

# Backsliding

by William MacDonald

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*William MacDonald's sermon on backsliding explores its causes, types, and the path to restoration for believers who have strayed from their faith.*

**Duration:** 1:01:00

**Scripture:** Hosea 14:1

**Topics:** "Backsliding"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the consequences of sin and backsliding in a person's life. He uses examples like a violin under pressure and a pilot following a flight plan to illustrate the idea that true freedom comes from following God's plan. The preacher also highlights the importance of confession and repentance, stating that God is the God of second chances. He warns against the dangers of backsliding and losing the joy of salvation, urging listeners to seek restoration and renewal in their relationship with God.

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## Transcript

I wonder if you'd turn with me today to the last chapter of the book of Hosea. The last chapter of the book of Hosea. Chapter 14, and we'll read the chapter.

Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea. Good. With that, the rustle of leaves stopped.

O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord. Say unto him, take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.

So will we render the calves of our lips. Asher shall not save us. We will not ride upon horses.

Neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, ye are our gods. For in thee the fatherless findeth mercy. I will heal their backsliding.

I will love them freely. For mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel.

He shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return.

They shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine. The scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim shall say, what have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him.

I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found. Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? Prudent, and he shall know them.

For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them. But the transgressors shall fall therein. Let's look to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we pray that at this conference we might receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save our souls. Able to save our souls from damnation. Able to save our souls from damage in this life as well.

Deliver us, Lord, from becoming professional sermon tasters. Give us a holy determination to be doers of the word, and not hearers only. We pray that we might come to you with receptive hearts.

Saying, beyond the sacred page, I seek thee, Lord. We pray that it might be so, that beyond the white page of black type, we might seek and see the Lord. We ask it in his worthy name, and for his glory.

Amen. Israel had backslidden from the Lord. It was very sad.

God could say to the nation of Israel, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness. God could look back on the youth of the nation, when the heart was warm toward him. When there was a genuine zeal for God.

But now, Israel had backslidden. Israel had become cold in heart to the Lord. Israel was cynical.

Israel was frostbitten. Israel was hard any longer. And now, in the 14th chapter of Hosea, as well as in other parts of the Old Testament, God is calling the nation back to himself.

And what happened to the nation of Israel, can happen to us as individual believers as well. Is it not so? We start off in the Christian life, our zeal is high. We're enthusiastic about Jesus.

We love to talk about him. But we live in a world that is a monstrous system of temptation. Nothing in the world is designed to help us in our ongoing spiritual growth.

We get our eyes off the Lord. We're prone to wander from the living God. And pretty soon we're hard, and we're cold, and we're cynical, and we're frostbitten as well.

And there's nothing sadder, I think, than to see one who was so bright for the Lord Jesus at one time. And now, he has lost his song. He goes on in a mechanical way, but the joy is no longer there.

I'd like to think with you this afternoon about backsliding and restoration. I think one of the reasons I want to speak about it is because we counsel so many. And this is just the problem.

A backslider is a true believer who is out of fellowship with the Lord because of some sin in his life. Some sin, unconfessed and not forsaken. A believer can backslide.

There's a difference between backsliding and apostasy. An apostate is one who professed to be a believer, but then repudiated the Christian faith, turned his back on Christ, is malicious in his attitude toward the Lord and toward the Word of God. None of those things are true of a backslider.

I think the difference is illustrated in Judas and Peter. Judas was an apostate. Judas had never been genuinely converted.

He had never been genuinely born from above. He sold Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. Peter was a backslider.

In spite of the woeful things that he did, he really did love the Lord Jesus and eventually came back to him. There are various types of backsliding that we could mention this afternoon. For instance, there's the moral backslider.

There's the Christian who falls into immorality. And I sometimes think that that's one of the most devastating kinds of backsliding that there is. I think the devil has two principal ways of attacking God's people.

One is through doctrinal error. The other is through moral failure. If he can't get us one way, he'll try the other.

