

Backslider

by Steve Hill

This sermon emphasizes the need for individuals to seek forgiveness and come back to the Lord, addressing hindrances that may have caused them to stray. It challenges listeners to confront their sins, pride, and excuses, urging them to make a bold decision to seek God's forgiveness and restoration.

Scripture: James 4:8, 1 John 1:9, Luke 15:20, Matthew 11:28, Romans 10:9

Topics: "Forgiveness", "Restoration"

Description

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Transcript

Thank you, Lord! Thank you, Lord! Yes, Lord! We just need to take time to thank Him. Hallelujah! Some of you have never thanked God for your toenails, your fingernails. I'm being serious.

Take everything for granted. Hallelujah! Let's just do that right now. Jesus, we thank you for everything.

We thank you, Lord, that we can breathe tonight. Thank you, Lord, for the fresh air of heaven. Thank you, Lord.

Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Lord. We thank you, Lord Jesus.

Thank you, Lord Jesus. Thank you, Lord. Hallelujah! Before you're seated, Patty, I appreciate so much your ministry and song.

And when I had Patty before, she leaves out of here. She's staying for a few days. I'm going to have to share her testimony with us.

She's been through hell on earth, like many of us in this room, and God's delivered her. But, Bruce, what you sang about, that's your brother-in-law. I've been in that situation.

I remember a time, and don't anyone be seated yet. We're going to pray, and you can be seated. But I remember a time of witnessing to a young man.

I'd gone into his camera shop, and I would go in there maybe once a week and talk to him. But I was being real light about it, you know, just didn't want to offend him. Have you ever been like that? You just don't want to offend anybody.

But, you know, the devil comes in, just slaps them all around the place. He doesn't care. But you want to come in, and you want to be kind and nice.

You know, you don't want to offend them. So I didn't want to offend this man, and I shared the gospel with him and loved on him. But I never really nailed it.

Never really nailed it down and talked to him straight, one-on-one, you must be saved. You must receive Jesus Christ as your Savior. And I drove by the business one day, and I looked up, and there was a wreath hanging on the door.

And my heart just sunk. And the thing that I feared the most was that he had died. And I went up, and I banged on the door of the business.

It was dark inside. I went to the business next door, and I asked them what happened. And they said, sure enough, that he had died.

And they said, didn't you know that he had terminal cancer? I went, no. And I left out of that place and cried and cried and cried and cried. And the Lord did not relieve me of that burden for months.

I don't know if you felt that, Bruce, or you probably felt it when you wrote the song. And I prayed. I said, God, lift this from me.

And he spoke to me. He said, Steve, I am going to make you feel horrible for a long, long time. And you may not understand this, friend, but I understood it.

I had disobeyed the Lord. I had not followed through. I had given in to pressure and had not nailed it down.

And the Lord said, Steve, you're going to feel this. I love you, son, but you're going to learn obedience by the things that you suffer right now. And you are going to suffer the pain of that young man's death for a long time.

And for months, I carried. I saw his face when I went to sleep at night. I would wake up every time I passed a cemetery.

I would see his face. And finally, the Lord lifted it from me, but I want to tell you what it did for me. People ask us why night after night we go after folks, why night after night we will preach the gospel in this place.

And I'll plead for you, man. I'll do anything in this place to get you to come down to these altars. You want to know why? I'm never going to stand on judgment day again like that.

I'm not going to stand with your blood on my hands. I'm going to give you the opportunity in just a few minutes to give your life to the Lord. I learned a lesson the hard way.

Everyone pray with me tonight. Dear Jesus, speak to my heart. Change my life in your precious name.

Amen. You may be seated. You may be seated.

Charity, I'd like for you to come and join us on the platform. Sit next to Dick Rubin. For over 20 years, the greatest joy of my life has been to personally witness with my own eyes people from all walks of life as they listen to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is real tinny. Those of you working the sound, please, if you could fix that. People from all walks of life, they listen to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

They respond to his message of love. They kneel at the old rugged cross and they receive forgiveness and turn their lives totally over to the Lord. I have always understood the words by John in his third book, verse four, when he said, I have no greater joy than this to hear that my children walk in truth.

I've always understood that. That's never been a scripture difficult for me to understand. The other day in this sanctuary, a man came in and he came up to me.

He said, Steve, you don't remember me, but 19 years ago, you came up into the Madison County Jail in Huntsville, Alabama and led me to the Lord. And he said, I just want to thank you, man, because for 19 years I've been living for Jesus. 19 years I've been living for God.

No greater joy, friend. Nothing makes me happier. The other day, Jerry and I received some pictures from Norma Gonzalez, who is an on-fire Christian.

She was formerly an Argentine revolutionist and I hope to get Norma up here sometime for her to tell you her story. She was the meanest snake in Argentina, man. She was a hard... Have you ever witnessed to somebody hard? This girl was stone-cold hard.

Was she hard, Jerry? Jerry spent month after month witnessing to this lady every night, and Norma would not come to Jesus. She called Jerry a fool. She called Jerry... She said, what on earth have you come across the world to Buenos Aires? You've left the United States of America.

You've come down here. You've learned a new language just to tell us this story that God loves us and has a plan for our life. You are ridiculous.

You're nuts. You're a fool. It'll never happen.

Well, hallelujah. We got a letter. We get a lot of letters from Norma.

This is a letter. She's a missionary, by the way, in Africa now. And these are pictures of Norma sitting around, all her converts.

She has led thousands to the Lord in Africa. By the way, is there anybody here that collects stamps? Come on up here, sis. I'm glad it was you.

I don't know who you are, but I'm glad some young whippersnapper didn't lie to me and say I collect stamps. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Those are from Africa. Is that right? She's a charter member of Brownsville. She deserves them.

Hallelujah. But Norma writes in her letter, she always calls us mom and dad. Why? We're not her fleshly mom and dad, but we are her spiritual mom and dad.

