

Samson the Backslider

by Albert M. Ewing

The sermon emphasizes the importance of maintaining our consecration and devotion to God, obeying His commands, and trusting in His power to avoid backsliding and its consequences.

Topics: "Backsliding", "Repentance"

Description

Albert M. Ewing preaches about the timely and crucial truth of 'The Backslider in Heart,' emphasizing the impact of backsliding on one's relationship with God, leading to separation and spiritual death. He distinguishes between unwilling sinners and willful sinners, highlighting the dangerous path of willful sin that rejects the means of salvation and can result in final loss. Through the tragic narrative of Samson's downfall, Ewing illustrates the gradual decline of a backslider's heart, urging repentance and a return to God's ways before it's too late.

Transcript

There is perhaps no Bible truth, the preaching of which is more timely, and which is more scrupulously avoided, than this truth, "The Backslider in Heart."

It is a truth that should be preached because it deals with a condition of heart that affects man's relationship with God to the extent of separation. "Your sins have separated between you and your God." Isa. 59:2.

There are those who unwillingly sin. I mean they are not sure the things they are doing, or are engaged in are wrong. While others that sin are willful sinners, because they know that what they are doing is sin; but do it anyway. What is the difference between the two sinners? Will not the results be the same? Yes, finally it will. "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; when sin is finished, it bringeth forth death." See James 1:14, 15. Backsliding, separation, death.

The willful sinner, is one who has determined in his mind and heart to sin with the full knowledge that he is sinning in what he is doing.

Sin, with him is finished, and spiritual death takes place in his heart: "For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, their remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." Heb. 10:26. He that sinneth willfully (with malicious and deliberate intent to sin). "He that despised the law of Moses died without mercy in the presence of two or three witnesses." Heb. 10:27. Also verse 29, "Of how much sorer

punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, where he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" This does not mean final apostasy, neither does it mean that this soul can never be reclaimed. It just means that he has backslidden, and has rejected his only means of salvation, and unless he repents, and does his first works he will be finally lost.

"This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" Acts 4:11, 12. We should be very careful about being willful or being willing until we are sure that the thing we are giving consent to, is not sinful. The willing sinner, does not want to sin; I mean really sin, but does things, which he is not sure are wrong. "Doubtful things," and instead of giving God the benefit of the doubt, when he is not sure, and refusing to engage in questionable things, he just stumbles on, until mercy ceases to be a virtue, and God must reckon with his insincerity, and withdraw His Holy Spirit, and Finis is written to his spiritual career.

So sparingly is this subject of backsliding discussed or even written upon. I wonder why? It may be its importance is overlooked, or it may be, that it is thought to be unethical for our day, and that it would be more profitable to spend our time getting folk sanctified. Well, my brother, sanctification is not the remedy for the backslider in heart. An old fashioned job of repentance at an old fashioned mourner's bench, would work better. Try that once.

If it is a Bible truth, describing a condition existing in the church today, it certainly is not unethical to preach it today.

The text, "The backslider in heart, shall be filled with his own ways" Prov. 14:14.

There are a number of scriptures that may be cited, showing where God left folk to their own way. In Judges 16-20, we read where God left Samson.

This Bible narrative of Samson and his downfall is most pathetic, and quite applicable to illustrate the truth of my subject, "The Backslider in Heart." Samson, like the prodigal son, wanting a more romantic career, became irreconcilable to the humdrum routine of his home life and decided to go into a far country, which in reality was not a far country, but perhaps less than one hundred miles away, but plenty far enough away to get him into a love affair and rob him of his clean pure life, unless he would have great respect for his Nazarite vow, which thing he evidently neglected to do, as the Bible narrative reveals, when we follow it through to the close of his life.

Samson went to Timnath, "Forbidding image," not for his health, or to better his moral or spiritual condition, for when we think of the name of the city and its meaning, "Forbidding image," it does not seem to us as a suitable place for those things, but he went probably for the marked contrast in the social life. The Philistine cities were full of gaiety and pleasure and most likely very different from his own home town, Zorah.

New Colonists and travelers were constantly moving in, offering greater opportunity for social indulgence, which did not exist in his own city or country.

