

Backsliding & Self-Examination

August 24, 2025 · AM · <https://letgodbetrue.com/sermons/2025/backsliding-self-examination-1/>

The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways:

and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.

Proverbs 14:14

Brethren, beware! Slipping spiritually in your heart is a subtle danger. It can happen easily and with little warning, but the consequences are terrible. God will pour out confusion and pain on you in proportion to your backsliding. But a good man, one who keeps his heart diligently, will have the continual feast of joy and peace in his heart.

Forget a common idea of backsliding – leaving religion to return to drugs, sex, or atheism as a lifestyle. Satan wants you to think that is backsliding. Instead, keep the light of this proverb on your heart – the true source of backsliding. It is your heart that first slips away from the Lord, His word, His holiness, and your previous hatred of sin. Sin takes you from the inside out – in the heart – as James carefully explained (Jas 1:13-16).

You must fear and hate this enemy. It can be as subtle as losing your first love, like at Ephesus (Rev 2:1-7). It also involves losing your spiritual joy, praying less, singing less, minding earthly things, and becoming spiritually dull. Of course, it will allow your heart to consider sins that you would have fervently despised before. Brethren, how is your heart? Do you have a fervent zeal for spiritual things, or have you slipped into a routine?

Solomon taught his son to diligently keep his heart, for out of it are the issues of life (Pr 4:23). Are you keeping your heart carefully? If you allow thinking contrary to the word of God, there will be hell to pay. Our glorious LORD, and rightfully so, will bring severe chastening to bear, as He did on His people Israel over and over again. If you allow your heart to slip away from Him, He can give you horrible leanness of soul (Ps 106:13-15).

But a good man, who lives faithfully with a pure heart, will have God's peace and assurance in his soul that he pleases his Father. What a difference! Fervent obedience brings God's blessing and confidence in your soul (Gal 6:4; Jas 1:25-27). Such men know they are righteous and appeal to it before God (Neh 5:19; Ps 18:20-27; Is 38:3). They go forward boldly, knowing they have a pure and single heart, which God will reward.

The cure for backsliding is easy, by God's mercy and grace. Jesus said, Remember from where you have fallen – repent – and do the first works (Rev 2:5). This three-step process will work. Remember the faith, joy, and peace you once had; repent of the sins of your heart or life that you have allowed; and repeat the same fervent actions you did in the beginning ... or even better ones.

Do not say with Governor Felix you need a more convenient season (Acts 24:25). Today may be your last chance without any future remedy (Pr 29:1). Return to the LORD now and repent for any foolishness, slothfulness, or backsliding. He will forgive. Fully commit your heart to tear every idol and temptation out of your life to be holy once again. Passionately seek His face. Prepare for a blessing. He will draw nigh to you as you draw nigh to Him.

Backsliders are weak men; they are fearful men. The Holy Spirit is grieved and quenched in their lives, and they do not have the joyful confidence they once had. It is imperative that every man examine himself and repent, if he finds any compromise in his heart. “Purify your hearts, ye double minded,” is what James wrote you (Jas 4:8).

Believers must exhort one another daily, so they are not hardened by the deceitfulness of sin and turn away from the living God (Heb 3:12-13). The elect need each other to provoke them to love and good works, lest they forget their professions of faith (Heb 10:23-25). It is for this spiritual purpose that believers gather in congregations.

Jesus warned His disciples that abounding iniquity would cause the love of many to wax cold, and such a state of affairs must be more true of this generation than theirs (Matt 24:12). How is your heart? Hot, cold, or lukewarm? Beware (Rev 3:14-16)! God’s judgments or blessings are just and proportionate to the state of your heart.

**THIS SERMON IS VERY IMPORTANT – MORE IMPORTANT THAN OUR SECOND SERVICE TODAY.
ARE YOU SPIRITUALLY SENSITIVE ENOUGH TO KNOW IT ... CLOSE ENOUGH TO GOD TO KNOW IT?**

But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection:

lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

I Corinthians 9:27

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 Corinthians 13:5

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Psalm 139:23-24

This is one of the most important duties of the Christian life ... ***self-examination in prayer with God.***

It is one of the last things a carnal Christian does ... he assumes he is right with God or does not care.

