

The Backslider in Heart

by Albert M. Ewing

Table of Contents

	<u>Title Page</u>
<u>Chapter 1</u>	Sermon 1 - The Danger of Backsliding
<u>Chapter 2</u>	Sermon 2 - Some Signs of The Backslider in Heart
<u>Chapter 3</u>	Sermon 3 - The Perils of The Ephesian Church
<u>Chapter 4</u>	Sermon 4 - Three Classes of Backsliders
<u>Chapter 5</u>	Sermon 5 - Samson The Backslider
<u>Chapter 6</u>	Sermon 6 - Hosea's Prophecy, -- Gospel of Backsliders
<u>Chapter 7</u>	Sermon 7 - Why Do People Backslide?
<u>Chapter 8</u>	Sermon 8 - Jonah, The Run-Away Prophet

The Backslider in Heart

Eight Messages

by

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Chapter 1

Sermon 1

THE DANGER OF BACKSLIDING

It shall be the purpose of this little volume to discuss in each of its eight sermons that special group mentioned in the title of the book, viz, "The Backslider in Heart." Proverbs 14.14.

The subject of backsliding is one that should be given great consideration by every individual.

First: because of one's liability to backslide: for regardless of how confident we may be, there is always that danger of being led away from our mooring and fall from our steadfastness. II Peter 3.1. Also, "He that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall" I Corinthians 10.12.

Much is said of one's falling into the condemnation, and reproach of the devil. This is one of the games of old Satan, that he so shrewdly works to accomplish his purpose. If, and when, he can cause us to fall into condemnation and reproach enough to discourage us; then he will push his claim, in accusing us of wrong doing, until he will finally overcome us and -accomplish our backsliding.

Second: Our second reason, for giving serious consideration to our backsliding, is the danger of losing our souls: the chance that we will ever come back to God is decidedly against us. We do not believe in the doctrine, "Once in grace, always in grace," no matter how much disgrace. The devil can bring up so many reasons why we should never try again -- and many never do try again. We may be one of those many that will never try, by reason of the circumstances, environments, associations, and dispositions, that one takes on after falling from grace.

Third: A third reason why we should use great care not to backslide is that we bring a great smear on the cause of Christ if we do; and we also contribute discouragement to others, and although we come back to God, we will suffer the loss of some things, that will never be restored. "The testimony of an unbroken fellowship will be lost forever." We will always remember when that break came. Also, we will always remember what caused that break.

It may not be thirty pieces of silver, but something of much less value.

It could be the unholy desire for painted nails, painted lips, abbreviated skirts, ventilated dress necks, short sleeves, or no sleeves at all, bobby-socks, cheap jewelry, lodges, clubs and such like. These are all signs of a heart condition, for when these things are indulged in, or even desired, we know it is because of the condition of the heart. For if the heart be holy, these things would not even be desired, much less indulged in. We know that salvation is not the outward appearance, yet we insist that it controls the outward appearance. Peter said, "Let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, or putting on of apparel." You can plainly see that he was not preaching in favor of these things, for he said, "let it not be." Salvation is not a make-up or make-believe, and there is just no use for anyone to indulge in those things and say, "Poo, that has nothing to do with one being a Christian"; your "Poo" doesn't make it salvation. What condemns is wrong no matter how much we try to justify ourselves in doing it. The trouble with many folk is that "the word preached, does not profit them, not being mixed with faith upon the part of those that heard it." Hebrews 4.2. The Word says, "Let it not be."

Now just what was He objecting to? Plating the hair? No, no; He was objecting to plaiting, or filling the hair with shining ornaments. I have gone into homes where old grandmas were sitting there with their hair all done up on metal, enough almost to make a wash basin. Grandma, did you say? Yes, Grandma, and a professor of religion at that. Be careful with your hairdo.

The Quizzer once asked the question of his auditors, when he had used a French word meaning "hairdo." "What is it?" The answer came back, "It is a horse." "Well," the quizzer said, as he smiled, "it may look like a horse, but it is a hairdo." Again he said, "Nor the wearing of gold." No comment on this. If you do not understand a statement as plain as that, you no doubt will get to heaven anyway. Again, "Nor the putting on of apparel."

It must be the hidden man of the heart, which is not corruptible, "even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit" I Peter 3.3, 4.

Backsliding is, of course, inward first, then outward. We do not do wrong outwardly until we are wrong inwardly. The heart is first frost-bitten, then the leaves begin to show the effect of the frost bite. Sometimes it is only a light frost and, to all appearances, not a lot of damage is done.

It is not always a killing frost. By this we mean we are not to think that because there have been no violent and wicked sins committed that there has been no harm done. For it is the little foxes that spoil the vines. Song of Solomon 2.15. The backslider is already in a position to not be too hard on himself, but to justify himself by saying, only mistakes have been made.

We are not to classify mistakes with sins. Of course we know that mistakes, when they become known to us, must be immediately corrected, or they will become sins. Willful and malicious wrongs are mistakes, but they are more; they are sins. The difference is that one is committed without the consent of the will and the other by our own voluntary and willful choice.

We should give serious consideration of our deeds, and not be too casual about them, for the heart is very deceitful. Jeremiah 17.9. God said, "Man's heart is evil from his youth" Genesis 8.21. Mark declares "The heart is where deceit comes from." "For from within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; all these things come from within and defile the man" Mark 7.21.

Satan shot man in the heart: he knows where to shoot, and is a good shot. To be shot in the heart is fatal; and so "Death was passed upon all mankind." But it also says, "Ye who were dead' in trespasses and in sins hath He quickened" "made alive" Ephesians 2.1. "I will give him a new heart," or make him a new heart, Ezekiel 18.31. We don't have to go around having a heart with a bullet hole in it; we can have a new heart. God did not plug up the old bullet hole Satan made, but just did away with the old heart, and made a new one and put His Holy Spirit in it. God does not believe in patch work. Adam and Eve tried that, and it did not work. It failed to cover their sin, and it will not cover ours either, unless they are confessed and forsaken.

Heart disease has first place, physically and spiritually, because the heart is the chief organ of life, for both soul and body. Neither the soul or the body can be healthy when the heart of either is affected, and, unless immediate help can be obtained, death will sooner or later be the inevitable result. Our subject of course confines itself to the spiritual heart, and to one that has given up their spiritual heart and has gone back to their dead heart: the one with a bullet hole in it. "Slid back in heart," and while very religious, yet not spiritual.

The text talks about the backslider in heart, not in practice. There is a difference. He did not say that they were backslidden in worship, or in works, but in heart. This is a condition that cannot be cured by better practices, or by

increasing our church activities, "doing more work," or by being more often at the sacraments. This can only be healed by godly sorrow that worketh repentance unto salvation that needeth not to be repented of. He said to the church at Ephesus (Revelation 2.5), "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent." He did' not suggest that they could pay their fine by doing good works, or going into hiding until people quit talking about it, or even staying the fine, until they were good and ready to pay it. He said repent and do the first works; go all the way back to the beginning, and bring up a clean slate. This is what John the Baptist required of the Pharisees; also John the Revelator of the church of the Ephesians. "Repent, or else I will come quickly and will remove thy candlestick out of his place." Notice "Except thou repent and do thy first works." Yes very much backslidden, they were.

We will notice some signs of this particular backslider spoken of in the text, as the reference is made entirely to an inward condition, viz, "In heart," and no reference is made to any outside irregularities of the religious profession. It is not likely that the religious performance will be perfect, but good enough to escape the criticism of the brethren, and to retain a good name. The church at Sardis had a name that lived, but they were dead, said Jesus.

First, let's notice the text says, "He shall be filled with his own ways." Proverbs 14.14. Now since there can be no vacuum, we are either filled with the Spirit of God, or we are filled with our own ways, as the wise man has said, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man (natural man) but the end thereof are the ways of death" Proverbs 16.25. This way evidently is self-indulgence, and whether willful or willingly, it is all the same, as self-indulgence is the fruit of the backslider in heart, and is the way of death.

To backslide in heart is first to invite unbelief. The law of faith is unalterable. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not on the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth upon him" St. John 3.36. "Oh, wherefore didst thou doubt" Matthew 14.31.

How unreasonable it is to doubt Jesus. "It is impossible to please God without faith" Hebrews 11.6. But this is not a chapter on faith, although it is faith or backslide. We are endeavoring to show how our weak faith, or the lack of faith, has substituted our own ways, and this has taken the place of Holy Ghost leadership, and has greatly hindered Holy Ghost revivals.

Many people are backslidden in heart, and do not seem to be conscious of it; this state of heart exists far in advance of any outward manifestation. We are inclined to think that because we do not do wrong things that we are all right. It is not because we do no wrong things, but because we do not do enough good things to keep us spiritual. We must be spiritual or we are nothing, in the way of a Christian. Now when we say that we have done nothing, we say the truth, and most of us have never been accused of doing anything. If we had done something, we would not have backslid. When we do something, that is something, that something will amount to something.

You will notice that the church had not as yet made the discovery that they were on their way out, and must repent at once. Being self-willed will license self-indulgence and sin. They reserved the right to make their own classification of right and wrong, so that their actions and conduct would be according to their own interpretations of this classification.

The expression, "My Bible says" is wrong, and should never be used. You have no Bible, unless God's Book doesn't suit you, and you want to make your own, like Hitler. He did not get along very well with his book, and you will not get on very well with yours, unless it is God's Book. I shudder almost when I hear preachers make this statement. It may seem innocent, but it seems to have a subtle approach to filching glory that does not, or ever can, belong to us. This statement "My Bible" would be very misleading to the heathen the missionary is trying to convert, as he would likely think that the missionary had written a Bible of his own. I have noticed that the backslider in heart can make his Bible say just what he wants it to say. But God's -- well, it just won't bend to our preconceived notions about things. The Bible is good enough as it is, for God's true children. And every one that has a Bible and reads it to his own accommodation is backslidden in heart. "Let God be true, and every man a liar" Romans 3.4. The man that reads and believes God's Book will, as the writer has said, "Swear to his own hurt, and change not" Psalm 15.4.

He means that he will tell the truth, even though he may suffer for it.

The backslider in heart will invent a way around the truth by explaining things in his own way. The things that he denied to others, and unChristianized them for doing, he will justify himself in doing. This very inconsistency he will observe in others, but will overlook in himself. The man in grace will claim no more for himself than he will allow in others.

Are we, or have we been, more severe in our criticism of others than of ourselves? If this is so, it is an evidence of backsliding. It may not be charitable to say that one is entirely backslidden, but we can truly say that he is on his way out, and unless he makes this discovery soon, and repents and has the blood applied to his heart, he will finally be enrolled in the class that my subject talks about: "The Backslider in Heart." "If we confess our sins, He is faithful to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" I John 1.9. In summing up for the backslider in heart, we will say that, "To be filled with our own ways is to be self-willed, self-indulgent, full of arrogance, and to be possessed of an uncharitable spirit."

All this is more than a weakness with us; it is sin in us, and though we may be as beautiful as a whited sepulcher on the outside, we are full of dead men's bones on the inside. Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart.

The blood, the blood, is all my plea; Hallelujah, for it cleanseth me.

The Backslider in Heart

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Chapter 2

Sermon 2

SOME SIGNS OF THE BACKSLIDER IN HEART

The subject under discussion, "The Backslider in Heart" verbs 14:14 are the words of Solomon, known as the wise man because of his great God-given wisdom. This exclusive statement, and I use the word exclusive as no other Bible character ever used, or spoke of backsliding in just that form.