It was in this city of Timnath, where he met a woman that he loved and wanted for a wife. There was nothing wrong about him wanting a wife, but she was a Philistine, and of course his parents would object

to the marriage on the grounds that she was not of his own people and country. But Samson said, Get her for me for a wife. But you know his father and mother would still protest the marriage of their son to a heathen woman, but they could not go beyond a reasonable persuasion to hinder him from carrying out his purpose.

Samson saw something in the woman that he loved and that pleased him, and he wanted her. He, being not only an Israelite but a Nazarite, was bound by the law to honor his parents, which thing he did by asking their consent and help in the matter. On the other hand the parents felt they dare not provoke their child to wrath by their positive refusal, lest he be discouraged and beside they were yet unawares that the Lord was leading in the matter in order that He might have an occasion against the Philistines, which evidently was the case. After their reasoning failed to change the mind of their son, the parents gave over to his request and went down to Timnath, and the arrangements were made and the marriage took place. It is not important what occasioned this romance as we know not the mind of the young man. We could hardly think that it was a matter of parental or religious discipline, for up to now in the narrative, I would not want to lay one thing to the charge of this young man. He probably reasoned that he was strong and healthy, as well as righteous, and could take care of himself, and there was nothing wrong in seeing some of the world.

Had he stopped at Timnath, where he married the girl he loved, things might have fared better with him, as God was still with him.

His wedding was quite an affair: many guests were invited together with a number of young men who were to act as groomsmen for the occasion.

During the social hour Samson proposed a riddle of his own making, and offered a reward for the correct answer. The reward was to consist of thirty sheets and thirty changes of raiment -one for each of the young men.

The young men could not explain the riddle in the time allotted them, so they inveigled Samson's wife, by threatening her life and her father's by burning them and their house, if they did not get the answer for them by intriguing Samson into revealing the riddle to her, by her pretended love and tears. So she put on a passion play of endearments as only a woman can do, and it worked. Although he had not revealed as yet the riddle to his parents, he gave way to his wife's intreaties and submitted to her the answer, and she, the same day, gave it to her people. This furnished the occasion for Samson to run amuck. He paid the rewards, but he committed murder to do it. Of course this was not hard for him to do, since he was angered now, and revenge to an angered man is sweet. One misstep, makes the next one easier to take. One sin invariably leads to another. He rushes off to a nearby city and there slays thirty men, and strips them of their garments and spoils, and returns with his booty and gives them to the thirty men in payment of his debt, and according to his promise. He leaves at once for his father's home, perhaps to think things over. While there his wife breaks relations with him and marries one of the groomsmen that served at his wedding. His wife reasoning perhaps that he was gone for good because of his bloody slaughter of the Philistines, and would fear to return, so she marries another without getting a divorce. But to her surprise Samson did return and this angered him all the more, and he burned their crops and smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter. Now when the Philistines learned who had committed this great deed, they went and burned Samson's wife and father, for revenge. The battle is now on, a nation is at arms, demanding his life.

This sent him on a trip of revenge, and on to Gaza where he finally lost the trail and where God left him.

What was the occasion here at Gaza of his downfall? He saw a woman, who was an harlot. This was the second woman that he saw, and this proved his downfall. He did too much gazing; he saw too many women. David saw just one too many, when he looked at Bathsheba taking her evening bath, which also proved his undoing. Going to Gaza was going too far, for there he met Delilah, who ruined him. This is what everyone does, who seeks excitement and gaieties in the enemy's country. When one begins to feel that his home, and wife, and job, and church, is in default 'of what he could have in other places, then look out; that person has hit the toboggan slide, and is on his way out. While Samson was physically strong, he was morally weak. It was not a strong spiritual character that delivered him, but it was his mighty faith in Jehovah that God honored. Samson had been on the down grade morally for many moons, and the sight of this second woman was one more downward pull. He was so near down, he could glide the rest of the way.