And she will not make a move anywhere without calling mom and calling dad and saying, what do you think about this? What do you think about that? I have no greater joy. Anybody know what I'm talking about? There's nothing like it. There's another young man.

His name is Milton Sanchez. He's from Palmita, Columbia. This church, this revival has helped build a church there.

And he calls me dad. He calls me pop. And he now lives in Fort Lauderdale.

He's going to be coming to the revival. I want you to meet Milton. Just a sharp guy.

But he came to the Lord in an open air meeting in Palmita, Columbia. He walked by this big white and yellow tent. And I was preaching the gospel.

And I saw him walk up. And I saw him across the tent, a real handsome man, had long brown hair. But he stood above all the other Columbians.

And so I just pointed him out. And I went, you, what are you doing here? And nailed him right in the middle of the message. I said, get up here now.

And he came forward, gave his life to Jesus. And now he's on fire for God. His father was a mafia hit man.

And he was murdered, was murdered by the mafia. And Milton wanted to grow up. And that's what he wanted to do.

He wanted to be a mafia hit man. But God got a hold of his life. Hallelujah.

And when I hear it, he'll call me every now and then. He'll say, hey dad, how's everything going? And it's like hearing from your children, friend. You don't know, unless you've led someone to Jesus and you've watched them live that life, you have no idea what it's like.

Am I telling the truth, pastor? There's nothing like it. Night after night, here in this revival, I am reminded once again of the power of the gospel. As new Christians, let me know how they're doing.

Over 18,000 people have come to know the Lord Jesus Christ in these revival services. And you should read our mail, friend. It's unbelievable, the stories.

We receive letters from many of them. Others come up during the break time and testify of how they're doing. I love to hear of when they were saved, when it happened, what they've been delivered of.

The other night, I heard the story about a man in Mobile whose wife was in this church when I preached with the axe. How many were here that night? I walked around here with an axe, a broad axe. And I'm so glad the news journal wasn't here that night.

Because it was a big axe, okay? It was a broad axe like this, a hundred-year-old axe. And the Bible says that if you don't bear forth fruit, he will cut you down. And there was a lady in the church that was scared to death because she was all right, but her husband was on his last leg and he felt like the axe of the Lord was after him.

So she went back and preached that to her husband and he got saved. I love stories like that, friend. I don't know what turns you on, but that turns me on.

I love to hear how it happened. It's all a miracle to me. By the way, if you're in this place, Jesus loves you and has a plan for your life.

It makes no difference how you feel. We've had people come here that were loving sin. We heard that last Friday night.

One young lady that came and testified, she came in here and nothing was really wrong in her life. She was having the time of her life, but she gave her life to Jesus because of the conviction of the Holy Ghost, friend. You don't have to be at the bottom.

You don't have to be. You can be on your way there and God get a hold of your life. But I love to hear the stories how people that were even doing good are now doing incredible.

Hallelujah. Everybody here tonight? I love to hear moms and dads consistently testify, either personally or by letter, how their sons and their daughters have been miraculously saved. They have been set free from bondages and are living a new life.

I get these letters, friends. I don't know what kind of letters you get in the mailbox. Maybe Bill, maybe Ed McMahon writes every now and then.

But we get letters 15 pages long, handwritten. And they start off with, how can I tell you? Boy, they proceed. Somehow they do.

And I tell my secretaries, how can anybody write this much? But then you get into it a little bit and you see how. Their son, their daughter has been miraculously delivered by the power of God. One father said, for 27 years, my son was an addict.

He went to the revival on a Friday night and he's never been the same. That's been four months, totally set free. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. I rejoice to hear that these folks walk in truth.

But then I also hear stories of those. Now stay with me for a few minutes, friends. This is going to get a little heavy.

I hear stories of those who have given their lives to God, were set on fire by the Holy Ghost, began to live a wonderful, liberated Christian life, testified to their friends and family of their newfound faith, and then for some reason or other fell away. They fell away from their relationship with God. They began cooling off and even backslid to a level worse than when they first believed.

I'm going to speak just for a minute to many of you in this room that are backslid. A backslidden condition is a horrible, horrible place to live. Charles Finney spoke to the backsliders back in the 1800s more than anything else because he knew America was full of backsliders.

And he said, you're miserable. You're miserable because you live in neither of the two worlds. Matter of fact, I'm going to see if I got his writing right here with me.

I doubt if I do. We've had so many people, friend, delivered from this backslidden condition. I don't, but you have just enough of the Lord to hate what you're doing in sin.

You live in sin. You're committing adultery. You're involved in just illicit sex.

You're doing things that are wrong. You're involved in drugs and drinking. But as you're doing all that, maybe the sin is pleasurable for a while, but as you're doing it or right after you're involved, you think about God.

You feel guilty. You feel horrible, friend. It's a horrible, horrible place to be, a backslidden condition.

I remember driving through a rough neighborhood in a town in East Texas with a minister friend of mine. He pointed to an X-rated adult movie theater and his X-rated adult theater and a bookstore, and he said, that place right there, Steve, is owned and operated by a man who was once on fire. He was an on-fire minister of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

My heart broke as I saw this adult movie theater and the X-rated propaganda all over the front of it, and I thought about, how can that happen? How can one man be an on-fire minister and now be distributing, be selling the very thing that he warned people about? I meet others who have fallen away. They once walked with a gleam in their eyes, a spring in their step. I see you come in here to this revival.

I prayed for a lady the other night. She hadn't been here in five months. She was here for a few days, got on fire for God, and then the devil snatched her up.

How many understand? He's waiting right outside them doors. You better believe it. He's got both eyes on this revival.

He's watching every step we take. He cannot stand the 18,000, and those are low figures, by the way, friend. We keep them low.

We've been rebuked by people coming in here going, I've been counting the folks getting saved. It's way over 18,000, and we tell folks, no, listen, friend, we're using that low figure because I don't want this revival to ever be ridiculed and harassed by folks that are out there saying, well, those numbers aren't true. That really didn't happen.