Because our hearts are deceitful, we need God to help us search out feelings we foolishly protect.

Because our religion is mainly of the heart, our hearts must be pure and single-minded for Christ.

God by His Spirit is able to show you faults in your heart and convict you to change them for Him.

Then we want God to examine and test us (try) to know the many thoughts running in our heads.

We only want to think thoughts that He fully approves – and strictly rule our foolish imaginations.

We must hate any wicked way in us ... confess and repudiate it ... ask God for the way of holiness.

Our glorious God and loving Father will help us do this, but very few even consider the exercise.

David feared *secret errors and faults* – feelings and ideas he did not fully recognize as his sin (BV).

He also feared *presumptuous sins* – worse sins by pride and rebellion that can control you (BV).
 He craved and prayed for *his speech and his heart thoughts to be acceptable to the LORD* (BV).
 When David was in his right mind – sins confessed and living holy – he prayed very boldly (BV).
 Let us all choose to be in our right mind – sins confessed and living holy – and pray like he did.

Suggested Links for Further Study:

Proverbs 14:14 (Backsliding) ... [the Proverbs 14:14 commentary](#).

Victorious Christian Living ... [Victorious Christian Living \(1\)](#).

[Running Scared](#) (Lot's Wife).

Nehemiah's Housecleaning ... [Nehemiah 13](#).

Sermon on Mount Lessons ... [Sermon on the Mount Lessons \(1\)](#).

GOS Living by Three Rules ... [Three Basic Rules](#).

David's Zeal in [Psalm 101](#).

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Introduction:

1. Self-examination is crucial to avoid the common and terrible sin of backsliding in heart, which was introduced in a preparatory message by a quick reading of David (Ps 139:23-24; 19:12-14; 26:1-12).
2. Self-examination is a key part of our religion, even to the extent of elect or reprobate (II Cor 13:5), which by Paul's warning is clearly the most important personal matter we should diligently prove.
3. It is far better to self-examine with God now than Christ alone later (Rom 14:10-12; II Cor 5:10-11).
4. Let us come into God's holy presence now by His Spirit and word and examine ourselves with Him.
5. Having ended a review of things observed in other churches, we should wisely examine our souls; and this was the goal and purpose from the beginning, not just to measure, mark, and criticize others.
6. We are in a war for our souls (not against other souls), so Peter begged readers to be strangers and pilgrims here by a heavenly perspective to hate the diabolical lusts that seek to ruin us (I Peter 2:11).
7. These sermons are mainly to warn backsliders, for castaways do not listen, reprobates cannot hear.
8. By correcting backsliding, a person returns to God and proves he is neither a castaway or reprobate.
9. A reprobate has been rejected by God – the word's meaning – he is not saved and will not be saved.
10. A castaway is an elect person that ruins or wastes his life by not ruling his spirit and bearing fruit.
11. Evidence of a castaway is little or no fruit by loving God's true worship and promoting it (Saul).
12. Evidence of a reprobate is no spiritual fruit, changed life, or delight in God, though religious (Judas).
13. If you are not born again or have never walked with God, then you will not understand backsliding.

14. Arminians presume salvation by a decision and OSAS to ignore/slight the need for self-examination.
15. Election (opposite reprobation) is a matter that can be proved (I Thess 1:2-4; II Pet 1:5-11; Phil 4:3).
16. Thoughts about others are wasted and wrong; you should think only about yourself (Matthew 7:3-5).
17. There must be constant and holy fear of backsliding; it is more a matter of *when*, rather than just
18. We are tempted to it numerous times every day, but to be forewarned is to be forearmed, if you care.
19. We must guard against backsliding with the spiritual might in Christ and by our own diligent efforts.
20. We live in the perilous times of the last days of a powerless form of godliness, which we must hate.
21. As your pastor, I fear for myself and each of you that we can slip from our holy zeal for Christ Jesus.
22. We do not fear it enough; it is a constant threat against souls by a three-fold enemy. *Lord, help us.*
23. What is a more important topic than to be reminded of backsliding and do all necessary to reverse it!
24. JMC's memorial on 8/23/2025 included his commitment nearing 80 to finish strong, unlike Demas.
25. These sermons and this outline are not exhaustive, but *Victorious Christian Living* is more so ... **Victorious Christian Living (1)**.

