

The Awful Consequences of Backsliding

by David Wilkerson

David Wilkerson's sermon warns of the serious consequences of backsliding and emphasizes the need for repentance and return to God.

Duration: 49:39

Scripture: Jeremiah 3:20

Topics: "Backsliding"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the consequences of backsliding from God. He tells the story of Jonah, who tried to run away from God's command and ended up in a storm at sea. Despite Jonah's attempts to escape, God pursued him and eventually had him swallowed by a great fish. The preacher emphasizes that no one can escape the consequences of backsliding and warns the audience of the dangers of turning away from God.

Transcript

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None of these messages are copyrighted, and you are welcome to make copies for free distribution to friends. Art, you knew who would be here tonight. You knew exactly what is needed.

And I pray, Lord, that your spirit come upon me now, from the top of my head to the soles of my feet. I take your authority over every evil spirit. There is nothing from hell.

There is nothing from the devil. There's nothing from mankind that can hinder the word of the living God when God determines to work. So touch me.

Let the fire of God come down tonight. Thank you for your presence tonight, Holy Spirit, making Jesus known to us, real to us. Now bring the word, O God.

Bring people back tonight. Those who have been drifting, those who have been backslidden, bring them back tonight, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

You that love the Lord, this message is not for you, but we want you to pray. There are many here tonight that need to hear this word. This is a good tape you'll be able to give to backsliders later.

We're not trying to sell them. By the way, the tape from this morning, we decided to make them anyhow, so they'll be available to you a week or so down the road. The awful consequences of backsliding.

God said to the prophet Hosea, my people are bent in backsliding from me. And what that means in Hebrew, my people habitually, they have a habit of drifting away from me, turning their backs on me. He said, my people have always had that tendency.

That's a habit with my people. That's the habit of all of Israel. You read the history and the story of Israel, one generation after another, backsliding.

I heard a preacher say backsliding is not in the Bible. Then he didn't know his Bible. It's all through the scripture.

The heart cry of Jeremiah was, turn back Israel, turn back to the Lord, O backsliding Israel, for the Lord is married to you. Israel and Judah habitually backslid from God, and Jeremiah, all through the book of Jeremiah, you hear him cry, O Lord, our iniquities testify against us. Our backslidings are so many.

We have sinned against thee, O God. In Jeremiah 5, 6, Jerusalem's transgressions are many, and their backslidings keep increasing. Their backslidings increasing.

You find this term all through the Bible, backsliding. Turning back on God. God's people mostly backslide in times of prosperity and blessing.

When God is blessing you, you've got his favor, that's the time to beware. That's the time that backsliding usually comes to God's people. Listen to it.

How shall I pardon thee for this? Thy children have forsaken me, they sworn by those that are not God's. When I fed them to the full, then they committed adultery. They have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the Lord.

They have backslidden against me when I fed them to the full. I blessed them, I favored them, and then they turned their back on me. Jeremiah describes perfectly who the backslider is.

The backslider, whether it's a he or she, is that child of God who has enjoyed the blessing and favor of the Lord, someone who's walked with God, devoted, loved the Word of God, loved to pray, walked in holiness, gentle, kind perhaps, someone who said, I'm going to always serve Him with all my heart, but now something has drawn the heart away. There's no more genuine love. The heart has grown cold in love toward the Lord.

They no longer seek Him. They no longer go to His Word. Prayer is gone.

They become foolish. They're without understanding. Their conversation changes.

They don't talk the way they used to talk. There's a hard time getting them into the house of God. They don't testify of the love of Jesus to their friends or their coworkers anymore.

They have grown cold and backslidden from the Lord. And the Bible makes it clear, and listen very closely. The Bible says it's a very evil and bitter thing to backslide against the Lord.

Their own wickedness shall correct them. Their backsliding shall reprove them. Know therefore and see that it's an evil thing and a bitter thing that you have forsaken the Lord your God and that His fear is no longer in you, saith the Lord of hosts.

He said, I planted you as a noble vine. I planted you holy as a right seed. How then have you turned away from me and become a generate plant of a strange vine unto me? God says, how could you have walked away from me when I planted you and I tried to establish you and you've turned away from me? Now, Jonah is the type of the backslider in the Word of God.