The words, "The backslider in heart," occur only once in the Bible, and are very definite and emphatic. It is our purpose to deal with the subject, as it is stated, and not after the broader view, as meaning only one who has quit professing. Much is said about backsliding in every dispensation, after the general usage of the term, that of "turning away," "turning from," "turning aside" and such like statements. So much is said, that no one can consistently say, "There is no such thing"; and then teach "Once saved, always saved."

The text says, "The backslider in heart." He did not say, that if there be one, as though it was only a possibility. No, no, but he is very emphatic that there is a backslider in heart, and tells us exactly what he is like: "He shall be filled with his own ways." Just as surely as there is a backslider in heart, just so surely he will be filled with his own ways.

Self-indulgence is, "Going where, being what, doing as, it seemeth right in our own eyes"; in other words, miss nothing that you want to do, see, or be.

Backsliding begins unexpectedly and unconsciously, like many dangerous diseases. It steals its way into the heart so secretly, that the utmost vigilance is necessary, lest we are cut of gas before we are aware of it, and our ear begins to slow down.

Know first, that it begins in the heart, and finishes there: hence the admonition "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Proverbs 4:23. A backslider in heart, is not always a backslider in life. Many are often very zealous workers in the externals, and seem to be very much interested in the success of their church. They keep up very well their form of public Christian service but without spiritual power. "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." II Tim. 3:5. Also Rev. 3:17: "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." One would not think that so much could be the matter with him, and not know it. But Jesus said, "They knew it not."

The claims of the church made in this seventeenth verse are the claims of a lukewarm "spued out" church. The devil had stolen their gold, and they were shining up their old brass. Jesus said unto them, "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich." If they had ever put that old dry profession in the fire, a little heap of ashes would be all they would have left, and the wind would soon blow that away. They may have had worldly riches, but no true riches. Then He said, You need white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear. They were naked and did not know it, and a lot of folk do not know it today.

They probably had on more clothes, than a lot of holiness professors, that claim to be sanctified; at least do not read of

any complaints from their pastor or brethren about their immodesty of dress. It took Jesus to see their spiritual nakedness, and their filthy garments. They themselves did not see their wretched condition, for the reason that they had lost their spiritual vision, and needed to anoint their eyes with eyesalve so they could see.

We do not begin to strip and show our nakedness, until we begin to backslide in heart. When this happens to us, then we look like it and act like it.

I have observed this class of folk, under deep conviction from the faithful preaching of the word, come to the altar for prayer, how ashamed and miserable they were. They would nearly pull their clothing to pieces, trying to cover their nakedness. They could not see before, because they were off the beam. This is why Jesus told them to anoint their eyes with eyesalve that they might see.

No half baked lukewarm professor, can trust his vision in seeing right and wrong things. You will notice here that Jesus definitely outlined the way back to God, that they might avoid any substitution or reformation by ritualism, or sacraments, and have only one alternative viz, "Be zealous therefore and repent," Rev. 3:19. Samson "Wist not when the Lord left him" Judges 16:20.

Should it be thought a thing incredible, that this same thing might happen to us? No, this has happened to many a person, and they made the discovery a long time later. They reached for their hair, only to remember that they had lost it in the barber shop, and their spiritual power was gone.

Notice some signs of backsliding; then compare them to our own experience as a means of checking up on ourselves.

First. We notice a loss or lack of love for private prayer and communion with God. One time it was a relish, and we had a pull for the secret place and we may still keep it up, but do not enjoy it as we did at one time. Jno. 15:9.

Second. We notice a loss of interest in the reading of God's word. David said, "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee" Psa.119:11, also 119:97. "Oh, how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day." We may continue to read it, but it is not as interesting as it once was. The precious blood is not precious, any more to the backslider in heart. How sad is this condition.

Third. We notice them thinking lightly of sin: gradually becoming used to it and moving a little closer to it all the time. It becomes Lot's Little Zoar "small thing." Lot's daughters justified themselves and left the place where God put them and went up the mountain and into a cave, and said, "No one sees us." But God saw them and their sin. He was watching them, and He is watching us. What won't people do when they think no one sees them. Well they will soon bring shame and disgrace, and a curse as well, upon their lives, and a stigma upon the cause of Christ and the Church.

Fourth. We notice a loss of zeal for real spiritual work, and a criticizing spirit for others who exercise their spiritual freedom, saying that they do not believe in too much emotionalism and demonstration. He does no soul winning any more, and becomes irregular in his attendance at the means of grace. The Bible says, "The time will come when men will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." II Tim. 4:2,3. You see, he wants church and profession: it is not the church that he is through with; it is the old fashioned truth. He does not want that anymore, neither does he want deep piety. He may have some extreme lines, that are nil, as he is compelled to major on externals in an attempt to cover up and to make up for the deficit in spiritual things.

He tries to appear spiritual by outward Pharisaical strictness, but like the wolf in sheep's clothing, he is discovered. The faithful preaching of the word of God, is what it takes to pull down their munitions of rocks, and discover their hiding places. "When He the Spirit of Truth is come, He will reprove of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." John 16:8.

Lastly. Some causes.

First. Getting off guard through unwatched avenues, and approaches to the many problems of life. "Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation" Mark 14:38. "The spirit is willing (ready), but the flesh is weak."

Second. The love of the world. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." Jno. 2:15. You may say, "I do not love the world," and you may not love its sinful pleasures; and the class that I am writing about are usually strong in their opposition against worldly amusements; but love their houses, and lands, and money, and are trying to get all they can of them for their own self-preservation. Demas, you know, forsook Paul, having loved this present world: and Achan, how he coveted after silver and gold and a Babylonish garment, until his hand reached out and laid hold on it, and it cost him his life and soul; and not only his life, but his entire family.

But not Achan alone; for Paul says, that others have done the same thing: "The love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." I Tim. 6:10. The Apostle declares that he had coveted no man's silver or gold. Acts 20:33. He had kept a watchful eye on that avenue, that would lead to backsliding, and by-pathed around it. Many are so greedy for money, that they will work on Sunday for time and half pay; buy and sell and merchandise in questionable things, and buy and sell in the house of God to get gain. I heard an evangelist say one time that he had two reasons for selling his books; one was to "scatter literature," I expect it was like "scattering litter," and his second reason was he "needed the money." That reason is selfish and mercenary, and a road that leads to backsliding. "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backsliding shall reprove thee: know therefore and 'see that it is an evil thing, and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God." Jer. .2:19.

Third. Neglect of known duty, and practice of it; like Jonah. He knew what he should do, but substituted his own way for God's way, and received a whaling for it,. and he had it coming to him.

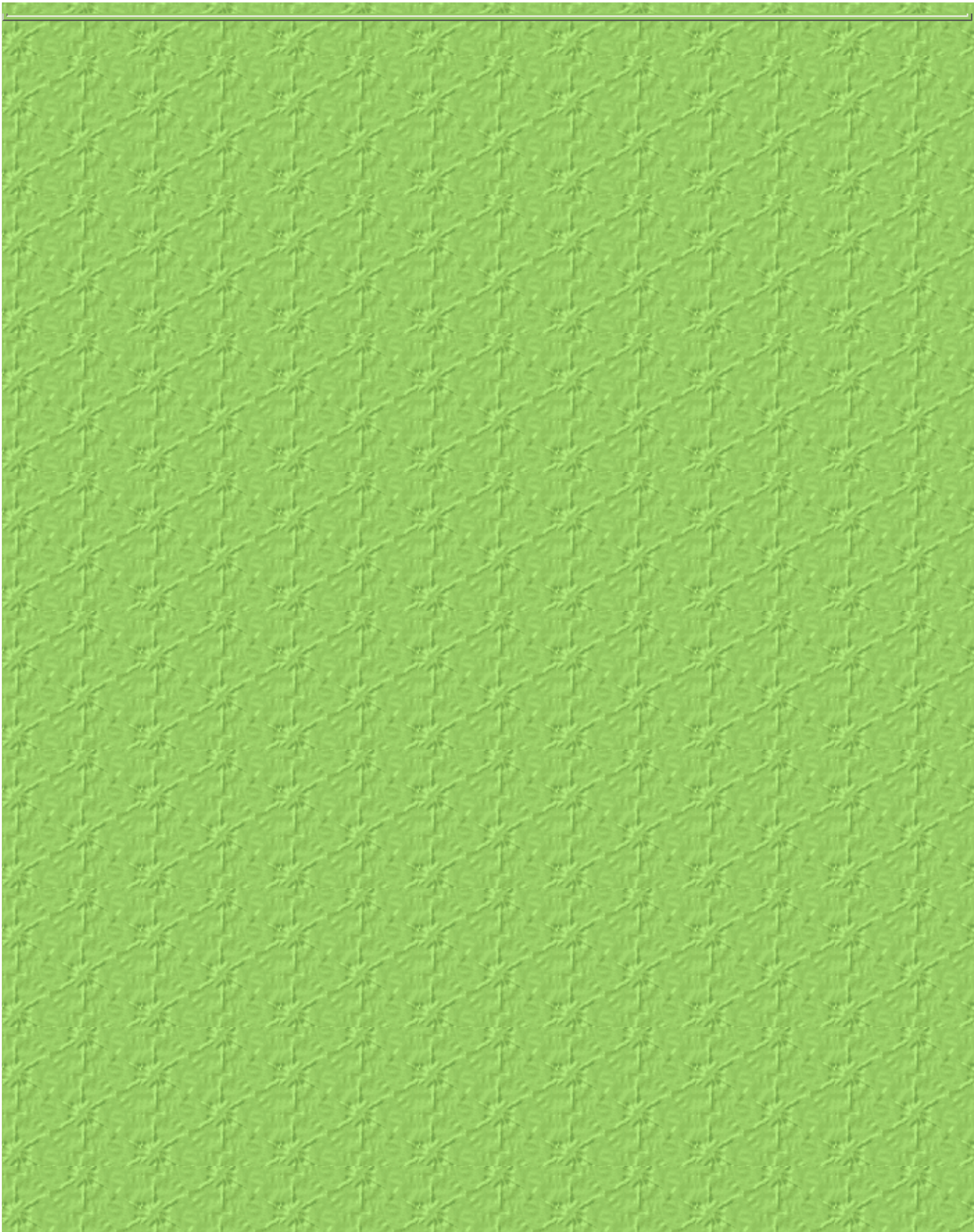
The indulgence of a single known sin, or sparing what we call no harm sins ("just a look") like David, will bring God's voice to the conscience, saying, "Thou art the man" II Sam. 12:7. And again we read verse 8. "I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things." Two kingdoms and his master's wives and his master's house, was not enough to satisfy a heart that had broken with God. This would be a good Bible narrative to read, if and when you have a little time. "Little foxes spoil the vines." It was just a look, but that look caused him to commit adultery and murder. It was a look of sin, that only the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse away. I Jno. 1:7.

Lastly. The results. Not only backslidden, but filled with his own ways; which is feeling that we are rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing. A professor said to me, "I am clean, I never had a sinful habit in my life; I don't need anyone to tell me anything, I don't need any instructions.

The man in the Bible was clean, and Satan acknowledged it; but he was empty.

He had nothing to keep the devil out. We must be filled with the Spirit, to be acceptable and safe. This backslidden church know not that they were wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: that they had not enough clothes on, and what they did have on were soiled and filthy. Israel was filled with their own ways, and was full of grumble, and this led to doubt and faultfinding, alienation and despair; "would to God we had died in Egypt."

