

- I. Fortunately for the Christian Gods word is clear, unambiguous it's not at all like a pictogram, when we go off course trying to do things our way we can go back to Gods Word and find how to correct our mistakes.
- The Christian life is not only about how our walk began; it is about being steadfast, holding firm and finishing so that God, who began a good work in us, will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. **Philippians 1:6**

As Christians we need to fully understand what Backsliding is according to Gods word, so we will realize when we are not following Gods plan for our life, putting ourselves in danger of backsliding.

So what is backsliding?

The original Hebrew word Meshubah (mesh-oo-baw) **Strong's #4878** is a noun derived from the verb meaning "to turn" or turning back.

- Meshubah negatively refers to **turning back** from God after knowing, experiencing, and walking in His truths. It is a decline in obedience and faithfulness but most importantly it is the decline in our love towards God.
- a. So, understand that backsliding is usually not a sudden rejection of Christianity it rarely happens all at once.
 - It begins with small compromises:
 - our desire for something else has become stronger than our desire to obey God.

1 John 2:1 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

- There are many examples throughout the bible to warn us because as a Christian we generally don't wake up 1 morning and think... today I am going to backslide.
- Every time God speaks and we refuse to obey, the heart becomes less sensitive. Every time we excuse sin, it becomes easier to excuse the next sin.
- Backsliding involves a deliberate movement toward what God has forbidden. That's why we are told in,

Proverbs 14:14 The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways, but a good man *will be satisfied* from above.

- Just like in **Judges 21:25 that tells us**, in those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes. This highlights a period of moral and social chaos in Israel when there was no king, and people acted according to their own judgment rather than following God's guidance.
- When we start acting according to our own judgment rather than following God's word
- What we once resisted, we begin to tolerate. What we once called sin; we begin to call:
 - A moment of weakness,
 - We seek things that are culturally permissive, it's not illegal, so there's nothing wrong with it.
 - We lean more on personal choice, or
 - We exorcise our Christian freedom,
- Let's talk about our Christian Freedoms who has heard someone quote from the bible: **all things in moderation**, (this phrase does not appear in the Bible), the principle of moderation is strongly supported the phrase all things in moderation is not in the bible.

- The reason Backsliding is so serious, it is more than merely breaking a rule; it is through a series of conscious decisions we began to slowly turn away from our relationship with the living God.
- b. No one backslides in complete isolation.** Our decisions influence our families, friends, churches, and communities.
- Genesis 19 records the choices of Lot. At first, he lifted up his eyes and saw the well-watered plains.
 - Eventually he was walk past the gates, then standing in the gates and finally he was sitting in the gate of Sodom.
 - He changed location and his relationships.
 - Sadley, Lot's wife warns us that the environment we are in, if we choose to embrace it, will weaken our spiritual sensitivity.
- c.** And when our spiritual sensitivity is weakened as a parent our compromises will confuse our children and affect the whole family.
- What is bad or wrong for your children to watch on TV is most often the same for the parents. (news)
 - Words children should not be saying... as parents we should not be using those words.
 - **Psalm 78:56–59** describes Israel testing and provoking God with their rebellion. God was grieved because:
 - He had blessed them,
 - He revealed Himself to them,
 - He protected them, and yet they continued turning away.
- ✓ As a parent our compromises will confuse our children and lead to rebellion in their lives.

Jesus said in **Luke 9:62**:

Luke 9:62 No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God

- Looking back speaks of divided loyalty. A farmer cannot plow straight while constantly looking behind him.
- Children need faithful parents who can be trusted, they need parents who will stand when it is difficult, parents who will not abandon their assignment when conditions become uncomfortable.
- As parents we cannot feed on ungodly influences and expect to remain spiritually strong. What we listen to, watch, celebrate, and normalize affects our hearts and eventually we are just going through the motions of Christianity.

A clear picture of this is seen in **Revelation 2** in the church at Ephesus Jesus tells them:

Revelation 2:4 Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love.

- d.** If we look at the church in Ephesus, they had works, labor, patience, discernment, and endurance. Yet something essential was missing... their love of Christ.
- It is possible to continue working for God while losing our love for God. A lot of times this shows up as Complaining:
 - Israel complained in the wilderness because they did not trust God's provision. **Exodus 17:3** records their murmuring against Moses because there was no water.
 - Complaining may seem small, but persistent complaining reveals a heart that questions God's goodness. A Christian that constantly complains has forgotten:
 - what God has already done
 - how far He has brought us
 - it also carries the connotation that we could do a better job than God is doing.
- ⇒ Complaining weakens our faith, but gratitude will strengthen our faith.

