

The Backslider

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[0 : 00] Jeremiah 3 verse 22 Lot's backsliding. To backslide it means to turn back. It means to slide back. To turn away from God. To coast downhill. It's a growing cold. It's a forgetting of God. Lot serves as a good example. Lot serves as a good example of a backslider.

Lot, he backslid bit by bit. He got closer and closer to the world. Ultimately he pitched his tent at Sodom. Unlike Abraham who had an altar, Lot was weak in his spiritual life. Abraham built an altar when he pitched his tent. Lot did not. He followed after his worldly desires. He pitched his tent towards Sodom. Even though he knew it was a wicked city, Lot was a backslider.

Lot's choice led to sorrow and hardship. Lot's sin led to a trail of trouble. All but two of his children were burnt to death in that wicked city.

And his wife turned to a pillar of salt. A broken man, he lived in a cave in the mountains. Then got drunk and ruined his own daughters who still had the ways of Sodom in their hearts.

[1 : 45] Lot, Lot, a backslider. Lot was a backslider. An example to us of what happens when we backslide. A priest called Ironside said, If you are ever closer to the Lord than you are right now, you're backslidden. That's a challenge, isn't it? For every one of us. For me.

If you are closer to the Lord than you are now, you're backslidden. Listen, God's word warns us against the danger of backsliding. And we ought to have a holy fear of it.

A Christian who backslides is like a child who disobeys his parents. It does not affect his sonship, but it affects his fellowship, his joy and the approval of his father.

And it starts in the heart. We read that in Proverbs 14, verse 14. In Proverbs 14, verse 14, it says, The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways.

It's a heart condition. It starts in your heart. In your heart, brother. In your heart, sister. It's a heart condition. A stubbornness, a hardness of heart.

[2 : 54] It's like when Solomon, in 1 Kings 11, 4 and verse 9, Solomon was old. It says, His wives turned away his heart after other gods.

And his heart was not perfect with the Lord, his God. And the Lord was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel.

Friends, it's when a believer calls his devotion, his affection to the things of God. When he drops out of fellowship. When he is not walking with the Lord.

Not faithful, not spiritual. But yet, it can be too. A Christian can still go through the motions. And still go to church regularly. And still be a backslider. It's not about the going to church per se as the ultimate thing.

But it's about the heart. It's about your heart. It's about my heart. It's about, are you a backslider? A fleshly, carnal, godless one.

[4 : 00] Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. It starts with the heart. Can be a pride in the heart. We can get proud in our heart. Can become as a heart gets wayward.

Where it doesn't come to the altar of God. Where it doesn't squirm with conviction. As the Holy Spirit ministers through the word. Keep thy heart.

Proverbs 4, 23. With all diligence. For out of it are the issues of life. Keep thy heart. With all diligence. It starts in the heart. And in the mind too.

We read in 2 Corinthians 11, verse 3. But I fear less by any means as the serpent beguiled or enticed Eve through his subtlety, through his craftiness, you could say.

Just as that serpent tricked Eve, so your mind should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. Our mind can be corrupted.

[4 : 56] Our mind can be misled. Backsliding. It's a process. It's like losing the hair. You don't suddenly notice that that last hair falls out of your head and you're bald.

It's a gradual thing, isn't it? I'm experiencing it from day to day. Moment by moment. It's a gradual process. And backsliding is like that too. It's a gradual process.

It's a process of decay, of that slackness, of that growth, of deadness, of apathy, of complacency. And the word warms us much against it. It says in Amos 6.1, Woe to them that are at ease in Zion. Those that are complacent. Those that are taking the easy ride.

He says woe to them. Woe to them that aren't at ease. It's when we neglect the word of God. When we get apathetic to it. When it doesn't move us like it used to. The word of God.

[5 : 55] When it doesn't inflame and inspire us like it used to. The word of God. When we neglect it. When there's a decreasing desire for the things of God.

When there's an increase in coldness in our heart. A hardness in our heart. A little warmness in our heart. In our prayer life. In our devotional life. In our zeal for souls.

Our zeal for soul winning. Our love of fellowship. Think of how is your concern for lost souls. How is your concern for the lost ones.

The lost ones. The Christless ones. The hell bound ones. How is your soul in relation to them. Is there a concern. Is there a concern in your heart. Is there a compassion.

I watched a message lately. It was titled. You don't have the right to remain silent. You know what the police say.

