

A Backsliding Nation — 06/25/23

TEXT- **Jeremiah 3:6-15** esp. **Jeremiah 14:7** *O LORD, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee.*

INTRO — The word *backslide*, in a Christian context, implies movement away from Christ rather than toward Him. A backslider is someone who is going the wrong way, spiritually. He is regressing rather than progressing. The backslider had at one time demonstrated a commitment to Christ or maintained a certain standard of behavior, but he has since reverted to old ways. Backsliding may manifest itself in several ways, e.g., dropping out of church, losing fervor for the Lord, walking away from a ministry or a family, or falling back into old habits.

Backsliding is not losing one's salvation according to **John 5:24** *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*

It is breaking fellowship with God, it is becoming at ease in the things of God. It can be out of Church or in Church.

Some stay backslidden longer than others. For Peter, it was a matter of days, for David, it was a matter of months, but for Lot, it was a matter of years.

Most church members live so far below the standard that you'd have to backslide to be in fellowship! - Vance Havner

In the beginning the church was a fellowship of men and women centering on the living Christ. Then the church moved to Greece where it became a philosophy. Then it moved to Rome where it became an institution. Next, it moved to Europe where it became a culture. And, finally, it moved to America where it became an enterprise.

4 Reasons People Backslide

One of the more interesting sections of dialog in John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* has Christian and Hopeful discussing the danger of backsliding, of falling away from what had the appearance of spiritual life and growth. That dialog, drawn from the tenth stage of Christian's journey, is important and instructive. Bunyan presupposes that such people have been awakened to their need for salvation by some combination of the fear of God and the danger of hell, but eventually fall back or fall away. Very often a backslider has a false sense of security and believes his backsliding is not serious or significant.

Here are four reasons that people backslide:

I. The conscience is awakened, but the mind is not changed.

Therefore, when the guilt and fear of God that motivated this awakening of conscience has passed, their desire for salvation cools and they return to their own ways.

Though the consciences of such men are awakened, yet their minds are not changed: therefore, when the power of guilt weareth away, that which provoked them to be religious ceaseth; wherefore they naturally turn to their own course again; even as we see the dog that is sick of what he hath eaten, so long as his sickness prevails, he vomits and casts up all; not that he doth this of a free mind, (if we may say a dog has a mind,) but because it troubleth his stomach: but now, when his sickness is over, and so his stomach eased, his desires being not at all alienated from his vomit, he turns him about, and licks up all; and so it is true which is written, "*The dog is turned to his own vomit again.*" **2 Pet. 2:22**. Being hot for heaven, by virtue only of the sense and fear of the torments of hell, as their sense and fear of damnation chills and cools, so their desires for heaven and salvation cool also. So then it comes to pass, that when their guilt and fear is gone, their desires for heaven and happiness die, and they return to their course again.

James 4:4 *Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*

II. They are overwhelmed by fear of man.

For a time, the fear of damnation overcomes this fear of other people, but as the sense of danger passes, so too does their boldness.

Another reason is, they have imitative fears that do overmaster them: I speak now of the fears that they have of men; "*For the fear of man bringeth a snare.*" **Prov. 29:25**. So then, though they seem to be hot for heaven so long as the flames of hell are about their ears, yet, when that terror is a little over, they betake themselves to second thoughts, namely, that it is good to be wise and not to run (for they know not what) the hazard of losing all, or at least of bringing themselves into unavoidable and unnecessary troubles; and so they fall in with the world again.

III. They are full of pride, unwilling to face the world's shame that comes with the gospel.

The shame that attends religion lies also as a block in their way: they are proud and haughty, and religion in their eye is low and contemptible: therefore, when they have lost their sense of hell and the wrath to come, they return again to their former course.

A backslider begins to neglect such things as Bible-Reading, Prayer, Giving, Concern for the lost, and Service in God's Kingdom.

Jeremiah 3:11 *And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah.*

IV. And finally, they refuse to face their own guilt and the danger that will come to them if they do not receive forgiveness for wrongs done.

Guilt, and to meditate terror, are grievous to them; they like not to see their misery before they come into it; though perhaps the sight of at it first, if they loved that sight, might make them fly whither the righteous fly and are safe; but because they do, as I hinted before, even shun the thoughts of guilt and terror, therefore, when once they are rid of their awakenings about the terrors and wrath of God, they harden their hearts gladly, and choose such ways as will harden them more and more.

Jeremiah 3:22 *Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God.*

CONCL –

I. Identifying Signs of Backsliding

- a. Loss of heavenly values
- b. Loss of Conviction of sin
- c. Lazy in Service
- d. Putting people's word ahead of God's Word
- e. Loss of Testimony
- f. Numb to the preaching
- g. Missing church services

II. Causes of Backsliding

- a. Evil/Wrong thinking
- b. Worldly mindset
- c. Self-Centeredness
- d. Lack of Prayer Time
- e. Gossiping
- f. Unbelief
- g. Too busy for God