It's happened, friend. It has happened in this place, but I see them. She came back after months.

She had gone out there and fallen away from God. I see it in your eyes. You were once excited about God, but you've lost it.

You've lost the joy. You're walking alone again. Friend, I can feel the difference.

I can see it when I speak to you. I want you to turn with me to Galatians chapter 5, and for the next few minutes, I can tell right now, I'm not going to get all the way through this message. Galatians chapter 5. Some of you are already squirming in your seats.

Look at me, folks. I love you, man, but you need to thank God you can still squirm. Thank God you can still feel it, that you can feel the presence of the Lord.

Some of you are going, dear God, he's going to speak right at me. I know what you're doing, man, and if I point in your direction, if I so much as look in that direction at 300 or 400 people, you're going to go, oh God, he knows my name. I don't know your name, but God does, and he knows what you're going through, friend.

This morning as I was writing this message, I was writing it out, my hand was so tired from writing, I dropped it. I said, I turned to my wife and said, babe, I'm beat, man, because the Lord was speaking to me about you. You need to thank the Lord for that, amen? Galatians chapter 5. Galatians chapter 5. Verse 1. It was for freedom that Christ set us free, therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

Behold, I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision that he is under obligation to keep the whole law. Verse 4. You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law, you have fallen from grace.

Don't get lost in these scriptures, friend, just keep moving with me. For we through the Spirit by faith are waiting for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything but faith working through love.

Verse 7 is where I'm going tonight. You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? You were running well.

Who hindered you from obeying the truth? Verse 8. This persuasion did not come from him who calls you. A little leaven leavens a whole lump of dough. Verse 10.

I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will adopt no other view, but the one who is disturbing you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is. Could I speak just for a few minutes tonight, friend, on that one verse, verse 7. You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? I'm going to get personal just for a few minutes, so stay with me.

Let me give you a brief background on the book of Galatians. These are people that settled in that area around 300 B.C. They used to be barbaric. They were Celts, and they were uncivilized and uneducated.

And they began mingling with the Greeks and became more civilized and were eventually taken over by the Romans in 189 B.C. Listen to these people. The Galatians were generous, impulsive, extremely emotional in feeling and language, but also vain, fickle, and quarrelsome. Vain, fickle, and quarrelsome.

Caesar used to say about this group of people that they are fickle in their decisions. They are fond of change and are not to be trusted. Some of that fits us too.

I shared that for a reason, friend. Some of us are like that. We are fickle.

You understand? We want to change all the time. We're so fickle we cannot decide what we want to do. In a few minutes I'm going to give you an opportunity to commit your life to Christ.

You are for the first time in your life going to make a decision and you're going to stick with that decision. You're going to say, Jesus, I'm coming to you. I'm going to live for you all the days of my life.

There is no turning back. It's 100%. This is it.

These Galatians were a lot like you. They became more civilized and enriched by the constant traffic of Armenian caravans passing through the area. And there's a lot of business potential.

Whenever there's business potential there are Jews. Isn't that right, Dick Rubin? I'm going to say that again so you'll hear me. There were a lot of Jews around there, man, because there was a lot of money to be made.

Paul went through this area on his second journey. He was detained there by an illness and converted many of the Jews and the Greeks. He visited again on his third journey.

Many inhabitants of Galatia were converted to Christianity by Paul, but they were now falling back into Judaism. The reason being, teachers had crept in on the scene after Paul had left. He compliments them at first by saying this, ye did run well.

That's King James. Ye did run well. He commends them for the initial experience and walk with the Lord, and I do you too.

If you have walked with God, I commend you. You did live for God at one time in your life. You did go after God at one time, but something has happened.

They had eagerly embraced the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. It had changed their lives, and they put their energies towards walking according to Paul's teachings. Some of you have done that.

You have followed Jesus. You have lived for God. You have eagerly embraced his teachings, but something has happened.

Their progress was halted. Their newfound faith in Jesus was under attack. Has anyone here ever come under attack? Has anyone here ever come under attack? Dear God, I'm going to tell you, if hell doesn't know your name, it ain't written down.

You need to be known in hell. Jesus I know, and Paul I know. Pastors, your church needs to be known in hell.

It doesn't need to be known all over Texas. It doesn't need to be known all over the United States. It needs to be known in hell.

They need to know your name down there, and if they know it down there, something good is happening. That's the attack, and it's coming. They were wavering in their allegiance.

They were in grave danger of losing all the advantages that they had gained. Some of you tonight are so close to losing everything. You're going to run to these altars tonight when Charity sings, Run to the Mercy Seat.

Unsound doctrine had seeped in like a cancer and was now affecting the very life of the believers. I want to talk tonight about some who's. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? Who did it? But before we do that, everyone, some of you here don't even know what a backslidden condition.

Let me share something with you. This is a test. This is a litmus test to see if you're in a backslidden condition.

You've lost your spiritual appetite. You can remember a time when you hungered and thirsted after God, but things are different now. Things are different now.

You've lost your spiritual appetite. If that is you at home, if you're watching me and you've lost your spiritual appetite, some of you are sitting there. You're certain you're in that seat at home.

You should be in church, but the reason you're there is you've lost your spiritual appetite. Someone shoved this in your face, making you watch it. You're backslid, friend.

I love you. I care about you. God loves you, but you're backslid.

Face it. You've grown worldly in your actions and desires. You remember a time when all you desired was God's will.

You were consumed with Jesus and his plan for your life, but things are different now. Before this revival broke out, I used to travel. I'm fixing to sell all my suitcases.

But I would travel. I would travel and preach in churches across this nation, and I could tell you just like that the pastors that were backslid by what came out of their mouth. It was quick, and I'm not judging, friend.

I could tell. You could feel it. There's times I'd be up at the pulpit.

