

# What is Backsliding?

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[ 0 : 00 ] Now for a short time tonight let's turn to the passage in Colossians that we read together. Colossians chapter 1, I'd like to base our thoughts this evening on verse 23.

We can read from verse 21 because it's one sentence through to the end of verse 23. As Colossians 1 at verse 21, And you who once were alienated and hostile in mind doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.

If indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Especially these words in verse 23 at the beginning. If indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel.

We could take that verse in different ways. We could take it to emphasize what it contains, in fact, the doctrine of perseverance. Perseverance.

[ 1 : 16 ] Because it very much contains the emphasis of perseverance as something that's related to just what comes before then. In order to actually be presented before God, holy and blameless and above reproach, we need to persevere on in our life in this world until God takes us out of it.

Until God brings us into that perfect state of holiness and blamelessness above reproach. But we're not going to look at it in terms of perseverance this evening.

We're going to look at it in what goes in the other direction. Because the topic we want to take tonight is backsliding. What is backsliding?

It's a commonly used term, again, like most of the words we're using in these topical studies. And it's interesting that when you look at Scripture as a whole, it has pretty much as much to say on backsliding as it has to say on persevering.

Because the two things, of course, are so very closely linked. Unless we are persevering, then we are backsliding. There isn't actually a neutrality.

[ 2 : 35 ] There's no sort of in-between going backwards as against going forwards. And that's why Scripture gives so much emphasis to backsliding.

Using different terms for that talks in some ways about the descriptions it gives for backsliding. It uses different words.

But it comes to pretty much the same thing. That it's in the opposite direction from perseverance, from going forward, from making progress spiritually in the following of God.

In other words, this verse is really saying to us that perseverance is itself, in the way it's used here, a condition of ultimately coming to the state that's mentioned there, the state of blamelessness, of perfection, or holiness in the presence of God.

And to actually receive from that, to go back from that perseverance, which is here as a condition of ultimately coming to heaven, is in fact backsliding.

[ 3 : 41 ] So I want to ask a number of questions. There are five points, especially, that we want to try and bring out very briefly, and they're related to each other. First of all, what is backsliding?

What exactly is it? I've given some clues to it already, of course. But it's interesting that the same idea, or the same kind of language, is used in the Bible of backsliding as of repentance.

And that shouldn't surprise us, because as repentance is a turning, so too is backsliding. Repentance is a turning, as we've seen many times, from sin to God, from sin towards God.

You're turning from having your back to God, and your face away from Him, your life away from Him. You're turning from that to face God, and have your back to the life you once lived.

That you could say is demonstrated, as we saw clearly in the prodigal in Luke 15. But you see, backsliding is also turning. It's turning from having your face toward God, that you have in repentance, in a life of perseverance and faith, going on walking in His ways.

[ 4 : 56 ] Backsliding is turning from that, and going back towards, or beginning again, to face in the direction you were once in, before you came to follow the Lord.

But who backslide? The question often answered is, can we use backsliding of anyone, except someone who's truly converted?

Well, the answer to that may be rather complicated, but you can simplify it by saying, the only way we know for sure, and even then we only have limited understanding, only God knows ultimately, and perfectly, and for sure, who is and isn't converted, He alone sees into the heart.

But the only way that you can gauge about a person's life, what direction they're in, has their life really changed, is the lifestyle that they follow. And when the lifestyle they follow, and when the profession they make, is that God has changed their lives, in His grace that He has converted them, that He's brought them to be saved, to know Himself, then you take that person, on the evidence you have, as a convert, as someone who's converted, as someone who has come to know the Lord, savingly.

And when such a person, then begins to show signs, of going back in their habits, in their way they do things, in their attitude, in their outward life, when you see that, then that person is backsliding, that person, you could say, is no longer openly, and obviously, following the Lord obediently.

[ 6 : 37 ] There's a lot of things you could say, that expand on that, but in essence, that's really, what you might say, is a definition, of backsliding.

It's really living, contrary, to what a convert, ought to be in their life, and to show, in their life. And it doesn't matter, whether that person, has just been, a little, a short time, in following the Lord, or professing the Lord, or like David, or Peter, has been on the journey, for some time.

We are all, in need, of this script, you're teaching, it's not just for, young people, though it's not, just for old people either.