DEFINITION of Backsliding

- A. **Backslide** = To *slide back*, in a figurative sense; to fall away from attained excellence, of religious faith and practice; to relapse.
- B. It is to decline spiritually from where you were; it is to be a dull Christian that can be observed; it is to be less committed and passionate than you were before; it is to lose conviction that Christ is all; it is to regress from earlier growth in grace; it is a loss of passion for the things of the Lord; it is a tolerance of sin you once hated; it is to be more attracted by the world than you were; it is to lose conviction for our great God, His Son, His truth to only go through the motions; it is a loss of fervency and zeal to feel dry and weak in comparison; it is to live with less thought of God; it is to have earthly ambitions stronger than before; it is to lose soul-thrilling time with the Lord; it is to be less godly than last year; it is to read, pray, and sing less than before, etc.
- C. It is opposite of what we call onesies, for instead of incrementally doing more for our God and His Son, we do incrementally less, thus the sliding back from earlier efforts.
- D. We must hate this sin, so do not let a syllable that follows distract from great hatred.
- E. Let us aim at backsliding in heart, for that is where it starts and infects the whole life.
- F. Sin takes us from the inside out – in the heart – as James warned clearly (Jas 1:13-16).
- G. Keeping our hearts with all diligence becomes crucially important (Pr 4:23), by self-examination with God in prayer about them, lest anything foreign be allowed to grow.
- H. We need not think about falling into heinous sins or doctrinal heresy, but rather losing first love, for which Jesus strictly warned the excellent church at Ephesus (Rev 2:1-7).
- I. It does not require gross sins, but rather subtle sins of losing spiritual joy, praying less, watching more “good” television, allowing sinful thoughts, singing less, minding earthly things, loving family too much, exercising too much, working too much, etc.
- J. Never think you are okay without constant self-examination; Ephesus and Laodicea thought they were

okay, but Jesus hated their compromise of passion and fellowship.

- K. It is the insidious and subtle process by which we relax our spiritual zeal and become dull to Christ, His church, His things which are above, and laying hold of eternal life.
- L. At baptism, most are very committed to following Jesus Christ with their whole heart; at other times the Holy Spirit has drawn your soul so you could taste heavenly joys.
- M. Backsliding is slipping back into carnality, compromise, or worldliness from holiness.
- N. It is opposite Bible descriptions of faith growing exceedingly (II Thess 1:3; Pro 4:18); growth in faith, knowledge, and zeal is one of the best antidotes and remedies, so that if you are not more spiritual fruitful than a month or year ago, you have backslidden.
- O. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways (Jas 1:8). He tries to go two different ways. He cannot do both (Matt 6:24), and trying to do so is spiritual adultery (Jas 4:4).
- P. The opposite of backsliding is helpful – *steadfast* (Psalm 78:8,37; I Cor 15:58; Heb 3:14) and *continue in my word* (John 8:31; 15:9; Acts 13:43; 14:22; Romans 11:22).
- Q. Paul called it letting gospel things *slip* and then *neglecting our great salvation* (Heb 2:1-3) and *drawing back* versus saving faith that goes on to victory (Heb 10:38-39).
- R. Peter called it *returning to vomit* (II Pet 2:20-22), which usually begins with minor backsliding like at Ephesus and Laodicea that gains speed and ends up in gross sins.