I remember one church where the pastor was in the back pew with his feet up on the pew. He was in good shape, wasn't he, folks? I'm telling you. That was a church that I got about five minutes into the sermon, closed the Bible, and said, I'm leaving.

This church is going to hell anyhow. You people don't know God. You know what he did? He got his feet off the pew, and he sat up and looked at me like, don't you dare, man.

And I did. I was there to take up a missions offering too. Wrong move.

It turned out good though, friend. We had 25 conversions. The Spirit of the Lord came down.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. You've grown worldly in your actions and desires.

That's a sign, friend, that you're backslidden. You remember a time when all you desired was God and God's will, but now it's not like that anymore. You have become less troubled about sin.

Sin used to bother you. Little things used to bother you, but now it doesn't bother you anymore. I want to put out a test for some of you men.

I'm going to put this out, and you can get upset if you want. What do you do when you're driving down the road and you see a couple of women joggers running down the road on the right side or the left? Men, I want to tell you something right now. A man who's godly will turn his head before he even figures out whether the women are men.

He'll turn his head. Why? Sin. He doesn't want anything to creep in, man.

He doesn't want to know what they look like. He doesn't want to know what color hair they have. He wants to turn.

He doesn't want to give the devil one inch, so he turns, but a person in a back-slidden condition will see them, look again, gaze for a few minutes, and then maybe drive on, but it doesn't bother them like it used to. I'm talking about the channels. You flip through the channels, friend, and your remote just flies past a moving, and you see something.

You're not sure what it was. You knew what it was, and you're going to go back and check it out. You're back-slid.

You are back-slid if you have to go back to check it out. A man who is on fire for God, who loves the Lord would say, Dear God, erase that image that just went across my mind. Erase it, Lord.

Don't ever let that pass through me again. I don't want to grieve you, Holy Spirit. Do you think the Holy Ghost is causing you to go back on them channels? No, sir.

Is this all right, pastor? You remember back when the littlest thing would bother you. You fell under conviction easily and repented, but now all that repenting is not that important. You're not as troubled about sin anymore, friend.

You are a different person now. You have back-slid, but I'm not doing the things I was doing. You will.

You're heading there, but you don't know what I was involved in, friend. Let me tell you something. You're trying to categorize sin.

Boy, I'm not going to get into it. I can't, man. I hurt for you, friend.

I think God has stamped this revival. He loves this revival. He's refreshing us and loving on us Christians.

Tonight, some of you drug yourself in here, and you're going to fly out like a bird. Some of you have been carried in here. I mean, you've been drug in here, and they're going to carry you out.

Want to know why? You ain't going to be able to walk. We had one pastor. I don't want to get prayed for for sure now.

I had one pastor come in here. His sweat was popping off his forehead. He was just wore to a frazzle.

He carried 15 members of his church out of here. He had his deacons over his shoulder like that, carrying them out. He looked at me and said, man, this refreshing is wearing me out, man.

It changed his whole church. He stuck all his deacons in front of me. He just sick them, you know.

So, we're going to pray for you Christians, but I want to tell you something. God has, he's blessing us. One of the reasons he's blessing us is because we're preaching the Word.

We're preaching about Jesus, and backslidden conditions, friends, are all through the Word. Don't be one. If you're a backslider, you come back to the Lord tonight.

A couple other characteristics is religious exercises become formal and emotionless. A backslider can often pray. He can praise.

He can sing. He can confess and give thanks with his lips, but it's all just a result of habit going through the motions. A backslider has lost his or her enjoyment in Christian service.

He has a lack of interest in God's Word. If there's a Bible in your home or a Newsweek, the Newsweek gets automatic preference. You will make sure every word is covered sometimes twice before the Bible is cracked.

You're backslid. You're backslid, friend. I know you love me.

You have a lax attitude towards a conversion of souls and revival. A backslider has a spirit of criticism and fault-finding. A backslider, friend, would take the News Journal, Sunday's article, four pages.

How many read that? If you didn't get it, you need to call the News Journal and get them before they get rid of the copies. Get Sunday's News Journal. That's history.

Four pages about this revival. Color. Unbelievable, friend.

But a backslider, someone who is away from God, would read through that, oftentimes with a critical spirit. They'll read through that and go, well, I don't know if that's really happened. Maybe that really didn't happen.

I don't know. A one who loves God and is open to the things of God would read that and weep. They would weep as they see these lies being changed.

Friend, are you backslid? Who hindered you? Number one. Who hindered you from running? How many know that Christian life is a race? You ran so well. Who hindered you? Now, I'm going to hit home to begin with.

I'm just going to be a couple more minutes on this and Charity's going to sing. I can tell I'm not going to make it through it. Was it a minister of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that threw a stumbling block in front of you? Look at me, everybody.

That's number one. Was it a preacher that hindered you? If it was a preacher that hindered you, I want to stand before this congregation and make a public apology. Forgive us if we are the ones, if one of us caused you to stumble.

Who has hindered you from running so well? Were you running well and someone came along with their hand outstretched and said, Did a godly minister pour cold water over you, over your enthusiastic zeal over the things of God? Were you like that? You were on fire for God, but a minister came up and said, You need to calm down. All this emotional stuff is for the weak. It's for the feeling-oriented people.

You just need to relax and live for God. Was it a minister that said that to you and caused you to backslide? You were so on fire for God. You want to know why Chuck Smith grew in California during the Jesus movement? Calvary Chapel blossomed overnight.

You want to know why? Because he didn't say halt. The hippies were getting saved by the hundreds and they wanted to play their guitars. They wanted to sing on the streets.

They wanted to talk about Jesus. They wanted to wear Jesus T-shirts. They wanted to look crazy out there.

And he said, Go, man. Go, preach the Word. Go on out there and do it to it.

Preach the Gospel. We have visiting us next week some of the pastors of one of the largest churches in America. They called me today out in Texas.

