water, and a dry well just doesn’t keep its promise. It’s like a rain cloud passing over the desert without dropping its life-giving water. Counterfeit Christians are the same way—outwardly they advertise they are Christians, but inwardly there is only dryness and death.

In the context of this passage, let’s address this question: **Q: Can a Christian lose their salvation? A: NO.** This passage refers to people who never had salvation, only a semblance of salvation. Peter wrote in verse 20 that they had known the way of salvation, they just didn’t take it. They heard the truth about Jesus and even had head knowledge of what it means to be a Christian, and then they turned their back on it.

If you want to go to my office, I can tell you that it’s on the east side of second floor of this building. Now, you can know the way to my office, and still not ever go there. I could even point the way out to you, but on the way there, you could turn and go in a different direction. That’s what some people have done with Christ; they are shown the road to heaven, and they learn *how* to get to heaven, but then they just don’t follow it. If someone asked you how to get to the pastor’s office, you could even tell him or her, without going yourself! Sadly, some lost church members, counterfeit Christians, can tell you Jesus is the only way to heaven, but they aren’t on the way there themselves.

John Piper wrote: “Some people make a start in the Christian life, and by all outward appearances have escaped from the defilements of the world. Then the cares and riches and pleasures of life (as Jesus says) choke the young plant and it withers and bears no fruit and dies

(Luke 8:14)." Peter is not teaching that God's elect can lose their salvation. He is most definitely teaching that church members can be lost and people who make outward professions of faith and even begin to clean up their lives can turn away from Christ and be lost.

You may be wondering, "Well how can I know for certain if I'm saved?" Simple. If you keep on trusting and loving Jesus, then you're one of His followers. Spiritual dropouts walk away before they reach the finish line. The Bible says: "They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us." (I John 2:19)

Every church roll contains the names of people who at one time claimed to trust Christ, but now they display no spiritual hunger, they never attend, they never give, and they feel no need to make a change. The sad thing is that some of these people are Baptists and they've heard that phrase "once saved, always saved." So they are deceived into thinking that just because they walked an aisle and shook the pastor's hand and got dunked they're going to heaven. But they're as lost as a ball in high weeds. It's not about meeting the pastor; it's about meeting the Master. It's not about getting washed off with water in a baptistry, it's about having your heart cleansed by the blood of Jesus.

The tragic thing is that some of these people become so hard hearted they are worst off than before they were saved! Here's the bottom-line truth: **THOSE WHO LEARN ABOUT JESUS AND REJECT THE GOSPEL ARE IN WORSE SHAPE THAN THOSE WHO HAVE NEVER HEARD!**

When you stand before God, you will be judged on the amount of truth you were given. And just about every person in America knows about Jesus and they have access to a Bible. God knows not only who repents, but also who would have repented if they had heard the truth.

When Jesus was walking on earth, He performed many miracles, yet many rejected Him. This is what He said about them, Jesus said, "Woe to you Korazin! Woe to you Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgement than for you." (Matthew 11:21-22) Here's the DOD paraphrase: It will be more bearable on the day of judgement for a Chinese person who has never heard than for a Texan who has heard the story of Jesus all of their lives.

So, I could be your best friend, or your worst enemy today—depending on what you do with the truth. For many of you, the worst thing you could do would be to listen to my words, because I'm telling you the truth about Jesus today, and you're going to be judged on the basis of that truth. You won't be able to look God in the eye and say, "Well, nobody ever told me."

2. A LESSON ABOUT SIN—SHEEP OR A DOG?

Peter is quoting Proverbs 26:11 in verse 22: "Of them the proverbs are true: 'A dog returns to its own vomit,'" I don't have any grandkids yet, but I do have "granddogs." Jenni and Jason have two full-grown boxers. Since they are big Oklahoma fans, the dogs are named Boomer and

Switzer. I have learned one thing about boxers: They will eat almost anything. One day Jenni and Jason came home from work and the dogs had eaten a piece of siding off the house! But the dogs referred to in II Peter aren't domesticated dogs. They weren't the sweet little housebroken pets we have today. These were mean, mangy curs that hung around garbage piles in Israel. There's only one other verse in the Bible that mentions dogs and pigs together. Jesus said, "Do not give to dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces." (Matthew 7:5)

Dogs are not fastidious creatures by nature. They like to eat junk and the love to get dirty. By contrast, in the Bible, God's children are called sheep, never dogs. A lamb is a clean animal. A lamb would *never* think about eating its own vomit any more than we would. But remember, this passage isn't about dog puke; it's about sin.