We should watch the above four avenues, as main roads to backsliding; and avoid them by daily reading the word of God; and by magnifying the blood, and making much of the Holy Ghost. This will be our shield and security against backsliding.



The Backslider in Heart

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Chapter 3

Sermon 3

THE PERILS OF THE EPHESIAN CHURCH

While realizing that we are engaging in a most difficult undertaking in trying to elucidate, to the reader's mind, the full content of meaning expressed in the text that heads the chapter, and gives the title to this book; I am persuaded that my subject, "The Backslider in Heart" is too much, if not altogether neglected by the ministry. Too many are palliating sin, and waving their smooth palladium of oratory over superficial, and backslidden holiness professors; "having men's persons in admiration because of advantage." Jude 16.

If we as ministers of the word of God, withhold the tenth, and shun to declare the whole counsel of God, for policy sake, whether it be for filthy lucre 'or popularity, we are become hirelings; and Jesus said "The hireling careth not for the sheep." John 10:12,13. That preacher may be esteemed very highly for his work's sake by his people; but God's estimate of Him is very low.

We are told in Ezek 33:6, very plainly the penalty required of the unfaithful watchman who fails to blow the trumpet with no uncertain sound.

The "backslider in heart" who is he? When the Lord said, "One of you shall betray me," they began to say, "Lord, is it I?" So the reader of this little book might say, to this question, "Who is the backslider in heart? Lord, is it I?" Well, t would not say that it was, but it could be. Now if you have left your first love, thou art the man; for the backslider in heart is one that has left and lost his first love. Rev. 2:4.

The word, "left" is used because, that is just what they did, and that the responsibility may fall where it belongs.

"Thou hast left." Of course when we leave it, we lose it. They left what is the most difficult thing in religion to maintain, viz "first love." "First" here mans, "in point of rank," "keen edge," love at its highest peak, or boiling point.

Wesley said, "few, ever get saved: and fewer still ever keep saved any length of time; fewer still ever get sanctified: and fewer still ever keep sanctified to the end." Many have left their first love; one time they ranked high in the spiritual life of the church, but now they are demoted to the lower levels of formality, and don't seem to be concerned about it, or even to realize it.

Let us look at Rev. 2:4. This church at Ephesus, Jesus said, "had left their first love," and as His custom was to mention all their good things before offering any criticism of their lives, He begins to enumerate them. First He said, "I know thy works." They had works, and I don't imagine it was running a culinary department, cream parlor in the church basement, or any social function. We think they were doing good works, such as a Christian church should be engaged in. It is sufficient to say that good works will not save us. No. good wife is satisfied with a husband that is a good worker, and provider, if he does not love her. She wants more than a mere living, she wants love and affection. We can do works; we know how to perform religious functions, but do we consider, whether they are done in a perfunctory way; or is the compelling force, that motivates us in doing work for God, coming out of a heart filled with pure love for the Lord Jesus

Christ. Jesus said they had patience. Do we have patience? I have many say to me, "That is my trouble, I have no patience." Well these folk did have patience, and Jesus gave them credit for it; and that was not all they had. They could not bear them that were evil. "Thou hast tried them that say, they are Apostles, and are not, and hast found them to be liars; and for my name's sake hast not fainted." They seemed to be careful about their associations; they did not hobnob and join in with just every crowd. Are we that careful? They knew their book, so that they could square their leaders by the word, and so protect themselves from wolves in sheep's clothing. They had stick-to-itiveness, and were not easy to faint. In fact, Jesus said, "they had not fainted;" that is, they had not given up their profession. Well, the Bible says, "hold fast your profession" Heb. 4:14 and 10:23. But if we will examine the context we will make the discovery that we had better have something hot, to serve with it.

He said to the Laodicean church: "I would that ye were cold or hot" Rev. 3:16. This crowd was neither cold nor hot; So he spued them out of His mouth. We have no record that anyone had questioned the Christian piety of the Ephesian church until Jesus came along and looked them over; and when He saw their good things, He acknowledged them; and no doubt they thought their rating would be high; but when He said, "Nevertheless (notwithstanding all this) I have somewhat against thee," it was not the pastor making this claim against them, but Jesus. I do not know what the pastor thought about this criticism, after all the good things he had acknowledged, and said about his church: but Jesus does not always see eye to eye with the pastor of the church. I do not think that the pastor knew just how backslidden his church was. This is true in many places. My, my! if Jesus had just left off speaking, when He got through saying all those good things, and just before He said, "Nevertheless," the pastor surely would have had a wonderful write-up about his church. But Jesus was through saying good things, and now He must say, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." Rev. 2:4. "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

They had fallen from grace, and needed to repent, by going all the way back and bring up a clean slate, the same as John the Baptist required of the Pharisees. He was preaching to a crowd of backsliders, that had taken on the viper nature, and John knew that it is no use baptizing a viper: for they would still be vipers after the ceremony. If water would have done the work, Jesus would not have had to die for our sins, we could have just washed them away with water. In the commendation of Jesus of the Ephesian church, it does not seem that they were backslidden; but wait a minute: let's see. They had works, labors, and patience, and had a horror for evil workers, and knowledge of the truth, and they had borne and had not fainted; but they had left their first love. They were performing well outwardly, but inwardly, they were backsliding or backslidden in heart.

To perform the functions of the Christian life perfectly, we must keep the fire of devotion burning constantly on the altar of our heart. It is love, not activities, that counts the most in Christian service. If love is not felt as at first, then we have left and lost our first love altogether, or we are losing it. Rev. 2:1-7. We are either spiritual, or we are nothing so far as God is concerned. "Ye must worship me in spirit and in truth" says the Master.

Jesus called the Pharisees' attention to what their prophet "had prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written,, This people honoreth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" Mark. 7:6,7. "In vain do ye worship me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men." He said, "Make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit." Matt. 12:33. When and if you have a little time, please read this portion of the 12th chapter of Matthew's gospel.

In the Ephesian Church we find a state or condition of backsliding in heart, existing with an outward maintenance of works that made them look like real Christians. Perhaps everybody around them thought they were real saints: only the keen eye of the Savior could detect that they were not. His message was surely a great surprise to them, for they were ready to measure spiritual arms with any church in their community or country. But alas! All the good works, and hatred of evil, could not refute the fact of their backsliding. There was a break, not in their works so much, but in their spiritual life, and a lack in their love as a consequence of this break. The reason people do not find their religious trouble is, because they look in the wrong place. They examine their works, when they should look to their spirit.

Jesus looked at their spirit and found their trouble. He did not say, "You are losing out." He said, "You have left your first love repent therefore or I will come quickly, and remove thy 'candlestick'" (or church). They were to repent while they still had the light. They still had some dim, shimmering light of a past experience, as every backslider remembers when he had better days. They were not to allow this memory of their yesteryears to be blotted from their minds, for He said, "If the light that is in thee become darkness, how great is that darkness."

We have found that the experience of backsliding is perfectly compatible with great zeal and activities. The Church just described was so far backslidden, that it was necessary for them to go all the way back, and do their first works, of bitter repentance, and begin all over again, notwithstanding they were very zealous, and very active.

There is no doubt, but this is a bit confusing to many: How any people can be interested in church work, and backslidden in heart at the same time. Well they may be following blind guides. A blind leader that knows how to get people in love with him by flattery, is a dangerous leader. There are many people, who are only religiously infatuated; they will work themselves down, on committees; they will work in the culinary department making soup, and the cream freezing department, and when they are through stirring, their religion is as thin as their soup, and as cold as their cream. There are a lot of willing folk in the church. There are some that are willing to work, and then there are some that are willing to let them do it. They are members of the church, but not members of the prayer meeting group. They are thrilled with the social functions of the church, but are not interested in old time, Holy Ghost, fire baptized, Spirit-filled meetings.

Again, backsliding will exist with the maintenance of strong discipline and sound orthodoxy; but these can identify the Christian, only, if and when, they are shown in the spirit of love. We are to reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine. II Timothy 4:2. Also we are to speak "The truth in love" Ephesians 4:15. "Though I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, and have not charity (divine love) 'it profiteth me nothing" I Corinthians 13:1. "I am become as sounding brass, or as a tinkling cymbal." In this manifestation of divine love alone is the equation between success and failure in our service for God.

Lastly. We will sum up for the backslider in heart.

First. He has left his first love; that high ranking love, and the light of the Spirit has died in his soul. The love of God going out, creates a vacuum which must of necessity be filled with something, as we can not have a vacuum.

If something goes out, then something will come in to fill that vacancy and that something will be "his own ways." There is a congruous correspondence between the church described in this chapter, and the church at Rome.

They had known God. Romans 1:21-25. "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened (backslidden). Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools: and changed the glory of God for idols, and for this cause God gave them up to serve their uncleanness, who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped the creature more than the Creator."

They did all these things because "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge" Romans 1:28. "Then God gave them up unto a reprobate mind to do those things which are not convenient." Just like the low lands when the flood gates are opened, they are immediately filled with all unrighteousness. Romans 1:28, 32.

Second. He is lukewarm in spirit. He has only the form left; his fire and power is gone; he may, and often times has plenty of zeal, but not according to knowledge and love.

Third. He is filled with his own ways and methods of doing things. He thinks little or nothing of substituting his ways, for God's plans; and like Nadab and Abihu, get out of their place and offer strange fire on the altar of God. There are just a lot of folk that will jump up and take the place of the priest, and especially if he happens to be a little late. I have seen them

jump up, and the preacher, that the people wanted to hear so badly had to wait, while they took his precious time, burning incense to their own experience, and said nothing that they could not have said at other opportune times. The Bible says, "Give place to the gospel." What happened to them that offered strange fire? The Bible says they died. Numbers 3:4. "Them that will honor Me, I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." I Samuel 2:30.

Fourth. The cares of life have overcome and taken possession of his life, and now it is his meat and drink. to do his own way.

Fifth. He is filled with Ego, and there is a complete absence of real humility. He will not only offer his service, but he will insist on it being accepted. He is often very radical, and harsh in his defense for his non-essentials. He has his own gospel as he sees it, but it is the gospel of the backslider in heart: cold and without mercy and sympathy.

Lastly. How do we backslide? We will notice only a few contributing causes.

1. Neglect of daily communing with God in prayer. We must meet God at the mercy seat, and get His touch on our souls, else we die.

2. Neglect of daily Bible reading and study. We must feed on the Word.

3. Neglect to support the work of God, with our presence and finance. It is not enough to send our tithe to church, God said to bring it. "Bring ye all the tithes into the store house." Notice it says "Bring ye" Malachi 3:10. He wants us to come to church. I have heard people say that the Lord can keep us at home. Well, He can, but He would rather we would go to church. "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." Hebrews 10:25.

4. Suffering things to remain unconfessed in our lives, instead of frankly acknowledging them and getting them out of the way.

5. And lastly, failure to witness publicly to the saving and sanctifying power of the blood of Jesus Christ. We cannot keep saved if we fail to bear this testimony.

The Backslider in Heart

by Albert M. Ewing

Chapter 4

Sermon 4

THREE CLASSES OF BACKSLIDERS

In the further discussion of this most important subject, "The Backslider in Heart" we purpose to notice a few things closely associated with this particular group that plays no small part in the professed church of Jesus Christ. Too much cannot be said on this all important matter as stated by the writer of the Proverbs 14:14.

He was not indulging in broad generalities of the term, "backslider" as is often the case. Solomon was all too wise, to think of the backslider in heart only, as one who has quit professing religion, praying and attending church.