Because we are all, prone, as we'll see, to backsliding. The other thing I would say, about what is, backsliding, well, two things maybe. You can have backsliding, in a very private sense, in a kind of hidden sense.

You can have someone, who is backslidden, somebody, who's been following, the Lord, and has come into, a backslidden state, let's put it, who, who, who, in their own hearts, know, that things are not, as they used to be.

[ 7 : 53 ] And that can go on, for some time, without it becoming, obvious outwardly. They may still go, to church regularly, they may still come, to the prayer meeting regularly, they may still talk, in a way, that shows, their mind is, set on spiritual things.

But yet, when the person turns, when a person turns, privately, in their hearts, away from God, away from following God, away from, the things that we'll see, in a moment, that have to do with, the essential things, of, a progressing, persevering, Christian life.

When you turn back, from these things, it's not really, that long. It will certainly, become obvious, sooner or later, let's put it that way, that that person, is backslidden. Because, you cannot keep, backsliding, hidden in your heart, forever.

It's going to manifest, itself, in your life, openly, somewhere. It's going to become, obvious, in your life, that things are not, as they should be, between yourself, and God, between the backslider, and the Bible, backslider, and prayer, or prayer meetings, and fellowship, with God's people.

So many things, are affected. But what we're saying is, what begins, inwardly anyway, and may go on, for some time, privately, and hidden, it comes to light, eventually, and shows itself, openly.

[ 9 : 14 ] The other thing, is that backsliding, is actually different, in terms of, what's involved. It's different, from occasional, lapses, or you might say, spiritual dips.

Backsliding, is more, that sort of, ongoing, habit, of being turned, away from the Lord. We all have, lapses, we all have, moments, or times, when we, are not, what we should be, when we neglect, our prayers, and come back to them, when we don't read the Bible, as frequently, so we can only hurry, through things, compared to spending, the time we should, on them.

But that's not the same, as backside, that may be the beginnings, of backsliding, that may lead, to backsliding, as we'll see, just later on, in the study, but backsliding, itself is, when the habit, has gone on, for some time, and when the person, has entered, into a state, of being turned, away from God, and increasingly, turning in that direction, away from him.

That's more, backsliding, than the, smaller, episodes, if you like, of just, neglect, which, are quickly, reversed, or caught up on, and rectified.

So we're taking it, that backsliding, is something, that has gone on, for some time, and is still going on. And that it's, something, on the part of those, who have, come to know the Lord, or confess, that they know the Lord, have come openly, to profess him, and to follow him, and have come, to state of themselves, by the way they live, or by word of mouth, by some confession, by taking communion, whatever else, we associate with, following the Lord, there is, in that person's life, the backslider, a turning away, from, some of these things, if not all of them.

[ 11 : 13 ] What is backsliding? It is that turning, away from, God, communion with him, and all the other things, associated with that. So how does, backsliding, come about?

What leads to it? What gives rise, to backsliding? Now we, we tend, mostly to think, about things, which are, outside of ourselves, and think, of these things, as, things which begin, backsliding for us.

For example, we may think of, relationships, people get into, relationships, which are not, necessarily helpful, and turn out to be, unhelpful, to their, Christian progress.

It might be, that we're, taking up a new job, or, are involved in our work, in something, where we just, immerse ourselves, in the work, and for maybe, quite considerable, length of time, we don't make time, for reading our Bible, we miss out, a lot of prayer meetings, or even, Sabbath services, and we're so, immersed, in our work, that it overtakes, our spiritual, our spiritual, attentiveness, to the things, of our soul.

That can cause, backsliding. There's so many, other things, you can think of yourself, that you can add to that, that from outside, puts so much pressure, on us, that we neglect, the spiritual things, and we begin, to backslide, and then sooner, rather than later, we find ourselves, having slitten away, quite a bit, and before we know it, we're actually, quite a distance, from God, and from the kind of things, that we were once, involved with, at least in terms of, relishing those things.

[ 12 : 52 ] But, backsliding, does not, begin, with things, outside yourself. These may be, influences, these may be, things that have, put pressure on us, but, this is where, backsliding begins.

Backsliding, itself, is the sliding, of this person, this soul, that has come, to turn away, from God, to some degree, or other, compared to what, they used to have.

Backsliding, begins, in ourselves. We, are the ones, who backslide. The devil, doesn't make us, backslide. The world, does not, make us, backslide. Backsliding, is an act, of our will.