It's sad to say the highway of the Christian life is littered with the corpses of those who have succumbed to the temptations of Satan and fallen into moral sin. It's really wonderful to me in a way how God has built certain principles into the very fabric of life in the world in which we live. The teachings of the kingdom, the teachings of the word of God are good for a man's health.

To violate them inevitably brings misery. I think it's good to remember that for all of us that God's laws are all intended for our good, not for his. I can't think of any commandment that God ever gave that was really intended for his good.

He could live a very comfortable life without any of us. But he has given us these laws and he's woven them into the very fabric of our life. And you can't go against them and get away with it.

And I think this is especially true of moral failure. How successful the devil is. He gets a man to fall into this sin.

The man is devastated. Originally when he came to the Lord Jesus for salvation, he believed that through trusting the Savior his sins were forgiven and he was made fit for heaven. But now he has disappointed the Lord, he's gone back on the Lord and he finds it very hard to come back to him.

There's nothing the devil likes better than to get us on the shelf, to get us sidetracked, to get us out of the path of usefulness. I think that's why Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9, Paul wasn't speaking about salvation there, he was speaking about service, wasn't he? No question of salvation. What Paul was saying in effect is it's possible to be fit for heaven through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ and yet to be on the shelf as far as service for the Lord is concerned because of sin, unconfessed and unforgiven.

I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest having preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. And so there's a form of backsliding where the devil comes in and dear friends, temptation is real, isn't it? And temptation is strong and no man, no woman can live the Christian life in his own strength. The Christian life is a supernatural life and it can only be lived by the power of the Spirit of God.

Left to ourselves, we're sunk. But by the power of God, we can walk on the water. By the power of God, we can triumph over Satan, sin and the world.

There's another kind of backslider and that's what you might call the prodigal son backslider. This is the fellow brought up in a fine Christian home and professes faith in the Lord Jesus and no doubt is genuinely saved. But then the illusion sweeps over his mind that he has had a deprived childhood.

The world looks so beautiful and the pleasures of sin look so attractive. And he decides to kick the traces and go where he can have freedom. The prodigal son backslider.

This man knows all the answers. He's wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can give a reason. You can't talk to him at all.

His mind is made up. Don't confuse him with the facts. His story may be told in three expressions.

Sick of home. Homesick. Home.

The story of the prodigal son in three words as it were. First of all, he's sick of home. He wants freedom.

The great watchword. I was reading today about a violin string just lying on a table has absolute freedom. It's absolutely worthless.

But then it's put into the violin and the pressure is applied. And then Chrysler comes along and plays on it. Really has freedom then.

The pilot flying the plane has the best freedom when he's following the flight plan. And so it is in all of life. This young man is sick at home.

He feels disadvantaged. He doesn't care how many people's hearts he breaks in the process. Especially those who are closest to him.

And he wanders away from home. One man said, I don't know very much about the Bible. But I know this, the way of the transgressor is hard.

You don't have to know very much about the Bible. To know that's true. As I said, it's woven into the very fabric of life.

And sin has its consequences and you can't get away with it. Pretty soon he's off in the far country. His money is gone.

He's patronized the bar, the brothel, the casino, and all the rest. And now he's hitting the bottom. I think it's most interesting and most instructive for us.

That when he was down at the bottom, his father didn't send money to him. God was doing a work in that young fellow's life. And God wanted patience to have its perfect work.

If the father had sent help to him, in that desperate situation, he would have only prolonged and hindered the work of God in the fellow's life. It's hard for Christian parents to see their children wallowing in the pigsty. And most Christian parents will bail them out.

But they don't help the young person in doing it. They only prolong the misery. God had to get that young fellow to the place where he broke.

Where he thought of home. Became homesick. He thought of the servants in his father's house that were eating well.

And he was perishing for hunger. Said, I know what I'll do. I will arise.

Will go. Say to my father, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight. And no more worthy to be called thy son.

Make me, I pray thee, as one of thy hired servants. That's exactly where God wanted him to be. And he didn't content himself just with saying the words he started off on the journey.

Homesick. Father sees him coming a long way off, runs, falls on his neck and kisses him. He had the speech all prepared.