He is talking of a group that is sincere in their profession, and has not as yet made the discovery of their backsliding: like Samson "They wist not when the Lord left them." As much could be said of the church which they serve: they too had not discovered it. Many backsliders in heart are serving the church in responsible positions, and the church does not seem to discern them.

Does the individual not know that he is backslidden? I would say that he does not. How can any one be backslidden and not know it? Well, if he knew that he was backslidden, and keeps on professing, he would be a backslidden hypocrite. This class that I am writing about does not know because their trouble is inward, and not outward. Man looketh on the outside, "outward appearance." He reasons that because he is doing nothing wrong outwardly he is all right inwardly. He does not seem to recognize the break in the Spirit.

God does not look so much at what I am doing outwardly, as He looks at how I am doing inwardly. God looketh on the heart. Of course there will be, of necessity, a slight imperfection of works, but this will not be so noticeable to the natural eye. Jesus said, "I have not found thy works perfect before me." But it took the all-seeing eye of Jesus to see it. The most spiritual folk in the church said nothing about it.

The backslider is not readily discovered as such, because of his many ear marks of a true Christian; but with all their religious activities, performing almost normally in some cases, doing and acting the part of a Christian, but like the five foolish virgins, out of oil. Only the test of the midnight cry, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh," could reveal to them their spiritual condition. Thousands are the slumbering backsliders in the church today; no ordinary preaching is sufficient to awaken them. They are like the Pharisees, with their "Lord I thank Thee, I am not as other men, I fast twice a week, I pay tithes of all I possess" Luke 18:11, 12. They were opposed to Sabbath desecration and dressed according to their ritual: but void of divine love. They were separatists; very clean indeed, but empty.

Our method of determining or identifying the backslider is wrong many times, and I think we can arrive at a more satisfactory understanding of the subject, "The Backslider in Heart" if we reason that the wise man had in mind a particular class. I know the reader will say, there is no difference: that a backslider is a backslider, any way you put it: to which we agree; but it will do no harm to think of him in more ways than one.

Let's divide the subject into at least three classes, and study them separately. This no doubt will improve our thinking and

help us to see that the old saying is still true that, "It is not all gold that glitters."

First. There are those who have just quit and gone back, as the dog to his vomit and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire. II Peter 2:21; Galatians 2:18. They have quit professing and have taken up their old sinful lives, and admit frankly that they are backslidden. They are running now with the same old crowd and to the same excess of it, as they ever did.

Second. There are those, who, while they have quit professing and attending church, have not gone back to their old sinful habits.

My own brother lost his wonderful experience with God and was out of grace for twenty years; yet he never took up a bad habit that he gave up to get salvation in the first place. Very much unlike the first class, mentioned above, that did go back to their old sins again.

He held the job as foreman in a large factory, with men working under him, and although a backslider, yet he requested his men, not to swear while working on the job.

He would frankly admit that he was a backslider, and had been for many years. One year before he was instantly killed, he was gloriously reclaimed, and after twenty years of backsliding, he could bring a clean outward life back to God. How sad to look upon those who have once known the way of life and the sweet peace of mind and soul, now engaging in sin, cursing, drinking, visiting taverns, movies, dance halls and gambling houses.

Peter said "It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it to turn from the holy commandment" II Peter 2:21. Many do this very thing, and may never come back to Jesus.

Third. There is a third class or group, who have backslidden in heart, but not in life, and are still "making long prayers for a pretense" Matthew 23:14; Mark 12:40. This class is the most insidious of the three groups. They love the chief seats in the synagogues, "front seats of authority"; they pride themselves on their strictness or radicalism: they are religiously religious about their church. They seem to think more of their church than they do of Jesus. They are infatuated with it, and are often heard to say, "I love my church." Well, we should appreciate the church, but we should love Jesus, more than any material thing. Religious infatuation must not be confused with love for God. If a lot of people would examine themselves at this point, they might find that they were worshipping the creature more than the Creator.

This class of folk is often very strict. The Pharisees were. There were no worldly cravings; they were faithful to their ceremonial creed, and yet they had no charity for others not of their persuasion. No divine love, no Holy Ghost. Jesus said to the Pharisees, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold." John 10:16. That did not set very well with them. They had a feeling that they were the only sheep in the clover patch. Well, when we feel that way about it, we are becoming sort of goatish, and have lost something that will take repentance to get it back.

How may one lose the Holy Ghost, or his "sanctification" without losing all? I would say, to that question, "This is very rarely done." If this should occur, I would say that it would be brought about by neglect, without deliberate willfulness. Plenty do not want to grieve Him or lose Him: but they grieve Him away by avoidables: I mean by avoidables, things that could have been prevented had we not been so careless and unmindful of the checks of the Holy Ghost.

The backslider in heart being filled with his own ways, wants to follow his own program, by substituting his own ideas for the plan of God and loses the personal touch of the Holy Ghost. Being radical, is not being hot, or Spirit-filled by any manner or means.

When we think of the backslider, we think of one who has gone back into sin and to old habits; but the backslider in heart is different, in that he is often very religious outwardly, critical, censorious, and fanatical, hot in the brain, but cold in the

heart. We are to be cold or hot. Revelation 3:15.

The backslider in heart has lost the fire of the Holy Ghost that made him hot, so he cooled off and was spued out. (v.16). We are to be baptized with the Holy Ghost and fire, and this is the only thing that will keep us hot: nothing we can do will substitute for the Holy Ghost

The church at Sardis. Revelation 3:1-6. Among all the messages given to the seven churches of Asia, none are so pathetic as this one. The condemnation and reproof is direct: "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." (v.1). Sardis was an ancient city of Lydia in Asia, and the church located there was probably the result of St. John's labors. It was the first city in that part of the world to receive the gospel, and by their good Christian living, had made for themselves a great name. They did an excellent work for a time, and as Paul said of the Galatian church, "Ye did run well, who did hinder you?" Galatian 5:7. So this church of Sardis, ran well for a season and was very popular for a while, but finally succumbed to their surroundings like other churches.

The command of God was, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die" (v. 1). There is not the slightest hint that what had perished, may be restored. I have observed fruit trees half dead, with the other half still bearing fruit. The dead part cannot be saved; only with great care and watchfulness can the green part live. We hurt ourselves by backsliding.

The snake never moves backward unless there is no other way of avoiding it. Their covering is so delicate and thin that if they are compelled to move backward they injure their epidermis, which they must lose by the process of fasting and shrinking until they can crawl out of the old hide and come out with a clean bright raiment and look like a new creature. How much like the backslider, who has crawled backward and hurt himself and now with humiliation, with godly sorrow and repentance he is able to shed the soiled garments of the backslider, and appear once again in the garments of salvation, pure and white, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, washed in the blood of the Lamb.

Jesus informs this church that their works were not perfect before Him. Revelation 3:1, 2. Of course not. We could not expect them to be under their condition, with only a few of their number that had not defiled their garments. No church can do effective work with more than half of their membership dead. Jesus said they were dead, all but a few which had not spotted their garments with the world; He said, "They shall walk with me in white" for they are worthy. White is a type of the righteousness of the saints.

Backsliders cannot wear white, it is too easily soiled and spotted. The picture is not all dark, there were a few that had the fire, but they were in great danger of being overcome by the appalling apathy of their environment. Their imperfection of works, which they were accused of, was the result of their break in the Spirit and their consequent spiritual death.

They possibly were capitalizing on their great and popular name: they said we have a big church; but Jesus said, "Ye have only a few names that have not defiled their garments." They only survive. The rest of your church are dead.

Here is the testimony of a once flourishing church which had the fire, but later, gradually and imperceptibly fell away, until the major portion of their number were dead spiritually, and serving only to sustain a religion that was formal, and a name that lived only in the opinion of the people. They were good people, so the people said, and that was all they wanted. This quite satisfied them. When Jesus testified, His testimony differed from that of the people. He said, their works were imperfect, their names lived only in the minds of the people, and they were dead (backslidden) spiritually down and out of the race, and unless they repent and do their first works, He will come quickly and remove their candlestick "church" which was their light.

The backslider has the light of those around him that have not defiled their garments, but have kept them clean and white, and are walking in the light with their Savior.

Then again they have the pale glow, and shimmering light of a past experience, when they saw better days. While they are trying hard to convince themselves that they are all right, because of their good outward moral life, they are not meeting with much success, for the reason, it takes more than good deeds and a good name to supply a spiritual lack. This would be like short beds and narrow comforters; most uncomfortable indeed.

If the enemy has stolen our gold, and gone off with it, there will be no use to shine up our old brass, it just will not fill the bill. Jesus said, "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire." Made bright by burning, and melting, not rubbing. There is no successful substitute for the Holy Spirit, the New Birth, or entire Sanctification, and these cannot be had unless the blood of Jesus Christ is applied in the heart.

The Backslider in Heart

by Albert M. Ewing

Chapter 5

Sermon 5

SAMSON THE BACKSLIDER

There is perhaps no Bible truth, the preaching of which is more timely, and which is more scrupulously avoided, than this truth, "The Backslider in Heart."

It is a truth that should be preached because it deals with a condition of heart that affects man's relationship with God to the extent of separation. "Your sins have separated between you and your God." Isa. 59:2.

There are those who unwillingly sin. I mean they are not sure the things they are doing, or are engaged in are wrong. While others that sin are willful sinners, because they know that what they are doing is sin; but do it anyway. What is the difference between the two sinners? Will not the results be the same? Yes, finally it will. "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; when sin is finished, it bringeth forth death." See James 1:14, 15. Backsliding, separation, death.

The willful sinner, is one who has determined in his mind and heart to sin with the full knowledge that he is sinning in what he is doing.

Sin, with him is finished, and spiritual death takes place in his heart: "For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, their remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." Heb. 10:26. He that sinneth willfully (with malicious and deliberate intent to sin). "He that despised the law of Moses died without mercy in the presence of two or three witnesses." Heb. 10:27. Also verse 29, "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, where he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" This does not mean final apostasy, neither does it mean that this soul can never be reclaimed. It just means that he has backslidden, and has rejected his only means of salvation, and unless he repents, and does his first works he will be finally lost.

"This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" Acts 4:11, 12. We should be very careful about being willful or being willing until we are sure that the thing we are giving consent to, is not sinful. The willing sinner, does not want to sin; I mean really sin, but does things, which he is not sure are wrong. "Doubtful things," and instead of giving God the benefit of the doubt, when he is not sure, and refusing to engage in questionable things, he just stumbles on, until mercy ceases to be a virtue, and God must reckon with his insincerity, and withdraw His Holy Spirit, and Finis is written to his spiritual career.

So sparingly is this subject of backsliding discussed or even written upon. I wonder why? It may be its importance is overlooked, or it may be, that it is thought to be unethical for our day, and that it would be more profitable to spend our time getting folk sanctified. Well, my brother, sanctification is not the remedy for the backslider in heart. An old fashioned job of repentance at an old fashioned mourner's bench, would work better. Try that once.

If it is a Bible truth, describing a condition existing in the church today, it certainly is not unethical to preach it today.

The text, "The backslider in heart, shall be filled with his own ways" Prov. 14:14.

There are a number of scriptures that may be cited, showing where God left folk to their own way. In Judges 16-20, we read where God left Samson.

