

Hosea's Prophecy -- Gospel of Backsliding

by Albert M. Ewing

The sermon emphasizes the importance of examining ourselves to ensure we are in the faith and avoiding backsliding by regularly praying, reading the Bible, and purifying our hearts through the power of the blood of Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Revelation 2:4

Topics: "Backsliding", "Sanctification"

Description

Albert M. Ewing preaches about the dangers of backsliding, emphasizing that it is not just a mere vacillation between church and worldly interests, but a steady leaning towards becoming unspiritual. He highlights the neglect of prayer and Bible reading as early signs of backsliding, and stresses the importance of confessing sins and allowing the blood of Jesus to cleanse and sanctify. Ewing warns against the trend of seeking popularized, accommodating preachers over those who preach the old-fashioned gospel, and addresses the issue of immodesty as a trademark of backslidden believers.

Transcript

We read in Hosea 11:7, "My people are bent to backsliding from me."

How out of the ordinary, is the moral condition of a believer, bent to backsliding. Backsliding, is not a mere case of vacillation between our interest in our church, and our family and friends; however, entirely too many are kept away from the house of God, by reason of friends and family. While, our family and friends may have influence upon us, that does not necessarily mean that they have control over us; for our love for God may still be supreme.

Again, backsliding is not merely having a desire to succeed in a material way. After years spent in the ministry, I have not knowingly met one that would resent a salary increase: I have known many to change, because of a more lucrative position; shall we brand them as back sliders in heart? No not necessarily so. That would be a most uncharitable thing to do. They may have spent the greater part of their ministry, on hard scrabble, and have honestly earned this consideration. It is not money: it is the love of money, that many have lusted after and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows. What little money, that I have, serves me and does just what I want it to do. I do not allow mammon to control me. The Bible says, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." And that is right: but you can love and serve God, and make your riches serve God and yourself. This is as it should be, and must be or else we backslide.

Again, backsliding is not mere vacillation between sin and holiness; which thing holiness will not permit. It is either holiness, or sin. it cannot be both. If we want sin, we do not want holiness. If we want holiness we do not want sin. You see there is a straight line of demarcation between the two conditions. Backsliding, then is a steady leaning, with an unbroken bent toward becoming unspiritual.

The first mark that we notice of this condition is neglect of public and private prayer. The neglect of either will result in sufficient evidence to convict that soul of the charge "Thou hast left, thy first love" Rev. 2:4.

A second mark of this condition is, "neglect of daily Bible reading." Reading only from the conviction of duty, is a very bad sign. Whoever walks closely with God takes special delight in every kind of service. Belated activity, reluctance and indifference in our effort to do good, are very bad signs. The deeper we delve into the Bible, the more specifically and clearly is seen the teaching with regard to inbred sin. The reference in Hosea, 11:7 is, "My people are bent to backsliding from me." Notice it says "bent to," not "on" backsliding. The little word "On" that we are accustomed to use, would hardly be intensive enough. This charge brought against Israel at this time, is the blackest article in the whole indictment. "My people are bent to backsliding from me." Every word of this statement is provocative and calculated to awaken them, and save them from final apostasy. He says "My people" and they were His, by profession, but not in spirit and practice. They were "bent to," crooked, warped and twisted: they were resolute in their sinning. Their hearts were fully set in them to do evil. Their trouble was in their own hearts; while they offered sacrifice, and kept the feasts, their sacrifices stank in the nostrils of God, as coming from sinful, and impure lives. The bloods of bulls and goats and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, can never take away sin or make the comer there unto perfect These all had a ceremonial purifying of the flesh, but the Lamb of God came and offered Himself through the eternal Spirit to the Father without spot to purge our conscience from dead works, to serve the living God. Now the "bent" is taken out, when we are sanctified, with all desire of the world, making the people of God the same in- every country of the world. Regeneration is the same the world over. 'The divine stamp is the same. His children do not eat devils' food.

"My people," this establishes the fact of relationship; but he said "they were astray": "bent to backsliding from me." This "bent" has been in the human family, since the fall. Listen in on prayer, both public and private. people unconsciously acknowledge it everywhere, in pulpit and pew and in song." "Prone to wander Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love."

This bent reveals that something is wrong with the heart. Man's trouble is heart trouble, when he is prone to leave God. Suppose a man would say, he is prone to leave his wife, you would say, that he does not love her, that there is unfaithfulness, disloyalty, and lack of real affection in him. You would say that he should confess to his wife this lack of love, and acknowledge his sin and have love restored to his heart. How about the professor that has these feelings? To confess a proneness to quit, and give up, is more than a weakness, or human trifling. It is deeper than that. It is a plague, a leprosy, and needs prompt attention. This bent is the crook of sin. It is in the nature, and cannot be made straight by merely following a rule of ethics or code of laws. It takes the blood of the Son of God.

