

The Backslider's Return

by Octavius Winslow

Octavius Winslow's sermon emphasizes the importance of returning to God after periods of spiritual wandering and the grace available for restoration.

Scripture: Psalm 51:10, Isaiah 55:7, Jeremiah 3:1, Matthew 18:21-22, Luke 15:20, Romans 5:20, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 6:1, James 4:8, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Backsliding", "Restoration"

Description

Octavius Winslow emphasizes the profound grace of God in calling back the backslider, illustrating the tender invitation of the Lord to return despite our repeated failures and wanderings. He reflects on the heart's deceitfulness and the struggles of the soul that has strayed from God, yet reassures that God's voice remains sweet and inviting, urging us to come back to Him. Winslow highlights that true spiritual restoration requires a heartfelt return to Jesus, transcending mere repentance and leading to a deeper communion with Him. The sermon encourages believers to embrace God's forgiveness and to strengthen others through their experiences of grace and recovery. Ultimately, it is a call to rest in the love and mercy of Christ, who welcomes us back with open arms.

Transcript

"Yet return again to Me, says the Lord."--Jer. 3:1

Could there be a more touching "Thus says the Lord" than this? The voice of Jesus, as it echoed over the mountains and along the valleys of our unregenerate distance from God, seeking and finding and bringing us home, was inexpressibly sweet and irresistibly gracious. But, to hear that same voice, after our many wanderings, our repeated relapses, our sad backslidings, still seeking, still inviting, still imploring us to return, though we had "played the harlot with many lovers," oh, there is music in that voice such as the heavenly minstrelsy must bend their ear to catch.

My soul, you are "bent upon backsliding, even as a backsliding heifer." Your heart is as a broken bow, treacherous to the arrow fixed upon the string, and ready for its flight. Your purposes of good formed, but thwarted; resolutions of amendment made, but broken; plans of usefulness laid, but frustrated; prayers for grace offered, but forgotten; desires and aspirations after God sent up, but, through a deceitful and wicked heart, dissolving into air. Oh! how many and aggravated have your backslidings from God been--backslidings in heart, backslidings in deed--secret wanderings, open wanderings. You have "left your first love," have "forgotten your resting-place;" and, straying from the cross, have gone back to walk

no more with Jesus. Truly, your "heart is like a deceitful bow."

But, has the Lord, by some gentle movement of His grace, or by some solemn event of His providence, aroused, overtaken, arrested you? Has He set a hedge around your path, that you could not find your lovers, bringing you to reflection, to penitence, to prayer? Then, listen, O my soul, to the gracious words of your "first husband;" "Yet return again to Me, says the Lord."

Spiritual restoration implies a spiritual re-conversion. In this sense we are to interpret our Lord's words to His fallen apostle Peter--"When you are converted, strengthen your brethren,"--that is, when you are restored, recovered, turned back again, employ your restored grace, the experience you have derived, and the lessons you have learned by your fall and recovery, in strengthening your weak brethren--in warning and exhorting, in restoring and comforting those who have been alike tempted, and have alike fallen.

There is something very expressive, tender, and touching in the word--"Again." "Yet return again." It sounds like the "forgiveness of seventy times seven." Lord! I have wandered from You times without number--"Yet return again." Lord! I have so often sinned and repented--"Yet return again." Lord! You have received and forgiven me more than seventy times seven--"Yet return again." Lord! I come confessing the same sins, deploring the same backslidings, acknowledging the same self-will and base ingratitude--"Yet return again to me, says the Lord." Then, Lord! I come with weeping, and mourning, and confession, since Your tenderness, grace, and changeless love, and outstretched hand bid me.

"Return to Me." My soul, rest not until you rest in Jesus. Let nothing come between your returning heart and your advancing, loving, forgiving Father. There is no true return of a backsliding believer but that which takes him past his repentance, past his tears, past his confessions, past his amendments, past his minister, and brings him at once close to Christ. There is no healing of the hurt, no binding up of the wound, no cleansing, no peace, no comfort, no joy, but as the soul comes to the blood, and nestles once more within the very heart of Jesus. "Return unto ME."

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/octavius-winslow/the-backsliders-return/>

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