

## BACKSLIDING - Pt.4 "The Way Home"

### Int.

1. Aim: To show backsliders that there is a way to return home if they desire!
2. Review of Sermons on BACKSLIDING
  - a. The Problem is Heartbreaking - Possibility, probability, prevalence
  - b. A backslider is one who has returned to Sin, left his first love, occupied with things
  - c. There are many reasons why people backslide - the greatest reason is probably discouragement
  - d. But a backslider may return home to God
3. Regardless of why he went astray if the backslider does not return he is lost
  - a. In Luke 15 we have 3 parables that teach about how people become lost
  - b. The lost sheep wandered away from the flock, the lost coin was lost because of the carelessness of another, and the prodigal (lost) son went away willfully.
  - c. But regardless of how it happened they were still lost
  - d. And they need to return home
  - e. Regardless of how, or how long you have been lost, you still need to come home.
4. How do backsliders come home?
5. What can we do to help?
6. What must the backslider do?

## Discussion

### I. WHAT OTHERS CAN DO TO HELP THE BACKSLIDER RETURN

- A. Gal. 6:1 "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."
1. It must be our desire to bring him back to God
  2. We should never count a backslider as an enemy, but a beloved brother or sister who needs our help
  3. God expects us to do our best to bring them back to the fold
- B. We should pray for them
1. Jesus set a wonderful example because he prayed for Peter when he was on the verge of wavering
  2. Luke 22:31-32 NKJV "And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! I indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. 32 "But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren."
  3. Just as Jesus prayed for Peter we should pray for backsliders that we know
    - a. Call their names
    - b. Pray that God will bring about circumstances that will turn their heart toward their lost condition

C. Then we should TRY TO RESTORE that person

1. Go to the individual in a spirit of humility
  - a. Gal. 6:1 - restore = mend
  - b. Make sure that our lives are pure so that he will find no occasion of stumbling in us
  - c. If a person knows that we are approaching them in a spirit of humility and not hypocrisy, then he will likely listen to us.
2. Speak frankly to the person about their soul and the need for immediate confession and repentance

## D. What we say depends upon what we discover as to why they became unfaithful.

1. If they were not fully converted then we must teach them
  - a. Heb. 5:12-13 "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. 13. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe."
  - b. Every babe in Christ must be grounded in the first principles
2. If they were offended then we should learn who or what offended them
  - a. If they were offended by the word - then remind them of John 12:48 "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."
  - b. If they were offended by a brother then remind them of Mt. 18:15-17

3. If they have lost faith then they must be taught
  - a. Rom 10:17
  - b. They may need a study in Christian Evidences
  
4. If they have been overtaken by worldly pleasures then point out what sin will do to our soul
  - a. 1 Jn. 2:15-16 "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17. and the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."
  - b. Do this in a spirit of love
  
5. If they feel that Christians have failed them then help them to see they also have a responsibility
  - a. Show them that the members do really care about them
  - b. Ask others to visit them
  
6. If they are weak they may be easily influenced by evil
  - a. But they can also be influenced for good, in most cases.
  - b. But it will take a lot of effort, and love and patience.

E. It is possible to restore a backslider

1. It will take a lot of prayer, personal attention, and proper teaching
2. Do not give up until repentance is refused or gained
3. Jas. 5:19-20 "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;  
20. Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."
  - a. Hide a multitude of sins
  - b. Hidden from God's sight by forgiveness
  - c. Lev. 1-16 = expiation - get right with God - sacrifices

## **II. WHAT MUST THE BACKSLIDER DO TO COME HOME ?**

A. Notice what the prodigal son did in coming home in Luke 15

1. He came to himself - v. 17
  - a. He remembered a good home
  - b. What do erring brothers remember about us?
2. He said "I will arise" - v. 18
  - a. He made a resolution or a promise
  - b. Many times a backslider will say "Now I know that I ought to come back and be restored but I want promise you anything."
  - c. The way home begins with a promise.

3. He said "I will go" - v. 18
  - a. It is not enough just to resolve to get out. We must get up and get out.
  - b. This young man went at once.
  - c. Sometimes people will say, "I'm coming back to the church one of these days, but I can't right now."
  - d. Procrastination is the thief of many souls.
  - e. This young man said I will go !
  
4. He said "I will say" v. 18 and 19
  - a. You cannot solve sin while denying it.
  - b. The hardest words to say are "I have sinned"
  
5. Watch his trip home
  - a. It was very hard
  - b. Physically it was hard because he was starved and exhausted
  - c. Emotionally it was hard because he carried a broken heart and to look his dad in the eye was going to be the hardest thing he had ever done.
  - d. It is easy to leave the church - but hard to return. It is the hardest thing we will ever do in life.

- B. In returning home the prodigal must do what God requires of him
1. He does not have to be re-baptized - only one baptism
  2. But he must:
    - a. Repent of his sins - Acts 8:22 "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee."
    - b. Confess his sins - 1 Jn.1:9 Admit, acknowledge our sins "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
    - c. Pray for forgiveness - Acts 8:22 "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee."
    - d. Cleansed - 1 Jn. 1:9
  3. Then accept God's forgiveness - because we need to forgive ourselves if God has!!!

### **III. OH PRODIGAL RETURN**

- A. I sa. 55:6-7 "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: 7. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."
- B. Are you a backslider in God's sight?
1. Have you failed to grow and serve?
  2. Have you gone back into that old life?
  3. If so the wrath of God is upon you and you must return to God while you have the opportunity.

C. Peter says you are blind - 2 Pet. 1:9 "But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."

1. You cannot see that you were once purged from your sins
2. You cannot see Christ as the pure and spotless one that He is
3. You cannot see your responsibilities to him
4. You cannot see the judgment of God that is coming
5. You cannot see the awful terror or hell
6. You cannot see yourself as God sees you, or you would do something about your soul

D. Take a look at the life you now live out of Christ as a prodigal!

1. Is it right?
2. What is beautiful about it?
3. Would you want everybody in the world to use your life as a model or standard?
4. Would you want everybody to follow you in life and death? Would you want them to follow you to the place in eternity that your present life is leading?
5. Would you say you have found the real peace, joy and satisfaction that your soul longed for?
6. Would you say that your future is bright and promising?

## **CONCLUSION**

1. Your only wise conclusion is to come home.
2. Don't continue as a backslider
3. Don't die as a backslider.
4. A touching story in the Bible is in Luke 15 when the father ran to meet the prodigal son who was returning home.
5. The Father above would like to run to meet you as your return home!
6. Oh, Prodigal, will you return ?

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Sermon by Arthur Pigman - Dec. 9, 2007 - Sunday Morning  
Evans Church of Christ  
515 Gibbs Road  
Evans, Ga. 30809  
706-855-1249  
evanscoc@bellsouth.net  
www.evansgachurchofchrist.org