And I want you to go to the book of Jonah. And we're going to look at this backslider. And I'll tell you what.

Get the book of Jonah and just leave it open on your lap, please. Book of Jonah and leave it open while I talk to you about the awful consequences of backsliding. You know the story.

Look this way for just a moment. Here's a prophet of God. He's called of God.

He loves God. He is walking close enough to God that God could speak to his heart and tell him to go to a wicked city and wake it up. He said, rise and go to Nineveh, that wicked city, and prophesy against it.

Folks, listen to me. This is a man of God. Jonah, nobody gets that kind of a call unless he's walking close to the Lord.

He had to be standing in the presence of God. And God says to him, you go now and you preach, repent or perish. Arise, go to Nineveh.

Now, instead of arising and going to Nineveh, he arises and goes to Joppa, about 35 miles north of Jerusalem, a seaport town. And he buys a ticket on a cargo ship headed for Tarsus. You've heard of this in the Bible of the ships of Tarsus.

Tarsus means prosperity, success, and power. How many people do you know that have boarded a ship toward Tarsus? That's their whole mindset now, to get prosperity, wealth, and success. Isn't it amazing that this man of God would buy a ticket and he goes down into the hold of the ship where the cargo is, maybe way up in the stern of the boat, and he crawls up in a blanket and he falls asleep.

Now, folks, somewhere, I don't know how long it took. It doesn't say when the storm hit. But there was a storm that God had arranged to come to that Mediterranean Sea.

And I want you to see, we know this story and we know that Jonah sleeps through a storm because God Himself sent a mighty hurricane. It wasn't sent from the devil. God stirred up the whole storm to get to one man who's in disobedience, one man who's backsliding.

I don't know how... Perhaps it was the first week. This is probably a three- to four-week trip in the Mediterranean, those old sailboats. They're on a trade route.

There are other boats coming and going on this trade route to Tarsus. These ships of Tarsus went back and forth. That was in Spain.

They'd left from Joppa near Israel and from other seaport towns, from Greece and Turkey, and all of those seaports, Macedonia, and they would go to Tarsus and back. Tarsus is where they smelted lead, they smelted other coppers and so forth, and they took these metals all over the Mediterranean. And this storm hits out of nowhere and that boat begins to toss.

The rudder is useless. The sails are ripped apart and the sailors are crying out to their gods. I picture these seasoned sailors.

They've never been in a storm like this. They know it's something beyond they've never seen. It's a hurricane beyond all hurricanes.

And that wooden boat is being tossed. It's shipped. It's being tossed everywhere.

They go down in the hold of the boat and they take all the cargo and throw it overboard to lighten it. That boat, that ship is being tossed to and fro. I can picture those sailors going into their duffel bags and pulling out their little silver and gold gods.

Some of them have ivory gods and they're standing there kissing their gods. I've seen people like that in trouble kissing the crucifix, holding the crucifix and kissing the little crucifix. I've seen people, they used to have these little things on the dashboard, these little angels.

And before they take a trip, they kiss the angel. I can see these sailors kissing everything that they think is divine. I mean, they are crying out.

They are praying. Backslider, I want to tell you something. Jonah is in the belly of that ship sleeping through this storm.

Somehow he misses even all the racket of them going down into the cargo where he's at, the cargo bay. And they're removing all this and they're screaming and they're praying. And somehow they miss him.

And he's down there fast asleep. Now I want to tell you, that's not the sleep of unconcern. That's not the sleep of a lazy man.

It's another kind of sleep. It's the sleep of sorrow. It's a man who knows he's running from God.

It's a man who knows that his conscience is troubled. He knows that he has no future. He has ruined his ministry.

Everything is gone. He's made the wrong move. He is moving away from God.

He's in the midst of a ship absolutely running from God. His conscience is pounding him. He's probably had a week or two on that boat saying, what am I doing here? How could I have done this? I've made a wrong decision.

But I've turned my back on the Lord. I've turned my back on the call of God. And this man has had probably a week or two battling in his conscience.