This Bible narrative of Samson and his downfall is most pathetic, and quite applicable to illustrate the truth of my subject, "The Backslider in Heart." Samson, like the prodigal son, wanting a more romantic career, became irreconcilable to the humdrum routine of his home life and decided to go into a far country, which in reality was not a far country, but perhaps less than one hundred miles away, but plenty far enough away to get him into a love affair and rob him of his clean pure life, unless he would have great respect for his Nazarite vow, which thing he evidently neglected to do, as the Bible narrative reveals, when we follow it through to the close of his life.

Samson went to Timnath, "Forbidding image," not for his health, or to better his moral or spiritual condition, for when we think of the name of the city and its meaning, "Forbidding image," it does not seem to us as a suitable place for those things, but he went probably for the marked contrast in the social life. The Philistine cities were full of gaiety and pleasure and most likely very different from his own home town, Zorah.

New Colonists and travelers were constantly moving in, offering greater opportunity for social indulgence, which did not exist in his own city or country.

It was in this city of Timnath, where he met a woman that he loved and wanted for a wife. There was nothing wrong about him wanting a wife, but she was a Philistine, and of course his parents would object to the marriage on the grounds that she was not of his own people and country. But Samson said, Get her for me for a wife. But you know his father and mother would still protest the marriage of their son to a heathen woman, but they could not go beyond a reasonable persuasion to hinder him from carrying out his purpose.

Samson saw something in the woman that he loved and that pleased him, and he wanted her. He, being not only an Israelite but a Nazarite, was bound by the law to honor his parents, which thing he did by asking their consent and help in the matter. On the other hand the parents felt they dare not provoke their child to wrath by their positive refusal, lest he be discouraged and beside they were yet unawares that the Lord was leading in the matter in order that He might have an occasion against the Philistines, which evidently was the case. After their reasoning failed to change the mind of their son, the parents gave over to his request and went down to Timnath, and the arrangements were made and the marriage took place. It is not important what occasioned this romance as we know not the mind of the young man. We could hardly think that it was a matter of parental or religious discipline, for up to now in the narrative, I would not want to lay one thing to the charge of this young man. He probably reasoned that he was strong and healthy, as well as righteous, and could take care of himself, and there was nothing wrong in seeing some of the world.

Had he stopped at Timnath, where he married the girl he loved, things might have fared better with him, as God was still with him.

His wedding was quite an affair: many guests were invited together with a number of young men who were to act as groomsmen for the occasion.

During the social hour Samson proposed a riddle of his own making, and offered a reward for the correct answer. The reward was to consist of thirty sheets and thirty changes of raiment -one for each of the young men.

The young men could not explain the riddle in the time allotted them, so they inveigled Samson's wife, by threatening her life and her father's by burning them and their house, if they did not get the answer for them by intriguing Samson into revealing the riddle to her, by her pretended love and tears. So she put on a passion play of endearments as only a woman

can do, and it worked. Although he had not revealed as yet the riddle to his parents, he gave way to his wife's intreaties and submitted to her the answer, and she, the same day, gave it to her people. This furnished the occasion for Samson to run amuck. He paid the rewards, but he committed murder to do it. Of course this was not hard for him to do, since he was angered now, and revenge to an angered man is sweet. One misstep, makes the next one easier to take. One sin invariably leads to another. He rushes off to a nearby city and there slays thirty men, and strips them of their garments and spoils, and returns with his booty and gives them to the thirty men in payment of his debt, and according to his promise. He leaves at once for his father's home, perhaps to think things over. While there his wife breaks relations with him and marries one of the groomsmen that served at his wedding. His wife reasoning perhaps that he was gone for good because of his bloody slaughter of the Philistines, and would fear to return, so she marries another without getting a divorce. But to her surprise Samson did return and this angered him all the more, and he burned their crops and smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter. Now when the Philistines learned who had committed this great deed, they went and burned Samson's wife and father, for revenge. The battle is now on, a nation is at arms, demanding his life.

This sent him on a trip of revenge, and on to Gaza where he finally lost the trail and where God left him.

What was the occasion here at Gaza of his downfall? He saw a woman, who was an harlot. This was the second woman that he saw, and this proved his downfall. He did too much gazing; he saw too many women. David saw just one too many, when he looked at Bathsheba taking her evening bath, which also proved his undoing. Going to Gaza was going too far, for there he met Delilah, who ruined him. This is what everyone does, who seeks excitement and gaieties in the enemy's country. When one begins to feel that his home, and wife, and job, and church, is in default 'of what he could have in other places, then look out; that person has hit the toboggan slide, and is on his way out. While Samson was physically strong, he was morally weak. It was not a strong spiritual character that delivered him, but it was his mighty faith in Jehovah that God honored. Samson had been on the down grade morally for many moons, and the sight of this second woman was one more downward pull. He was so near down, he could glide the rest of the way.

Delilah is a type of a worldly church, where freedom of thought and desires are freely indulged in, and where restraint of selfish indulgence is done away with. Samson goes in to participate in this liberality, and was soon nodding under the mighty influence of her hypnotic power. She was not interested as to whether he loved her 'or not, but to destroy his power, so she could collect the reward offered by the Philistines. Delilah is not always a lewd woman, but a dollar sign, or selfish ease, or comfort, pleasure, or personal freedom. What is it that slows us down, and cools our zeal for God? Delilah's process was very slow, but sure; little by little, here a little, there a little; finally her endearments and loving petulance worked, and he revealed the sacred secret of his heart. He said, "My strength is in my hair -- my Nazarite covenant." Delilah made several attempts before success rewarded her efforts. But at last she used her most powerful appeal. "How canst thou say that I love thee, when thy heart is not with me?"

This was too much for him; he had toyed once too often; he now casts away his vow and reveals the secret of his power, lays his head down in Delilah's lap and goes to sleep. She had stolen his heart, and he is backslidden in heart. She calls for the barber, and his locks are shorn, his power is gone and his Nazarite vow went with it. Have we kept our vow to God?

Notice, Samson felt strong through it all; he said, "I will go out as at other times." This was the snare about it, and the thing that deceived him. We may feel strong, while all the time, the things we are doing, may be chewing our harness to pieces. We may as he did, when danger comes, think to shake ourselves as at other times, to find that He is gone. We do not notice the first gray hairs that come, and the winter creeps in on us unawares.

Wherein lay the secret of Samson's strength? I would say first, that his strength lay in his early consecration, and devotion to God.

Our success and influence in Christian service is measured by or in proportion to the measure of our consecration. If we give all, we get all; if we sow sparingly, we reap sparingly. To withhold, tendeth to poverty.

Secondly, I would say, Samson's strength lay, in doing the work assigned to him. Obedience is better, than sacrifice, and to hearken, than the fat of rams. I Sam. 15:22. The fact that the name of Moses occurs 813 times in the Bible, and is recorded in 31 books of the Bible, is not an accident, but because of his trust-worthiness, meekness, and obedience to divine orders. "Make all things according to the plan" was his motto, and for that he was proclaimed meek above all men which were upon the face of the earth. Num. 12:3. So we are strong, only as we are meek, and obey the commandments of God.

Thirdly, I would say that Samson's strength lay in his implicit confidence in the great Jehovah, that He would deliver him in battle with his enemies, by using the weapons of warfare that God providentially placed in his hands. All other Bible warriors in his day had armies, but he fought and conquered alone. He had no machine-guns, or armies, or atomic bombs, but he made him one out of the jaw-bone of an ass, and slew a thousand Philistines, and then slaked his burning thirst with the water springing from the same jawbone.

That which was death to others, was life to him. We would get farther today if we did not lean so much upon our own inventions, and rely more upon the almightiness of God. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of the strongholds of Satan. II Cor. 10:4. Many, like Peter, have used the wrong sword (carnal) and have wielded it in their own defense, and to their own hurt.

Fourthly, I would say that Samson's strength lay in his willingness to die for the cause against his enemy. Listen, "Let me die with the Philistine s." Judg. 16:30. Though his vision is gone, and his liberty lost, and he is become a slave to his enemies, he begins to renew his covenant and vow by calling on the Lord. Vs. 28. "O Lord remember me, I pray Thee, and strengthen me, I pray Thee, only this once." He knew that he had lost something by his escapade. We lose something when we backslide: and while his strength came back, and his hair grew again, his eyes were out forever. Sin does frightful injury to one when he backslides. If our consecration is not in perfect tact just as at first, then we know that we have slipped.

Lastly, we cannot affect our consecration, without affecting our life.

Backsliders can be, and are forgiven, when they really repent with a godly sorrow, and are fully restored to salvation again, but they never regain the feeling of comparative innocence once enjoyed. The innocence you now enjoy will never compare with the innocence you enjoyed before you backslid. Like the unfaithful man or woman, who has been untrue to the marriage vow, you will always have that regrettable sin to look at, and think about, so far as you are concerned. But in God's mind you are forgiven and innocent as at first. For when He forgives, He forgets. David said, "My sin is ever before me." What sin? The sin of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, of course. This sin for which God told him that the sword should never depart from his house. Precious one don't ever backslide.

One would not think that one so well born, announced by an angel the same as in the case of the Saviour, one so well consecrated, and so mighty, would ever backslide, but he did: and worst of all, he did not know when it happened. Can a man lose out and not know it? Samson did, "And Delilah said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson," and he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him. But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house." How sad. Beware.

The Backslider in Heart

by Albert M. Ewing

Chapter 6

Sermon 6

HOSEA'S PROPHECY -- GOSPEL OF BACKSLIDING

We read in Hosea 11:7, "My people are bent to backsliding from me."

How out of the ordinary, is the moral condition of a believer, bent to backsliding. Backsliding, is not a mere case of vacillation between our interest in our church, and our family and friends; however, entirely too many are kept away from the house of God, by reason of friends and family. While, our family and friends may have influence upon us, that does not necessarily mean that they have control over us; for our love for God may still be supreme.

Again, backsliding is not merely having a desire to succeed in a material way. After years spent in the ministry, I have not knowingly met one that would resent a salary increase: I have known many to change, because of a more lucrative position; shall we brand them as back sliders in heart? No not necessarily so. That would be a most uncharitable thing to do. They may have spent the greater part of their ministry, on hard scrabble, and have honestly earned this consideration. It is not money: it is the love of money, that many have lusted after and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows. What little money, that I have, serves me and does just what I want it to do. I do not allow mammon to control me. The Bible says, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." And that is right: but you can love and serve God, and make your riches serve God and yourself. This is as it should be, and must be or else we backslide.

Again, backsliding is not mere vacillation between sin and holiness; which thing holiness will not permit. It is either holiness, or sin. it cannot be both. If we want sin, we do not want holiness. If we want holiness we do not want sin. You see there is a straight line of demarcation between the two conditions. Backsliding, then is a steady leaning, with an unbroken bent toward becoming unspiritual.

The first mark that we notice of this condition is neglect of public and private prayer. The neglect of either will result in sufficient evidence to convict that soul of the charge "Thou hast left, thy first love" Rev. 2:4.