It's an act, of our heart. It's within, our souls. It's a movement, it's a movement, within, ourselves, maybe triggered off by, maybe actually, influenced by, but the cause, is in ourselves.

We, are responsible, for our backsliding. And it is we, who have to put it right, when it happens. It begins, in here, it begins in our souls, it begins in our minds, it begins, whatever influences, we are, we are, aware of, at certain times, we have to actually, confess that, this is where, our backsliding begins.

[ 14 : 16 ] You can look at, the examples, that are very clear, in scripture, mentioned to already, David, and Peter, one from each testament, and other two, but these are the two, that you think of, mainly, I'm sure, when you ask, who in the Bible, is brought before us, as someone, who backslid.

And, they come to mind, readily. And as you look at them, as you study their lives, as you look especially, at the, immediate, circumstances, and what led up to, these circumstances, before, backsliding, you can see that, actually, whatever influences, were involved, this is where it began.

Peter, did not, listen, to his Lord's voice. He didn't listen, to the Lord's warning. He thought, he could manage it, as he managed, before he thought.

And if, even everybody else, of the disciples, deserted Jesus, he was confident, that he would never do that. And yet, he was the one, who denied him, three times.

So, it begins, in ourselves. But it happens, more often than not, very gradually. Backsliding, is not like, somebody coming with, a bucket of cold water, and throwing it, and throwing it, in your face.

[ 15 : 40 ] You're immediately, aware of that, and it gives you a shock. And it's, maybe that sort of, thing, in a spiritual sense, an event, of some kind, that shocks us, out of backsliding, but backsliding, itself, does not, 99.9% of the time, anyway, come from, anything sudden, like that.

it comes, about, gradually. And the devil knows, that that's what we are, most prone to, just gradual, influences, gradual, steps, here and there.

We have a, wonderful picture of, backsliding, actually, in the, book of Proverbs, maybe not the most obvious, place to look for it, but, in the book of Proverbs, which of course, is a book, to do, so much with wisdom, with believing wisdom, in chapter 24, of Proverbs, and from verse 30, onwards there, it gives us a picture, of a neglected vineyard.

I passed by, the field, of a slugger, somebody who had, grown lazy, by the vineyard, of a man lacking sense, and behold, it was all over, grown with thorns, the ground was covered, with nettles, and its stone wall, was broken down.

Then I saw, and I considered, it, I looked, and I received, instruction. Now, a vineyard, doesn't become, neglected overnight. You don't go past, a vineyard one day, and you see, it's all beautifully, kept, and manicured, and all the, the vines are growing, and properly looked after, and pruned, and then the next day, or the next week, you go after, it's totally up, it's just a shambles.

[ 17 : 20 ] It happens, gradually, and it happens, gradually, just through, bit by bit, increasing the neglect. I looked, I looked at it, he said, and I received, instruction, and then he says this, a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands, to rest, and poverty, will come upon you, like a robber, and want like an armed man.

What's he saying? It begins with a little, a little carelessness, a little spiritual slumber, just taking a nap, here and there, from what you know, are actually, your essential, spiritual exercises.

And that goes on, and you add to it, it increases, and neglect grows. And then what it says there, your want comes, your situation, of really being in trouble, then comes upon you, like an armed man, you've weakened yourself, so much, that when something, then does attack you, you're not ready for it, you're not strong enough for it, you're not built up against it, and it just, has an easy victory over you.

That's what he's saying, that's why, backsliding is, so dangerous, or one of the reasons, because it can lead to, some sudden temptation, then coming on us, when we're backslidden, and boy, we're then in real trouble.

We're really then, in the grip of, sin, not of the devil. So it comes, really, gradually, and you know, it comes, perhaps think about, backsliding, when you think of the things, that we, that we have as, our spiritual exercises, believing, faith, reading the Bible, prayer, Christian fellowship, attending, the word, preaching, and so on, we may actually have, all of these still going on, in a formal sort of way, and yet, that's what I mean is, we haven't rejected, these all together, we're not saying, the backslider, seldom says, well, I'm just going to get rid of, all these things, they're a waste of time, I've come to the, to the view, that God doesn't exist, and I'm far better off, as a secularist, you don't find, the backslider, saying that, it's not so much, rejecting things, outright, it's not, ejecting things, from your life, and say, right,