That leads us to our next question: **Q: Can a Christian sin? A: Yes, but not continually.** A dog eats vomit and enjoys it, because it is the nature of a dog to eat its vomit. A lost person loves to sin because it is their nature to sin. The Bible says, "No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God." (I John 3:9) In other words, a counterfeit Christian came come to church on Sunday and go out and continually commit adultery, steal, lie, and cheat because it's their nature. But a Christian *desires* to be holy and pure. Whenever a true Christian sins, it breaks their heart. That leads to this bottom-line truth: **A REAL CHRISTIAN IS SICKENED BY SIN AND WANTS TO STAY CLEAN.**

How does the idea of eating your own vomit appeal to you? What if I asked you what are you having for lunch today? "Oh, I'm going to stick my finger down my throat and make myself puke. Then I'm going to take a spoon and eat it up!" Does that offend you? Good! That's how you should feel about sin. Sin is as gross, foul, yucky, disgusting, loathsome, putrid, horrid, repulsive, repugnant, abhorrent, detestable, crude, obscene, and vulgar as dog vomit!

Like a lamb, a true child of God wants to stay holy and clean. The way you do that is by staying close to God. The Bible says, "Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands you sinners, and purify your hearts you double minded." (James 4:8)

3. A LESSON ABOUT SALVATION—A SON OR A HOG?

A hog's nature is to wallow in the mud; a human being wants to stay clean. Let me tell you a dirty story. A few years ago, I had a Kawasaki 750 motorcycle. Cindy and I enjoyed riding through some of the country roads in East Texas. On our last outing a few years ago, we were riding through a new subdivision under construction. The roads and curbing had been cut in, but the roads weren't paved. It had been a wet spring, and as I steered us through the back of the subdivision, we approached a low section of the road that was covered in mud. I didn't know how deep the mud was, so I juiced the throttle to get enough momentum to drive through it. Big mistake! In an instant, we had sunk down in the thick mud was deeper than the hub of my front tire. The mud was like glue, and it caught the bike and slowed it to a crawl. Without any forward momentum, we plopped over sideways into the mud.

Fortunately, the mud was soft and deep so that neither of us was hurt. After a few seconds of silence we started trying to climb out of the mud. Cindy looked at me and I looked at her and we both started to laugh. We were covered with mud from head to foot. It was in our eyes, under our helmets in our ears. There was mud in crevices I didn't even know I had! We crawled out of the mud hole and I was finally able to lift the bike, and walk it out. Then we headed straight home. We were driving up Broadway, and it seems that we had to stop at every traffic light. We got plenty of funny looks from people who were looking at two mud-covered characters beside them! The main thing I remember about that experience is that we couldn't wait to get cleaned up. When we got home we went into our backyard and hosed each other off, and had to leave our clothes on the back porch.

Most people despise being covered in mud, but pigs *love* to be covered in mud. It's the nature of a pig to love mud. In the same way, Christians hate sin, but non-Christians love sin like a pig loves mud. If you are a child of God, He has placed His Divine nature in you, so that whenever you sin, you feel dirty.

That leads to the next question: **Q: Can a Christian stray away from God? A: Yes, but a true child of God will always return.** A true believer may slip into sin temporarily, and by so doing, they may get out of fellowship with God. But when a person is a true believer, they *always* return to God in a spirit of repentance. Here's the truth: **A PRODIGAL SON RETURNS TO HIS FATHER, BUT A PRODIGAL PIG ALWAYS RETURNS TO THE MUD.**

CONCLUSION

In Luke 15, Jesus told the story about a man who had two sons. The younger son was unhappy and restless, so he asked his father for his inheritance. He had it coming when his daddy died, but this kid was so rebellious that he wanted it *all* and he wanted it right now.

The loving father cashed in his assets and gave his son 1/3 of his net worth. Quick as a whistle the son headed for the bright lights of the big city and he spent all his money on wine, women and song. He was living the high life until he ran out of money. Soon he found himself in a muddy pigsty. He was wallowing in the mud with a bunch of pigs. His job was to feed them, and he had to eat the same slop they were eating.