And he's weary and he's worn. Folks, I'll tell you, it's a terrible thing to have to fight a conscience that God has got a hold of. It's a terrible thing to try to sleep at night when you know you're running from God.

And you remember being in the house of God. You remember being in meetings just like this. You were on fire for God.

You loved the Lord and He called you. He put His hand on you. And here you are now trying to go to bed at night because you have compromised and you have turned your back and you're running away from the Lord.

You say, oh, I sleep, Brother Dave. No, my Bible says there's no rest to the wicked. There's no rest.

Oh, you may sleep, but I'll tell you what is the sleep of a condemned person. Condemned by your conscience. Saying, do you remember His touch? Do you remember His arms around you? Do you remember His love? Do you remember that He has a city prepared for you? Do you remember all the promises He made to you? Do you remember what it was like to be so close to Him? Oh, this man was sleeping, but it was a sleep of sorrow.

This man wore Him out. His conscience is worn out. He's worn out by sin.

He's worn out replaying it. He's worn out knowing that His reputation is gone. Everything, He blew it.

Oh, there are a lot of people that have that deep sleep upon them. They're just in some kind of a daze now. Do you think for a minute that God's going to stand by and let the devil take you away from Him? Do you think for one minute that Lord's just going to sit back while the devil comes with all kinds of temptations and tries to get you away from Him? He bought you with His own blood.

He's not about to sit by idly and let you go. He's going to send a storm into your life and get you back. God wasn't going to sit back and let His man run.

He never sits back and lets His people run. Oh, folks, I'm going to tell you something. There are three awful consequences that you have to understand if you are running from God, if you're backslidden, or the devil's been trying to get you to backslide.

I want you to hear me as you've never heard any preacher in your lifetime. Consequence number one of backsliding. When you backslide, you become one of the most dangerous persons on earth.

I don't want to be near you. Jonah, the moment he stepped on that boat, was the most dangerous man in the Mediterranean because God was after him. Every sailor who sailed with him is in danger.

I don't know how many boats got tossed on that trade route. Not only that boat, but all the boats coming and going, and there could have been hundreds of sailors weeping and crying. Because, you see, when you run from God, when you backslide, you can't say, this is just my sin, this is my problem, I'm hurting nobody but myself.

I've heard that from drug addicts all my life, alcoholics, prostitutes. It's my body, I'm only hurting myself. Nobody else is my problem.

Oh, no. It's not just your problem. It's the problem of everybody that lives with you, walks with you, and knows you.

You're a dangerous person because God's after you. Not to hurt you. But, oh, are you going to go through it? The Lord sent a great wind.

The captain goes down, I don't know why, probably going down to inspect the beams of the boat to see if it's still holding together, to see how much water they're taking on. The waves are coming over the boat. The rudder is useless.

There's no sails left. And he looks up way up there in the stern and there's a man rolled up in a ball snoring. You know something? God may have a controversy with one sinner, one backslider, and affect so many people while he's dealing with him.

A lady wrote to me recently. She said, Pastor David, my preacher dad backslid. He resigned his church and he left Mom, his wife and my mother, and picked up with some ungodly woman.

Absolutely backslid. Not only did he backslide, but he caused all my brothers and sisters to backslide. And she said, Brother David, he calls me telling me I'm a phony and I need to stick with my family and my father's trying to get me to backslide.

She said, thank God he hasn't touched me. And God's been keeping me. You see, when you backslide, you not only affect yourself, you affect the whole family.

Here's a father and a husband who's been delivered from drugs, for example. And the Lord touches his life, begins to restore him, brings him back to his family. The little children now are so excited.

Daddy's home. This is true. Case after case, but I'm thinking one in particular.

Three precious little children. Now he has a good job and he comes home from work and they crawl up in his lap and they laugh and they play and she is happy. God has answered her prayer.

Her husband is home. Daddy's home. And God is blessing.

Everything is favorable. God is blessing in a marvelous way. But one day, the tempter comes and he goes back into a back room with a bag of stuff and snorts.