EXAMPLES of Backsliding

- A. Starting early in Genesis, the sordid story of Lot and backsliding from uncle Abram's consistent and excellent faith is told, as he chose Sodom, though it vexed him greatly.
- B. Further into the Bible we find God's favorite, David, sliding into terrible sin the same way, incremental compromise, to commit horrible crimes against a close friend.
- C. Israel, especially in the book of Judges, is repeatedly described as backsliding, and reading their history should convict and provoke you to hate any slippage of you at all.
- D. Israel was well known for backsliding (Ps 78:7-8,32-42; Jer 3:6-23; Hos 4:16; 11:5-7).
- E. Seventy years in Babylon did not cure them, thus Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Malachi, who had to correct sins similar to what sent them into captivity, showing its subtlety.
- F. Jewish legalists made inroads in Galatia by promoting another gospel (Gal 1:6-7; 3:1).
- G. The church at Ephesus, whom Jesus praised considerably, but warned severely for losing their first love, would cost themselves the presence of the Spirit (Rev 2:4-5).
- H. When God left Job, David, Hezekiah, Peter for just moments, they backslid horribly, which is why we should pray for a hedge around us from sin temptations of all kinds.
- I. Every believer knows by experience the constant ebb and flow of spiritual vitality by sin, so we must use all available cures and means to keep ourselves pressing upward.
- J. We sing *Come, Thou Fount* ... where lyrics include ... *Praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it, mount of Thy redeeming love ... 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.*

DANGERS of Backsliding

- A. Why does the heart require all diligence? For out of it will come this evil (Prov 4:23).
- B. Where you set your affections – what you choose to enjoy and love – is key (Col 3:2).
- C. The deceitfulness of sin can harden you to depart from the living God (Heb 3:12-13), and you should not belittle the possibility for that is part of sin's deception of a soul.
- D. If you allow a little backsliding, a little compromise with spiritual neglect or sin, not ruling your spirit's wild ideas, it will not be satisfied but is capable of destroying you.
- E. Lot and Solomon began with incredible advantages, but both were eventually ruined.
- F. Either you abound in fruit or you forget the glorious gift of salvation (II Peter 1:8-9).
- G. Compromise loses personal presence and power of the Spirit (Eph 4:30; I Thess 5:19).
- H. Losing first love of Christ will cost churches the Holy Spirit candlestick (Rev 2:4-5).
 - I. Confidence in anything but fellowship with Christ will bring chastening (Rev 3:19).
- J. God knows if you have just a form of godliness without spiritual zeal (II Tim 3:4-5).
- K. The most important goal in life is your vertical relationship with God as He defines.

EASE of Backsliding

- A. Nothing is easier in your life than to backslide. Believe it. Hate it. Pray/fight against it.
- B. If you relax and go through religious motions, you will backslide; you have already!
- C. You default to backsliding by your vile nature from Adam; it is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked – fighting against conviction or commitment (Jer 17:9).
- D. Then a world that hates God uses every means it can to eliminate accountability to God and get you to relax your love, devotion, and zeal for Him and His goals for you.
- E. Then the devil wants to hinder every committed Christian from a God-glorifying and Christ-exalting life and fruit-bearing, so he sends his wiles and fiery darts against you.
- F. How in the world could Jehu backslide as he did after his start? How about Solomon?
- G. How could churches at Ephesus and Laodicea in a few years slip into spiritual decay, so that our Lord had to dress them down with severe descriptions and warnings?
- H. Relaxing is folly – you will easily backslide; you are at war for your soul (I Pet 2:11).

WARNINGS of Backsliding

- A. God said a backslider “shall be filled with his own ways.” He gets what he deserves, for he turns back from the only true and living God and His riches for crumbs of earth.
- B. The jealous LORD will pound your soul, health, family, business, or all the above, yet fear that He can also send dangerous blessing to punish you like Israel (Ps 106:13-15).
- C. God is jealous, thus any backsliding or competitors to Him provokes Him to jealousy.
- D. If the holy God of heaven will cast the wicked into hell for all eternity, then He surely will chasten His children that squander His grace and play with things of the world.