[ 19 : 48 ] I'm going to be rid of that, I'm not going to do that anymore, it's more to do, with taking things in, which then squeezes, the spiritual things out, if I put, a barrel in front of you there, filled it up with water, to the brim, and then said to you, I want you to remove, most of that water, but you're not allowed, to tip the barrel over, you're not allowed, to take anything, cup, or bucket, or any kind of container, like that, to dip it in, and take the stuff, out of the barrel, you have to take, most of that water out, but you're not allowed, to do it in any of those ways, how could you do it, what you could do it, by taking, a pebble, and dropping it in, and then taking another pebble, and dropping it in, and then another one, and then another one, and as you keep on doing that, and as the pebbles, take up, the space in the barrel, the water is pushed out, and you end up, when the pebbles, are right up to the top, and there's hardly any water left, and that's how it is, with our souls too, you take the pebbles, of the world, and you just let one, drop into your soul, and you say, that's not really, doing any harm,

I'll easily catch up, but the next day, you put another one in, and you don't attend to it, and you put another one in, and before you know it, they multiply, and it's squeezing out, the water of your spiritual life, your spiritual vitality, the water, or the things, that have to do with, the health of your soul, they're more and more, being pushed out, by the things, that you're putting in, that's what backsliding, really, is essentially, very much about, it's far more to do with, taking things in, and just let them, cram into your soul, and more and more, the space is taken up, by that, and less and less, space is left, for the essential, spiritual things, that really keep you, in good spiritual health, so it comes about, it comes about gradually, most of the time, it's something, that's inward, it comes about, from within ourselves, but very often, through other influences, outside, it is of course, to do with sin, as well in that, but it comes about, by adding things, by just having things, come into your life, and not really, dealing with them, so that you're, making sure, that they're pushed out, and that you're keeping up, what you should be, keeping up as a Christian, that's how you can, very easily, very soon, become a backslidden, disciple, so, what is it, how does it come about, what are the symptoms, of it, when God, was speaking to Israel, through the prophets, like Hosea, he very often, referred to their, backslidden condition, as a kind of, spiritual disease, something that they, needed a, spiritual remedy for, and, and there are, there are symptoms, just like there is, with a, a normal, physical disease, something wrong with you, physically, there's also, there are also symptoms, of, of backsliding, or of this, spiritual condition, first of all, one of the symptoms, is, that you, lose your appetite, for communion with God, for the word of God, and that includes, for, both in private, and in terms, of your life, publicly as well, in terms of, being part of the church, of God, appetite, is something, we're conscious of, does actually, at times, dip, but then again, it comes back, but with, with backsliding, the spiritual appetite, begins to wane, begins to recede, begins to, get less and less, and the more, the backsliding goes on, without it being dealt with, the less of an appetite, you have, for reading your Bible, for coming to God, personally, to pray, to have communion with him, so that loss of appetite, is a symptom, of backsliding, if you find, in your life, any day, you get up, and you go to your Bible, and you're conscious, that you don't have, the appetite, for the Bible, that you had, the day before, or that you used to have, look at that, as a possible beginning, of backsliding, don't let it be something, that actually continues, and that you don't, think really seriously about, because it can lead, to some severe, backsliding, if you don't attend to it, because remember, the word of God, is such an incredibly, important part, of our daily diet, as Christians, there's the losing, of appetite, for God's word, and God himself, secondly, a symptom, is also, losing the desire, to have time, with God's people, people, we know, said John, that we have, passed from death, to life, because we love, the brethren, because we love, the people of God,

he doesn't just say, we know, we've passed, from death, to life, because, we like being part, of the church, because we like being, with the people of God, he said, because we love them, and when we love something, we love, the company of that person, when we love someone, we love to be with them, we love to share, things with them, we love to have, the same sort of, experiences as them, or if not the same, certainly sharing, what the difference, of experiences are, Christian fellowship, Christian company, we have, we have a, a desire for that, when God brings us, to know himself, it's one of the great, marks of being a Christian, that you love other Christians, that you recognize, in them, something that's also, in yourself, and when that, desire, is not, as strong as it was, when it's, in a, in a decline, then it's, very often then, that you find, a person beginning, to backslide too, and it's when these, especially come together, the lack of appetite, for God's word, and the lack of, desire to be with,