- You can defend sound doctrine while becoming spiritually cold.
 - Pastors that are knowingly sinning (commit adultery) before stepping down.
 - **Remember the gospel is not affected by the actions of fallible men.**
- It's also possible to be busy in ministry but distant in fellowship.
 - How do you deal with someone difficult; do you treat them the same way as someone you like or are you different towards them?
 - If we are just going through the motions not motivated by love, we end up in a downward spiral moving further away from God.
- e. We see this in the life of King David.
 - **2 Samuel 11** begins with David remaining in Jerusalem when kings went out to battle. This put him in the wrong place at the wrong time, he saw what he should not have pursued leading to a series of bad decisions that caused him to backslide.
 1. He saw
 2. He inquired
 3. He sent
 4. He committed
 5. He attempted to cover up
 6. Eventually David murdered.
- ✓ Our actions, words and our decisions: will either strengthen our fellowship with God or weaken it. There are only two directions we travel spiritually: toward God or away from God.
- f. In **1 Timothy 5:15**, while discussing the care of widows, Paul warns Timothy that some Christians had turned aside after Satan.
 - I am not saying that every backslider consciously declares allegiance to Satan.
 - What I am saying is that when we reject God's will and follow our own sinful desires
 - We are willfully putting ourselves in danger.

That danger is often accelerated by prosperity. Many of the parallels between ancient Israel and modern America are spelled out for us

Deuteronomy 8:11–14 after Israel becomes prosperous.

Deut 8:11 Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, **12** lest *when* you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell *in them*; **13** and *when* your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; **14** when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;

- What we know of Israel's backsliding, it was not out of ignorance.
 - We have the full counsel of God called the Bible and history to back it up!
- Their problem was that even though they knew God they became complacent in their relationship with Him because of their prosperity, they fell into the trap of self-sufficiency.
- **The danger is not from being blessed**, God wants to bless us. The danger is in forgetting where those blessings come from and having a thankful heart towards God.
- ✓ America has always been a nation strongly influenced by Christianity from our very beginning. Yet now that we stand as the most prosperous nation on earth. How are we doing at honoring God for our blessings?
 - There is a subtle but deadly risk in equating material prosperity with spiritual approval.
 - It often leads us to treat God's grace as a license to continue in sin.
- g. Paul expresses this in the first chapter of **Galatians**; he is astonished at how quickly they were turning from the gospel of grace to another gospel **Galatians 1:6–7**.

And then In **Galatians 3**

Galatians 3:1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.

Gal 3:2 Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?

Gal 3:3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, **are you now being perfected by the flesh?**

The Galatians had begun in the Spirit.

Backsliding is not always a return to the obvious immorality we use to practice. Sometimes it is a departure from the simplicity and sufficiency of Christ.

- A lot of the time it is simply trying to satisfy the flesh and ignoring God's grace.
- ✓ And there is a real danger of taking God's grace for granted is highlighted in **1 Corinthians 10** by this warning:

1 Corinthians 10:9 "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents."

To tempt Christ is to presume upon His mercy while deliberately continuing in disobedience. What does that look like in the church today:

- **It is easier to ask for forgiveness than permission:**
- It is saying, "God will forgive me," while knowingly doing what is wrong, and believing all I have to do is ask for forgiveness and I have repented. But having to ask for forgiveness again and again while willfully in rebellion committing the same sin is transgression.
- It is treating grace as permission to sin. It tests how far we can go before consequences happen. God is merciful, but His grace must never be used as an excuse for our rebellion.

Psalms 106:13-14

Psalms 106:13 They soon forgot His works; They did not wait for His counsel, **14** But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, And tested God in the desert.

- Israel was not satisfied with God's provision. Their desires or lust became stronger than their gratitude.
- Lust is more than sexual desire. It is any craving that controls us and competes with God. We can lust for **pleasure**, attention, **power**, money, **recognition**, food or **possessions**.

⇒ None of these are bad, in fact a lot of these things are blessings from God and are a natural part of what we all desire.

II. So, what Prompts Backsliding? like I said earlier a Christian doesn't just wake up 1 day and decide today is a good day to backslide.

- ✓ Backsliding, like any sin, promises freedom but produces bondage. It usually occurs with plenty of warning.

✠ **#1** A haughty spirit, **PRIDE**:

Proverbs 16:18

Proverbs 16:18 Pride *goes* before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.