He never got it fully out. What a picture for God. The God that we have so quick to meet the returning backslider.

Repentance is slow on our part. Forgiveness is fast on God's part. It took him a long time to come to that place where he was willing to repent.

But once he started to home, the father was quick to forgive. The prodigal son backslider. Dear friends, San Francisco today is filled with prodigal son and prodigal daughter backsliders.

Many a broken hearted parent throughout the country today waiting, waiting for God to bring that young person to the end of himself so that he comes back. Another type of backslider is the intellectual backslider. What's this? Well, this is a young person who has been brought up, who knows the Bible as it were, has trusted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

But then in his associations, he begins to wonder about the Bible. He puts his mind above the Word of God. One of the worst mistakes he could ever make.

Dear friends, we should never allow our minds to judge the scriptures. We should allow the scriptures to judge our minds and test everything by the Word of God. I have absolute trust today that this book we hold in our hands is the inspired, inerrant Word of God.

I didn't come to that by having someone prove it to me. I accepted the Bible by faith and then I knew it was true. I don't know if you know that Billy Graham had that experience in his life.

But many years ago, as a young man, he was out at Forest Home Conference in Southern California. He had been listening to doubts and denials about the Word of God. And he was out on the mountains and back of the conference grounds and he was having a duel with God.

He was wrestling with the Lord over this whole subject. Is the Bible the infallible, inspired Word of God? Finally, Billy Graham came to the place where he bowed his head and said, Lord, I accept this book by faith as your Word. The fight was over.

He went out from there to the Los Angeles Crusade. And that's when Billy Graham would hold the Bible in his left hand and jabbing his right hand forward would say, the Bible says. And he said that from that time he realized that there was a new authority in his ministry that he never had before.

That was the beginning of the great ministry. That was the time when hundreds were swept into the kingdom of God. But few of them knew the battle that had gone on in the mountains behind the conference grounds when Billy wrestled with the Lord.

He accepted the Bible by faith and God showed him it was true. You see, man says, seeing is believing. God says, believing is seeing.

Jesus said to Martha, Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldst believe thou shouldst see the glory of God? Believe first and then see. We read in Hebrews chapter 11, By faith we understand. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God so that things that are seen were not made of things which do appear.

But did you get it? By faith we understand. First John 5, 13, These things have I written unto you that believe that you may know. Believe first.

And then you'll know. And it's really true. The Bible is self-authenticating.

You come to it, you accept it by faith. And you'll find that no book will ever do in your life what the Bible will do. That's why one man said, he who has felt the force of it is not likely to deny the source of it.

But that's true. But I want to tell you, no book has ever exposed me to myself like the Bible. Shakespeare never did it.

And no book ever led me to fullness of life, to the abundant life like the Bible has done. So it's a sad thing to see people going and putting their minds above the Bible and judging the Bible by the weakness of human intellect. And then going off and losing their joy.

Years ago when we had a, when I was at Emmaus Bible School with a young fellow and he started wondering about the Bible. And on the first day of hunting season, he went out with a couple of other fellows. I think they went down to Peoria or Joliet or one of those places.

And they were going through some thicket. And the fellow behind him didn't have the safety on his gun. As they were going through the thicket, his gun went off and it hit our student right in the back of the head.

A spray of pellets right in the back of the head. Knocked him to the ground, the force of it. If it had been an inch lower, he'd have been killed.

But as it was, they all embedded in his scalp against the skull. They rushed him to the hospital. We didn't know whether he was going to live or die.

But you know, God directed every one of those pellets. He really did. And the fellow recovered.

The only thing he noticed when he'd start to read the newspaper for a while after that, there'd be a big white area in the middle of the newspaper. It was such a shock to his optic nerve. But the doctor said, not to worry, that'll all work itself out.

And it did. But while he was there in the hospital, one of our instructors went to visit him. And he said, Herb, he said, the Lord is a good shot.

Herb said, what do you mean? He said, he hit you right where you were having the trouble. Herb said, I'm in no mood for a theological discussion. But you know, I never forget Herb, because one day before this happened, he walked into my office and he said, Mr. MacDonald, I've lost my song.