God's people, if both are together, then certainly, the warning signs, are there for us, and there's also, another symptom, and it's another important one, backsliding involves, losing, our sensitivity, to things, not being right, with us, you lose, your sensitivity, to, things, not being right, you know, when things are not right, in your soul, as a Christian, you know, looking in yourself, looking at your life, you know, when things are not right, you know, when things are not right, between you and God, you know, when things are not right, between you and the Bible, you know, when things are not right, in every aspect of, your life, as a Christian, and when you begin, to lose, sensitivity, to that sense, of things, not being right, then, you are really, certainly beginning, if not, well on the way, to backsliding, because, when you lose, your sensitivity, to things, not being right, what then happens, is that, the word of God, and, your reading of it, or in the preaching of it, or the personal counsel, of other people, that love you, and want you to, to know that they're concerned, for you, that doesn't register, in a backslider, and maybe hear, the sound of the voice, but it doesn't really, have much impact, the soul is kind of, deadened, to the sound of it, and it's one of the serious things, about backsliding, that, we are so, numbed, as it were, in our souls, to the voice of scripture, to the voice of the spirit, through scripture, to the voice of, fellow Christians, counseling us, all of these things, kind of, recede along, without, spiritual energy, symptoms, look for the symptoms, guard against the symptoms, deal with the symptoms, when you find them,

I've just mentioned, these three, losing your appetite, for God, for his word, for, for, for, for, a study, for his, declaration, and preaching, losing your desire, to be with God's people, and, losing your, sensitivity, to, the knowledge of things, not being right, with you, fourthly, what are the consequences, of backsliding, just very briefly, what are the consequences, of backsliding, well, there's personal, loss, but there's also, secondly, the way it affects, other people, backsliding, involves, personal loss, and that of course, really is obvious, we don't have to go, very far into, studying the subject, or experiencing it, for ourselves, though, we'd rather not, experience it, we don't have to do that, very long, before we're aware, of personal loss, a backslider, doesn't have, a great sense of assurance, that they are a child of God, that God is indeed their father, that they have been saved, the more we backslide, the less assured, we will become, a backslider, doesn't have, the sense of joy, and rejoicing in Christ, that once was the case, or that should be there, in the soul, and that's such, an incredibly important thing, in itself, because when we're facing, temptations, and when we're being, battered by the world, that ridicules us, for being Christians, that finds fault with us, for beginning this Christian way, of following Christ, then the Bible says, the joy of the Lord, is your strength, and if you lose, the joy of the Lord, you lose, so much of your strength, what did David pray for, when he came back, to the Lord, after having backslidden, after having done so much, in his own life, and in causing things, in the lives of others too, what did he pray for, well he prayed for, a lot of things, as you know in Psalm 51, his great prayer, of turning back again, from backsliding, to God, but amongst the many things, was this, restore to me, the joy, of your salvation, he'd lost the joy, of the salvation, that he had, he didn't lose his salvation, but he lost the joy of it, he lost the strength of it, he lost the vibrancy, in his soul, that he ought to have had, and that he previously had, as a man of God, as a disciple of God, as a follower of God, and that's what he's praying for,

[ 30 : 57 ] Lord restore to me, give me back again, the joy I had, make my willing spirit, glad, as the Singed Psalms version puts it, so there's that loss, for ourselves, we lose so much personally, in backsliding, secondly we lose, also in terms of the consequences, in the public side, of our lives as Christians, which of course, is so important, but, a backslider is a bad witness, a backslider is an ineffective witness, a backslider, can actually, try and keep up appearances, and very often, and very often, will go and try, and witness for Christ perhaps, and then realise, actually, the world is seeing, my backsliding, and is really pretty much, telling me, who are you to tell me, what to do, you see the world, actually sees, through our lives, and if our lives, are not, what we're professing, they are and should be, one of the first, effects of that, is that the world, will notice that, you're not being, in actuality, what you profess to be, and therefore, if it's an obvious, backsliding, our witness becomes, ineffective, we lose, the cutting edge, of our, life as disciples, how did Jesus put it, you are, the salt, of the earth, but, if the salt, loses its saltiness, with what, can you be salted, and that's essentially, what he meant, losing our saltiness, it's like salt, that's been lying, for a while, and in those days, especially, it was mixed up, with other minerals, but when you left it outside, the salt leached away, into the ground, or whatever, and was washed away, and you had, you ended up, picking up something, that may look like salt, but it wasn't salty, at all, and Jesus is saying, that's what happens, in backsliding, you lose, your saltiness, and, when you try, and, use salt, that isn't, actually salt, that isn't salty, it's ineffective, it doesn't really, do the job, that's meant to do, and as we saw, looking at witnesses, that's what God is, sending his people, into the world, for you, are my witnesses, says the Lord, that I, am God, so, four things, what's the fifth one, well, how can, backsliding, be prevented, that's an important, one as well, if it's the sliding, away from God, this turning, away from God, and back towards, the life we once had, if it comes about, slowly, if the symptoms, of it, as we've seen, if the consequences, of it, are such, personally, and in a public sense, how can we prevent it, well, the best prevention, of all, of course, is never to backslide, the best way, of preventing, backslide, backsliding, is not to do it, is not to backslide, it's not impossible, not to backslide, my little children, said John, these things,