Proneness is sin. It is not a liability to. sin. The liability to sin is something inseparably connected to the probationary state: As a free spirit working in salvation. We need not pray for freedom from the liability to sin: We would take away our moral freedom, and make a machine out of ourselves.

There is a difference between the feeling, that we are liable to sin, and the feeling of a proneness to wander from Jesus. Jesus did not come to destroy the liability or the possibility of sinning, but to take our "bent," and "prone" to wander from Him into by and forbidden paths, which is the tendency of the unsanctified heart. Liability to sin and the possibility of sinning, come from our moral freedom, and adhere to the Spirit of God. Prone belongs to the fallen nature. "Take away our bent to sinning, Alpha and Omega be." It is not that one really wants to backslide but just cannot keep going in the right direction. Walking a straight line, is more than child's play; One must have good equilibrium. We promise to do more, and do less. Why? Because of the heart condition. Jesus said: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; all these evil things come from within, and defile the man." Now we know that if we have any of these, we know we have them all, and our heart has not been cleansed from inbred sin. It looks like a dark picture, does it not?

There is a difference between a new heart, and a pure heart. Both James and John had new hearts, but they wanted to call fire down upon folk that were doing the same kind of work they were doing, viz casting out devils. This was before Pentecost and before their hearts were cleansed. Jesus said to Peter "Get thee behind me Satan, thou art an offense unto me." Matt. 16:23.

Why did he call Peter, Satan? Because Peter at that moment was talking for Satan, by attempting to persuade Jesus not to suffer on the cross. When he suggested that to Jesus, he was in opposition to the very thing or cause for which Jesus came. "For this cause came I into the world," said the Saviour.

Whatever stood in the way of His going to the cross to suffer, even though it be sympathy, He would consider it as coming from Satan's subtle powers.

Satan often enters into men's hearts, like Judas, but he probably was merely influencing Peter from without. If he had been in Peter, Jesus would have said, "Come out of him"; but because it was only some of Satan's works showing up in an unsanctified heart, Jesus said, "Get thee behind me Satan, thou art an offense unto me." He could not deceive Jesus, He knew his voice, and language, and let him know, that he knew who was doing the talking.

Peter thought perhaps, that he was pulling these words right out of his own mind: but Jesus knew that he was pulling them right out of the mouth of the devil. We should keep our spiritual senses well exercised, so that we will know, not only who is talking, but what they are saying. Many a person has been started on his way to backsliding, by encouraging self pity at the suggestion of some supposed friends. Satan speaks some times through a saint, as well as a serpent: sometimes God speaks through a dumb ass, as well as a wilderness minister. John cried, "I am a voice crying in the wilderness." Balaam, though a prophet, did not know it was God speaking from the mouth of a dumb ass, until he saw the angel with drawn sword.

Peter was sponsoring Satan's cause unknowingly, by his advice to the Saviour, who does not need our counsel He thought perhaps, that he was talking wisely; when he said to Jesus, how unnecessary it was for him to suffer. His sympathy proved to be an offense. Much like advice is given today, in many cases, to those who are seeking at an altar of prayer to be saved. They try to spare the victim, and by doing so they spoil the victory. The sacrifice must suffer and die, and any attempt upon the part of any one to ameliorate or appease the suffering or cheapen the price, by saying, Suffering, and agony are not necessary, is lending their voice to the chicanery of Satan. The Bible says, "Agonize to enter in at the straight gate." This is the way, and there is no other way, that leads to life. The easy way, the way that seemeth right, is

the backslider in heart's own way. He wants religion in his own way, and at his own price; no suffering, and at his own convenience. It must be inexpensive and require very little effort, time and labor. The backslider in heart, will go the limit for personal gain, and selfish interests.

What is the remedy? Let the Bible speak, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin" I John 1:7. It is the power of the blood, that saves and sanctifies. Sins must be confessed, and forgiven, and the sin Mark catalogues for us (7:21) must be cleansed out, and the heart be purified, Acts 15:8, 9. This is the cure. There is no opposition to positive filling, or enduing, or empowering with the Spirit: but when you mention the word eradication, look out: this brings war a plenty. But this. is the plan crucify and kill the old man.

It was St. Paul who said that the time would come when men would not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts should heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.

"And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." 2 Tim. 4:3, 4. Of course this does not mean that all will do this, but that there will be a general trend toward universal backsliding in the great falling away period, that the Apostle writes about in 2 Thess. 2:3.

