

Consider the Backslider

Jeremiah 3:22, *"Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee: for thou art the Lord our God."* All backsliding is rooted in pride, the worship of selfish desires over God's Word. Backsliding has many excuses that are easily justified by the carnal-minded. However, when they are compared to the price Jesus paid to redeem us at Calvary, the Holy Ghost that He has given to those who obey Him, the blessings that He gives us, the heaven to come, and the hell to be delivered from – backsliding is not worthy to be considered.

Through personal observation, there appear to be three types of backsliders:

1) Those with a degree of Godly fear or, more accurately, respect for Godly principles and people. They believe the Truth but have become convinced they cannot overcome sinful habits. Because they do not want to be hypocritical, they leave the church. Some of these come and go - not affecting others but never victorious. These will tell anyone that the message of Acts 2:38, holiness within and without, love for others, and submission to God is necessary for salvation. Yet, somehow, they are beyond God's mercy and grace. They oppose themselves and are taken captive at Satan's will {2 Timothy 2:25, 26}.

2) Those who become bitter have experienced verifiable abuse and injustice done to them by life, church members, or ministry. These rarely find a place of true repentance because the root of bitterness is seldom dealt with {Hebrews 12:15-17}. They often become church hoppers and doctrinally confused. Many of them end up in charismatic or trinity churches. They look for love and acceptance from others - rather than Truth - they become disillusioned and wander in delusions of spiritual self-will, becoming companions of like-minded individuals.

3) Those who have the world in their hearts - *Lust of the eye, Lust of the Flesh, Pride of Life* {1 John 2:16}. They display a tendency to worldliness and resist regular Godly consecration. This group partake in worldly ways with joy and abandonment. Often, that group of backsliders will visit the church and its functions, flaunting their rebellious freedoms. They are without fear of God or respect for His people.

Here's a real-world example. Two siblings backslid from an Apostolic church with many good and godly people. The pastor was a man above reproach. However, there were many things that church folks were unaware of. For instance, their mother, a single hard-working tongue talker, was physically and mentally abusive. Often, the abuse was worse after church and home prayer meetings. Both children were exposed to pornography at young ages. One was molested at the age of 8 by some church teens and adults. His mother and some church members often reminded the boy that he would be like his father. At the ages of 11 and 8, the children were sent to foster homes for a time.

Later, they were returned to their mother. Finally, the mother told the children she no longer wanted them and preferred to live with her other four children in another city. The father said he would accept the daughter but wanted nothing to do with the son. The young man had received the Holy Ghost when a boy but had so many sinful and shameful habits that guilt, shame, anger, and lust ruled. At 18, although convinced the church was right, he was sure that he could not overcome sin in its various forms. In this author's opinion, the man exemplified points 1 and 2. Thankfully, at 22, God allowed him to return to the church and to gain victory over sin and any desire to return to the world – for any reason!

Luke 15:11-32 records the parable of the prodigal son. He chose, for whatever reason, to leave the Father's house and go to a faraway city. However, all prodigals have a moment when they come to themselves.

What they do with that moment makes a difference. Some decide to stay in the city or in the pig pen. Others get up and go back home – they must travel a long way back – but they make it. **How glorious that is!**

The Father restored four things to the returning son:

1. Home: The safety and joy of a sanctuary.
2. Robe: The garment of righteousness and praise.
3. Shoes: Enabled to testify of God's mercy, grace, and holiness.
4. Ring: The instrument of authority to conduct business using the family name.

However, the Father could not give his son back the wall of innocence. Having once before left the Father's house in rebellion, doing so again was an easy option. Unless he chose to rebuild the wall through loving and submitted obedience to the Father, as 2 Corinthians 10:6 states, *"Having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled."*

Contemporary backsliders are often more aware of what is happening in all the churches, near and far, because of the access to all forms of social media – Pinterest, Facebook, X, Instagram, Photo streams, YouTube, internet forums, text, and the phone. They have become family with ungodly counsel, stand with sinners, and sit with those who scorn and mock all that is holy {Psalm 1:1}. Backsliders who congregate with other backsliders share in one another's mockery, bitterness, lies, and sinful activity. Thus, they rarely, if ever, return.

The post-modern apostolic church is too touchy-feely, politically correct, and user-friendly toward the backslider. Many churches now allow the things some people once backslid to do. Others feel that the backslider must feel comfortable and loved, and then they will return. THAT IS A LIE!!!! The prodigal knew that the Father cared for him. The prodigal cared more for his desires than his Father and the community. The backslider should feel condemnation, shame, guilt, and loneliness. That is the price of leaving the Father's house. Yet, when they begin to return, they should be greeted with joy and not with the attitude of a cynical brother.

The prodigal left the Father's house saying, "Give me what's mine." He returned, saying, "Make me a servant." Only those who leave the "Give me" attitude and ask God to "Make Me" can have the relationship repaired. When backsliders come to themselves, they will return to the Father in repentance, find mercy, and be given the grace to overcome their past and live victoriously in their future. The scriptures state, *"He that covers his sins shall not prosper: but whoever confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy"* (Proverbs 28:13) and, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). The cost of living in the Father's house and enjoying fellowship with God's family remains the same as the Bible declares, *"Wherefore come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty"* (2 Corinthians 6:17, 18).

That was the message Paul preached; it remains relative and essential today. Without apology!

Joe Savala