[6 : 53] Or the US police. You have the right to remain silent. You don't have the right to remain silent. As a Christian. You ought not to be silent. You ought to be a witness. You ought to speak up.

Speak out. And be a soul winner. And yet. There's a loss. In the backslider. A loss of that love. For the things of God. A loss of that sensitivity. To spiritual things.

A loss of that fear of God. Of that abhorrence of sin. The backslider. Perhaps you have drifted too. And you don't even realise it.

It's like Samson. It was said of him. In Judges 16 verse 20. That he did not know. That the Lord was departed from him. He didn't know. It just happened.

Almost imperceptibly. Before he knew it. And it starts. With little things. The backsliding starts. With little things. And I'm preaching to myself here tonight too.

[7 : 51] I'm not saying. This is to you. It's to all of us. Myself included. It's the little things brother. It's the little things sister. The little things we neglect. The little things.

That we take on. We read in Proverbs. A little sleep. A little slumber. A little falling of the hands to rest. A little leaven. Paul writes.

In the lung. Little foxes that spoil the vice. Just little things. Just a little leaven. There's danger in the little things. There's danger in the little things.

As well as the big things. That thin ice that we might tread upon. Danger. Danger. Don't fool yourself. Friends tonight. Backsliding. It's not always obvious.

In 2 Kings 17 verse 9. It says. The children of Israel. Did secretly those things. That were not right. Against the Lord their God. They secretly did the things.

[8 : 47] That were not right. Against the Lord their God. You can conceal your sin. You can conceal. And hide it from men.

But before God. It is open to his eyes. You can't hide it from his eyes. Paul said it's possible to profess the truth. And deny him in our actions.

Read that in Titus 1.16. They profess that they know God. But in works they deny him. The backslider.

What is God's response to the backslider? What does God do with the backslider? How does he deal with the backslider? We read in Exodus 34.14.

The Lord's name is jealous. He is a jealous God. God is angry at backsliders. He's angry at the backsliding. In Zechariah 7.11-12.

[9 : 47] It says of them. But they refused to hearken. And pulled away the shoulder. And stopped their ears that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone.

Lest they should hear the law and the words. Whence the Lord of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets. Therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts.

They would not hear. They pulled away the shoulder. Their heart was a stone. God had a great wrath. The wrath of God is against the backslider. The chastening of God is against the backslider. In Hebrews 12.5-6 it says that he chastens his beloved when they sin. It says, He loves you.

That's why he chastens you. He loves you. That's why he scourges you. When you're in a backslidden state. Backsliding. The chastening of God is against the backslider.

[11:04] Backsliding is an evil and bitter thing. In Jeremiah 2.19 it says, Thy backsliding shall reprove thee. Know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord.

It's an evil and bitter thing. You'll feel that bitterness. You'll feel that regret. You'll feel that emptiness if you're a backslider. The wrath of God is against the backslider.

The chastening of God is against the backslider. Before I was afflicted I went to Australia but now have I kept thy word. There's a time when God chastens the believer as his children.

But thankfully there's another one. The love of God for the backslider. The love of God that he extends in our unworthiness. In our undeserving condition.

Yet he extends his love. We read of that in Hosea 14. The desire of his heart is to woo and win the backslider back to himself. Hosea 14.

[12:11] I will heal their backsliding. I will love them freely. God extends his love freely. Of course I'm quoting verses here and there.

Some of which are priced to the nation of Israel. I'm very conscious of taking the word in context. Yet there's principles here that God is wanting to heal the backsliding nation. God is wanting to heal those who are astray.

Those who are undeserving. God wants to bring soul healing. He wants to bring heart cleansing. I believe he still does today. For you. For me. For this nation.

For this people. For those who are backsliding in Australia tonight. God wants to heal. He wants to save your soul. He wants to restore your walk with him.

And he brings mercy. He brings forgiveness. He brings restoration. Look through the word as we see some. For example Thomas. In his moment of unbelief. But he returned.

[13:12] He returned to faith. Peter. He denied the Lord in the face of persecution. But the Lord said I have prayed for you.

That you do not fail. Says in the word in Proverbs. The just man. Though he falls seven times. He gets up again. He doesn't remain in his sin. Moses fell.

David fell. Peter fell. The church is in Revelation. Fell. And were exhorted to repent. And friends. What about you tonight? We're all under attack. Every one of us.