- E. Consider the painful trouble He brought on His loved nation of Israel for backsliding; their chastening repeatedly was worse than what we spoiled Americans can imagine.
- F. Jesus warned His disciples that abounding iniquity would cause the love of many to wax cold, and that must be more true of our generation than it was theirs (Matt 24:12).
- G. We must give earnest heed to N.T. things we know, so cannot let them slip (Heb 2:1).
- H. Stand fast like men (I Cor 16:13); hold fast (Hebrews 3:6; 4:14; 10:23; Rev 2:25; 3:3).
 - I. Pure and holy living must be stressed more than doctrine or love, for it is the threat.
- J. We are to stand fast without moving (Philippians 1:27; 4:1; I Thess 3:8; II Thes 2:15).
- K. God arranged this warning; embrace it (Prov 29:1; Jer 2:14-19; 5:6; 8:4-12; 14:10-12), and if you have not changed meaningfully since last Sunday, you remain backslidden.
- L. Doers of the word are blessed for continuing in speech and holiness (James 1:25-27).
- M. Every man shall bear his own burden; pastors are only bound to warn (Galatians 6:5).
- N. You must keep your heart with all diligence; out of it will come good or evil (Pr 4:23).

CURSES of Backsliding

- A. Solomon warned backsliders in heart would be filled with their own ways (Pr 14:14).
- B. God's jealous judgment will punish those cheating earlier blessing of conviction.
- C. He will fill them with confusion and trouble for rejecting conviction from Him.
- D. Many without justification make this a drastic reversal from true religion to Satan.
- E. But Jesus warned the church at Ephesus about much less compromise (Rev 2:4-5).
- F. Paul taught each man to prove his integrity or bear his own burden (Gal 6:4-5).
- G. Malachi declared a man cursed that sacrifices less than the best to Jehovah (Mal 1:14).
- H. Malachi also declared a curse on priests for cheating Him in their hearts (Mal 2:1-9).
 - I. It is quite a curse for a church to become a corpse without the Holy Spirit (Rev 2:4-5).
- J. Paul warned weak Hebrews not to return to Moses or face perdition, where perdition means destruction or ruin, which truly happened to any that did return (Heb 10:38-39).
- K. Judah's backslidings became so bad that God refused Jeremiah's prayer (Jer 14:7-12)

CAUSES of Backsliding

- A. This is simple – you give up conviction, focus, vigilance, and diligence by distractions and slothfulness, for you are in a war for your souls in which you cannot relax at all.
- B. If you are not growing in faith, grace, and zeal, you will backslide, and you cannot blame others, for God offers and provides more than enough for any serious Christian.
- C. If you allow love for anything or anyone else to compete with Christ, that infatuation will cause backsliding, like the example of money ambition (I Tim 6:6-10), or Demas and this present world (II Tim 4:10), or Solomon many strange women (I Kgs 11:1-6).
- D. The dangerous war is not outside you – it is inside – your lusts of all kinds war against your soul (I Pet 2:11); only those winning the internal war will resist backsliding.

- E. Christians must constantly compare themselves to scripture and do self-examination with God's help to find any compromise that is backsliding and will demand yet more.
- F. Bitterness or profane casualness leads to defilement, as Paul warned (Heb 12:12-17).
- G. Letting others affect you, whether hypocrites or hateful, will weaken you to backslide.
- H. You cannot be comfortable as a Christian – you must be sober and vigilant (I Pet 5:8).
 - I. You must press as running a tight race, not as belly worshippers (Phil 3:11-14,18-19).
- J. The Christian race requires you get rid of weights, pet sin, and look up (Heb 12:1-2).

SYMPTOMS of Backsliding

- A. Bible reading will decline, for you will no longer have drive to engage with the Lord like you once did – and yes, that is the bar – the best you ever were – your first love!
- B. Prayer is the breath of a soul in close communion with God – it will decrease or end; do not forget private prayer of you and God only and our own small prayer meetings.
- C. Singing is the activity of a soul filled with the Spirit – it will decrease and often end; congregational singing will lose most or all its joy and pleasure to a backslidden heart.
- D. Attending church and engaging will slide, for you have lost your soul's passion for it.
- E. Peace is fruit of a holy life and pure conscience – it will decrease; frustration will rise.
- F. Joy is the light of God in a heart – it will decrease and discontentment will replace it.
- G. No longer enduring sound doctrine – Bible preaching – is a symptom (II Tim 4:3-4).
- H. Bitterness in relationships shows it, for love of God and Christ preclude such things.