It's a church that went from 200 to 7,000 during the Jesus movement. They're still running about 9,000 now. Their pastors are coming next week to be prayed for.

They're coming to study our prayer team. They want to see how this all works. They want this to happen in their church.

But when the revival first broke out in that church, let me tell you what happened. A bunch of no-names got saved. Junkies, drug addicts, prostitutes, bikers came into the church and sat in the back in their leathers and chains and their shorts and flip-flops and something barefooted.

And they didn't get saved. They just sat there and listened to the pastor preach. He waited several Sundays and finally one of them walked the aisle and gave his heart to Jesus.

The congregation was small at that time and several of them looked at it like, well, I hope he changes his appearance and his looks quick because this is going to ruin our upper-class church. Next day he comes back, that man comes back and he fills up two rows with all his friends. Say hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Fills them up with his friends. The altar call is given and they all come forward.

Something was happening. The pastor was in heaven, man. He couldn't preach anything wrong.

Everything he preached on, they were in it. They were going, yes, yes, yes. Pick a sin.

They had done it. And he'd give an altar call and down to the altar they'd come. Well, half the church would just sort of snobbishly look on.

It went on and on and on and it grew. These pastors are going to be here next week. It went on and on, grew, grew, grew, grew, grew.

Finally, half the congregation went to the pastor and said, if this keeps up, we're out of here. He said, it's going to keep up. You're out of here.

He said, goodbye. And they went on to grow to 7,000 members. Friends, now you go to the church.

Tony, you'd love this, man. You go to the church and I remember looking across there, the pastor pointed to me and there was a wealthy man. You could tell by the way he was dressed.

In the back of the church sort of standing like this. Pastor said, you want to know who he is? I said, who? He said, he came in here on his Harley. He had leathers, chains.

He came in here just a scum, tattoos all over his body. He came in here, gave his life to Jesus years ago. Now he's one of the wealthiest men in the city.

He owns every car wash from one side of this town to the other. He's a multi-millionaire. He's a yuppie, what we all call him, you know.

He's got everything now. He's our biggest tither in the church. Wow, the scum, the pawn slime that people didn't want dripping in the church.

Friend, that pastor missed, he didn't miss God, but the people missed God. But across this country during the Jesus movement, thousands of pastors missed God because they did this. Stop! Or was it ungodly behavior of a preacher? Now this is going to hurt pastors that are visiting.

Those of you that are backslid, was it an ungodly behavior of a preacher or perhaps a Sunday school teacher that caused you to lose your joy, fall away from God and go back into the world? Paul said, who has hindered you? Who has done this to you, my precious Galatians? I know you're fickle. I know that you're undecisive, but I planted the truth in your heart. Who has hindered you? Who has hurt you? Was it ungodly behavior? I remember meeting a lady in the Midwest who was a dynamic teacher of the word.

She was in a small church in the Midwest. I'm talking about 30 members. And this lady was as good as Marilyn Hickey.

Her teaching was phenomenal. Incredible. And I sat in her Sunday school class.

I was preaching that morning. I sat there to listen to her. And I thought, this woman needs to be in the largest church in America.

And I went up to her afterwards and I said, have you ever toured? She goes, I've been there. She went on to tell me the story how she was in one of the largest churches in America with her husband and a beautiful family and one of the pastors of the church that she respected, she esteemed as a godly man, tried to fondle her one day. It devastated her.

It devastated her family. The family wanted to backslide, but they had enough of God to hold on. It devastated them so much, they moved from that city and moved to a small Midwestern town to just hide from the devastation, hoping to rescue their kids because the kids knew what was going on.

You could see the pain that it had caused. I'm telling you right now, friend, if you're in this room and a pastor or a Sunday school teacher has been responsible for you backsliding, forgive us. Forgive us.

I remember meeting the housekeeper. Can I stay on this just for a minute? I've never preached on this, ever. I've never touched on this, friends.

It's got to be talked on, though. I remember meeting a housekeeper. I was up in Wisconsin.

She was in her 80s and she was the housekeeper of one of the most noted evangelists in the 40s and 50s, one of the big time healing evangelists. And don't try to guess who it was. You're wasting your time, friend, because I'm not going to tell you and it's none of your business, but I'm going to tell you what happened to her.

She was the housekeeper. She took care of his house. And while she was cleaning his house one day, she found in the bed stand stack after stack after stack of Playboys.

And she went to the authorities, the ones who ran the ministry, and said, look what I have found. She brought the evidence. And they said, we know about that, but he's too big.

It'll all blow over. And besides that, look at the work he's doing for God in America. And she said, but he's living in sin.

He's a sinner. She was devastated. It damaged her and it damaged her husband and to this day, he will not come to a church.

To this day, he would never come to an altar. To this day, I talked to him. It was like talking to an ice cube.

He was ice cold because of something that happened back in the 50s. It's called hypocrisy. And he said, I don't ever want anything to do with any preachers.

And I told him, I said, there's some good people out there, man. I'm living for God. I said, I'm living for God.

I've got a good family that loves me and I love them. I'm faithful to my wife. It didn't make any difference, friend.

He had hardened his heart. He was a backslider. How about an anger? How about anger or bitter treatment? Some of you may have received from a minister.

Maybe some of you have been in a congregation and the preacher didn't give you a chance to get forgiveness and he just blurted out in the congregation, I know you're out there and I know you've committed this sin in this city and you knew that everyone knew what was going on in your life and he embarrassed you in front of thousands of people or hundreds of people and it was wrong because he didn't come to you one-on-one. He didn't love you. He didn't care for you.

I want to stand here before God and you and ask you to forgive us. As a representative of the ministers of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, forgive us. Do not hold that against us.

Perhaps a minister made a promise to your family that he couldn't keep. Forgive us. Forgive us.

Perhaps a loved one was dying of a disease and the preacher came to your home and by the bedside and said that God told him that she would be healed and you believed and a few days later she died. You're devastated from it. You left the church and you've never gone back.