- **truth is not truly received until it is obeyed.**
- a. **2 Peter** chapter **1** begins by describing the characteristics of fruitful growth in faith, but in verse 9, it provides a contrast. It describes the person lacking these spiritual qualities as being shortsighted, even blind—having forgotten that they were cleansed from their former sins.
 - Spiritual blindness causes the immediate to become more important than the eternal.
 - Our pride causes spiritual blindness to make us careless. When pride is speaking:

As a secular person it sounds like	As a Christian it sounds like
Don't lecture me on safety	No... I'm not in need of counsel.
I know what I am doing I have done this 1000 times	I will not fall; I know what I am doing
But what is common to the Christian and the secular person	
That warning is for others, someone with less experience than me, I'm okay.	

- One clear example of how pride can cause spiritual blindness is found in **Revelation 3:17** with the church at Laodicea. They described themselves as rich and wealthy, claiming they had need of nothing; however, Jesus revealed their true condition as wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked because they failed to recognize their true spiritual condition.
- Their blindness occurred when they mistook outward success for inward health. When this happens to us it leaves us vulnerable to deception.

b. Deception is something we all have to guard against, it can lead us to backsliding. **Acts 20**

Acts 20:29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; **30** and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.

2 Timothy 4:3–4 says that people will not endure sound doctrine but will gather teachers who suit their own desires.

- This is a description of itching ears. People not wanting the truth when taught; they want teaching that confirms what they already believe or want to believe.
- We must be willing to submit to the full counsel of God.
 - not use the bible to find a verse that supports my thinking.
- False teaching is dangerous because it often sounds spiritual. It will use the Bible out of context to change the meaning of what is said.
- The danger is when we use the Bible to justify our desires rather than allow the Bible to correct and guild our desires.

III. Fortunately, Paul **tells us how to handle a fellow believer who is backsliding:**

- “Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently.
- But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted” (Galatians 6:1).
- James concurs: “My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth . . . someone should bring that person back” (James 5:19).
- The backslider has wandered from where he should be and is “stuck” in sin, but the job of the church is to work to restore him and set him back on the path of righteousness.

IV. I want everyone to know there is a difference between backsliding and a crisis of faith:

- In **Mark 14:27** Jesus told His disciples:

Mark 14:27 Then Jesus said to them, “All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: ‘I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered.’”

- What He meant was that, when He was arrested, they would experience a crisis of faith,

- a life event so shocking that they would run from Jesus and question the very core of their beliefs.
- It was a night of stumbling for them.
- But it was temporary. Three days later, Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to the disciples and their faith and hope were restored, stronger than ever.

1. Some people use the word *backslide* to mean that a person has lost his or her salvation.

- The word “backslider” or “backsliding” does not appear in the New Testament. It is used in the Old Testament primarily of Israel. **Jeremiah 8:9** tells us the Jews, although they were God’s chosen people, continually turned their backs on Him and rebelled against His Word.
- That is why they were forced to make sacrifices for sin over and over in again in order to restore their relationship with God, having offended Him.

2. Which brings us to a question that may be asked from today’s teaching: does backsliding mean you have lost your salvation?

a. Will God take us back if we backslide? Is forgiveness and restoration available to us?

- The answer is determined by God’s faithfulness, not your failures.
- God’s forgiveness flows from His character. The psalmist writes,

Psalm 86:5 “You, Lord, are forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call to you”

- We cannot earn God’s forgiveness; it is a gift received when we repent of our sins and turn to Him in faith.

Regarding believers and sinning:

1 John 1:8–9 is clear If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **9** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- b. So, NO. Backsliding doesn't mean a person loses their salvation. The Bible makes it clear that once we are saved, that is, we've put our faith in Jesus as the Son of God who came to die on the cross in our place and rose from the dead, so we have life ever after, we are saved for good **John 10:28–29; Romans 10:9–10**. Our place in Christ is secure.
- c. But the secular world is watching and if they see no difference between themselves and Christians, what motivation do they have to want to change their lifestyle?
 - They are already inherently hostile to the things of God (**1 Corinthians 2:14; Romans 8:7-8**).

Put on the whole armor of God. This spiritual battle we are in is real. Our enemy is active and seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).

Stay connected to the believers in your church. We have a great asset in fellow believers who can exhort, encourage, and edify us. We can hold each other accountable and help guard against the subtle encroachment of sin.

The word of God is a medicine that helps counter the poisoning of sin and spiritual hardening. A dose of it is prescribed daily.