Every one of you. Every one of us. And we all can be subject to. That danger of backsliding. It's a danger. It's an ever present danger. Because we've got an ever present enemy.

And it says of him. That he wants to wear down the saints. He wants to wear you down. Backslider beware. Satan is working overtime.

[14:07] We can see the evidence of that. Be watchful. Against compromise with the world. The cares of this world. The love of this world. The word warns us much.

Watch. Be sober. Take heed. Beware. Hold fast. And Jeremiah 3.14. Turn. Turn.

O backsliding children. Save the Lord. Notice he still calls the backslidden. His children. Now we can take heart in that. That even if tonight.

Even if this very present moment. You're far, far from God. You're far from where you ought to be. Where you used to be. He says. My child. Turn.

Turn. Turn. God's cry to the backslider is to turn. To return. To return to him. As we see of the prodigal. The reception of the father.

[15:05] For this stinking, rotten, filthy scum of a man. The gracious welcome. The gracious, warm and generous welcome to the prodigal.

God's response to the backslidden. It's wrath. It's chasing. But it's love. Free love. Undeserved love. Jonah was a backslider. Jonah. He fled from God. He ran from God as far as he could run. But God chased him down. God chased him down.

He was a marked man. He couldn't escape. The Holy Spirit. He couldn't escape. The master. The master. Jonah responded. He prayed in the fish's belly.

What about you tonight? Are you a backslider? Are you backslidden? Are you not where you were? Are you less than where you were? I'm sure we could all think how we could do more.

[16:05] And be more for him. Do we need business with God? In Hebrews it says, Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. What of your response tonight?

Malachi 3.7 Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. How to get back to God? That should be our prayer, our desire.

So seek him. As it says in Jeremiah 3.12 Go and proclaim these words to the north and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you.

For I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger forever. Jeremiah 3.13 Only acknowledge thine iniquity. Acknowledge thine iniquity.

But thou hast transgressed against the Lord your God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers. It goes on, You have not obeyed my voice, saith the Lord. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord.

[17 : 07] And it continues, I will bring you to Zion. Turn, O backsliding, and I will bring you to Zion. He can refresh, He can renew, He can revitalise that life.

He can rekindle that zeal, that fervour again. He can revive that first love again. God deals with the heart. He challenges the heart.

What of David? We know what happened to David. David fixed his heart. He made it single-minded, without distraction. In Psalm 57.7 he says, My heart is fixed, O God.

My heart is fixed. I will sing and give praise. His heart was steadfast. His heart was fixed. We know that man, in whom it says that he was a man after God's own heart.

This man David, he blew it completely. He was an absolute disaster. And yet God turned his life around. Will you be as one, as such a one?

[18 : 11] Will you be as those in Hosea, who will sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy, break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord?

Will you be as one, who will break up your fallow ground? I know some preachers of old have used it, of that hardness of the heart. As a breaking up, as a plough, will break up the field, so that God would break up our heart, and plough deep.

As it says in 2 Chronicles 30 verse 9, The Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if you return unto him.

It takes humility of heart. We read in Proverbs 3.34, He giveth grace unto the lowly, grace to the humble. Friends, think of it tonight, prayerfully think of it tonight, your response, to the wooing of the Holy Spirit, to his challenge to you.

Will you be devoted to Christ, committed to him, crucified with him? Will you repent, and depend upon him? Where are the Puritans today, we could ask?

[19 : 23] Where are the Puritans today, those that would be pure, in their faith? Puritans. That's where it stems from. Here's a Puritan's prayer. A Puritan's prayer.

Listen to this carefully. A Puritan's prayer. Lord Jesus, give me a deeper repentance, a horror of sin, a dread of its reproach.

Help me chastely to flee it, and jealously to resolve that my heart, shall be thine alone. Give me a deeper trust, that I may lose myself, to find myself in thee, the ground of my rest, the spring of my being.

Give me a deeper knowledge, of thyself as saviour, master, lord, and king. Give me deeper power, deeper power, in private prayer, more sweetness in thy word, more steadfast grip, on its truth.