I write to you, so that you, do not sin, so that you, have something, that keeps you, on the way, of, obedience, righteousness, and truth, that's the best thing, don't, backslide, but, very few of us, will never backslide, to some degree, and when we do, know that we've, backslid, and when we've seen, even the very first, step of it, or whenever it is, we actually, come to see it, even if it's been going on, for a time, when we've not really, been aware of it, whenever you are brought, to be aware of it, and myself, I'm as prone, to backsliding, as anybody else, perhaps even, more so, in terms of, the job, that we're trying to do, as ministers, because one of the things, the devil, will always be, at us for, is being inconsistent, and, backsliding, ourselves, you would have, very little benefit, if I came to the pulpit, week after week, and secretly, in my heart,

I'd gone away, from God, and I was in a, backslidden, condition, I could still, probably compose, sermons, from a theological, sense, but I have, absolutely no doubt, there would be, no power in there, no effectiveness, why, because my own life, would be completely, wrong with God, and in fact, I would be just, being a hypocrite, preaching to others, what I don't, maintain myself, what's the best way, to prevent vaccine, well that's the best way, obviously, but when you know, you've done it, when you know, you've taken a step, in the wrong direction, away from God, come back immediately, step back into line, rededicate yourself, to God, come before him, again in prayer, and say, Lord I know, I've done it, but I know, that you receive, those who come, to confess their sins, because with you, is forgiveness, give me back, what I lost, and then, there is, also, keep up your daily, reading, your daily prayer, reading the Bible, it's very much, part of the armor, as you see, in Ephesians chapter 6, and, if, like myself, sometimes, we're short of time, at any point in the day, and especially in the morning, when, you don't have the advantage, of, what I have, in the man's, when, most mornings at least,



I can come, and spend time, and study, and do some time, in Bible reading, and in prayer, most of you, will be going to work, and you don't have much time, in the morning, or to school, or whatever, but, the little time you have, use it well, it doesn't have to be a long time, but it has to be a serious, concentrated time, you and your Bible, and your God, and, use, reading notes, if you can, or Bible study notes, which really are concise, summary type of things, that gives you a verse, and then some comments on it, if you do that, every day, studiously, seriously, and then a prayer, as much time, as you can for prayer, then your soul, will be kept fresh, and, I just discovered, actually the other day, I haven't, downloaded it yet, but if you're using a Kindle, or a, or a, reader like that, which many people are nowadays, you can actually get, an abridged version, of a really, really famous work, on Ephesians 6, by William Gurnell, an old Puritan minister, from many, many years back, the Christian, in complete armor, if you buy the whole book, it's that thick, but you can get it, in a daily reading form, for your Kindle, the Christian, in complete armor, what it does, it takes a verse, shows you how it provides, armor for the day, against temptation, against the devil, against the leanings, of your own soul, towards sin, and towards backsliding, and that will give you, itself, along with,

I'm not suggesting, you just confine it to that, but it's a great help, if you have things like that, especially, when you're short of time, and if you have something like that, it's a huge help, towards, actually, going out, to face the day, with God's armor, already on, take to you, says Paul, the whole armor of God, put it on, and then stand, against the wiles, of the devil, so, secondly, that's the second thing, keep up your daily, exercises, thirdly, don't let anything, but that, which is a legitimate, unavoidable duty, come between yourself, and the worship meetings, of God's people, of God's church, on the Lord's day, and tonight, at the meeting, where the, the word is expounded, as I try to do, especially for, for Christians, more so than, in a wider, general sense, like we do, on the Lord's day, this is the feeding time, this is really, the time, when your soul, I hope, is gathering in, spiritual food, that builds you up, and, if we begin, to neglect that, then we're already, on the way, to backsliding, and one of the things, you notice, with people, who are, really into, backsliding, is how they miss, the prayer meeting,