You know, while he was entertaining those doubts about the Word of God, he said, I've lost my song. You kind of doubt about the Word of God and have a song, too. Those things don't go together.

The intellectual backslider. And then, of course, there's the backslider who starts off with a social drink. And one thing leads to another, and pretty soon he's an alcoholic.

He doesn't discipline his body. He gives reign to his appetites. I'm sure you've known people like this.

A man I knew years ago, when he was a young man, he could talk so enthusiastically about the Lord Jesus. Loved to be out witnessing for Christ. Started the social drink.

And he went from bad to worse. And then there's the unequal yoke backslider, too. The unequal yoke backslider.

Here's a person in deliberate violation of the Word of God. He enters into marriage with an unbeliever. At first, everything goes along gloria in excelsis.

Everything is cloud number nine. But pretty soon, it's apparent they're not pulling in the same direction. Pretty soon, she's an anchor to him spiritually.

Or, if it were the other way around, he's an anchor to her spiritually. He's really kept back from living his life for the Lord. In one moment, in one decision, made out of the will of God, he wrecks his usefulness for God.

Hard, isn't it? Or it could be a business partnership. It could be any sort of a partnership where the yoke is unequal. That expression, unequal yoke, of course, comes from the Old Testament, where the Jewish people were told not to plow with an ox and an ass yoked together.

The ox being a clean animal. The ass being an unclean animal. And these two animals have different temperaments.

When one wants to surge ahead, the other wants to lag behind. There's no good for getting the plowing done, is there? No good for getting the harvesting done, the unequal yoke. And all through the scriptures, God is teaching his people that he's a God of separation.

A God of separation. Don't sow your seed with mixed seeds, he said. What did he say that for? Because he was teaching them what kind of a God he is.

Don't wear garments of woolen and linen. What did he say that for? Because he's a God of separation. Don't plow with an ox and an ass yoked together.

Why? Because he's a God of separation. And it doesn't take us very long in our Christian lives to know that it's only when we walk in separation from the ungodly world that we have power with God. Archimedes said, he said, give me a fulcrum outside the world and I can move the world.

It's good. Give me a fulcrum outside the world and I can move the world. You're afraid you can never move it while you're a part of it.

Good thing to remember for those who are tempted to become deeply involved in politics, the politics of this world. Never move the world while you're a part of it. Politics is by its very nature corrupt.

The Christian who gives his life to that is squandering his life on something that's not God's best. The unequal yoke backslider. People can be backslidden through discouragement even.

I think that's a temptation for a lot of us. We all have things in life that could discourage us. When I get discouraged, I often think of what Moody said.

He said, I've never known God to use a discouraged man. Wow, I do want the Lord to use me. That helps snap me out of discouragement.

Another is something I heard Leonard Sheldrake say many years ago. He said, anytime I'm tempted to be discouraged, I thank God I'm not in hell. That's where I should be.

You know, it's true, isn't it? Anytime I tend to be discouraged, I thank God I'm not in hell. That's where I ought to be. Discouraged.

Anytime I tend to be discouraged, I thank God I'm not in hell. That's where I ought to be. Discouraged.

Disillusioned. Disappointed. People can become cold.

People can become defeated in this way. But I really do believe that a lot of these things are just evidence of the self-life. That's what they are.

They're just evidence of the self-life and are therefore sin. I'm really amazed as I travel around and go into bookstores today to see how many books there are written, good sellers too, on self. I get rather sick of it.

Self-esteem, the new reformation, you know, utter nonsense what it is. Absolute nonsense. I often think of what a dear old brother said years ago.

He said a sanctified self is a poor substitute for a glorified Christ. That means even if you could take self and squirt a little eau de cologne on it and tie a pink ribbon around its neck and get it all prettied up, it'd still be a pretty poor substitute for a glorified Christ, if that's true. Introspection is foolish for the child of God.

Introspection is like casting your anchor inside the boat. It's not going to hold the boat. The secret of victory is not in self.

