

The Backslider

Other than feeling for certain that your child is lost and a stranger to grace, nothing depresses a mother more than knowing that her child is backslidden. A backslidden state is when a child of God departs from the life of total dedication to Christ and lapses into a state not unlike that of the unconverted. The late Diane Dew said, "Scripture metaphorically describes the backslidden state as: serving two masters, forsaking the Lord, going our own way, leaving our first love, forgetting God, falling away, turning aside, growing cold, departing from the faith, putting a hand to the plow and looking back (Luke 9:62), "salt that has lost its savour" (Matthew 5:13), "a dog returning to his vomit" (Proverbs 26:11).

Today mothers are much in prayer as they have taken advantage of Mother's Day to get their kids to church. Even in our congregation today there are mothers with broken hearts, pleading with God as the pastor preaches, "Oh God, speak to my boy/my girl." May we hear more than the preacher today; may we hear the voice of the Lord declare, "*Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings...*" (Jeremiah 3:22). Even though some of you did not get your kids into church today, your prayers could not be more fervent than those who succeeded. Today I join these godly mothers in this devout, unselfish prayer. Oh how I yearn for this to be a Mother's Day long to be remembered as the day of revival for the prodigal.

For clarification, what is a backslidden condition?

1. Backsliding means "a turning back."

The Bible says Israel tempted and provoked the Lord and kept not His testimonies, "*But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow*" (Psalm 78:57). The picture here is of the eastern bow. It has a natural bent, but to make it effective, it must be bent against the natural bent, giving the string the tautness required to propel the arrow. If a person is weak or unskillful, the bow can spring back to its original position and even cause injury to the person stringing the bow. Then sometimes after the bow is bent, it often turns in the hand of the bowman causing a serious problem of lack of accuracy in the firing of an arrow. For target practice, not much harm is done, but in the heat of the battle, you could miss your mark and your enemy would get the advantage or you may even veer off so severely as to injure one of your own men. I love the statement from II Samuel 1:22, "*From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back...*" (II Samuel 1:22). Jonathan's bow did not "backslide," i.e., miss the mark of his enemy or bring harm to his armor bearer.

The pull of the world, the temptation Satan gives and the lustful cries of the flesh lure the believer back to the world. The Bible says, "*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*" (I Peter 5:8). If we turn back, we can cause great harm. If we return to God, there will be a wondrous release of joy. "*And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full*" (I John 1:4).

When does a person begin to backslide?

2. A person is close to backsliding when he or she doesn't believe they will backslide.

"*Peter answered and said unto Him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples*" (Matthew 26:33-35). Within twenty-four hours the disciples had fled and the most flagrant one was Peter, the boasting one who said he would never deny Him although others may. The Word of God says, "*Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall*" (Proverbs 16:18). "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (I Corinthians 10:12).

3. A person is backslidden when the love to the Lord Jesus Christ wanes.

"*Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love*" (Revelation 2:4). Leaving our first love with Jesus is dangerous. We did not lose it; we left it. In the end time it is prophesied, "*And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold*" (Matthew 24:12). The great commandment is: "*And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment*" (Mark 12:30). When we allow even the slightest distance between us and our Lord, we are set up for a backslidden fall. Our bond of fellowship is weaved with the golden threads of love. When that love gets "threadbare" our loyalties to Christ are more likely to tear us away from the place of deep dedication. Idolatry is, basically, allowing anything or anyone to take that place of preeminence in our life beside Christ, "*...that in all things he might have the preeminence*" (Colossians 1:18).

4. The punishment of the backslider is that he or she will become the sad recipients of their own lifestyle.

The wisest man in the known world at the time of this writing said, *"The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself"* (Proverbs 14:14). Emerson said, "What lies before us and what lies behind us are small matters compared to what lies within us." How true! A backslider is selfish, so if you remain backslidden, you now must live with a selfish person. A backslider is irritable, so now you have to live with a grouch. A backslider has little or no faith, so you live without hope.

On the opposite side of this condition we are reminded of the rest of that verse: *"...and a good man shall be satisfied from himself"* (Proverbs 14:14). Also there was a concluding statement of Ralph Waldo Emerson after he said, his "what lies within us" sentence, he followed by saying, "And when we bring what is within us out into the world, miracles happen." I would add when that which is within us is right, miracles happen. Galatians 5:22-23 gives us the type of satisfaction we have in a life lived wholly for Christ, *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."*

For all backsliders who have Christian mothers praying for you, how about "making their day" and becoming right with God?

-Pastor Pope-