This crowd that he mentions as turning from the truth, by no means quits professing religion: Oh no, they just change preachers. You know that Israel wanted a king, so they could be like other folk; and God let them have one, but sent leanness to their souls. This is our trouble today; the old-fashioned gospel preacher is. being relegated to hard scrabble circuits and we are reaching out for the more modernized, popularized, streamlined story-teller, that loves to be bragged on, and who is known by his title rather than his sainthood.

The old-fashioned gospel never has been popular with all the people, and he who would preach it without fear or favor, and refusing to seek the applause of men, oftentimes is called upon to undergo some severe hardships.

It was not a rare thing in the early days of the holiness movement to see some of its pastors in their pulpits, with trousers patched on the knees and holes in the toes of their shoes.

What a change has come about since the church has become rich and increased in goods, and hath need of nothing. The pastors no longer wear shoes with their toes sticking out; but as much, could not be said of all their wives, and women of their congregations.

Where his modesty embarrassed him when his trouser knees were threadbare and being fearful lest his knees would be exposed to his congregation, now no small percent, not only of the younger set, but mother and grandmothers have their dresses modeled upward above the line of moral equation until the full knee is exposed with every sitting, with little or no embarrassment. .

They consider the minister narrow that even refers to this immodesty in his message. I feel sorry in my heart for any people so far gone from their first love and original righteousness, that they cannot eat strong meat, and have a preacher condoning this condition, by preaching an accommodating gospel that is emasculated by reason of containing no food for their poor starved half backslidden souls.

For anyone to approach the appearance of immodesty, reveals the earmark of backsliding, if not the full content of the text "The backslider in heart." When the preacher becomes popular, and bargains for the praise of men, his church becomes unspiritual and worldly.

Immodesty is the trade-mark of backslidden professors of religion, and has no place in the church of Jesus Christ. Listen to the scriptural injunction, "That women should dress in modest apparel, with shame facedness and sobriety." I Tim. 2:9. To be immodest, is to be unspiritual regardless of sex.

I am reminded by the text, that this is not a desultory discussion on different subjects, such as "Dress and Immodesty," but where indulged in both are real contributions to the cause of backsliding.

"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 Cor. 13:5. Notice the injunction, "Examine yourselves."

It is not commendable or favorable evidence, for anyone to have misgivings about a rigid personal checkup, under a close scrutiny, by the word of God. Such misgivings reveal that we are of a doubtful mind with reference to our own personal standing in grace.

The Good Book declares, that "He who doubteth, is damned, or condemned." Rom. 14:23. "For whatsoever is not of faith is sin"- same verse. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Rom. 8:1. Sin brings condemnation, and condemnation takes away our liberty and freedom. Now when this condition obtains, it could be truly said, as one of old spake, "There's but a step between me and death." I Sam. 20:3.

Space will not permit me to include all the sayings of the different writers listed in the Bible referring to the backslider, such as, "sliding back," "going back," "turning away," "leaving first love," "falling from your own steadfastness," and many others; each writer using different ways of expressing himself on the subject.

Four books of the Bible seem especially addressed to backsliders; The "Canticles," by Solomon. Study this book, especially chapters 3 to 5.

Then, we turn to the plaintive cry of the "weeping prophet," Jeremiah. The word, "backslider" occurs more frequently in this book, than in all other books of the Bible. Then we come to the prophet, Hosea with his prophecy. sometimes called "the gospel of backsliders." The arguments used by this prophet are the very same arguments as used by the prophet Jeremiah.

We turn to the New Testament, and listen to St. Paul's address to the Galatians. This church was noted for its fickleness: and such expressions, as, "soon removed," 1:6 "bewitched," "driven back" (Marg). vs. 5:7. Note also the letter to the Hebrews is especially an address against apostasy.

It is remarkable how many saints who are spoken of in the Scriptures as being "perfect," fell into grievous sin; Noah, David, Asa, Hezekiah; how many proved to be weak in their strongest point. Notice Abraham, the man of faith, in unbelief; Moses, preeminent for meekness, overcome by anger; Job, the pattern of patience, becomes impatient; Solomon, renowned for his wisdom, turned to folly; John, the Apostle of gentleness and love, proposed revenge; Peter, the boldest in the hour of danger, turned coward at last.

Now what can I say more, time and space would fail me to speak all that could be said, as direct Bible statements on this subject, but suffer me to refresh your minds in closing this chapter, by restating the text, "The backslider in heart, shall be filled with his own ways" Prov. 14:14.

God is calling the prodigal, come without delay,

Hear, O hear Him calling, calling now for thee;

Though you've wandered so far from His presence, come today, Hear, His loving voice calling still.

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