And he's caught. He goes home that day and his wife, there's a terrible fear comes over her because she sees something on his face he hasn't seen in a year. She says, oh God, don't let it be because she knows when he comes sniffing and his eyes are red.

She's been there. She's seen it many times. And within a week she knows he's hooked again because the next day and the next week he's there at noon.

He's there at three o'clock coming back getting drinking water and trying to drink coffee and trying to come out of a daze. And she knows now that when he goes off at eight o'clock in the morning he's not going to his job. He lost his job.

And he's back on the streets. And now those three little children are bitter and they are mad. They're mad at God.

They're mad at dad. They're mad at mom. They're mad at the whole world.

And that father who said, it's my body, it's my problem. No, you're a dangerous man. You're destroying everything around you.

And now you're destroying even the grandchildren that were in your womb or in your loins. But those wonderful grandchildren that you could have had there are not going to be there because you're a dangerous man. Because God sends storms.

He's going to come. I don't know if you heard about it in the news this week. Here in New York City on Wall Street one of the top Wall Street brokers of all times.

I mean handling multi, multi millions of dollars for his corporation. One of the Wall Street firms here. And he got hooked on heroin.

And heroin is sweeping all through Wall Street now. And he would, just before he had business deals he would snort heroin. And the stuff that's on the streets now is almost 75% pure.

And it can kill you. And he got hooked. Lost his job.

And got his wife hooked. Another Wall Street broker. And in the New York Times on Saturday they told their story.

And you know where they are now? They're in a city shelter here in New York. They lost millions of dollars. They lost their home.

Lost their family. Lost everything. The man's out of his mind.

No, you don't hurt just yourself. It's not just your body. Nobody lives and dies to themselves.

When David sinned in numbering Israel he was a dangerous man. Why? Because God, when he sent his judgment on David sent judgment on Israel and 70,000 innocent men died. Now I don't know how innocent they are because the Bible said they were into idolatry.

God may have been dealing with them but I want you to know that one man's sin cost the lives of 70,000 men. Backslidden Christians are sending a lot of people to hell on their jobs. There was a time you went into your job you had a Bible on your desk.

You were a testimony. There was something about your countenance made you different. You went to church you tried to get everybody else on your job to go to your church.

You were so excited about Jesus and now they know there's a change and then they see you. They see you going down. They see you backslidden.

They know something's wrong. They can't figure out the spirituality of it but they know something's different about you. You're just like them.

And you were their last hope. They looked at you and even though they may have mocked you they said, well, at least I know there's somebody I can go to when I'm in trouble. There's somebody I know that may prove that there may be a God.

But now you robbed them of that hope. You become dangerous. The second consequence of backsliding.

You're going to be rebuked by the world. Not just by the Holy Ghost. The world's going to stand up and rebuke you.

This captain comes to Jonah fast asleep and he shakes him. You know what he said? What meanest thou, O sleeper? Rise and call upon God. Now isn't that something? A heathen captain commanding a preacher to get on his face.

Get down and pray, preacher. Who are you? What does this mean? And suddenly Jonah shakes himself and he wakes and he feels the boat tossing and suddenly he hears the screaming of the sailors and he knows he looks at the water filling the hull of the boat and he says, Uh-oh. Uh-oh.

Oh, no. He caught me. It's God.

It's God. He crawls up on deck and he says, Gentlemen, this is all about me. I'm a backslider.

I'm running from God. And all those sailors said, How can you do this? How can you run from your God? How can you run from Him? Why are you bringing all of this trouble on us? In other words, did your God fail you? Did your God beat you? Did your God not love you? Were you so afraid of Him you had to run from Him? What kind of God do you serve, Jonah? You know, Paul, the apostle, he was on a boat that was tossed in a horrible hurricane. But he wasn't running from God.

And that man could stand before all the devils of hell and he could stand on that rocking boat and say, Don't worry, gentlemen. Not one of you is going to be lost. I heard from God last night.

My Lord told me we're all going to be saved. There was a time some of you could say that. You could stand up in any storm, in any crisis and say, My God is able.

But now you're a coward, just like Jonah. Jonah had no power whatsoever. He couldn't command the storm.