I learned that years ago. I learned it from Romans chapter 7. Paul said, I know that in me that is in my flesh dwelleth no good thing. I never look in my flesh for anything good.

Why? Because I know it isn't there. The Bible says it isn't there. And I'm never disappointed when I don't find it there either.

And I just try to lay up all my treasures in the Lord Jesus and to be occupied with him. Because that's what Paul told me in 2 Corinthians 3.18, he said, But we all with unveiled face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changing as the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. Our victory is in Jesus.

The more you're occupied with Jesus, the more you'll have victory in your Christian... And be delivered from self. From wasting money on all the books that tell you to turn the searchlight in on yourself. Utter nonsense.

What it really is, is secular humanism in Christian labels. Really what it is. I'm apt to hear sparks from some of you about that afterwards, but I've said my piece.

Another form of backslider is the business backslider. Say, just a minute brother, business is respectable. Work is honorable.

Any honorable work can be done to the glory of God. But I want to tell you this, that business can take the place of God in a man's life. Business can crowd out the things of the Lord in a person's life.

I know something about business today. I know how business, if they get a hold of a man that has what it takes, they're willing to pay him. The money is not the consideration.

They'll pay him well, and then they'll try to extract the very lifeblood out of him. Till when he's 55, 60, 65, they give him the golden handshake, and he leaves, and he's like this. He's burned out for a corporation.

And I want to tell you, I'd rather be burned out for Christ than for any corporation in the world. And this won't apply to all of you, but it might apply to some of you, that the time might come when you say to your business, thus far, shall I proud waves come, and no further. When you say, I will not allow business considerations to crowd out the things of God in my life.

I'm determined to seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and claim the promise of God, that all these things shall be added unto me. It's possible. It's possibly a member of the church in good standing.

Be successful in business, and men will call you great, and will speak flatteringly of you. And yet you know deep in your heart, that you're not giving the Lord what is his due. I admire people who are willing to work less, to have enough to buy the food for their table, and to give to the work of the Lord, and then give the rest of their lives to him.

Thank God for people like that, who are willing to make this decisive thing. Then again, it's possible to be a religious backslider. I talked to one two weeks ago, came to me after the meeting in tears, told me he'd been living a double life, carrying on a charade for the last twelve years.

He enumerated the sins, and he wept his way back to the cross. And I'm sure most of the Christians didn't even know what was going on. They knew something wasn't right.

They had no idea what was going on. People are good actors, good actresses. We all are.

We're born with a built-in course in psychology, aren't we? And it's possible to be religious, as it were. To carry on a religious game, and yet be cold, cold, cold in heart toward the Lord. What are the marks of a backslider? I've already given you one.

He's lost the joy of his salvation. David prayed, restore unto me the joy of thy salvation. He had lost his song.

His moisture was turned into the drought of summer. All his bones were out of joint. I don't know any better description of a backslidden condition than that.

All my bones are out of joint. My moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Nothing clicks in life anymore.

I never see those things happening which should be happening, which would never happen according to the laws of chance or probability. I've lost all of that. Second, he has no appetite for the Word of God.

He used to love the Word of God. He used to love that quiet time and go to the Word. And when the Lord showed him something from the Word, it was as if he had found a gold nugget.

In fact, if he had found a gold nugget, he wouldn't have been thrilled nearly as much as to see that in the Word. Now it's all gone. He never has those experiences anymore.

Lost his appetite for the Word of God. Dear friends, there's no holiness without the Bible. Is there? There's no holiness without the Bible.

And it's true as it ever was true that God, the omnipotent God, cannot separate dust on the Bible and ice in the heart. And it's true as it ever was true that this book will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from this book. Not only that, but his prayer light is dead.

He doesn't feel he needs to pray. In fact, probably rather ashamed to even talk to the Lord. Such a terrific sense of having let the Lord down.

He doesn't even want to go and talk to him anymore. His prayer life is dead. And he's not anxious for Christian fellowship.

Not anxious for it. Many times he'll avoid it altogether. It's been my unhappy experience down through the years to try to contact men and women whom I knew were away from the Lord.