MOTIVES against Backsliding

- A. God's love for His people – for you – should shut out all competitors or compromise (Malachi 1:1-5), and we sing about this motive in a well-known song, *Come, Thou Fount ... Praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it, Mount of Thy redeeming love*
- B. Paul found this to be true of Christ's love for Him, constraining Him (II Cor 5:14-15).
- C. Seven promises of God's fellowship to us dearly beloved can perfect us (II Cor 7:1).
- D. John also described it, for the love of adoption should produce His purity (I Jn 3:1-3).
- E. His exceeding great and precious promises help us with the divine nature (II Pet 1:4).
- F. The greatness of God should crush all competitors to be very careful (Malachi 1:6-14).
- G. Lot, Samson, David slid into sin, but Joseph resisted by fear of God (Ge 39:9; Ps 4:4).
- H. All the Bible has to say about the fear of God should teach against backsliding ... **Fear of God (2 Sermons)**.

God's Love Is a Motive (Malachi 1:1-5)

- A. Judah returned from Babylon after 70 years and quickly backslid – let us fear (**1:1**).
 1. God sent Haggai, Zechariah, and Nehemiah to pull them out of their backsliding.
 2. Then He sent Malachi with even more severe warnings for worse backsliding here.
 3. It is the burden of the word of the Lord to Israel – God's warning of His judgment.

- B. Jehovah appealed to the special love He had for Judah that is even greater to us (**1:2**).
 - 1. Though twins in Rebecca, the great God chose only one of the two for blessing.
 - 2. Love is as meaningful as discriminating and rare. Universal love has little of either.
 - 3. God commended love toward sinning enemies, and we should hate all backsliding.
- C. In contrast, God hated Esau and destroyed his inheritance, and not as chastening (**1:3**).
 - 1. By this choice and love of the younger twin, Israel should have loved God forever.
 - 2. If election and predestination are true (they are), the elect should love Him forever.
- D. God has indignation forever against some – reprobates. Let His grace be exalted (**1:4**).
 - 1. Nebuchadnezzar was God’s servant to do this work (Jeremiah 25:15-29; 27:1-11).
 - 2. The Jews under Judas Maccabeus and John Hyrcanus effectively destroyed them.
- E. We should see and be convicted by many differences visible from our borders (**1:5**).
 - 1. Israel questioned God’s love by evil circumstances of the captivity, sort of like Job.
 - 2. There are dramatic borders if you look, and God deserves faithful love (I Cor 4:7).
 - 3. Take note of borders (Ex 8:2; 11:4-7; 34:24; Deut 12:20; Pr 15:25; Ac 14:24-28) and see them (Deut 4:3; 11:7; Jos 24:7; I Sam 12:16; II Chr 29:8; Luke 10:23-24).
- F. God’s love is a great motive to never backslide. No one else ever loved you like Him.
 - 1. He demands service with joyfulness and gladness for abundance (Deut 28:47-48).
 - 2. Paul appealed to the knowledge of Christ’s love as a motivating force (Phil 2:1-2).
 - 3. All the differences in your life are differences God made without you (I Cor 4:7).
 - 4. Consider the five phases of salvation and discriminating differences made in each one (*eternal* in Eph 1:3-4; Jer 31:3; *legal* in Romans 5:6-8; I John 4:10; *vital* in Eph 2:1-7; Tit 3:3-7; *practical* in I Tim 3:16; *final* in Rom 8:28-39; I Cor 15:22).
 - 5. Paul prayed for Ephesus to know the full dimensions of Christ’s love (Ep 3:14-19); if the result is being filled with all the fulness of God, which will end backsliding.

FEAR of Backsliding

- A. You have three conspiring foes out to destroy you – your flesh, the world, and Satan; this combination should terrify you into, *Running Scared*, as I preached 23 years ago.
- B. Those who imagine and fear political conspiracies fall prey to the real conspiracy; they think themselves well informed, but they are ignorant of the real war (Eph 6:12).
- C. Sin is deceitful and can turn us away from the living God (Jer 17:9; Heb 3:12-13).
- D. Every saint knows by experience the constant ebb and flow of spiritual vitality by sin, for they have experienced backsliding and merciful forgiveness and restoration.
- E. You should fear it; but you need not resign to it; you can be an overcomer with Christ.