Maybe tonight's your first night back in years. We have people come to this revival. They haven't been to church in 18 years.

They haven't been to church in 32 years. This is the only church they've ever been to one night of the revival. If you've been devastated by something that a preacher did, forgive us.

Just a couple more things. Perhaps you've fallen into a prophecy trap. You began following the prophecy teachers and there's some good ones out there, but these particular ones were spitting out dates and times of Jesus' return.

I've ministered in 20 years to several people that have been caught up in this. Maybe you're one of the thousands who fell for that business and you fell for a particular date and you sold your car. You sold some of your possessions and you gave it to that ministry.

Maybe it was a plea over the television set and you gave your things away and the date came and passed and it never happened and he got on the air and he said, God changed his mind. You were devastated. Haven't you known it happens all the time? Forgive us.

Forgive us friend if that's happened to you as a representative of the ministers of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Forgive us for that. Was it something that I said from the pulpit? Maybe the night that I walked around with that ax.

Maybe you're sitting in here and you're going, Dear God, I knew he was a maniac, but he's coming after me now. Maybe that offended you friend. What offends some people draws other people right into the kingdom.

Forgive me if that offended you, but I want to tell you, I would do it again. Maybe it was a Sunday school teacher. This is my last one on this.

Maybe a Sunday school teacher was sharing a scripture and then wove in a personal opinion and sort of wove it in his gospel and you raised your hand and disagreed with the teacher. He or she got prideful and arrogant in front of the rest of the class and basically told you to shut up and sit down and embarrassed. You left and you haven't ever gone back.

As a representative of the ministers of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, I want to ask you to forgive us. If that happened to you, that was wrong behavior. It should have never happened.

Forgive us. But let me share something with you tonight. I've had leaders that I admired and loved dearly fall away from God right before my very eyes.

Do not judge Christianity by the unworthy lives of some of those who profess it. Is anybody listening tonight? Do not judge Christianity by the unworthy lives of some of those who profess it. You must judge the Christian life by Christ himself.

Your relationship with Jesus Christ, now I'm going to get heavy on you right now, then I'm closing. I already beat up me, all right? I beat up the ministers. I beat up the ministers.

Your relationship with Christ is personal. It is individual. The whole Christian world could backslide.

It could fall into the sea of sin. What are you going to do? What this man does or that man does is beside the point. Are you going to live for God? Young people, we've had thousands of teenagers say, if a dozen of your friends backslide, what are you going to do? Are you going to be a wimp? Are you going to be some type of jellyfish, a spineless person and just go, well, they fell.

I'm going to fall too. I wonder if you ever knew the Lord. Do you know Jesus? If you know Jesus, pray for the 12.

Go after them, man. Who hindered you? Who caused you to stop running with the Lord? Who's the one that slowed you down? Well, I've covered the preachers. And now in closing, I'm going to cover a couple more.

Was it others who hindered your walk? Did an ungodly Christian come up to you and pour cold water all over you? If they did, slap them next time. Some of you, I want to tell you, look at me, everybody. Some of you, you are a wimp.

I'm telling you, sir, you are a wimp. I talked to you on the phone. One man called me the other day and he said, it's just so hard.

And I said to you, well, just go live in sin. Don't even say that to me around Easter. It's just so hard.

You haven't suffered under blood. You're talking about some lousy porno addiction you got or some lousy lust you have, some little fickle thing that's about you. And you go, well, it's just so hard to live for God.

Well, then go burn in hell. You wanted it, you got it. Was it others? Did another believer come along and pour cold water on your little zeal? I want to tell you, friend, or was it your ungodly friends that came along? I want to ask you something.

Did you get saved or not? If you got saved, stick your face in their face and go, I'm a fool for Jesus. Who's fool are you? Don't go walking up to them like this just like some little humbled man. You know, don't walk up to them hoping that they're not going to talk to you about your God.

Walk up to them like this. Stick your face in their face and point your finger in their face and say, let me tell you what Jesus Christ has done in my life. And they can say anything to you.

Some of you that are in this room, you backslid? See, I've covered the preachers, all right? Can I cover you now? You're backslid. I want to tell you, you're spineless. Why don't you act like a man and be strong? Act like a woman of God and come down to this altar tonight and say, it was my fault.

I let my friends over a cup of coffee talk me out of Christianity. The man died on the cross for you and over a cup of Folgers, you backslide. You're like that.

You know what I'm talking about. Someone sits. You're in the fires of God, man.

You're full of the Holy Ghost, going with God and some agnostic neighbor corners you by the garden out back and says, Julie, you really don't need to be so white hot. You don't even do the things you used to do. Come on over and have a little martini with me like we used to.

Well, I'll come over, but I'm not going to have a martini because I'm saved now. And you go over and you sit down before a long friend. You're sipping on that martini and you want to know why? You're a wimp.

Jesus died for you, man. You can't stand up and look these people in the face and tell them that Christ has changed your life. No wonder you're backsliding.

You never had the guts to begin with. Stand for God, man. Look at these people in the face and tell them, Listen, you can go with the devil if you want to.

You can dance with him all night long. I'm dancing with Jesus. I'm running with the Lord.

I'm going after God. Others. Charity, I want you to get up and get ready to sing.

Others have hindered you. Friends, I'm not even touching on this tonight. I got 8,200 pages right here and I'm just not going to get to them.

But others have hindered you. See, Paul had to deal with some false teaching crept in. Look at me, everybody.

Everybody's watching you. Get up there and go sit on a bench. Go sit over there and be real still and they won't watch you.

See, when I bring charity, I love this girl, man. How many love charity, James? Some of you. You've come to Jesus in this revival and you know this is God.

This is God, friend. I've been around long enough to know this is the Lord. This is the Lord moving in people's lives.