A second mark of this condition is, "neglect of daily Bible reading." Reading only from the conviction of duty, is a very bad sign. Whoever walks closely with God takes special delight in every kind of service. Belated activity, reluctance and indifference in our effort to do good, are very bad signs. The deeper we delve into the Bible, the more specifically and clearly is seen the teaching with regard to inbred sin. The reference in Ho sea, 11:7 is, "My people are bent to backsliding from me." Notice it says "bent to," not "on" backsliding. The little word "On" that we are accustomed to use, would hardly be intensive enough. This charge brought against Israel at this time, is the blackest article in the whole indictment. "My people are bent to backsliding from me." Every word of this statement is provocative and calculated to awaken them, and save them from final apostasy. He says "My people" and they were His, by profession, but not in spirit and practice. They were "bent to," crooked, warped and twisted: they were resolute in their sinning. Their hearts were fully set in them to do evil. Their trouble was in their own hearts; while they offered sacrifice, and kept the feasts, their sacrifices stank in the nostrils of God, as coming from sinful, and impure lives. The bloods of bulls and goats and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, can never take away sin or make the comer there unto perfect These all had a ceremonial purifying of the flesh, but the Lamb of God came and offered Himself through the eternal Spirit to the Father without spot

to purge our conscience from dead works, to serve the living God. Now the "bent" is taken out, when we are sanctified, with all desire of the world, making the people of God the same in- every country of the world. Regeneration is the same the world over. 'The divine stamp is the same. His children do not eat devils' food.

"My people," this establishes the fact of relationship; but he said "they were astray": "bent to backsliding from me." This "bent" has been in the human family, since the fall. Listen in on prayer, both public and private. people unconsciously acknowledge it everywhere, in pulpit and pew and in song." "Prone to wander Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love."

This bent reveals that something is wrong with the heart. Man's trouble is heart trouble, when he is prone to leave God. Suppose a man would say, he is prone to leave his wife, you would say, that he does not love her, that there is unfaithfulness, disloyalty, and lack of real affection in him. You would say that he should confess to his wife this lack of love, and acknowledge his sin and have love restored to his heart. How about the professor that has these feelings? To confess a proneness to quit, and give up, is more than a weakness, or human trifling. It is deeper than that. It is a plague, a leprosy, and needs prompt attention. This bent is the crook of sin. It is in the nature, and cannot be made straight by merely following a rule of ethics or code of laws. It takes the blood of the Son of God.

Proneness is sin. It is not a liability to. sin. The liability to sin is something inseparably connected to the probationary state: As a free spirit working in salvation. We need not pray for freedom from the liability to sin: We would take away our moral freedom, and make a machine out of ourselves.

There is a difference between the feeling, that we are liable to sin, and the feeling of a proneness to wander from Jesus. Jesus did not come to destroy the liability or the possibility of sinning, but to take our "bent," and "proneness" to wander from Him into by and forbidden paths, which is the tendency of the unsanctified heart. Liability to sin and the possibility of sinning, come from our moral freedom, and adhere to the Spirit of God. Proneness belongs to the fallen nature. "Take away our bent to sinning, Alpha and Omega be." It is not that one really wants to backslide but just cannot keep going in the right direction. Walking a straight line, is more than child's play; One must have good equilibrium. We promise to do more, and do less. Why? Because of the heart condition. Jesus said: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; all these evil things come from within, and defile the man." Now we know that if we have any of these, we know we have them all, and our heart has not been cleansed from inbred sin. It looks like a dark picture, does it not?

There is a difference between a new heart, and a pure heart. Both James and John had new hearts, but they wanted to call fire down upon folk that were doing the same kind of work they were doing, viz casting out devils. This was before Pentecost and before their hearts were cleansed. Jesus said to Peter "Get thee behind me Satan, thou art an offense unto me." Matt. 16:23.

Why did he call Peter, Satan? Because Peter at that moment was talking for Satan, by attempting to persuade Jesus not to suffer on the cross. When he suggested that to Jesus, he was in opposition to the very thing or cause for which Jesus came. "For this cause came I into the world," said the Saviour.

Whatever stood in the way of His going to the cross to suffer, even though it be sympathy, He would consider it as coming from Satan's subtle powers.

Satan often enters into men's hearts, like Judas, but he probably was merely influencing Peter from without. If he had been in Peter, Jesus would have said, "Come out of him"; but because it was only some of Satan's works showing up in an unsanctified heart, Jesus said, "Get thee behind me Satan, thou art an offense unto me." He could not deceive Jesus, He knew his voice, and language, and let him know, that he knew who was doing the talking.

Peter thought perhaps, that he was pulling these words right out of his own mind: but Jesus knew that he was pulling them right out of the mouth of the devil. We should keep our spiritual senses well exercised, so that we will know, not only who is talking, but what they are saying. Many a person has been started on his way to backsliding, by encouraging self pity at the suggestion of some supposed friends. Satan speaks some times through a saint, as well as a serpent: sometimes God speaks through a dumb ass, as well as a wilderness minister. John cried, "I am a voice crying in the wilderness." Balaam, though a prophet, did not know it was God speaking from the mouth of a dumb ass, until he saw the angel with drawn sword.

Peter was sponsoring Satan's cause unknowingly, by his advice to the Saviour, who does not need our counsel. He thought perhaps, that he was talking wisely; when he said to Jesus, how unnecessary it was for him to suffer. His sympathy proved to be an offense. Much like advice is given today, in many cases, to those who are seeking at an altar of prayer to be saved. They try to spare the victim, and by doing so they spoil the victory. The sacrifice must suffer and die, and any attempt upon the part of any one to ameliorate or appease the suffering or cheapen the price, by saying, Suffering, and agony are not necessary, is lending their voice to the chicanery of Satan. The Bible says, "Agonize to enter in at the straight gate." This is the way, and there is no other way, that leads to life. The easy way, the way that seemeth right, is the backslider in heart's own way. He wants religion in his own way, and at his own price; no suffering, and at his own convenience. It must be inexpensive and require very little effort, time and labor. The backslider in heart, will go the limit for personal gain, and selfish interests.

What is the remedy? Let the Bible speak, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin" I John 1:7. It is the power of the blood, that saves and sanctifies. Sins must be confessed, and forgiven, and the sin Mark catalogues for us (7:21) must be cleansed out, and the heart be purified, Acts 15:8, 9. This is the cure. There is no opposition to positive filling, or enduing, or empowering with the Spirit: but when you mention the word eradication, look out: this brings war a plenty. But this, is the plan crucify and kill the old man.

It was St. Paul who said that the time would come when men would not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts should heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.

"And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." 2 Tim. 4:3, 4. Of course this does not mean that all will do this, but that there will be a general trend toward universal backsliding in the great falling away period, that the Apostle writes about in 2 Thess. 2:3.

This crowd that he mentions as turning from the truth, by no means quits professing religion: Oh no, they just change preachers. You know that Israel wanted a king, so they could be like other folk; and God let them have one, but sent leanness to their souls. This is our trouble today; the old-fashioned gospel preacher is being relegated to hard scramble circuits and we are reaching out for the more modernized, popularized, streamlined story-teller, that loves to be bragged on, and who is known by his title rather than his sainthood.

The old-fashioned gospel never has been popular with all the people, and he who would preach it without fear or favor, and refusing to seek the applause of men, oftentimes is called upon to undergo some severe hardships.

It was not a rare thing in the early days of the holiness movement to see some of its pastors in their pulpits, with trousers patched on the knees and holes in the toes of their shoes.

What a change has come about since the church has become rich and increased in goods, and hath need of nothing. The pastors no longer wear shoes with their toes sticking out; but as much, could not be said of all their wives, and women of their congregations.

Where his modesty embarrassed him when his trouser knees were threadbare and being fearful lest his knees would be exposed to his congregation, now no small percent, not only of the younger set, but mother and grandmothers have their

dresses modeled upward above the line of moral equation until the full knee is exposed with every sitting, with little or no embarrassment. .

They consider the minister narrow that even refers to this immodesty in his message. I feel sorry in my heart for any people so far gone from their first love and original righteousness, that they cannot eat strong meat, and have a preacher condoning this condition, by preaching an accommodating gospel that is emasculated by reason of containing no food for their poor starved half backslidden souls.

For anyone to approach the appearance of immodesty, reveals the earmark of backsliding, if not the full content of the text "The backslider in heart." When the preacher becomes popular, and bargains for the praise of men, his church becomes unspiritual and worldly.

Immodesty is the trade-mark of backslidden professors of religion, and has no place in the church of Jesus Christ. Listen to the scriptural injunction, "That women should dress in modest apparel, with shame facedness and sobriety." I Tim. 2.9. To be immodest, is to be unspiritual regardless of sex.

I am reminded by the text, that this is not a desultory discussion on different subjects, such as "Dress and Immodesty," but where indulged in both are real contributions to the cause of backsliding.

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates." II Cor. 13:5. Notice the injunction, "Examine yourselves."

It is not commendable or favorable evidence, for anyone to have misgivings about a rigid personal checkup, under a close scrutiny, by the word of God. Such misgivings reveal that we are of a doubtful mind with reference to our own personal standing in grace.

The Good Book declares, that "He who doubteth, is damned, or condemned." Rom. 14:23. "For whatsoever is not of faith is sin"- same verse. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Rom. 8:1. Sin brings condemnation, and condemnation takes away our liberty and freedom. Now when this condition obtains, it could be truly said, as one of old spake, "There's but a step between me and death." I Sam. 20:3.

Space will not permit me to include all the sayings of the different writers listed in the Bible referring to the backslider, such as, "sliding back," "going back," "turning away," "leaving first love," "falling from your own steadfastness," and may others; each writer using different ways of expressing himself on the subject.

Four books of the Bible seem especially addressed to backsliders; The "Canticles," by Solomon. Study this book, especially chapters 3 to 5.

Then, we turn to the plaintive cry of the "weeping prophet," Jeremiah. The word, "backslider" occurs more frequently in this book, than in all other books of the Bible. Then we come to the prophet, Hosea with his prophecy. sometimes called "the gospel of backsliders." The arguments used by this prophet are the very same arguments as used by the prophet Jeremiah.

We turn to the New Testament, and listen to St. Paul's address to the Galatians. This church was noted for its fickleness: and such expressions, as, "soon removed," 1:6 "bewitched," "driven back" (Marg). vs. 5:7. Note also the letter to the Hebrews is especially an address against apostasy.

It is remarkable how many saints who are spoken of in the Scriptures as being "perfect," fell into grievous sin; Noah,

David, Asa, Hezekiah; how many proved to be weak in their strongest point. Notice Abraham, the man of faith, in unbelief; Moses, preeminent for meekness, overcome by anger; Job, the pattern of patience, becomes impatient; Solomon, renowned for his wisdom, turned to folly; John, the Apostle of gentleness and love, proposed revenge; Peter, the boldest in the hour of danger, turned coward at last.

Now what can I say more, time and space would fail me to speak all that could be said, as direct Bible statements on this subject, but suffer me to refresh your minds in closing this chapter, by restating the text, "The backslider in heart, shall be filled with his own ways" Prov. 14:14.

God is calling the prodigal, come without delay,

Hear, O hear Him calling, calling now for thee;

Though you've wandered so far from His presence, come today, Hear, His loving voice calling still.

The Backslider in Heart

by Albert M. Ewing

Chapter 7

Sermon 7

WHY DO PEOPLE BACKSLIDE?

We understand that the word "Backslider" is an Old Testament word, and does not occur once in the New, but this does not suggest to us that backsliding ceased with the Old Testament dispensation. Terms change, but themes remain. Jesus said, "No man having put his hand to the plow, and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God." He is talking on the same theme ("backsliding") but is using a different term; yet the man that would do this would be doing the same thing as Lot's wife, who on leaving Sodom, looked back, and turned to a pillar of salt. Lk. 9:57-62.