He couldn't bring hope. He had no message. He had nothing.

He was weak. He was a coward. And that's what sin does to you.

It takes away your dignity. It takes away your strength. It takes away your power and makes you a coward before all mankind.

And you know what happens? You present to the Lord a very unattractive salvation. You make it seem to the sinner that it's more profitable to be a sinner than to be a Christian because they come to you now and say, Why are you so irritable? See, your back's slidden now. Where's that smile that was on your countenance at one time? Why is it people don't come and unburden our problems to you anymore? Why don't you ask me to your church anymore? It's been ages since you asked me to go to Times Square Church.

That's what the sinners are saying. How can you do this to your God? How did it happen? You're irritable now because you've got problems you never had before. You've got fear.

You have guilt. You have condemnation. And you know that God's coming.

That the Lord's not gonna let you get by because you told Him, you gave Him your heart. You said you're gonna serve Him for life and He took you at your word and He put His blood on you. Jesus sprinkled His blood on you.

That's my blood. I died. That's my shed blood.

I paid the price. You're mine. And I'm not gonna let you go.

I'll do anything. I'll take... I will take any drastic action I have to take to keep you. I'll put you in a killer storm if I have to.

I'll put you in the belly of a whale if I have to, but I'm not letting you go. There should... Listen to me now. There should be no area in life where we as Christians should make it seem more attractive to serve the devil than to serve the Lord.

In every area of life, we ought to have the gentleness, the smile, the kindness, the goodness, the grace. We should be a testimony to the whole world. Serve Jesus.

He satisfies. He makes a way where there's no way He'll see you through any storm. That should be the testimony.

But the backslider has lost that testimony. He has no testimony. Backslider, you have no testimony.

Tell anybody you want what it used to be like serving Jesus, but that's not a testimony. It has no power. Doesn't mean a thing.

You brought a bad report. You brought a slander on the Christian walk. You see, when... Well, let's go to consequence number three so I can get to this.

Consequence number three. God is going to take you down into the lowest pit known to man. You're going on a whale of a trip.

Pardon the pun. God's got a fish ready for you. I want you to listen to me, please.

If you're a backslider here tonight, you've got to hear this. No man, no woman on earth has ever escaped what we are reading here. No one has ever gotten away with it.

I want you to go to Jonah, first chapter 11. Beginning to read verse 11. Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee that the sea may be calm unto us? For the sea wrought and was tempestuous.

And he said unto them, Take me up, cast me forth into the sea, so shall the sea be calm unto you. For I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you. Nevertheless, the men rode hard to bring it to the land, but they could not, for the sea wrought and was tempestuous against them.

Folks, look at me, please. First of all, God sends a crisis to your life. If you're running from the Lord, if you're backslidden, if you're not in a crisis, mark it down, it's coming.

The crisis of your life, the storm of your life, you are going to be tossed and turned inside out, upside down. I mean, you are going to go through it. If you thought you had it rough before, just wait.

No one can escape this storm. Now, some of you are already in it. You're beginning to taste it.

You're beginning to go through it. You don't understand. This is the end of side one.

You may now turn the tape over to side two. Be well. There'll be friends just like these friends.

There'll be people who try to shield you from it. They kept rowing, trying. We don't want this man to be thrown overseas.

They pictured him being eaten by sharks within a few hours. And these are ungodly men, but they were moral men, evidently. And said, no, we can't do that to you, sir.

And so they're rowing, trying to get it. They're trying to shield him from the hand of God. But you see, God's already made up His mind.

And you can row all you want. You can have all your friends try to shield you, and it's not going to work. Because God has a purpose.

He's after you. Not to hurt you. Not to kill you.

But to deliver you. And bring you back to His first love. And so they're rowing.

They said, we can't do it. But God wouldn't let up. Wherefore, they cried unto the Lord and said, we beseech Thee, O Lord, we beseech Thee, let us not perish for this man's life.

And lay not upon us innocent blood, for Thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased Thee. So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea, and the sea ceased from her raging. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, and made vows.

Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Folks, after the storm comes the most critical, dark moment of your life.