They don't want to be contacted. We get letters all the time from dear Christian parents throughout the country. They say, my son, my daughter is in San Francisco.

Would you please go and see if you can help them? Our answer is sure, we'll go and see if we can help them. But we've never been able to help one who didn't want to be helped. Not one.

They avoid Christian fellowship. That's not a good sign. Because when I read about the early Christians and they'd been arrested and taken before the Sanhedrin, it says, when the Sanhedrin let them go, they went unto their own.

Birds of a feather flock together. And so do Christians. And then, of course, Mark of a backslider, he indulges in worldly activities.

His speech betrays him. Just like Peter, backslidden Peter. His speech betrayed him.

The speech of a backslidden Christian often becomes quite earthy. Things come out that wouldn't come out. And the things that do come out aren't particularly edifying anyway.

Again, we think of dear Peter, when those men gathered together outside the court there and made a fire. And Peter sat there with them, warming his hands at the fires of the world. His Savior on trial for his life.

Peter warming his hands with the enemies of Christ. I'll tell you, sin gets us into some very paradoxical situations, doesn't it? Mark of a backslider, he's critical of others. I've never known a backslider who didn't take it out on others.

It's an amazing thing. One of the perverse things of fallen human nature. Critical of others who don't deserve the criticism.

It's just a form of self-defense, isn't it? It's just a form of self-justification. And you know, the sad thing is that we take it out on those who are nearest and dearest to us, often. We take it out on those who are near to us.

It's true of an animal. An animal is wounded, an animal is hurt. You go and try to help the animal, and the animal oftentimes just turns on you.

It's true of human beings, too. The backslider is unhappy, and he makes other people unhappy, too. I'd like to think with you now about the consequences of backsliding.

Maybe you've never backslidden. I can't say that of myself. I think the worst thing about sin in the life of the believer is the dishonor it brings on the name of the Lord Jesus.

The worst thing about it. God said to David, because you have made the enemies of God to blaspheme, isn't that a terrible thing? By what you've done, you've made the enemies of God to blaspheme, and it's true, too. They're still blaspheming because of what David did hundreds of years ago.

They say, David, a man after God's own image, look what he did. What kind of a God is that? It's exactly what they say. And sin really does bring dishonor to the wonderful name of the Lord Jesus.

Ruined testimony and sealed lips. There's nothing that seals the lips like the life. And what an awkward situation it is to be there, and they're discussing something, and you have the perfect opportunity to speak a word for Jesus, but you can't say it.

Your lips are sealed by the sin in your life. And you do try to say it. They're apt to say, if you believe that, what are you doing here? Or they're apt to say, I never knew you were a Christian.

Tell you, some of the things that the world says can really be scalding, huh? The world has higher standards for God's children than they do for themselves. And they've got a right to, too. The world has higher standards for God's children than they do for themselves.

And what they have perfect freedom to do, they don't expect you to do it. I had a funny experience when I was in the Navy. I went out with an unsaved pilot one night at supper.

I was witnessing to him. He's still not saved. I prayed for that fellow since 1946, and he's still not saved.

But anyway, we went to a restaurant. We were having supper there in the restaurant, and it came time for dessert. I had struggled through the meal to get to the dessert.

And the waitress came and she said, would you have dessert? He said, yes, I think so. And she said, what would you like? And he said, well, I'll have a daiquiri. Well, I had been brought up in a very sheltered Christian home, and I guess I thought a daiquiri was apple pie and ice cream.

And I said, well, make it two. And he said to her, no, make it one. And then he turned to me and he said, you order something else.

See? He had a different standard for me than he had for himself. And the world does, too. The world does.

For those of you who don't know, I since found out a daiquiri is kind of a crushed ice with some sort of a liquor. Pour it over. I didn't know it.

Sounded very appetizing to me. That's the trouble with sin, isn't it? The trouble with sin is it's beautiful in prospect and hideous in retrospect. You ever notice that in life? Sin looks beautiful as you look forward to it.