Delilah is a type of a worldly church, where freedom of thought and desires are freely indulged in, and where restraint of selfish indulgence is done away with. Samson goes in to participate in this liberality, and was soon nodding under the mighty influence of her hypnotic power. She was not interested as to whether he loved her 'or not, but to destroy his power, so she could collect the reward offered by the Philistines. Delilah is not always a lewd woman, but a dollar sign, or selfish ease, or comfort, pleasure, or personal freedom. What is it that slows us down, and cools our zeal for God? Delilah's process was very slow, but sure; little by little, here a little, there a little; finally her endearments and loving petulance worked, and he revealed the sacred secret of his heart. He said, "My strength is in my hair -- my Nazarite covenant." Delilah made several attempts before success rewarded her efforts. But at last she used her most powerful appeal. "How canst thou say that I love thee, when thy heart is not with me?"

This was too much for him; he had toyed once too often; he now casts away his vow and reveals the secret of his power, lays his head down in Delilah's lap and goes to sleep. She had stolen his heart, and he is backslidden in heart. She calls for the barber, and his locks are shorn, his power is gone and his Nazarite vow went with it. Have we kept our vow to God?

Notice, Samson felt strong through it all; he said, "I will go out as at other times." This was the snare about it, and the thing that deceived him. We may feel strong, while all the time, the things we are doing, may be chewing our harness to pieces. We may as he did, when danger comes, think to shake ourselves as at other times, to find that He is gone. We do not notice the first gray hairs that come, and the winter creeps in on us unawares.

Wherein lay the secret of Samson's strength? I would say first, that his strength lay in his early consecration, and devotion to God.

Our success and influence in Christian service is measured by or in proportion to the measure of our consecration. If we give all, we get all; if we sow sparingly, we reap sparingly. To withhold, tendeth to poverty.

Secondly, I would say, Samson's strength lay, in doing the work assigned to him. Obedience is better, than sacrifice, and to hearken, than the fat of rams. I Sam. 15:22. The fact that the name of Moses occurs 813 times in the Bible, and is recorded in 31 books of the Bible, is not an accident, but because of his trust-worthiness, meekness, and obedience to divine orders. "Make all things according to the plan" was his motto, and for that he was proclaimed meek above all men which were upon the face of the earth.

Num. 12:3. So we are strong, only as we are meek, and obey the commandments of God.

Thirdly, I would say that Samson's strength lay in his implicit confidence in the great Jehovah, that He would deliver him in battle with his enemies, by using the weapons of warfare that God providentially placed in his hands. All other Bible warriors in his day had armies, but he fought and conquered alone. He had no machine-guns, or armies, or atomic bombs, but he made him one out of the jaw-bone of an ass, and slew a thousand Philistines, and then slaked his burning thirst with the water springing from the same jawbone.

That which was death to others, was life to him. We would get farther today if we did not lean so much upon our own inventions, and rely more upon the almightiness of God. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of the strongholds of Satan. II Cor. 10:4. Many, like Peter, have used the wrong sword (carnal) and have wielded it in their own defense, and to their own hurt.

Fourthly, I would say that Samson's strength lay in his willingness to die for the cause against his enemy. Listen, "Let me die with the Philistine s." Judg. 16:30. Though his vision is gone, and his liberty lost, and he is become a slave to his enemies, he begins to renew his covenant and vow by calling on the Lord. Vs. 28. "O Lord remember me, I pray Thee, and strengthen me, I pray Thee, only this once." He knew that he had lost something by his escapade. We lose something when we backslide: and while his strength came back, and his hair grew again, his eyes were out forever. Sin does frightful injury to one when he backslides. If our consecration is not in perfect tact just as at first, then we know that we have slipped.

Lastly, we cannot affect our consecration, without affecting our life.

Backsliders can be, and are forgiven, when they really repent with a godly sorrow, and are fully restored to salvation again, but they never regain the feeling of comparative innocence once enjoyed. The innocence you now enjoy will never compare with the innocence you enjoyed before you backslid. Like the unfaithful man or woman, who has been untrue to the marriage vow, you will always have that regrettable sin to look at, and think about, so far as you are concerned. But in God's mind you are forgiven and innocent as at first. For when He forgives, He forgets. David said, "My sin is ever before me." What sin? The sin of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, of course. This sin for which God told him that the sword should never depart from his house. Precious one don't ever backslide.

One would not think that one so well born, announced by an angel the same as in the case of the Saviour, one so well consecrated, and so mighty, would ever backslide, but he did: and worst of all, he did not know when it happened. Can a man lose out and not know it? Samson did, "And Delilah said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson," and he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him. But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house." How sad. Beware.

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