

SOTERIOLOGY (155)

Unfortunately, under this heading of “Contextual Misinterpretations,” not only do some contexts refer to false teachers, but others are (mis)used that refer to other things.

(Sub-heading #2) - Passages that contextually refer to moral reformation or outward profession.

There are certain passages that refer to those who profess salvation but do not possess salvation. Those who use verses from such contexts fail to “rightly divide” the true context.

1) Luke 11:24-26 – Here is another famous Arminian text that is often cited as one that proves one may lose his salvation.

There is no better discussion of this text than that of Dr. Chafer:

“The Savior is here presenting a phase of truth related to demonology which is not even remotely related to salvation by grace. A demon going out of a person, leaving that former abode free from such an unholy tenant may return, taking with him other demons worse in character than the first tenant. The fallacy of the use of this Scripture to teach insecurity is seen in the fact that the removal of a demon is not the equivalent of salvation, in which the divine nature and Spirit are given to the believer. (This episode occurred long before Christ ascended into heaven and sent His Spirit to indwell the believer.) The presence of a divine nature and Spirit guarantees that no demon can overtake God’s property (I John 4:4). This incident may represent a reformation or improvement in the case of a suffering one, but it contributes nothing to the question of whether one once saved might be lost again” (Vol. 3, pp. 296-297).

Religious reformation without the dynamic of real transformation is a demonic reformation. This is not a discussion of a person once saved losing his salvation. This is a text about a person once demon-possessed being temporarily delivered without coming to faith in Jesus Christ.

The context is certainly not a discussion of one once saved losing his salvation. Any honest examination of this context will reveal this important reality.

2) Matt. 13:1-8 – Here is a parable often cited as a proof-text for claiming one may lose his salvation. As with other texts, when we examine this context, it becomes very clear that this passage is not referring to the loss of one’s salvation in any way.

Those who suggest that this passage proves one may lose his salvation say that the seed which fell beside the road (13:4), the seed which fell upon rocky places (13:5), and the seed which fell among thorns (13:7), all represent people who were once saved, but now are no longer saved. However, upon examination of the context, we may observe that this type of interpretation is inconsistent with what is truly the point.

Jesus Christ was personally here on earth proclaiming to Israel that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, which was also the message of John (Matt. 3:2). Jesus Christ was the King and He was offering Israel her kingdom. Many people were following Jesus Christ, listening to Him.

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The majority of them were giving the impression that they were indeed spiritual people who loved God. Jesus Christ could see the hearts and knew that deep inside this was really not the case.

This is clearly one reason why Christ spoke in parables, so those who were right with God could grow and those who weren't right with God couldn't understand and grow (13:10-17).

The parable of the sower is a parable that is designed to teach what happens to the majority of the people when the Word of God is presented. We must remember that the majority of people surrounding Jesus Christ and His disciples were pretending to be right with God and Christ is revealing what is really happening as the Word is being presented.

One group hears the Word of God and does not understand it because Satan and his forces are actively at work seeking to take the impact from the people (13:19). Another group hears the Word of God and even though there appears to be some emotional reaction to it, there really is no root and when persecution or pressure comes, these people fall away, proving there was no real root to their faith (13:20-21). Another group hears the Word of God and appears to have a great interest, but their commitment is deceitful and this group is more interested in the world and in riches rather than being right with God (13:22). The fourth group is the one that is really right with God and the proof is they produce fruit (13:23). This is the group that has a deep understanding of the Word of God.

Of all the people who heard the Word of God from Jesus Christ, only 25% were truly and really right with God. The rest were religious pretenders. In fact, the next parable—"The Wheat and the Tares" (13:24-30), indicates that all of these pretenders will be fully exposed at harvest time (13:30).

This passage has nothing to do with those who were once saved and lost their salvation. This text has everything to do with those who pretend to be right with God and pretend to really be interested in the Word of God, when, in all reality, that is not the case. Such people never come to an understanding of the Word of God and they are never really right with God and the judgment of God will eventually prove that.

3) Hebrews 3:6, 14 – These few verses are often used as support for the belief that man can lose his salvation. However, upon a close examination of the context, it will be seen that this is not the true interpretation at all.

In this section, the writer of Hebrews was very concerned that there were some Hebrew unbelievers with hard hearts, who somehow had convinced themselves that they were right with God, probably due to their Jewish lineage. The writer wanted them to realize this was not the case. In fact, many were turning away from the truth concerning Jesus Christ.

When we examine the contextual point as it relates to Hebrews, we may begin to form a true perspective.

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There were many who had not truly responded to the Spirit of God and their hearts were hard, in total unbelief (3:7, 8, 12, 15, 18, 19). If a person continually hardens his heart to Jesus Christ and the Spirit of God, he will never enter into God's rest and may reach a point where he is not able to respond to the Gospel (4:1-3).

The context is very clear that those who have believed on Christ have entered into the rest of God (4:3). The specific point in this context is to cease from relying upon one's own works and start trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ (4:9-11).

This passage is a serious warning to those who profess to be right with God, but have never truly responded to the saving grace of God, which is found in Jesus Christ. A critical key to this is the fact that such a person relies upon his own works to make him and keep him right with God. Such a person fails to totally rely upon the finished work of Jesus Christ, even though the Holy Spirit is prompting him to do so and, as a result, this person fails to enter into the rest (rest from works) which God has provided.

This text warns that it is possible to reach a point in which it is no longer possible to come to faith in Jesus Christ. The writer of Hebrews is warning people not to harden their hearts to the Spirit of God, for one never knows when God has spoken for the last time (3:7-8). The truth of the Bible is this—a "come to Christ at any time gospel," is not a biblical Gospel. One may harden one's heart one time too many and it can be too late.

As we have observed, from a contextual analysis of each of these passages, the subject is not one of a person losing his salvation. The subject matter is one of a person professing to be saved and not truly being saved. Profession of salvation and possession of salvation are two very different and distinct issues.

(Sub-heading #3) - Passages that contextually refer to true salvation being proved by fruit.

There are two lines of truth that threat N.T. teaching regarding the fruit of one who is truly saved:

- 1) There may be times when a truly saved person bears no fruit.
- 2) There cannot be a total time when a truly saved person bears no fruit.

Bearing fruit is a valid test for humanly establishing true salvation. We are to look for fruit-bearers because fruit-bearers are, in fact, truly right with God.

When one is being used by God to influence people into being saved or to develop and mature in their lives and in their understanding of the Word of God, that one truly demonstrates he is right with God.