But you'll get out there, you'll be on fire for God for a couple weeks and some minister or somebody out there will sit you down and talk to you. And they'll say something like, only weak Christians need that type of emotionalism. And they're dry as desert sand.

Next time they say that, go, and watch them just blow all over the place. They're dry, friend. Have you ever met people and said, I don't need emotion? Then do this.

Next time Florida State and Florida play, buy tickets to the ball game and take them to it. And say, sit still now. Sit still.

You don't need, you're not emotional, remember? Just sit there. While the others are going, whoa. You just sit still now.

Sit still. You're not emotional, remember? You don't need all that emotionalism. They're liars, friend.

They don't know God. They're trying to bring you back down to where they're at. Don't let it work, friend.

Look at them in the eyes and say things like, when was the last time the Holy Spirit poured out his reign on you? When was the last time God kissed your soul? When was the last time God breathed on you? They're going, well, you can say, it was last night for me and I'm going again tonight. Oh, friend. Now, there's a bunch of folks in this place that don't even know the Lord.

You've never known the Lord. You don't have a clue what I'm talking about because you've never backed someone. You haven't had a chance to front slide.

You are in a minute. We have people walk down here like this, friend. They've never in their life walked to y'all.

We've had cult members, witches saved in this place. You know, they just, first time they've ever been in a church. We're going to give you the opportunity to meet the Lord.

Uh-oh, time to quit. There's a couple more and I'm going to preach them some other time. But the bottom line is your time is up.

Those of you that are backslidden, it's time to come home to Jesus. Okay? It is time. The excuses, they're not going to hold up, friend.

They're not going to hold up. If anybody's got an excuse to backslid, I do. I've had some of my favorite Christian leaders fall away from God right before my very eyes.

The ones who were teaching me. When I first got saved in Team Challenge, there's some Team Challenge guys here. When I first got saved, one of the directors, the co-director of the program, backslid right before my very eyes.

I worshipped him. He baptized me. And he fell away from God right in front of my face.

And I looked at him like, you fool, don't you believe this? He still backslid today. 19 years later. I wonder now if he ever even knew God.

Did he even know the Lord? Who hindered you? Who stopped you? Friends, it's time to come back to the Lord tonight. I'm going to have Charity Singh run to the mercy seat. Everyone in this room, look this way.

Those of you at home, you listen. And you listen carefully. I'm going to give you the opportunity to make a decision for Christ right now.

But you're not going to make it like a wimp. You're not going to sit there and just, and I'm not against any preacher that does this. Don't take me wrong, friend.

But you're not going to sit there and mumble a little prayer under your breath. And go, Jesus, I just want you to forgive my sin. And when I ask you to get up, when I ask you to do something, you're not going to do this.

Ask folks to raise their hand, they'll do this. Boy, you really want to get right with God, don't you? Yeah, I really do, but you know how it is. Yeah, I know how it is.

You're ashamed. You're ashamed of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. You're prideful, you stink, you're corrupted with pride.

A person that wants to get right with God sticks their hand up in the air. We've had people right in the middle of the service run down and fall on their face. They don't care what you think.

They care what God thinks. What does God think? What does the Lord think about your life? If you're not right with the Lord, if you're not right with the Lord, you get right with God. We've had 25 pastors get saved in this revival, and I'm amazed that you watch them.

One pastor of a major church came forward one night, and I'll never forget him. I've used this illustration. He wouldn't mind me using it.

He came forward right over here, and I went up to him. I just thought he came up early, you know, for special prayer. I started praying for him.

He said, Steve, I'm a sinner. I'm in sin, man. I lost God years ago.

I pastor my church out of my abilities, my talents to pastor. I'm a professional minister, but I've lost out with God years ago. I'm living in sin, Steve.

I'm a sinner. He didn't care what anybody thought. He wanted God.

But some of us sit in our seats. We need forgiveness so bad tonight. We need the Lord to wash our sins away.

He died 2,000 years ago on Calvary for you. I already told you he has a plan for your life. He shed his blood for you.

We just celebrated Easter. If there's any time in the season of the year, the time there's ever been a time to get saved, it's right now, friend. The 40 days when Jesus was still walking around the earth.

Hallelujah. So here's what we're gonna do. I'm gonna give you the opportunity, those of you that are in sin, you need Jesus Christ to forgive you.

Regardless of who hindered you, who stopped you cold, those of you that are backslid, when charity begins singing this song, you come as quickly as you can to these altars and get right with God. Did you hear me? Get right with the Lord. Come down here.

We're gonna pray with you. You cannot just sit there. I'm sorry.

No, I'm gonna sit here, okay? Just sit there. I'm gonna tell you what you're gonna do. Nothing will happen.

You'll go home. You'll lay in your bed and you'll go, why didn't I have the guts to go down there? You ashamed of him, he's ashamed of you. You confess him, he'll confess you.

He hung on the cross nude for you and you can't get up from your pew and come down to this altar and ask him to forgive you. Friend, if you can't do that, you're in pitiful shape. You're in pitiful shape.

Up at the balcony, when I give this altar call, you come as quickly as you can. Those of you that have never known the Lord, this is your opportunity to meet the Lord. You're carrying a heavy burden.

It's called sin. He will take your sins away. Amen? He will wash you as white as snow.

Teresa, I want you to stand up. This girl right here. Now, what's your husband's name? Rodney.

How many read about Teresa in the newspaper? Teresa, that was a powerful article. You're her sister. Stephanie, has she changed? You would know that, wouldn't you? Has Stephanie changed? This girl, the power of Jesus Christ has changed.

She was a drug addict. She came in this place so burdened down, so weighted down, and I watch you, Teresa, come in this place. You're one of thousands, but I watch you come in here free as a bird, and you still have responsibilities.

By the way, her husband, Rodney, she said, My only regret is that my husband has not come. He loves the world too much. How many of y'all read that? I read it and I thought, Oh, man, he's going to hit her for putting that in the newspaper.