That's called the pit of despondency and despair. Jonah in the belly of the whale confessed. He said, I have gone down to the bottoms of the mountains, the deepest recesses of the earth.

That whale went down. Do you know what it was like? There's total darkness in the belly of that whale. There's no light down under the sea.

There's just a little bit of oxygen. Now folks, sea pressure. Even in submarines, they have to have it pressurized when they go down.

They're trying to dig up the remains of that 800 flight, and they have this little submarine, rescue submarine. It has to be pressurized. Folks, I don't know how God did this, but his eardrums had to be pounding at the pressure.

And seaweed all over his head and all over his body. And every fish that is being in that whale trying to digest that food. Can you imagine him in this stinking mess of darkness and everything else? Folks, that's a picture, Backslider, of where you're headed.

I had a message I preached years ago called Seaweed Prophets. I went down to the bottom of the mountains, he said. Backslider, there's going to come a night of darkness to you.

Terrible darkness. Absolute despair and despondency. This is what hit Jonah in the belly of the whale.

And that's why God swallowed him up and let him be down there. Because, you see, God's looking. There's only two options that you have when you go down into the belly of this crisis that God brings to the Backslider.

There's only two options. One, you give up to despondency. You say to yourself, well, God, I have so backslidden, I'm so far down, I can't get back to God.

And you let despair rule your life. You go down into the pits of depression. You say, I have so failed God, I'm in such a mess.

There's no hope for me. And I'm going to tell you something. Jonah could have very easily given in to that spirit of despondency, and he could have died in the belly of that whale, and he could have been swallowed up by the whale, eaten by that whale, digested by that whale, and never be heard of again.

You say, well, God had a mission for him. No, God can find somebody else. God can find somebody else.

Because we have our own free will. We have a free will, and He had to make a choice when that came. And some of you who have backslidden from the Lord, some of you who were so close to Jesus, and you're sitting here tonight, you've already seen what it's like when you get away from His presence.

How empty and cold and dark and damp and wearisome and the despondency and the despair and the guilt and the condemnation and the fear. Your conscience running from God is the hardest thing in the world. What a tragic thing it is.

But folks, when you get down in the bottom of despair, when you are despondent and full of fear and anxiety, you have to make a choice. Thank God Jonah made the right choice. Jonah prayed unto the Lord, Is God out of the fish's belly? And he said, I cried by reason of my affliction unto the Lord, and He heard me.

Out of the belly of hell, cried I, and you heard my voice. I have a preacher friend. He was a preacher.

Loved him dearly a number of years ago. He was the sweetest, gentlest man you'd ever meet. Sweet and gentle, and I mean in a manly way.

But he was so kind. He'd go anywhere, do anything for anybody. And I loved him because he was a simple, trusting man.

He had some trouble in his marriage. And I noticed each time I would see him, he was just a little cooler than he was before. A little more despondent.

And I didn't know what was happening. But one day I got a telephone call that he'd resigned the ministry. He'd left his family.

And was running around with a lady drug addict. And by the time I got to him, the storm had hit. And he was in the storm of his life.

Because that woman who he thought was going to be answered to all of his needs, couldn't satisfy him. He was miserable. Not only that, she had got him on pot.

And when I sat with him outside of a building, I had called them to come and visit me, and we were sitting outside. I remember three chairs, and I'll never forget the look on his face. He's smoking pot now.

Not only that, he was selling it. And I looked at him, and he couldn't even lift up his eyes. They were two of the most miserable people.

Because you see, she once knew the Lord, and she backslid too. And now on drugs. And now she's sitting there thinking, not only am I on drugs, but I brought a man of God down, and I caused the preacher of the gospel of Jesus to go to drugs.

Can you imagine her despair? She was in the belly of the well. She was totally despondent. And I said, I still love you, sir.

I said, the Lord loves you. And I'm here to tell you, I'm your friend, and I want you to let me take you by the hand and bring you back to the Savior. The Lord will restore everything the canker worm has eaten.

He said, Brother David, I'm too far gone. I've sinned too much against Jesus. There's no way he could forgive me for what I have done to him and the reproach I brought on his name.

