

# Backslider

## God Wants YOU Back

**A backslider is a person who once had salvation, but has since turned away from the Lord Jesus to the point that he is now spiritually lost and dead again, just like he was before becoming saved.** The Bible is filled with examples of people, named and unnamed, who turned away from God temporarily or permanently. Some returned, like King David and Peter, while others never came back to God, like Kings Saul and Solomon.

A common contact that our ministry receives is from the grieving backslider, who wants to come back to God, but isn't sure that he can. Some backsliders think they sinned too much and too grievously while others think they committed *eternal sin* and therefore can't get forgiven. There is, perhaps, no more downcast person to communicate with than a repentant backslider who isn't sure he can come back to God and find forgiveness, though he desperately wants it!

Years ago, when I was pastoring, I knew a person who was once saved but afterwards fell into sexual immorality. Over the next couple days that backslider lost nearly 10 pounds and was actually, on occasions, beating his own head against the wall in regret over his sin and foolishness. (He wrongly thought, as a backslider, he was doomed to hell with no possible hope of ever getting saved again.) **What finally helped that backslider to see that he could come back to God, in spite of his wicked actions, were the examples of King David and the Apostle Peter. Since God took these men back, why should he not take him too, since he was deeply repentant and resolved to never commit that sin again.**

Other examples of grieving backsliders would vary from people crying to simply asking if they could possibly find forgiveness once again. For such people, we often tell them of the teaching of the Lord Jesus in Luke 15:11-32. In our day, we call that teaching the *Parable of the Prodigal Son*, though it is not actually called this in the Bible. The highest authority on the backslider, and how God reacts to a repentant one, taught the following:

Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there **squandered his wealth in wild living.** After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: **Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.**' So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, '**Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.**'



But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. **For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.**' So they began to celebrate. Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with **prostitutes** comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!' 'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours **was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.**'"

### Observations

- The backslider (or prodigal son in this case) repented when he came to his senses. This means a person who remains unrepentant and in sin that is dragging him to hell is not in his right spiritual senses. He has been spiritually blinded by something or deceived somehow.
- The prodigal son was able to find forgiveness after he turned from all the wickedness he had been in that held him in spiritual death. Repentance (turning from sin) to serve God is illustrated in this teaching. Though the backslider was in wild living, including sexual sin with prostitutes, for an unknown period of time—perhaps many years—he still found forgiveness.
- The prodigal became alive again and his lost spiritual condition changed upon turning from all those sins and humbly coming back to the Father to serve him. Compare to 1 Thess. 1:9b.
- The only time in the Bible that we read where the Father ran is in this teaching and it was to welcome the repentant backslider back home.
- The Father was so happy to have the backslider home he hugged and kissed him as well as celebrated.
- Some Christians who correctly reject the teaching of eternal security wrongly think that no one who ever falls away can come back. This is clearly refuted by Jesus' teaching here, as well as other passages (Rom. 11:19-23 and Jam. 5:19,20).
- This teaching proves that a spiritually lost and dead person could be a person never saved or one that was once saved.

### God Delights to Show Mercy to the Repentant!

The fact that God delights to show mercy to the repentant backslider is illustrated in Jesus' teaching, but also candidly declared in the following passage:

Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but **delight to show mercy**. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:18,19).

Another relevant passage is:

He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy (Prov 28:13).

Did you notice that the returned prodigal (backslider) confessed his sins and wicked actions to the Father (and not to any man, including a priest). This is the Lord's teaching on this:

The son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son" (Luke 15:21).

The Bible also says about those who sin after getting saved:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

David's prayer as a backslider returning to God and asking God for forgiveness shows the pain and misery, he and others like him, are in. When the devil is tempting the righteous to sin, he will never accurately portray sin in this manner:

For the director of music. A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba. **Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.** For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me (Psa 51:1-11).

**Had the prodigal (or David) died physically when in their backslidden condition, they would have gone to fiery torment.** We can all rejoice that those backsliders came back to the Father, but this is not always the case. God's discipline doesn't always bring the backslider home (Jer. 32:33). Many turn away and die physically in that lost condition, such as the Apostle Judas Iscariot. Don't be deceived by those who would say that Judas was never saved. (Please see our book, *The Believer's Conditional Security*, pages 279-286.)

Similar to the fact that there are two types of lost people, as stated earlier, there are also two types of wicked people. This is reasonable since the spiritually lost are also wicked in God's eyes. But many in our day would wrongly consider the backslidden, who were previously saved, *carnal Christians or elect people in grievous sin* and not unsaved (wicked) at all. Such has been produced by the pernicious theology of eternal security as embraced by multitudes of religious deceived people. **We have noticed that eternal security proponents don't usually repent of their sins until they first learn that there is no such thing as eternal security, once saved always saved or the perseverance of the saints, that is, there is no such thing as security in sin.**

## Backsliders are Wicked

Scripture shows that the backslider is wicked:

For the director of music. Of David the servant of the LORD. An oracle is within my heart concerning the sinfulness of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes. For in his own eyes he flatters himself too much to detect or hate his sin. The words of his mouth are wicked and

deceitful; **he has ceased to be wise and to do good**. Even on his bed he plots evil; he commits himself to a sinful course and does not reject what is wrong (Psa 36:1-4).

That fact is also a deathblow to eternal security because the wicked are always unsaved people on the road to the fiery furnace:

**Salvation is far from the wicked**, for they do not seek out your decrees (Psa 119:155).

This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mat 13:49,50).

## Are You Biblically Wise?

To be a Biblically wise person, one must put into practice the word of God and by doing such he is identified as a member of Jesus' spiritual family. Dear reader, take to heart Jesus' teaching on this:

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and **puts them into practice** is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and **does not put them into practice** is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash (Mt. 7:24-27).

He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who **hear God's word and put it into practice**" (Luke 8:21).

Getting back to Psalm 36:3, *to cease to be wise and to do good* shows that such a person was once God's child at a prior point in time, but since (as a backslider) has lost that spiritual identity and taken on a new identity—wicked. In other words, when one turns to this degree he loses his salvation. The backslider is no longer saved. This is taught many other times in the Bible:

But those who turn to crooked ways the LORD will banish with the evildoers (Psa 125:5).

But rebels and sinners will both be broken, and those who forsake the LORD will perish (Isa 1:28).

## Eternal Sin

Jesus was the only one who ever mentioned eternal sin and at the same time told us clearly what it is:

But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin. He said this because they were saying, "He has an evil spirit" (Mark 3:29,30).

If you read Mark 3:22 you will learn more about those who committed such a form of blasphemy. **They were saying that Jesus had a demon and by the power of the devil he was casting them out and performing his miracles. This is what Jesus identified as eternal sin. It is not adultery, murder, disowning Jesus, or any other kind of sin. All of the latter can be forgiven, but not blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, also known as eternal sin.** Another sin that can't be forgiven is taking the mark of the beast, Rev. 14:9-12. (Eternal sin is apparently the type of sin those mentioned in Heb. 6:4-6 committed and, therefore, they could not be *renewed again by repentance*.)

So, backslider come home. Almighty God wants you back. It is the devil that is tormenting your mind and trying to make you think you cannot return to God. **Remember also all the good that Peter did after he returned to God from his backslidden condition.** God used him mightily and can do the same with you. Yes, returned backsliders can do great things for the kingdom of God. If you have been a backslider, but since have sincerely returned to God after repenting of your wickedness, he has accepted you home. May God use these eternal truths to spiritually enlighten real truth seekers who are in desperate need of knowing this vital material for backsliders.†

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