

THE BIBLE VIEW

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Keep From Backsliding – *again!*

Bill Brinkworth

If there is a point at which a Christian can say “I used to do” some spiritual feat that they are not doing any longer, chances are they are backslidden. They are “slidden” down or away from the spiritual height they were once at. Some of the common “I used to do’s” include: I used to attend church, or read my Bible, or have a prayer life, or go on visitation, or teach a Sunday school class, or fast, or have a closer relationship with the Lord than I do now, or ... and on and on the list can go. Everyone, if they are honest, has been in a backslidden condition more than once in his life.

Sometimes, not only can an individual be farther away from God than they were in the past, but also a nation or people can. Such was the case with the people of Israel, as can be read in the book of Nehemiah.

The main center of Israel’s worship, Jerusalem, was deserted, and in disarray in Nehemiah’s day. No longer did its temple host sacrifices and worshipping of God. The temple was destroyed, as were the city’s walls and gates. Streets were cluttered with debris. No longer was the city needed for worship, because the people were backslidden away from their Creator.

God raised up a man, Nehemiah, who had the burden and fortitude to rebuild the center for worship. It was not easy rebuilding the city. Individuals opposed him. Government opposed him. Not only was the building difficult, but it was a dangerous undertaking.

As hopeless as the situation first appeared, there were others that quickly joined him in the battle to return the city back to God. The people came out and joined him in the reconstruction. As enemies increased, the rebuilding became more difficult. There were even times when they built with one arm and wielded a weapon with the other to protect themselves. The task did get completed. The place for worship was repaired and ready to be used.

As in any “backslidden” condition, it is hard to return to where one once was. Reconstruction can also be more difficult than the original “construction” in an individual’s life. When a people get it in their heart to return to where they once were with God, it is not easy to do; as Nehemiah could surely agree with. The only way out of the backslidden condition is to do hard work, as did Nehemiah and the other Israelites.

After one has returned to the level he had once been at, there is still danger of backsliding again. Nehemiah knew this and after the city was rebuilt, he took several steps to make it as hard as possible for the same disarray to happen in his people’s lives and their worship.

There is no way out of a backslidden condition without first doing the hard work to reconstruct

what is broken in your life. After the sin is stopped and avoided, and all attempt is made to do what you used to do, the battle is not over. There must be certain things done so you do not get back to where you previously had been. We can learn some preventative measures from returning to a backslidden condition by following what Nehemiah had his people do after they got the city back to what it was supposed to be. These measures included:

- He returned to proper worship. His case was different than ours would be today, as his time was still under the law, but he made sure that all who served in the temple were qualified by their lineage to be in the priesthood. He made sure the right spiritual leaders were in service.

For us to return from a backslidden condition we have to make sure we worship in a good, Bible-following church. So many get far from God, and when they want to return or get closer they pick the same worship (or lack thereof) that got them in a far-from God position in the first place. The same spiritually-wrong leaders lead them in the same wrong direction. In returning, make sure that your worship, or place where you are attending, has Godly guidance. So many have wanted to turn back to God, but the liberal, watered-down preaching they heard never included enough of the Word of God to warn them from returning to their lowly state or to get them out of their backslidden condition.

- We have to make changes. Nehemiah's charges had to clean out their sin and get back to obedience to God.

No one can have two masters. We cannot serve ourselves and God. It must only be God that we serve; or we will end up far from Him, again doing whatever feels good, tastes good, or whatever we desire. It is the same selfish decisions that got us in the spiritually low condition before, that will get us there again!

- One of the most important steps Nehemiah made to protect his people from returning to where they spiritually were was to include scripture in their lives. Today, reading the Word of God is one of the most important measures one can take to prevent spiritual decline. How can one know the will of God, if he does not read and obey His Word?

The only source God has left behind for us to know His will and way is the preserved Word of God. It has been kept for thousands of years, so we would always have access to what God desires of us. The Word of God cannot be replaced by opinions, Christian radio and television or any other media; although these can be a spiritually positive influence. God's will must be obtained from one source — the Bible. Without doing so, how can we know for sure that the preaching on the television is from God's Word, or how will we know what the preacher is saying is according to His Word? We will not know unless we see it for ourselves and hide it and its principles in our hearts and follow them. Too many have gotten far away from God because they trusted another to feed them spiritually. Because the food was not pure and spiritually satisfying, they were not strong enough to make the right decisions in their lives.