Boy, as you look back on it, it's awful. Especially to see it through the eyes of Christ and through the cross of Christ where he died for it. Ruined testimony and sealed lips.

Another consequence of backsliding is the misery and unhappiness brought on others. I often think of this. God has built the universe in such a way that no man is an island.

We don't live to ourselves. We don't die to ourselves. Our actions affect others.

And you show me a Christian father who's out of fellowship with God, and I'll show you a family that's paying the price. Or a Christian mother, or Christian son or daughter. Backsliding affects others.

I think one of the cruel things about backsliding is the disappointment it brings on those who trusted you. I don't mind telling you that as temptations have come into my life, oftentimes the faces of dear Christian people who have prayed for me and supported me so loyally and faithfully over the years, those faces come before me and I tell you, they're a tremendous deterrent to sin. But when a person yields to temptation, what a disappointment to those who trusted, to those who have had confidence in you.

Consequence of backsliding, an enormous waste of time and money. Enormous waste of time. I believe that if you go back to some of the calculations of the chronology of the children of Israel in the Old Testament, God doesn't even count the time in the wilderness.

Wasted time. I don't think he counts the time when we're in the wilderness even. And money.

Well, God threatens that. He threatens to put holes in our money bags, and he does. I want to tell you, a backslidden Christian tithes.

He does tithe. He doesn't tithe to God, he tithes to the garage mechanic and to the doctor and to the dentist and a lot of other people. You do.

It's just the wrong kind of a tithe, that's all. Physical and emotional disturbances. Consequence of backsliding.

It's true. It's absolutely true. Physical and emotional disturbances.

What does it mean? It means that what affects my spirit affects all of me. I am spirit, soul and body. You can call it holistic medicine, you can call it anything you want.

It's really true. The British Medical Journal one time had an article that said there's not a tissue in the human body wholly exempt from the spirit. And what it meant was that what affects part of you affects all

of you.

That can be in the physical, it can be in the emotional, the mental, any part of you. Consequence of backsliding is a deep shame and remorse that goes with it. The personal misery and wretchedness.

I don't believe a person, a sane person can be out of fellowship with God and be happy. You can put on a good act, give the impression to others that you're happy. I don't believe deep in your heart of hearts you can be happy and be away from the Savior.

Consequence of backsliding, others stumbled by your example. Amazing, isn't it, to think that other people are watching us all the time. That's what a Christian ought to be, huh? That's what a Christian ought to be.

We stumble. I think one of the saddest things is when young people come and tell me that the person who led to the Lord is in a backslidden condition. How it hurts that young convert to think that their father, their mother in the faith, has gone back on the Lord.

Consequence of backsliding, the discipline of God in this life. I tell you, God loves us too much to let us get away with it. And if you've ever backslidden, you know that things happen in your life and other people don't know why they happen, but you know why they happen.

And you bless God later that they ever did happen, huh? I tell you, God can speak to us and he can speak very loudly and very unmistakably, and it's worth it. It's worth it. No chastening for the present seemeth joyous but grievous, but afterward it yieldeth a peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby.

Consequence of backsliding, loss of reward at the judgment seat of Christ. Each of us should live with that judgment seat in view every day. One day I'm going to stand before the Lord, the judgment seat of Christ.

Help me to live this day, the next 24 hours in view of that judgment seat. I think another thing, another consequence of backsliding is a reduced capacity for enjoying the Lord and enjoying the glories of heaven. Because of the time that was wasted, a reduced capacity for enjoying the Lord.

But praise God, there's a way back home. That's the good news. I have often said, and I say it from the bottom of my heart, I don't think I could go on.

Another two weeks, 1 John 1.9 wasn't in the Bible. If we confess our sin, it's faithful and just to forgive us our sin, to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. It's true.

Think of it. If we confess our sin, this is spoken to believers. If you're a sinner, you come to the Lord Jesus in faith.

By believing on him, you get the forgiveness of your sins as far as their penalty is concerned. If you're a believer, you get the forgiveness, parental forgiveness of your sins by confessing them to him. If we confess our sins, he's faithful and just, faithful to his promise.