Why do people backslide? Because, First, They do not obey God, and second, If and when they do, it is with reluctance. In the narrative given by the Master in the above scripture, where one said, "I will follow Thee whither soever Thou goest: But suffer me first to go and bury my father." This was a very reasonable request, if his father had been dead at that time; and requiring only a few days; but since his request, to remain at home until after the death of his father, which might be a matter of years, all because of a prevailing custom; was not considered strict obedience, by Him who said, "He that loveth father and mother more than me, is not worthy of me Mt. 10:37 and "Let the dead bury the dead" Lk. 9:57. Then another who thought his excuse more worthy than the former, said, "I will follow the Lord; but first suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house." I do not know who they were, he does not say, and it matters not. Which is of more importance, to quickly obey the call of God or to sob over our kin folk?

This is exactly what Lot's wife did, and became a monumental backslider to all generations to follow. We are to follow in His steps, I Pet. 2:21, not Mrs. Lot's steps. When we start following to Lamb, we will quit following the goat.

We do not mean to say that the term, "backslider in heart" is synonymous with final apostasy. While backsliding is apostasy, it is by no means a state or condition, from which we cannot or may not recover; but a state in which we are likely to remain. It is so dangerous to backslide: the hell pull is so strong, chances and circumstances, being unfavorable, may combine with many other things, and defeat our every attempt to return to God.

The Eternal Security gospel, "Once in grace, always in grace," "Will never be lost," "No backsliders in hell" and such like, just won't hold water: it is just one of Satan's nostrums to put the victim to sleep, and populate hell. I am sure there are plenty of morally good people that believe this doctrine, but there is a difference, between being morally good, and being spiritually worthy.

There are literally millions whose only hope of righteousness, is a mere moral assent, a nod of the head, a hand shake in confirmation of their acceptance of a compromise and emasculated gospel that gives no witness of the Spirit, or assurance of eternal life.

The class that we refer to as "the backslider in heart" is a different folk. They represent a group of people fallen from grace, and who do not or will not admit it, but as Jesus said, "make long prayers for a pretense, and love to stand in the market places praying, to be seen of men." One must be in possession of a thing, before he can leave it or lose it. One must be saved before he can backslide from it. Just when are we competent to say, when one is backslidden if we are

correct in saying that the process of backsliding, is involuntary, gradually, unconsciously and imperceptibly in many cases? The Poet wrote,

There is a time, we know not when,
A place we know not where;
That marks the destiny of men,
For glory or despair.

There is a line by us unseen,
That crosses every path;
The hidden boundary between
God's patience, and His wrath.

To pass that limit is to die,
To die as if by stealth;
It does not quench the beaming eye,
Or pale the glow of health.

The conscience may be still at ease,
The spirit light and gay;
That which is pleasing still may please
And care be thrust away.

It is a sad moment, for souls to let carelessness steal into their life and rob them of their deep spirituality. Thousands living are burning incense to a musty, dusty, rusty, lusty, moldy experience. They have become infatuated with their own profession and have built up quite a market for their surplus of non-essentials; and being the good salesmen that they are, have succeeded in selling themselves at a moderately high market. But remember, that pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Not a small percentage of the average church enrollment could, with reasonable certainty, be included in this group denominated "The backslider in heart." I realize that the elucidation of our subject is rather difficult; in view of the many religious opinions, and standards of living as outlined by the various religious bodies, and even among our modern holiness movements.

I have heard ministers declare, "That if your experience was ever better than it is now, you are backslidden, and need to repent." Others would say, "Pay no attention to your feelings, as religion is not feeling, but faith." Well, I agree that it is faith, but it is feeling too. If we have salvation, we will have feeling: and to continue indefinitely without any feeling of God's divine presence is some evidence at least of being backslidden in heart.

Some preachers will kill the old fox with all the little ones, and some will kill only the big old fox and let all the little ones live. Solomon wrote, "It is the little foxes, that spoil the vines. Not many persons backslide because they killed someone. They may have killed some one because they were backslidden. Few people ever backslide because they commit big sins. It is because they commit little deeds that they have been told by holiness professors, there was no harm in doing; and things that they had seen their pastor doing.

Is there any sure rule by which we may reckon the true spiritual condition of the group under consideration? Well what we have just been saying, is not looking up a blind alley. It is at least a clue. Jesus said, "By their fruit ye shall know them." But he said fruit, not actions. It takes a season to produce fruit; it takes only a moment, for an act. If I see a person do a thing that possibly he never did before, and may never do again, that is not sufficient evidence for condemnation, unless it was willful, and with the full knowledge that it was sin. But when that act is repeatedly indulged in, contrary to

plain Bible teaching, then it is no more judging, but knowledge. We know that whosoever is born of God does not commit sin. I Jno. 3:9. So if one is continually committing sin, he is doing so because he is backslidden in heart. He is not only doing it willingly, but willfully. The objection to this conclusion is, that so long as one does not acknowledge that he is backslidden, we have no right to brand him as such. Well the Good Book declares that, "Whosoever commits sin, is of the devil" I Jno. 3:8. We need not judge, we have one that judgeth, even the Word Jno. 8:50: If we should discover the things that others are backsliding over, we should profit by it and turn away from them. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." I Jno. 2:15, 16. This analytical interpretation of the writer is both emphatic and final.

The sensual indulgence of fleshly passions and appetites of pur body and the carnal lusting of the eyes of adultery, feasting themselves on the shameful immodesty of womanhood, the pride of life, blatingly, brazenly, boldly burning incense to the fashion god of this world, at the expense of a well guarded Christian influence and strong character, and common decency: can only be, the fruit of one who is backslidden in heart. The above Scripture is a fearful arraignment of the sins of the backslider and leaves no room for doubt as to their source, "They are not of the Father, but of the world."

Backsliding has its beginning in the heart. This is its seat and source. It may be ascribed to various causes. If the heart is only regenerated, and not sanctified the enemy has a greater advantage through the works of the flesh; but if sanctified, Satan must enter through temptation. We are admonished, not to yield to temptation, for yielding is sin; and then he that is tempted is drawn away with his own lusts. Sanctification would deliver us from this source of danger, viz, "The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." "Pride." One of the seven things that God hates, and one of the things the world loves is, regular old Lucifer pride; with its knee bob skirts, armholes dresses, ventilated necks, and bobby socks or no socks at all, and shoes with their toes out and no heels. I can remember when ladies just would not appear in public with -- their toes out, and with bare limbs, and now it is common stuff, even in holiness churches. Well they say, we can just get used to any thing, yes even just old-fashioned sin, if it is the style. Some one has said, "It is not pride, when one wants to look nice." Yes; it is pride only, that make one want to follow the fashions no matter how ridiculous they are.

It seems some folk would rather be out of the world (dead) than to be out of style. I would rather be in the will of God, than to be either. I have often thought how much alike are the style feinds to the window models: They just wear whatever the stylists suggest, and think they are properly dressed. But remember God and the stylist, do not agree on this subject of the dress question. The physician says, "Watch your weight, and reduce." The stylist says, Watch your appearance, and reduce. Style does not require so much clothes, your body needs more air and sunshine. Not all, thank God, but all too many have listened to the voice of Hollywood and Paris, have reduced to the irreducible minimum, looking back like Mrs. Lot; Yes, not only looking back, but going back to their Big Sister Eve to copy her style, after she had backslidden, and who could satisfy herself with a few fig leaves pinned together to make a girdle.

This pinup dress of mother Eve was her own designing after she had backslidden and would compare favorably with the pinup style of today. When God got to her, He quickly slew an animal and taking its skin hurriedly wrapped Mother Eve up in it, and said to her, "Who told thee that thou wast naked?" The man was the first to speak, and takes no responsibility; that is what the man of today would say. "If I would say anything about how my wife dressers, she would leave me." The poor parson says, "If I would preach against it, they would just leave the church, and we just cannot afford that." Mother Eve must square herself, for she was very much aware that her style did not meet God's approval: So she laid the whole matter at old Satan's door. I would to God our women would follow Mother Eve's last example as obediently as they have her first; and say, Yes, I know that my skirts. and sleeves, and necks, expose too much of my person, and although I am past the meridian of life, and no longer a young girl, I am wearing the same style hat and having the same hairdo that my young daughter wears. This is the fruit of the backslider in heart, and being filled with your ways. God said, women should dress in modest apparel, which becometh women professing godliness. I Tim. 2:9. What does modest mean; let's see. Read Rev. 3:18. "I counsel thee to buy of me white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear." You say, that it is all you have, and you have no money to buy

more. Well, Jesus told the young rich ruler to sell what he had. Why don't you do that, and. get some clothes that God can approve of. Well you say that it was old Satan that got me in this mess. Yes, no doubt he had something to do with it; but I would suggest to you to examine your proud heart, and my guess is, that. you will find that it is backslidden and full of old carnal pride; and that you have been warming yourself with painted fire, and that the heart is a cage of unclean birds.

But there is another group who are clean, but empty. There is a crowd that would have none of this stuff, and, like Brother Peter with his two edge sword, cut the ears off that other liberal crowd, every opportunity they get. They are narrow, harsh, and critical: full of debate and argument; but at the same time so strict and clean of any worldliness and so much like the real, outwardly, that like the wheat and the tares, it takes time. Jesus said, "Let them both grow together until the harvest," and I will send my angels to gather them and separate them. They wanted to go out and pull them up, but Jesus said you will pull up good wheat. A very close imitation, when it requires the services of angels to do the job. The five foolish virgins live right with the wise in the same church, with a depleted experience and not ready for the coming of the Lord. And if the wise virgins knew it, there is no mention made of it. It took the cry of the crier at midnight announcing the coming of the bridegroom to awaken them.

The warning of the Bible is, Watch your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. Prov. 4:23. Again, "He that thinketh that he standeth, take heed lest he fall." I Cor. 10:12. Also II Pet. 1:10.

Wherefore the rather brethren, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things (spoken verses 1 to 9) ye shall never fall. Finis.

The Backslider in Heart

by Albert M. Ewing

Chapter 8

Sermon 8

JONAH, THE RUN-AWAY PROPHET

In closing this little volume I cannot refrain from lifting up one more Bible character representing the backslider in heart and that character is Jonah the Prophet.

Jonah was an Israelite of the tribe Zebulun and lived in Gath-hepher a town in lower Galilee in Zebulun near Nazareth where Jesus was born.

His prophetic period was probably sometime during the reign of King Jeroboam B.C. 825-784. His commission as prophet was given to denounce the sins of Nineveh the capital of ancient Assyria, a great and wicked city.

Jonah of course being an Israelite would naturally shun having any dealings with the heathen Gentiles. He evidently had a very deep prejudicial hatred against them.

The test of Christian experience is not in doing what we love to do, but doing what we do not like to do, if God commands it.

The book of Jonah is one of confession, not one of apology. Jonah was strong in his self-condemnation as you will notice. The book exalts God but rebukes and punishes Jonah. He acknowledges fully his wrong doing and when we read the story we think of Peter who went out and wept bitterly.

The book is dealing with a real live story, for Jonah was a real live person.

It is not an allegory, or fish story, as many would have you believe, for the narrative declares that the word of the Lord came unto Jonah commissioning him to go to Nineveh to warn that wicked city; and he disobeyed and went to Joppa to board a ship for Tarshish instead. He had no call to go to Tarshish, the land of minerals and monkeys but he was not looking for, or wanting a call; he already had one that he did not want, and one that he was not going to willingly accept. Disobedience is sin, and sin separates us from God. There is no doubt but at this point of decision, to not obey God's call to go to Nineveh, Jonah broke with God, and became a backslider.