There's no way. Folks, I sat there for two hours trying to persuade him, using scriptures, did everything. I couldn't bring him out of that pit of despair and despondence.

I couldn't get him out. In fact, in the next three years, I kept trying. Telephone calls, and every time I'd go into his city, I would get a hold of him, and I found he was deeper and deeper.

Just one time, there was a glimmer of hope, but I couldn't reach him. You know what he did? He had two options. He could either, in the belly of the well, when he's down and despairing and feeling that God has given up on him, there's no hope, he can't get back.

If all he had done is out of the belly of that hell, cried to God. Said, Oh, God, I've sinned against you. Deliver me! The Lord would have been there immediately.

The Lord would have delivered him. I don't know what's happened to him. I've lost touch.

Last I heard, he was far gone. And what about you tonight, sitting here? And you say, Brother Dave, you don't know what I've done. You don't know how far down I've gone.

I have ministers that come, even to this church. They'll come and visit from all over the country. They'll meet me backstage.

Occasionally, I'll know their names because they had a measure of notoriety or they were familiar, they were quite famous in their time. I remember one who, when I was a boy, he was on television and radio, one of the best known men. He came to one of my meetings and when I, you've heard me tell about it, he came up and he told me his name and I was aghast.

His wife was leading him. He had eyes, but she was leading him like a blind man. I went to shake hands with him and he handed this to me, a dead fish.

I didn't know what to do with it. This man, by the time he met me, he'd been in that condition for 20 years. 20 years.

One of the most fiery, powerful preachers in America was a dead fish. Why? Because in his despair, that man got so despondent, for a whole year he'd hardly come out of his house. He said, there's no way, I brought more reproach than any man probably in history.

I brought reproach and he couldn't get away from the reproach, he couldn't get away from all of that and he wallowed in that despair and it destroyed him. And I'm telling you, consider tonight, and if you don't get a hold of this now and say, I have two options and I'm going to take the right one, I'm telling you, you can die in your despair. You can die in despondency.

You can allow yourself to wallow in that fear and wallow in that guilt and condemnation and fear and you can die in it and go to hell. Or you can say, no, I've heard a message tonight. A message of hope.

A message of strength and power in Jesus. I can come home. I can come back.

Oh, hallelujah. When Jonah began to pray in the belly of the whale, I believe God started drying up a nice spot somewhere up there in that belly. And he said, just sit there now and worship me.

And I believe he had a revival meeting there. And I'll tell you what, God moved on that whale and swooshed him across the Mediterranean, got him up into the high places and took him out, landed that whale near the shore and made him vomit. Out he came.

Out came a man of God free, set free, anointed back on schedule with the anointing of the Holy Ghost. God restored everything that was destroyed and eaten. God restored it.

God wants to restore everything the devil has taken from you. He wants to give everything back to you in good measure. Well, yeah, I got it.

Jeremiah. I found it. Jeremiah 3. And I'm going to close.

I knew there was something yet. I thought it was finished, but just this scripture here. Jeremiah 3? Oh, here's a good part.

Go to verse 20. Jeremiah 3, verse 20 through 22. Surely as a wife treacherously departed from her husband, so have you dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the Lord.

In other words, you backslid on me. A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping in supplication of the children of Israel, for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the God, the Lord their God. Return, ye backslidden children, and I, what, will heal your backslidings.

Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God. I'll tell you what, go to Jeremiah 15, please. I'm sorry, one more.

Jeremiah 15. Will you stand while we read this? Backslider, listen to it. Therefore thus, verse 19.

Jeremiah 15. Therefore thus saith the Lord, if thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me. And if thou take forth the precious from the vial, thou shalt be my mouth.

Let them return unto thee, but return not unto them. In other words, if you'll just walk away from your old crowd, walk away from what you've been doing, turn to me. I and I will make thee unto this people a fence, brazen wall.

They shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee. In other words, they're going to try to keep you away, but the Lord says they're not going to be able to prevail against you. For I am with thee to save thee, and to deliver thee, saith the Lord.