He didn't hit you, did he? Did he cry through that article? He cried through that article, and because she wrote that in there, he said he's going to come to the revival. Tell you what, you got to watch what you say to them news reporters. But what you said was right, and it touched his heart.

But, friend, Jesus Christ will wash your sins away tonight. I'm spending just a moment on this because about 200 or 300 people are about to get up from their seats right now and come down here and get their sins washed away. This is for grandmas and for grandpas.

Religious person, can I hit you just for a minute? Religion is damning this nation to hell. This Easter, this nation went to church. The Sunday newspaper on Easter from coast to coast looks like a religious bulletin.

Why? Because it's kosher. It's okay on Easter to talk about God. This nation went to church.

That's religion. Religion is hanging around the cross. Christianity is getting on the cross.

There's a big difference. We need to quit singing Leonard Ravenhill said, there's room at the cross for you and start singing there's room on the cross for you. There's room on the cross for you.

There's a big difference, friend. Don't be one of those that Jesus was always, they were always hanging around the Lord until he turned and said, drink my blood, eat my flesh, and they all left. Those of you that are religious in here, you belong to a church.

You're faithful to a local church. You do good, but you don't know God. On that final day, you're going to be held accountable for not knowing him.

Depart from me. I never knew you. You did great things, man.

You taught the best Bible study in church, but we never fellowship. The only time we prayed was when you said, Jesus, help me with today's lesson. Amen.

Everyone stand. I don't know if I've covered it or not. Yeah, you covered it, Brother Steve.

Move on, man. Friend, friend, whoever hindered you, backslider, you come home right now. Whoever hindered you, it's time to come home.

This is your night. Make no excuses. Drop them all.

Drop them all at the cross. If you've been hurt by a minister, drop them at the cross. There's some good preachers out there.

There's some people that care about you. Drop it. If somebody has hurt you, you're never going to forget it, so just forget it.

You hear me? If somebody has hurt you, you will never forget it, so just forget it. I've been hurt a thousand times, but I'm going after God. I'm going after God.

Everyone who needs forgiveness in this place, you need Jesus Christ to wash your sins away. Look at me. Some of you are standing there like this, and you need to be there like this, walking in spades right there.

You're just waiting for charity to begin singing. Run to the mercy seat. Don't stand like that.

Don't grab your boyfriend or your girlfriend. Start moving. Hey, man, I'm going down there, man.

I need God to forgive me. I need my sins washed away. Charity, sing this.

Come right now. You need forgiveness. Get down here right now.

You need the Lord. Come on. Right now.

Right now. Come on. Come on.

Yes. Come on right now. Let's go.

Come on. Come on. Yes.

Come on. Yes, Lord. Come on.

Come on. Come on. Come on.

Come on. Turn that off just for a second, and then we're going to turn it back on. You folks are going to trickle in here all night long.

I can feel this. This is one of those trickle times. I mean, you have trickled.

We have had times, pastors, where it started with 50 and ended with 500. People just kept trickling and trickling. Look at me, everybody.

If you're going to come down to the altar, would you come? You're like the Galatians. You're fickle. Step out and come, man.

Come on. Yeah, come on. You know you're going to come in a minute anyhow.

Why don't you come right now? In the balcony. Come on down. Come on.

Yeah. Come on, man. Come on.

You know you're supposed to be down here, friend. Your heart's doing this. You're away from God.

Would you get down here now? Come on. Charity, forgive me for stopping your song, but I just... Some of you are standing there going, I know I need to go. I know.

That's me. I know I need to go. I know I need to go.

In just a minute, I'm going to go. I'm going to go in just a minute. I know I am.

I just... When the time is right, when I feel... When she gets to a certain part in that song, I'm going to come. Would you just come right now? Yeah, come on. Come on.

Come on. I'm trying to help you. We're not hindering you tonight.

Who did hinder you, friend? We're trying to help you. I'm putting you back on the track tonight. You're going to run with the Lord.

Come on. Okay, here's what we're going to do, friend. I am so ready to pray with these folks, but there's about 100, 200 of you out there that are supposed to be down here.

Still coming. Look at me, everybody. Those of you at the altar, stay right where you're at.

Everybody in this room, you're going to turn to the person next to you, and you're going to ask them if they need Jesus Christ to wash their sins away, if they need the Lord to forgive them. Don't do it yet. This is serious.

This is serious. You're going to ask the person next to you. You may not know the one next to you.

Good. It's about time you started talking to strangers. And ask them, do they need Jesus Christ to forgive you? One night, we had a Mormon girl in the very back.

Someone turned to her and said, I'll go down there with you. Do you need Jesus Christ to forgive you? Another night, we had a witch come forward. We've had multi-millionaires.

We've had dirt poor beggars get saved. We've had people that have never been in an evangelical church. They didn't know what this was, but they felt in their heart a tug from the Lord.

Somebody turned to them and said, Sir, do you need the Lord to forgive you? Yeah, I do. I do. Will you come with me now? Yeah, I will.

They've come now. We've had some of the most incredible conversions during this time right now. Everyone's going to turn to the person next to them and ask them if they need forgiveness, if you need Jesus Christ to forgive you.

They may be backslid, friend. If you are, if you need forgiveness, don't lie. Don't anyone lie.

This is not the place to lie. If you're going to lie, go lie at the mall somewhere when they ask you how you're doing, but don't lie in here. Tell the truth in here.

I'm rotten. I'm doing bad. I need forgiveness, and then both of you come down here in the balcony.

Some of you, we're going to flood out of that balcony right now. I know we are. You come down here as quick as you can.

You need the Lord to forgive you. You turn to one another right now and come down here. Come on, charity.

Sing that. Come on, right now. I need forgiveness.

I need the Lord to wash me clean. Come on, right now. Come on, hurry up.

Let's go. Come on, hurry. Come on.

Come on. Anybody else?

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