But something happened when he was in the pigpen. He came to the realization he wasn't a pig: He was a son. So, as Jesus described it in Luke 15:17, “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘how many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father.’” (Luke 15:17)

You've heard the story of the prodigal son; now hear the story of the prodigal pig. In the pigpen, the prodigal son made some good friends with the pigs, after all, he was living with them, and living like them. His best friend was a big old pig named Porky. When he finally came to his senses he turned to Porky and said, “What are we doing here? My daddy's house is better than this. I'm outta' here. I'm getting my life cleaned up. I'm going back to my Father. Do you want to go with me?” Porky said, “Sure, why not? Let's boogie.”

When they approached the son's home, the loving father ran and embraced his dear son and said, "We're going to have party! Kill the fatted calf!" And the son said, "Dad, I'm sure glad we aren't having pork because I want to introduce you to my best friend, Porky." The father said, "Any friend of my son, is my friend. Welcome Porky. Now, let's get you guys cleaned up before dinner."

At dinner, the son was wearing a new robe, new sandals, and a new ring his father had given him. The servants had scrubbed Porky to remove all the dirt and grime. From the tip of his snout to the end of his tail, he was squeaky clean. The servants had even tied a big blue ribbon around his neck and dabbed some Brut cologne behind his ears.

It was a touching scene. The Father only had eyes for his son who had returned, and the son said, "Dad, it's sooo good to be home again." Meanwhile, Porky was feeling very uncomfortable. He felt tense and out of place. He really didn't care for being clean, and that ribbon was chafing his neck. He was nearly gagging from the terrible smell of the cologne. And how was he supposed to eat using a knife and fork?

In a flash, he said, "Sorry, but I'm going to get up and go back to my own kind. I really don't like this place. If I stay here any longer I'm going to commit suey-cide!" So, Porky jumped off the dining room chair and ran as fast as his short legs would take him—straight back to the mud hole. As he approached the filthy pigsty, he got a running start, yelled, "Whee!" He jumped up, turned a double flip, and performed a perfect swine dive, "PLOP!" right back in the mud.

You see, a pig returns to its mud because it is the nature of a pig to love mud. Don't be surprised when you see some people start attending church, and seem to clean up their lives, only to go running back into the same old filthy, sinful lifestyle. Their nature was never changed.

Evelyn C. Sanders summed up this idea with a poem entitled, "A Pig is a Pig."

"Come home with me," said the Prodigal Son.
"We'll sing and dance and have lots of fun."
"We'll wine and dine with women and song.
"You'll forget you're a pig before very long."

So, the pig slipped out while the pigs were asleep,
Shook off the mud from the mire so deep.
Around his neck was a bow so big,
He's gonna show the world, a pig's not a pig!

With his snout in the air he trotted along,
With the prodigal son who was singin' a song.
It must be great to be a rich man's son,
he would surely find out before the day was done!

It didn't take him long to realize his mistake
He'd been scrubbed and rubbed 'till his muscles ached!

He squealed when they put a gold ring in his nose
And winced with pain when they trimmed his toes.

He sat on a table on a stool so high,
A bib round his neck and fork to try,
While the prodigal son in his lovely robe,
Kept feeding his face, so glad to be home.

When the meat came around, the pig gave a moan—
It looked too much like a kind of his own.
He jumped from his chair with a grunt and a groan,
Ran through the door and headed for home.

His four little feet made the dust ride high
For he didn't stop 'till he reached that pigsty!
It's what's on the inside that counts, my friend,
For a pig is a pig to the very end!

A counterfeit Christian is like that old pig. The lesson of the prodigal pig is this: **YOU CAN CLEAN A PERSON UP ON THE OUTSIDE, BUT UNLESS THEIR INNER NATURE IS CHANGED, THEY WILL ALWAYS RETURN TO SIN.**

If you have received Jesus Christ in your heart, you have a different nature. To you, sin is as revolting as dogs vomit and hog slop. If you are child of God, you want to spend time with members of the Family. So, look within and examine the condition and attitude of your heart.

There IS something much more disgusting than dog vomit and pig slop. It's a place the Bible calls hell. But God loves you so much He doesn't want to you spend eternity there. He sent Jesus Christ, the precious Lamb of God, to die in your place. And if you will truly turn from your sins, place your faith in Him, and surrender to Him as your Lord, you will never even get close enough to hell to smell the smoke.

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes