

BACKSLIDING TRAGEDY

By. Dr. Hal Webb, Evangelist

"Thine own wickedness shall correct thee and thy backslidings shall reprove thee; know therefore and see that is an evil thing and bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts" Jer. 2:19.

Not all who call themselves Christians are careful to walk close to the Lord. There are many who profess to be saved but live a fluctuating life of defeat. Many have lost their first love and drift in and out of the victorious life a believer ought to enjoy. A backslider is a saved person who slips into sin or fails to walk close to God. There are some very serious results. **IT WILL COST YOU YOUR PEACE.** God promises, *"my peace I give unto you"* John 14:27. Jeremiah 2:19 gives clear warning that backsliding is evil and bitter. Many believers live miserable, compromising lives of unhappy defeat. **IT COULD COST YOU YOUR HOME.** You have only to read Genesis 13 to see Lot lose his family. He looked, moved near, entered into and lost his wife because he chose to stray into worldly Sodom. Family graveyards are strewn with the results of backsliding. **IT MAY COST YOUR LIFE.** If your departure from God reaches a serious Christ dishonoring level He warns *"for this cause many are weak and sickly among you and many sleep"* I Cor. 11:30. If your sin brings disgrace upon Christ you may lose your life. Pastor slandering, church destroying Christians are standing on dangerous ground. Read I Cor. 5:5 to see how God deals with immorality in the flock of God. **YOU WILL LOSE YOUR PLACE OF SERVICE.** A dull tool ceases to have redeeming value. Many a pastor, Christian leader and believer have lost their creditability and place of service because of sin. Many teens possessing great potential squander it in foolish sinning that disallows their later use by God. Read I Corinthians 9:27 to see Paul's constant striving to stay acceptable to God as a servant. **IT COULD COST YOU YOUR CHURCH.** Unconfessed sin and the drifting eddies of backsliding will put you

at odds with your pastor and church disciplines. Your neglect and refusal to stay true will cause you to drop out slowly or go with a snarl from some office or business meeting. Anger, criticism, wounded feelings and stubborn rebellion will take you away from the church fellowship you need. **YOU WILL LOSE YOUR REWARD.** II John 8 admonishes you to *"look to yourselves that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."* God has a full and beautiful life of victory and accomplishment for every believer. Someday, all our actions will be weighed. Wasted actions and foolish sinning will bring us tears of shame at the judgment seat of Christ. (II Cor. 5:10). The previous paragraph makes it clear that backsliding does not pay and it has some very serious results. Next, I want to clearly show the two main things that cause backsliding.

The first is **NEGLECT.** Almost everything in life is affected by careless indifference to those things which strengthen and cause growth. Neglect causes our teeth to decay, our health to fail, our autos to break down and the quality of our life to slip away. I see daily in the lives of many believers four neglects that are fatal. First, there is the **NEGLECT OF PRAYER.** In I Thess. 5:17 we read *"pray without ceasing."* With great discipline you must set aside the times and places you will meet God in prayer. The more you skimp the more you will slip. One cannot walk close to God without taking time to get close in communion through prayer. The second area is **NEGLECT IN READING YOUR BIBLE.** We are urged in II Timothy 2:15 to *"study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."* Again, you need a time and a place to get alone with God and read of His will and direction for you. It is your light, food, road map, guide and great source of encouragement. One must eat to stay well, and the Bible is our great source of promised strength. A third area is the **NEGLECT OF WITNESS.** If your tongue no longer praises Him and seeks to tell others of His love you become unusable and soon set aside. All of God's creation is to praise Him. John 15:16 says we have been *"chosen to go and bring forth fruit."* If you

cannot speak of Him to others you are not doing what He chose you to do. You will surely speak of the one you love. If you don't, you will find yourself like Peter, sitting by worldly fires, denying Him. Then there is the **NEGLECT OF SERVICE**. In I Corinthians 15:58 we are urged to be "*steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.*" If you slack up in church attendance and service for the Lord you will drift into backsliding. Be diligent in your service and you will walk close to God.

Another great cause of backsliding is **ENTANGLEMENT**. I see four things that pose great threat to believers as Satan uses his trickery upon them. Daily he seeks to engulf the child of God in **THE WORLD'S ATMOSPHERE**. Wherever you walk the beat of evil music assaults your ears. The lyrics of filthy suggestions like waves beat upon your wall of Christian convictions. TV with its evil programming swears in your face and portrays the vilest evil as if it were normal. The "slop-operas" and evening programming are anti-Christian, sprinkled with crime, murder, sex, and riotous scenes of evil. Such an atmosphere, which most Christians carelessly allow, destroys Bible convictions. Colossians 3:2 says "*set your affections above, not on things on the earth.*" Another tool of entanglement is **QUESTIONABLE PLEASURES**. "*No man that cares entangleth himself in the affairs of this life*" II Tim. 2:4. A teen girl said to me, "I don't see anything wrong with soft rock". I told her if she got hit in the head with a soft rock it would hurt as much as a hard rock. The believer that wants a spiritual life must not walk near to the edge of the drop off. That which feeds the flesh will still do so, though more softly. Contemptible contemporary music is written and sung like the world and appeals to worldly believers. Christian rock will never lift but rather pull down in flesh pleasing imitation of the world's style. The dance is no place for a believer. A dancing foot and a praying knee don't belong on the same leg. Present day movies are all trash. Also, you better know what kind of a party you are planning to attend. Repeatedly, I am told, "I didn't think." You better stop to think before you cuddle up to things that will pull you down. There is

always further danger from the **WRONG CROWD**. Proverbs 2:20 commands.. "*walk in the way of good men.*" You cannot run with a skunk and smell like a rose. Every friend you have will either lift you up or pull you down. Your close friends must be carefully chosen for "peer pressure" is a powerful tool of injury to many believers. Further, many Christians are devastated by many **THINGS**, your house, boat, car, sports, money and even work. The list goes on endlessly. You have become entangled when things make you so busy you don't have time to worship the Lord and serve Him. Most believers are far too busy with things that one moment after death or the rapture they will see were dust. The church is hindered by those who sing, "All to Jesus I surrender", and hardly give the Lord an hour a week. Most have deliberately made themselves so busy they will not sacrifice to serve Christ.

I cannot close this chapter without warning of **THE RESULTS OF BACKSLIDING**. First there is **CHASTENING**. The writer of Hebrews warned, "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" Heb. 12:6. If you drift away from the life God intends for you to live He will bring into your life those things that will bring you back to Him. Accidents, sickness, job loss, and family heartbreak are not only the results of sin, but often the rod of God to get you back on the straight and narrow. Another result of backsliding will be **REMORSE**. Your first love will be gone, and any kind of spiritual living will be tedious and boring. In Jeremiah 2:19 backsliding is called "an evil thing and bitter." Once you have tasted the manna from heaven the garlic and onions of the world will never satisfy. Often, a backslider will pretend to be happy but he is living a lie. Backsliding will further bring about **SIN'S REAPING**. "*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*" Gal 6:7. Continued smoking after accepting Christ will still seed the cancer that will kill you. The Christian girl can still get pregnant with her unwise actions. Parents' drinking can set the pace for the drunken debauchery their own kids will inherit. The divorce of believers is no less shattering to their children. Sin is sin and "*he that*

soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh read corruption " Gal . 6:8. Lastly, there is **FUTURE JUDGMENT**. *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ: that everyone may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done whether it be good or bad"* II Cor. 5:10. The day will come when all who have lived will face a Holy God. The result of our life have been honestly recorded. We are saved by faith but will be rewarded on the basis of our works. God's video camera never gets out of focus or runs out of film. He sees deep within. The tragic results of backsliding will show up at the judgment. There will be no secrets at this tribunal. Some will receive great rewards and others will suffer loss. We will all see how we measured up to God's plan and will for our lives. The key to great reward will be faithfulness and obedience to His will through our lifetime. Wasted hours, days and years will show as holes in the fabric of our accomplishments. Many will wish they had not made the wrong turn, listened to the wrong voice and missed God's best for them. Haunting voices and hidden deeds will point fingers of accusing. Before I close this chapter I will tell you how to return to victory and avoid further grief and failure.

God is great in mercy and offers all backsliders a **CURE**. First you must **CONFESS**. I John 1:9 promises *"if we confess our sin He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* Make that confession as wide as necessary. If the transgression was just between you and God, then no one else needs to know. Cry out for His forgiveness. If it involved others, then also confess to them and seek to make things right.. If the wrong spread to many and was open knowledge, then stand before your church and beg forgiveness. Having done this you are then ready to **FORSAKE**. Whatever it was that pulled you away must be put out of your life. Rock and roll must be removed along with movies, most TV, evil books, alcohol, cigarettes and whatever dragged you down. You may even have to dump a boyfriend or girlfriend or a certain crowd if they were the cause of your slipping away from God. Identify the termites that chewed at your relationship with God and put them out of your sight and grasp. *"Come*

out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" II Cor. 6:17. After doing this then simply **COME BACK**. *"Draw nigh to God"* James 4:8. Don't wait any longer or run any further. The Lord is very interested in your return to the path of obedience. There is nothing He will not forgive, so hurry back into the sunshine of His blessing. Finally, **STAY CLOSE AND BE ON GUARD**. Since Satan has your number he will try again. Don't trust yourself and don't flex your muscles in questionable areas. Always remember *"the flesh is weak"* Matt. 26:41. Keep starving the old nature and feeding the new. Don't take chances with evil. If in doubt, don't! Keep up a constant vigilance, doing everything that will keep you close to God. Watch your step in every area that could possibly lead again to the valley of defeat. Not all the dead have been laid to rest in cemeteries. If all those who sleep in church Sunday morning were laid end to end.....they would be more comfortable! Many no longer come to church or clutter the back pews occasionally. They are gaunt skeletons of what they used to be. Complaining voices of descent, clutching their opinions to their wasted selves, couching their rebellious ways in liberal thinking and loose living. They are critical of anyone who dares to disturb their chosen path of disobedience. They disgrace their families, destroy the testimony of their church and become a laughingstock to the world. There is no room for spineless desertion among the soldiers of the cross. Backsliding always leads to a defeated life, lifetime regrets, great injury to others and tragic judgment. We are all capable of this sin at any time. If you have ever been closer to Christ than now you are a backslider. Remember *"the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways"* Prov. 14:14.