

The Sorrows of Backsliding

by John R. Rice

The sermon emphasizes the consequences of backsliding, including the chastising of God, the natural wages of sin, remorse of conscience, and suffering loss even in Heaven.

Scripture: Proverbs 14:14, Jeremiah 2:19, 1 Corinthians 3:12, 1 Corinthians 11:30, Hebrews 12:5

Topics: "Backsliding", "Discipline"

Description

John R. Rice preaches about the consequences of backsliding, emphasizing that God chastises His beloved children when they sin, as seen in Hebrews 12:5,6. He uses examples like David's sin and the Corinthians' misconduct to illustrate how God punishes His children for their sins, showing that God is more determined to discipline Christians than lost people. Rice warns that backsliding leads to personal chastisement, natural consequences of sin, and remorse of conscience, urging backsliders to return to God before facing a bitter and sorrowful path.

Transcript

Jeremiah 2:19 says:

"Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts."

Oh, the trouble that comes to the backslider in heart! Again, Proverbs 14:14 says, "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways." How many, many people have told me that their backsliding brought them only grief and trouble, and that they had enough of it!

First, the backslider is sure of the chastising of God. God still hates sin, and He has promised to chasten His beloved when they sin. Hebrews 12:5,6 tells us:

"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

And verse 11 in the same chapter tells us:

"No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

So God whips every backslider, and He does it in love. He does it to correct their backsliding and to bring "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" in His children.

I love my children so much that I want them to do right and be happy and succeed in the Christian life. So sometimes I have to whip them for their disobedience. It is painful, but it is done in love and for their good, and at the last it "yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness."

For David's sin, God smote his child and the baby died. One son, Amnon, raped his sister, Tamar. Then Absalom killed Amnon, then he grew embittered and tried to seize the kingdom from David. David paid fourfold for his sin, but David did not lose his soul. When David confessed his sin, God's message came to him.

"And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die."

David was a backslider. God forgave his backsliding but still punished him for his sin.

And when the saints at Corinth got drunk at the Lord's table, or made an unseemly feast of it, and when there were divisions and strife among them which they did not confess and forsake, the Lord had Paul write to them, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (I Cor. 11:30). For their sins some were weak and sickly, and some had already died and gone to Heaven prematurely. God punishes His children who sin.

It is apparent that God is more determined to punish the sins of Christians than the sins of lost people. For lost people will go to Hell forever and there will suffer for their sins. But God must be just, and the only time He can punish His own in actual chastising, we suppose, is in this world. So like a faithful father, who chastises his disobedient children but loves them still, God punishes the backslider.

Besides the personal chastising of a loving Father, the backslider reaps the natural wages of his sin. When a Christian gets drunk, he wastes his money and wakes up with a headache and is just as apt to lose his job or to break up his home as a lost man. It never pays anybody to sin, and it never will!

What a trail of trouble followed Lot's sin! He lost all his property in Sodom. All but two of his children were burned to death in that wicked city. His wife turned to a pillar of salt. A broken man, he lived in a cave in the mountains, then got drunk and ruined his own daughters who still had the ways of Sodom in their hearts!

That is what backsliding can do to the child of God. If you have tasted it, you know that the dregs of the cup are bitter and that "thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee." Surely, if you have been a backslider, you have found that "it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God." If one reads this who is persistent in going away from God and who is not yet ready to turn and beg forgiveness and cleansing. I warn you now, a hard, rough, bitter, sad road is ahead of you - the Backslider's Way.

Again, the backslider will have remorse of conscience over his sins. If you have truly been saved, then you love Christ and you love God. If you are truly a child of God, there is something in you which rebels against your sins. When you were a lost man, you may have enjoyed sin, but now that you are God's child, the cup of sin will turn bitter to your taste before the drink is well down.

Can you see in your mind Peter going out to weep bitterly after his denial of Christ? He quit the ministry and went back to fishing and was almost in despair, until he met Jesus again by the Sea of Galilee and had his joy restored.

Read the fifty-first Psalm which shows the brokenhearted David after his sin with Bathsheba. Hear him cry, begging to be cleansed: "For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me." The sense of his blood guiltiness, his soul-realization of the wickedness of his nature, is made clear in every verse of that Psalm, and he pleads, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation: and uphold me with thy free spirit." And when God will give him the assurance of forgiveness and cleansing, David promises, "My tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness!"

Some of you who read this have known, as I have, the broken heart that David had over his own sins. Oh, the burning conscience of a backslider!

At Gary, Indiana, a man came down the aisle at the invitation to say, "Five years I have been a backslider! Oh, Brother Rice, five years is a long time to be away from home!" and he broke into weeping.

Well, poor backslider, I wouldn't stay away any longer. I would come home today for it is a sad, bitter business when you have known the joy of salvation, the presence of God, the sweetness of the Bible and of answered prayer, then to lose all that joy and not be able to see the face of the God whom you love.

The poor, prodigal boy in the hog pen, dreaming about the plenty at home while he perished with hunger, a stranger, half-naked and despised in a far land, knew the sorrows that a child of God has who sins and falls away from the sweet communion and joy which every Christian has a right to have.

Last of all, let us remember that "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Even when we get to Heaven we will be sad that we were backsliders. There we will have to stand before Christ to give an account for our deeds. Even in Heaven the backslider will be ashamed that he drifted away from full fellowship with the Saviour and with his Heavenly Father. When his works are burned up, he will "be saved; yet so as by fire" and will "suffer loss" (1 Cor. 3:12-15).

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