Give me deeper holiness, in speech, thought, action, and let me not seek, moral virtue apart, from thee. Plough deep in me, great Lord, heavenly husbandman, that my being, may be, a tilled field, the roots of grace, spreading far and wide, and that thou alone, art seen in me, thy beauty golden, like summer harvest, thy fruitfulness as, autumn plenty, I have no master, but thee, no law, but thy will, no delight, but thyself, no wealth, but that thou givest, no good, but that thou blessest, no peace, but that thou bestowest, I am nothing, but that thou makest me, I have nothing, but that I receive, from thee, I can be nothing, but that grace, adorns me, quarry me deep Lord, and then fill me, to overflowing, with living water, what a prayer, the prayer of a backslider, coming to Christ alone, can make us better, friends to close,

[21 : 34] I picked this up, just today, the backslider test, the backslider test, how do you know, if you are a backslider, and I'll just pray to you, in part, when prayer ceases to be, a vital part, of a professing, Christian's life, might he be a backslider, when the quest, for biblical truth ceases, might he be a backslider, when that truth, is not applied inwardly, a backslider, when earnest thoughts, about eternal things, cease to be, regular and gripping, a backslider, when the services, of the church, lose their delights, a backslider, when sports, recreation, and entertainment, are a large, and necessary part, of your lifestyle, might you be, a backslider, when the sins, of the body, and

mind, can be indulged in, without, a tinge of conscience, might you be, a backslider, when aspirations, of Christlike holiness, cease to dominate, your life, and thinking, might you be, a backslider, when the acquisition, of money, and goods, becomes, a dominant part, of your thinking, a backslider, when you can, mouth religious, songs and words, without heart, a backslider, when you can, hear the Lord's name, taken in vain, and spiritual things, mocked, and eternal issues, flippantly treated, and not be moved, when you can, watch degrading, movies and TV, when breaches, of peace, in the brotherhood, are of no concern, to you, when the slightest, excuse, seems sufficient, to keep you, from spiritual duty, and opportunity, might you be, a backslider, when, you can, pardon your own, sin and sloth, by saying, the Lord understands, might you be, a backslider, when there is, no music in your soul, and no song, in your heart, a backslider, when you adjust, happily, to the world's lifestyle, when human misery, around you, does, and you do nothing, to relieve it, when the church, has fallen, into spiritual decline, and the word of God, is no longer preached, there, with power, and you are still content, backslider, when the spiritual condition, of the world, around you, and you cannot, perceive it, when you are willing, to, cheat your employer, when, you are, find yourself, rich in grace, and mercy, and love, like your own,

God likeness, when your tears, are dried up, and the hard, cold, spiritual fact, of your backsliding, does not unleash them, the hardness, of your heart, backslider, how do you know, if you are a backslider, this is another source, if you can't remember, the last time, you had a quiet time, if you find yourself, being critical, finding fault, instead of worshipful, focusing on God, when you go to church, if you stop, growing spiritually, and blame others, for it, you might be, a backslider, if you are praying, the same prayers, you were praying, a year ago, you might be, a backslider, if you are less involved, in your church now, than you were, a year ago, you might be, a backslider, if you don't remember, the last time, you shared your faith, if you find yourself, reading other books, or things, more than your Bible, if you aren't, regularly praying, for your lost friends, and relatives, to come to Christ, if you discover, you get offended, more easily now, than you, used to, if you don't recall, the last time, you gave sacrificially, if you haven't, confessed your sin, to God, and asked for his forgiveness, in the last seven days, you might be, a backslider, friends, yet God, he shows wrath, he shows chastening, but he shows love, and friends, whatever your state tonight, you can respond, respond like Jonah, as he prayed, from the fish's belly, cry out to him, cry out to him, afresh, renew that, faith, renew that love, renew that walk, and God will restore,

Heavenly Father, we thank you, that you are merciful, that you call us, to yourself, help us Lord, to see our lack, and do something with it, Lord, to confess it, unto you, that we might be, those people, that you have called us to be, help us Lord, to be refined, to be revived, to be, recharged, Lord, that you might be honoured, in every life, in every heart, in this gathering, of these people, today, and for the time ahead, that we might be, that people, not a backslidden people, but a people, who will return, who will turn, unto you, Lord, we pray, revitalise, that spiritual life, Lord, help us to come, to that throne of grace, help us Lord, to pray, we pray Lord, help us to, to read your word, to fellowship, to witness, to do those, basic things again, that we must do, not to earn, our salvation, but, because we love you, so much, we cannot be silent, we pray in Jesus name.

I love to tell, the story, of haunting things, above, of Jesus, and his glory,