- Most importantly, after the Israelites had read the Word of God, they obeyed it. There is no way in this world to return to God today unless we obey, by faith, what God speaks to our hearts about and shows us in His Word. Obedience is the difference between the "used to be" and the one sitting in the front row pew and serving God in a ministry. There is no other way around it! The only way to get closer to God is to obey Him!
- Nehemiah also rehearsed some of the spiritual errors Israel had made in the past; so it was quite clear what they did to get in the condition they found themselves in, and so they would not do the same things in the future.

Ex-backsliders must have in the forefront of their minds what they did to let themselves get in the position they had gotten themselves in. It will seldom be "he made me do it", or "it wasn't my fault". No one can make another person get far from God. It is always

personal decisions that got us in a not-obeying-God-state. We could have always said “no”. Some paid a tremendous price to say “no” to disobedience. They may have lost their job, friends, social standing, or even their lives, but they chose to obey God more than anyone else. To prevent backsliding one must take the responsibility for what he did wrong against God, and avoid it in the future. Seldom, if ever, are we “victims” in not obeying God.

To be a Christian, one must be saved from his sins by trusting in the finished work Jesus did on the cross. When we accept His payment for our sins, we have God’s promise that we will go to heaven. As a Christian, we can follow and obey God every single day of our lives, but we will always have some weaknesses that we all have to battle the entirety of our life. That weakness is our sin nature. We may be forgiven, but in a heartbeat we can follow our sin nature and not God. When we do obey God, we please Him. Disobedience will cause us to backslide from close fellowship with God. There is always hope for a return to a close relationship with God. One can leave the self-life and return to the spirit-led life and do all he can to avoid backsliding again!

Christian, are you backslidden? Come on home!

Hymn Writer Loses Joy of Salvation

H. Bosch

Robert Robinson, author of the hymn “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing,” lost the happy communion with the Saviour he had once enjoyed, and in his declining years he wandered into the byways of sin. As a result, he became deeply troubled in spirit. Hoping to relieve his mind, he decided to travel.

In the course of his journeys, he became acquainted with a young woman on spiritual matters, and so she asked him what he thought of a hymn she had just been reading. To his astonishment he found it to be none other than his own composition. He tried to evade her questions, but she continued to press him for a response.

Suddenly he began to weep. With tears streaming down his checks, he said, “I am the man who wrote that hymn many years ago. I’d give anything to experience again the joy I knew then.” Although greatly surprised, she reassured him that the “streams of mercy” mentioned in his song still flowed. Mr. Robinson was deeply touched. Turning his “wandering heart” to the Lord, he was restored to full fellowship.

Come, Thou Fount

Hymn writer Robert Robinson

(1) Come, Thou Fount of ev’ry blessing, Tune my heart to sing Thy grace; Streams of mercy, never ceasing, Call for songs of loudest praise. Teach me some melodious sonnet, Sung by flaming tongues above; Praise the mount — I’m fixed upon it — Mount of Thy redeeming love.

(3) O to grace how great a debtor, Daily I’m constrained to be! Let Thy goodness, like a fetter, Bind my wandering heart to Thee: Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love; Here’s my heart, O take and seal it; Seal it for Thy courts above.

“Inbred corruption is the worst corruption. ‘Lord,’ said Augustine, ‘deliver me from my worst enemy, that wicked man — myself.’” — Spurgeon

Go to the Devil

Author Unknown

Before the turn of the century, an ardent and dedicated Christian wrote a tract entitled “Come to Jesus.” It became famous and influenced many for Christ.

Later he became engaged in a theological dispute. In reply to a publication by an opponent, he wrote an article bristling with invectives, sharp, and cutting as a razor. Looking for a title, he asked his friend. His friend wisely suggested: “Call it ‘Go to the Devil’ by the Author of ‘Come to Jesus.’” He destroyed the article.

“When a man, who professes to be converted, says that he goes into the world and into sin for pleasure, it is as if an angel went to hell for enjoyment.” — Spurgeon

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