Why does Jonah write the book as confession on himself? Well a true and genuine confession and repentance withholds no truth even against oneself; it overlooks no sin or weakness that would hinder a full restoration.

Jonah in his backsliding was willful and deliberate. "He pays the fare and goes down." Had he gone where God sent him he could have had free transportation and all expenses met, as God always provides for His own. But he refused to ride on a free ticket, or travel on a pass: this being true, he must pay his own fare. Obedience is fruitful and economical, but disobedience is expensive and wasteful. You know sometimes we make little things straight, and leave a lot of big things crooked; making up in pedantry what we lack in principle. Beautiful character, of necessity, must needs be a holy character. "Out of Zion the perfection of beauty, God hath shined." Psalm 50.2.

It is always contrary to good practice to use scripture out of its setting, even in an accommodating sense unless and only when it is made clear that such is being done. It shall be the purpose of the writer to deal with the facts as recorded in the narrative.

Jonah was to undertake a mission of a very remarkable kind, and his call was of a very unusual character. He, being an Hebrew, was ordered to go to a great heathen city to testify against it, threatening it with destruction.

God evidently had a design in such a mission, but He probably did not reveal His purpose to Jonah; but it was very likely, to provoke Israel to jealousy by showing them a great heathen nation, from a king on his throne to a beggar lying prone and prostrate and penitent in the dust, under a single warning, from a single prophet. Such a sight would be a rebuke to Israel that had been favored with so many prophets, and had received such earnest warnings. Should the tribes of Israel continue to reject the faithful warnings of their prophets, their final destruction could not long be delayed. Here is a good spiritual lesson for the Christian of today.

You will remember that the narrative relates that on the prophet's way down to Tarshish, a terrible storm broke upon the ship, and Jonah went down into the sides of the ship, looking for relief and safety. But God knew his movements and the storm continued. Going into hiding did not help matters, but they rather grew worse. His relief was only temporary, and he would soon be called to give an account of himself to the ship's crew. When they had done everything that experienced seamen knew to do and had failed, they unloaded the ship's cargo -- tea, coffee, tin ware, the pork barrel. All this had failed to quiet the storm that was raging, and one more thing was left to do. That was to get all on board the ship together and take a straw vote to find out who the guilty culprit was that was causing all the trouble. They dispatched a committee to wait upon Jonah who was fast asleep down in the steerage, and to bring him forthwith to the upper deck for counsel. They cried unto Jonah, "Awake, call upon your God" but Jonah had quit praying; he had broken with God, and was a backslidden prophet. He said he was an Hebrew when questioned: "Where did you come from? What is your occupation? Whence comest thou? What is thy country? and of what people are thou?" "I am just a Hebrew."

He did not say that he was a prophet, but he did acknowledge that he feared God that made the sea and the land. Come upstairs they said, and we will cast lots to see who is, or what is, the cause of our trouble. Jonah lost as all backsliders do. This was the deciding voice to Jonah; he needed nothing more. He said to the men of the ship, Cast me overboard into the sea, and your trouble will be over, the storm will cease.

One Achan in the camp, and one Jonah aboard the ship contrary to God's plan, will bring a storm and defeat every time. "Be sure your sin will find you out" Num. 32.23.

Jonah had a horrible experience in coming through by the Whale Express Route, and his schedule running a little behind, by reason of the way he chose, but we say, "It is better late than never." But I would say that, "It is better never late."

Jonah's case was not final apostasy: He could repent, which thing he did before it was too late. Although swallowed by a whale, which without a miracle from God would have spelled his doom, he cried to God, Who will save to the uttermost all them that call upon His name. Jonah called from the belly of the whale, "Have mercy, Lord, and I will obey the call;" and God ordered the whale to take him to land. This little didactic epic will give the story in verse form.

Among the prophets of old, there's a story often told,
Of a disobedient man whom God had sent;
A message to unfold, in a meeting he would hold,
In Nineveh who God called to repent.

The Lord said "Arise and go," but Jonah said "Oh no,"
To run away his mind was fully bent;

Jonah did not think it so, but the story we all know,
Is that Jonah finds at last he must repent.

Down to Joppa he makes haste, for there is no time to waste.
And he finds the ship all ready now to go;
Poor old Jonah thinks he's safe, when he finds that secret place,
Be sure your sin will find you out, you know.

There is no time to sleep, while the storm is on the deep,
Arise and quickly call upon your Lord;
Thus the crowd to him did speak, Jonah feels a little weak,
Please excuse me, sir, just throw me overboard.

Then, they their lots did cast, midst the crashing of the masts, And poor Jonah lost as all backsliders do; But he confessed
at last, and overboard was cast, He said good-bye to Tarshish, worldly crew.

His sin did find him out, and he took another route,
A route that made him willing to repent;
It was no time to shout, but a problem to get out
Before the Landlord came to get the rent.

I had better took the trail, than the stomach of a whale,
The air is foul, the walls are rough and plain;
His heart begins to fail, so he starts to weep and wail,
Let me out, he said, I'll take another train.

He decided to explain, gets permission then to change,
And get a place in Nineveh to park;
While he suffers inward pain, all his plans must rearrange,
For anything beats living in a shark.

My landlord got sick of me, said you can't digested be,
And I'll take you back to land, this very day;
I'll not only set you free, but will collect no fee,
I'll gladly all your boat expenses pay.

By and by he reaches land, then takes Jonah by the hand,
And leads him through the straight and narrow way;
To go forth at God's command, in Nineveh take his stand,
All the precepts of the message to obey.

When holiness evangelism begins to thunder against carnality and backsliding, the modern Jonahs of today begin to hide out, take back seats, and become irregular in attendance at the means of grace. I have seen the front seats empty up in revivals, and folk move back, that served in front trenches before the meeting began. As in Jonah's case, this crowd will ride the top deck the first few days of the meeting until things begin to warm up, then they begin to cool down and move back to a more comfortable position.

As is generally: the first firing goes a little wild of the mark; until the messenger gets his bearings. Until then, only a few feathers are shot off: and this was all too close for lasting comfort, and carnal prudence would then suggest, "Find safety in retreat" as "self-preservation is the first law of life" and Jonah and Jonah's kind move to what they think is a safe

distance from the trouble, and now take a sleep in carnal security. But the fury of the storm increases; the evangelist thunders out in no uncertain sound, "There is too much excess baggage aboard this vessel," and the tried and true sailors all agree and say, "Amen, preach it, brother; that's good preaching." And they began on the externals. This is not a bad place to begin, but a poor place to stop. They threw overboard the wares, and this could mean a lot of things. There is the coffee, they said we won't need that, and, of course, overboard it went. But the whale let it go by, as he did not drink coffee; even if it is not a sin, the whale knew that there was no food in it.

Then there was the tobacco, throw it overboard, It is not fit for anyone to use anyway; and the whale did not use it either, so he let it go by. The pork barrel went over board and, as good as it may be, the great fish let it go by. He was not looking for a substitute, he was looking for a real backsliding prophet and was to refuse any offer of compromise. The trouble was not with the ballast of the ship, and our trouble today cannot be remedied by mere reformation only; it is deeper than that. They had to go down after Jonah and bring him up to a red-hot prayer meeting before the final act of disposing of him. Chapter 1.12. A lot of times we think the externals hinder the meet mg, and there is no doubt but they make a bad show in the flesh, and they should be cried out against and disciplined in our churches, and we have license to do so, as Isaiah writes, "Cry aloud and spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet and show my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins." Isaiah 58.1. In our Jonah case the trouble was not external but internal; it was in the hold of the vessel. A backslidden prophet, backslidden in heart, was down there; and when full confession was made that he was the sole source of the trouble, and a request that he be thrown overboard, and the transaction was fully committed, the trouble was over.

It is remarkable the trouble one backslider can cause , Achan defeated Israel at Ai and caused the loss of many men. Lot's wife not only lost her own soul, but ruined her whole family. Now here is Jonah going to Tarshish, a great trading center; his purpose evidently was to traffic in metals and monkeys; but God would have no monkey business from His prophets, so He quickly intercepts his plans by sending a strong wind that threatened his ship with destruction. The bad man never suffers alone: others suffer with him. They cast forth their wares; here is loss of property, trying to save a bad man. Oftentimes social influence is lost by our complicity with backsliders in their evils.

He said, "I fear God." This could not be reverential fear, as this fear renders obedience. It must have been a fear with misgivings in it; this is implied in chapter 4.2, when he said, "O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled." It seems that Jonah had told the Lord his reason for running away. He said I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and merciful, and if I should go to Nineveh and speak to them the words, that Thou gavest me to say, that they would repent in sackcloth and ashes, and that You would repent of the evil You had thought to bring upon them, and forgive them, and I just could not have my prophecies to fail, so I started to leave the country.

Now that is exactly what happened (see) chapt. 3:10. "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and He did it not."

"But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry." Ch. 4:1. This seems to be evidence sufficient to convict him as a backslider; but there is more that can be added. Why was he angry? All because his prophecy had not been fulfilled. Notwithstanding, God had blessed his message, so that a whole city had repented, and He had forgiven them and saved them, and given Jonah, one of the Bible's greatest recorded revivals. Enough to have made any Christian rejoice. But Jonah was not in a rejoicing mood. He was angry instead. The Lord said unto him so gently, "Doest thou well to be angry?" 4:4.

In other words, "Do you think this is the right spirit to be angry, because I have had mercy on this poor sinful people" and Jonah went out and made him a booth and sat down under the shadow thereof, that he might see what would become of the city. He was fearful, he was angry, and he was a pouter.

Yes, when you can say that one is guilty of this trinity of evils, you can further say, that they are backslidden in heart, and the old man is still on board. The lopping off of externals is not the remedy for this disease. You can throw overboard

your tin ware, (cheap jewelry) coffee pot, tea pot, pork barrel, and what not, and nothing will happen; but like the case of the woman in the Bible, who spent all her earnings on the doctor and was nothing better, but rather grew worse; so will it be when attention is given to nothing more than externals. To tell God, "I will give this or that," unless it is all sin, is nothing more than an offer of bribery. People have tried to starve this condition out, but of course they failed; they have tried to smother it with a piece of bacon, and drown it with a cup of coffee, but it just would not work. It takes repentance with a godly sorrow to get back.

Jonah was fearful that God would not do what he had promised. The Good Book declares, "That the fearful and unbelieving, shall have their part in the lake of fire." Rev. 21:8. Also, "He that feareth, is not made perfect in love" I Jno. 4:18.

And priest, prophet or preacher, that feareth to give God's message because of any misgivings he has about the faithfulness of God, and fear of the people, is headed for the rocks, and will more than likely take his people with him.

What a tragedy that Jonah the prophet is not classed among the heroes of faith, but is only referred to when you want to talk about a backslidden prophet running from God. One of the most regrettable things to follow any minister's life, is to have to say, that he was possessed of misgivings concerning the faithfulness of God: when God would say to him, "Cry aloud, and spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Isa. 58:1 "I have never seen one that would admit his misgivings, but you can look at their work and observe it, when you can see sin, real sin, walk in at the front door without knocking. He fears to do what God commands lest he hurt someone's feelings. He will say, "I am against sin in the church, and I offer my protest." Yes, so did Pilate protest the crucifixion of Christ. He had power to protest, but he lacked power to resist. It is one thing to have power to protest, against sin; it is quite another thing to have the courage and power to resist sin, and say that it cannot come.

O Preacher! Preach the Word faithfully, resist sin with all the power of your being, and make Peter's admonition, the agenda of your life, by giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.