Said he would do it, he'll do it. He's just in doing it because he has a righteous basis on which to do it, the work of Christ at Calvary's Cross. To forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

But it involves forsaking sin too, doesn't it? Proverbs 28 verse 13 says, He that covereth his sin shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. Forsaketh them. I believe that our

confession has to have that element in it, the determination to forsake it.

A Christian worker was dealing with a man who had stolen, a professing Christian. And they're on their knees and they're going to confess it to the Lord. And the Christian said to him, what did you steal? Well, he said, I stole a half a load of hay.

But he said, you better make it a full load, I'm going back for the other half tonight. That wasn't confession, was it? He had no intention of forsaking the sin. He was playing games with God.

Wonderful thing when we've wandered away from the living God to come back to him and just pour it all out like the prodigal son. Pour it all out before him. And then what? And then believe.

Know that you have been forgiven. This is a tremendous problem for people. They say, well, I confessed it to the Lord, but I don't feel forgiven.

You ever had that problem? Don't go by your feelings. Go by the word of God. God says he's forgiven.

I tell you, feelings are really deceiving. Really deceiving. People have such hang-ups over their feelings.

Don't base your Christianity on feelings. Base it on the unchanging word of God. And when you confess your sin to God, you get up from your knees and you know that the slate is clean because God said it.

You say, I hear you, but I know God has forgiven me, but I can't forgive myself. This is a self-induced form of torture, isn't it? I know God has forgiven me, but I can't forgive myself. I know why people say that.

I can empathize with their feelings, but it's wrong just the same, isn't it? If God has forgiven me, and if God has forgotten, then I certainly should forgive myself. And not only that, not remember it except as a warning not to do it again. When it says that God forgets our sins, it doesn't mean that he has a poor memory.

It means that they're not there in a sense that he could ever bring them against us again. That's how he forgets. He'll never bring them up before us again.

As far as the East is removed from the West, so far has he removed your transgressions from you. So I say believe. When you confess your sin, believe you've been forgiven, whether you feel it or not, and forgive yourself.

I think a good thing to do also is to have a thorough housecleaning. One of our intern's wives had a thorough housecleaning this last week. She'd been collecting certain albums of music.

She read an article in the newspaper about the person who was featured in those albums. That's all she needed. She didn't want those albums in her home anymore.

Good to have a thorough housecleaning. There are things in life that are associated with temptation. It's not the same for any two of us.

But those are the things we have to deal ruthlessly with. Is it not true? Mend broken relationships. Mend broken relationships.

You've come back to the Lord. Some people that maybe you should go and talk to. People you offended when you were out of touch with the Lord.

That's hard. It's easier to go to the Lord and confess than it is to go to fellow Christians and confess. You know that, don't you? It really is.

There's someone today that I've really hurt, grieved, offended, stumbled. I should go and make it right with that person. And then of course live daily in fellowship with the Lord.

And maybe we'll be talking more about that tonight. God says in the book of Joel that he can restore and will restore the years that the locusts have eaten. I think that's beautiful.

Only God could ever do that. Restore the years that the locusts have eaten. You know, remember when the hostages came back from Iran? This country, the trees of this country blossomed with yellow ribbons, didn't they? It was a spectacle all over the country.

People think that goes back to a song that was popular a few years ago, but it's a lot older than that, I'll tell you that. That's a story that has its roots practically in antiquity. But I want to tell you something.

God's oak tree is filled with yellow ribbons today. For any Christian who wants to come, confess his sin, confess the sin of backsliding, weep it out before the Lord, and make a new start. Praise God, he's the God of the second chance.

In this regard, not in salvation. After a person dies, there's no second chance. He is the God of the second chance.

The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time. I'm so glad it did. Shall we pray? Father, perhaps you've spoken to some of our hearts today in warning, perhaps in conviction.

Pray that you will have your way unhindered in all of our hearts. Lord, keep us from sin. Keep us from anything that would bring shame.

On the name of the Lord Jesus, may we be a holy people, separated from the world, separated unto yourself. We ask in Jesus' name, and for his glory, amen.

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