And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible. I will pull you out of the belly's well, and I'll set you free. O God, O God, speak tonight to those who have been running from you, those who are cold and indifferent.

They've taken a step toward away from you, Lord. O God, bring them back tonight. Bring them back tonight.

Could we sing just as I am, just as I am without one. He wants me to be an evangelist. And I've been his evangelist tonight.

And I love to preach evangelism because I know I know the faithfulness of God. Up in the balcony, I want every backslider. Now that takes a great confession, great honesty.

Every backslider downstairs here. Get out of your seat now. And get up here and say, Lord, I'm in the belly of the well.

I want deliverance. I want deliverance. I want it tonight.

I want it now. Get out of your seat and run down. And get down here quick and say, O God, O God, I don't want the devil to claim my soul.

I don't want to go this way anymore. I'm sick and tired of this. Lord, I'm coming home.

Come on, get up in the balcony, go to the stairs on either side, and come on down. Move in close, please. There'll be a lot of people coming.

Another step. Step back. Turn around and come home.

Turn all the way around and say, No, devil, I'm not going your way. No, I'm not going to that temptation. No, I'm not going to turn away.

If you've made even one step, turn around and come on back. Join these that are coming right now. Look this way, please.

The Holy Spirit just whispered something to my heart. The Holy Spirit told me to ask you a question. It has to do with a question from the heart of Jesus.

Listen to it now. Jesus is asking, Are you ready to walk all the way with me now? Are you ready to lay down everything in this world? Are you willing to walk away from everything that has your heart and come and give me everything? That's the question. Are you ready to walk away from everything in this world and say, Jesus, I want to get free and I want to give you everything, but you're going to have to help me.

If you'll make that commitment, yes, I'm ready to walk with Jesus. I'm ready to give him my life and my heart. I don't want anything in this world to stand between me and Jesus now.

How many can say that with a raised hand? Raise your hand if you can say that and leave it there while you pray this prayer with me right now. Pray it from the innermost part of your being. Dear Jesus, let me hear it.

Dear Jesus, from my heart, I confess my sins. Sprinkle your blood on my heart. Cleanse me and forgive me.

Lord Jesus, I don't want to walk toward the world. I don't want to leave you, Jesus. Draw me back right to your spirit, into your heart.

Come, Lord Jesus, be everything to me. The best I know how, in simple faith, I give you my heart, I give you my life, and I'm returning to your love. Fill me with your love.

Send the Holy Spirit and give me power to live for you, Jesus, and to resist the devil, and to get victory over every lust in my life. Now let me pray for you. Heavenly Father, I thank you for bringing so many backsliders back home.

Lord, I know that some of these that are standing here are going through a terrible time. They've had a battle, Lord, with their conscience. They've had a battle with fear, condemnation.

Many of them, Lord, came to this church tonight deep in the pits of despair and depression. Lord, there's something now that you've said to them. You've said, I'm still there, I'm still waiting, and I've allowed all this pain in your life just to make you sick and tired of the world.

I've allowed all this pain and all this suffering and guilt and fear and despair to drive you back into my own arms. So yield to me now, the Lord says. Just yield to me and open your heart, and I'll come and I'll restore my joy into your life.

Hallelujah. Talk to him right now. Just talk to him in your own words and say, Lord, I'm coming this time.

I come with all my heart. I'm returning to you. I surrender to you, Jesus.

I'm surrendering. Hallelujah. Holy Spirit, come now.

Now I want you to thank him in your own words. Just give Jesus thanks. Lord, thank you for loving me tonight.

Thank you for shaking me up. Thank you for stirring me. Thank you for drawing me.

Thank you, Jesus. I give you praise. I give you thanks.

Give thanks to the Lord. Just give him thanks. Some of you will say, well, Brother Dave, does this mean that before I go out of church, this problem, I'm going to be vomited out of this and I'm going to be suddenly free? No, he was in there for three days and three nights.

You still may have some difficulty when you got out of here, but if you'll hold on to the Lord and keep praying and seeking God like Jonah did, I'm telling you, God's going to get you out. God's going to bring you out of that well. He'll bring you out.

Glory be to Jesus. Hallelujah.

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