EXCUSES of Backsliding

- A. It is your heart; it is a choice to diligently keep it or not; you can keep it with Christ.
- B. Some blame the pastor, for he is “just not preaching like he used to.” A man walking with God will profit

from singing. Instead of blaming the pastor, examine your heart.

- C. Some blame circumstances, for they are too beat down by life to live fully for the Lord, yet the most crucial thing they can do to defeat circumstances is to live for Him.
- D. Some blame their church, for the other hypocrites there just do not love them enough.
- E. Some blame their weakness, but Jesus came to give you victory (Phil 4:13; Jn 16:33).
- F. All pastors and churches are imperfect, requiring spiritual maturity to rise above them.

REMINDERS of Backsliding

- A. Our text is not one you should forget soon, for it warns clearly and promises just pain.
- B. A reason fathers must do their duty with children is due to backsliding (Ps 78:7-8,37); what greater gift can a father give his children than to teach them against this danger?
- C. Jeremiah warned Judah of backsliding (Jer 2:19; 3:6,8,11,12,14,22; 5:6; 8:5; 31:22).
- D. Hosea warned Israel of backsliding and will preach comfort later (Hosea 4:16; 11:7).

God's Greatness Is a Motive (Malachi 1:6-14)

- A. God appealed to the honor and fear given fathers and masters for greater loyalty (**1:6**).
 - 1. God rightly assumed honor of fathers and honor of masters (Heb 12:9; Ps 123:2).
 - 2. Therefore, He should be honored, for Israel called Him both Father and Master.
 - 3. He condemned the priests for despising His name, or His worship, by synecdoche.
 - 4. Typical of their arrogance and self-justification, they asked how they had done so.
- B. Malachi rebuked their contempt of God shown by less than best priestly service (**1:7**).
 - 1. The sin here is inferior sacrifices to God: we know it by context (1:7-8,10,12-14).
 - 2. The Spirit's method here was to turn actions into offensive words against God.
 - 3. "In that ye say" deduces from polluted bread an implied opinion of Jehovah's altar.
 - 4. Here is the key – what do your actions toward Jehovah say of your love for Him?
- C. God reasoned with them as to the propriety of inferior service to their governor (**1:8**).
 - 1. Their vile crime was inferior animal sacrifices with less value to God (1:7,13-14).
 - 2. Would such gifts gain the pleasure of a Persian governor to accept them? No way!
 - 3. We use this governor comparison to zealously worship God and see backsliding.
 - 4. Prayer, preparation, punctuality, attire, attentiveness, sobriety, zeal, etc. all fit in it.
- D. God rejects worshippers and worship, even prayer, when they cheat His glory (**1:9**).
 - 1. Persian governors would not accept their compromised gifts/persons, nor God.
 - 2. Malachi with sarcastic irony confronts the priests about neutered power with God.
 - 3. We cannot backslide and compromise His worship, or we lose our access to Him.
 - 4. Since their worship was compromised, would God respect their persons? Hardly!
- E. Malachi confronted the covetous greed and laziness of priests in their service (**1:10**).
 - 1. God mocked them for refusing to open the temple doors without being paid for it.