[ 40 : 06 ] I know, they don't seem, to find, the prayer meeting, all that essential, well, I would say, from my own, personal experience, and I'm sure, it's huge as well, that, this particular, time, in the week, is a vital, time, for every Christian, for them, to be together, for them, to share together, in coming, to learn, from the word, of God, what is able, to give them, the strength, to persevere, to grow, to increase, and not, to backslide, so don't let, anything, but what is, absolutely, legitimate, and necessary, keep you away, from that, always beware, the thought, that says, it's just one, I won't really, miss, another one, always beware, of that, if that's, the voice, that you're hearing, there, it's not, from the Lord, it's from the one, who wants you, to backslide, final thing, I would say, is how can, backsliding, be prevented, well,

I think it's, important, to develop, a close, friendship, with at least, one other, Christians, with one other, Christian at least, and probably, best with one, just, somewhere, Donna came across, one of these, little, pithy sayings, that you find, brought up, from time to time, but it was, this one, she said, a friend, is a man, who knows you, but still loves you, a man, who knows, everything about you, but still loves you, well, you can change that, a little bit, to say, a friend, is a person, doesn't matter, it's a man, or a woman, a friend, is a person, who knows, everything about you, that at least, is known about you, and still loves you, develop, a close, friendship, with somebody, that you can come, after you've come, to realize, the person is trustworthy, you can develop, that friendship, to the point, that you would trust, that person, and you can share, with them, what's in your heart, and you can tell, that person, if there are things, which you find, in your life, that are worrying you, spiritually, if you find yourself, that you've been, backslidden for a while, or are beginning, to show signs of that, discuss that, with somebody, don't keep it, to yourself, find, a friend, develop, a friendship, where a Christian, will reliably, be depended on, as someone, that you can share, these things with,

I'm not, the next thing, I'm going to say, I'm not promoting, myself with this, but one, of the things, that disturbs me, a bit, is that, in, I don't know, the last 20 to 30 years, somehow, or other people, think the minister, is too busy, or not really, in a position, like others, to listen, to what they have to say, to unburden, themselves, any time, of the day, or night, that anyone, has a problem, please, don't say, he's too busy, or he wouldn't, be interested in me, Paul, wrote, to Timothy, and one of the things, he said was, be instant, in season, and out of season, that means, always be ready, and willing, and prepared, at any time, now all of us, have to be that, as Christians, but we especially, in the ministry, have to be that, in terms of our, responsibilities, towards those, that we minister to, and I would hope, that, not just for myself, but in all, congregations, where ministers, are placed, that, we would be seen, as those, who are genuinely, concerned, to, be there, for, in confidence, to have others, share things with us, to open up their hearts, knowing, that it doesn't, go further than that, and that we bring it, to the Lord, together, together, now if we do that, if we have, these times of sharing, between yourselves, and a close friendship, with someone, that will be, a huge provision, and a huge benefit, against, backsliding, against, spiritual decay, and you and I, will then be, much more likely, to be like the Colossians, of whom Paul, was confident, that they were persevering, onwards, until the day, they would be, they would be, they would appear, and be presented, blameless, before God, in his presence, let's pray,

Lord, we ask, that you would give us, daily the strength, to continue, to persevere, to do so, lovingly, and gladly, and to do so, realizing, our own proneness, to backsliding, forgive us Lord, we pray, when times, of backsliding, overtake us, forgive us, for the delays, that we know, exist in our lives, when we don't, come back to you, as we want, we pray, that you would, build us up, oh Lord, in the defense, that you give to us, so that that spiritual, armor that you provide, will be taken up, willingly, and gladly, each day by us, grant that we may be, empowered, by your grace, to help each other, for your word, requires us, that we bear, one another's burdens, and so fulfill, the law of Christ, and we ask these things, oh Lord, seeking, that in following you, we might constantly, seek your help, for every step, we pray this, in Jesus name,

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.  
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