2. He had no pleasure in them, and He would not accept their offering. Let us beware!
 3. There are church members that attend and/or serve for false, foolish, vain motives.
 4. Watch your backsliding. God sees your level of love and zeal for Him perfectly.
- F. God will have worshippers in spirit and in truth for His glory among Gentiles (**1:11**).
1. Here is as plain of a prophecy of the gospel era of the New Testament anywhere.
 2. We saved Gentiles love the great name of Jehovah and the name of His Son Jesus.
 3. Are you happy to be heathen? Saved heathen? Give God glory for His great name.
 4. We fulfill the prophecy by exalting His name by pure worship without backsliding.
- G. After prophecy of the Gentiles, Malachi then again condemned Jewish worship (**1:12**).
1. The “it” of the first clause of this verse is traced to God’s name in 1:11 and 1:6.
 2. His name is great, and it is to be greatly praised, and its greatness is unsearchable.
 3. While the Gentiles considered it great (twice in 1:11), the Jews sinfully profaned it.
 4. “In that ye say” is the same as 1:7, for he returns to that subject (1:13-14). It is the logical implication by faulty worship. They did not actually say the profane words.
- H. God condemned the Jews with even more examples of words by their actions (**1:13**).
1. Their actions said God’s altar and worship were a weariness i.e. boring and tiring.
 2. Their actions said God’s altar and worship was nothing i.e. to snort disrespectfully.
 3. Will God accept worship that is cheap, disrespectful, sinful, or done casually? No!
 4. When you have backslidden from fully love and holy living, your worship flunks.
- I. God cursed any who gave less than the best in His worship; He is a great king (**1:14**).
1. These men were lying deceivers and hypocrites by not keeping vows in substance.
 2. When they viewed their flock to pay a vow, they overlooked the better for worse.
 3. Though these men brought sacrifices to the God of Israel, He cursed them for it.
 4. Each Christian must reflect on his baptism and membership commitment to Christ.
 5. Never give less than your best, for He is a great King that deserves the very best.
 6. If you backslide, meaning your love is now corrupted, you are a cursed deceiver.
 7. Today Christians love pleasures more than love God and His worship (II Tim 3:4).

CURES of Backsliding

- A. Remember from where you have fallen – repent – and do the first works (Rev 2:4-5).
1. This three-step process is what our Lord taught for recovery, obvious and simple.
 2. If we are dull spiritually, it is usually because we are not doing what we once did.
 3. If marriages sour, it is because spouses are not doing what they once lovingly did.
 4. Changes in conduct observed in people can be traced back to changes in heart.
- B. Examine yourself with the Spirit’s blessing to search heart and soul (Ps 139:23-24).
- C. Every sin that exists must be repented of, repudiated, rejected (Job 33:27; Prov 28:13).

- D. Every door that could lead to sin must be closed (Rom 13:14; I Jn 2:15-17; Ps 101:3).
 - 1. You must have personal and family revival of holiness by ending sinful influences.
 - 2. You must gird up loins and tighten hatches to be more zealously holy for the Lord.
- E. You must seek the Lord by prayer, reading, meditation. It takes time and commitment.
- F. If double minded, you get single minded, by sober, personal sacrifice (James 4:8-10).
- G. David fixed his heart to be single minded, without distractions (Ps 57:7; 108:1; 112:7).
- H. Pray for restoration, grace, and strength to stand (Ps 17:5; 18:36; 119:116-117,133).
 - I. We are in a spiritual warfare, needing God's might by armor and prayer (Ep 6:10-18).
- J. God seeks our repentance after backsliding (Hosea 14:1-3; Jeremiah 3:22; 31:18-20).
- K. Read David's commitment to keep his feet fixed with God (Psalm 26:12; 62:2,6).
- L. Reminders are crucial, even if we think we know enough, as Peter (II Pet 1:12-15).
- M. You must take time for self-examination with God (Ps 139:23-24; 19:12-14), and this will not happen if too busy to stop, consider, reflect, examine, repent, confess, reform.
- N. Let us watch and be sober in light of Christ's surprise coming to destroy (I Thess 5:6).

RESTORATION after Backsliding

- A. David described his slow and hard process of recovery (Ps 42:1-11; 43:1-5; 51:1-19).
- B. But God abundantly pardons when we repent better than we can imagine (Is 55:6-9).
- C. God forgives and restores mercifully (Hos 14:4-9). Take words and run (Hos 14:1-3)!

Conclusion:

- 1. Turn to the Lord now and repent for any foolishness, slothfulness, or backsliding. He will forgive.
- 2. Will you commit to go from here to tear every idol and temptation out of your life to be holy again?
- 3. Do not follow Felix for a convenient season (Acts 24:25). Today may be your last chance (Pr 29:1).