

(2 Sam. 12). He purposed that, even though he had done irreparable damage to his own life, he would seek to prevent others from suffering the same judgment. He prayed: "uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted to thee" (Ps. 51:12,13). God will "restore the years that the locusts have eaten [damage of backsliding years]" (Joel 2:25) when we make genuine efforts towards restitution.

GODLY SORROW: If a backslider is sorrowful only because He got caught or caused great damage to himself and others; he will never experience the restoration God offers. Every criminal in prison is sorry He got caught, but that doesn't guarantee he won't commit the same crime again. There must be godly sorrow! "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation...but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Cor. 7:10). King David clearly understood godly sorrow when he confessed: "Against thee, thee only I have sinned, and done this evil in thy sight" (Ps. 51:4). He recognized that his greatest offense was against God even though he had sinned against Bathsheba, her husband, his own family, and the whole nation of Israel. Godly sorrow recognizes and admits to God that it was a rebellious spirit towards Him that led to the backsliding. Unless this spirit of rebellion is mourned over and forsaken there can be no comfort from God (Matt. 5:4)

RENEWING OF THE MIND God warns a Christian not to be conformed to this world's lifestyle (Rom. 12:2). He further instructs believers with the means by which to be "transformed" into the likeness and lifestyle of the Lord Jesus Christ. The means of overcoming the world's allurements is by the "renewing of the mind" (Rom. 12:2). The Bible reveals that "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). If you sow a thought, you reap an action. If you sow an action, you reap a habit. If you sow a habit, you reap a lifestyle. This worldly lifestyle all goes back to the man's mind. This is why Jesus declared: "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn. 8:32). Meditation on God's Word is absolutely essential if the believer is to experience the victory in Jesus Christ (Joshua 1:8, Psalm 1).

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The CORNERSTONE

BIBLICAL ANSWERS TO CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

CAUSES OF, RESULT OF, RESTORATION FROM

BACKSLIDING



Cornerstone Booklets

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BACKSLIDING

THE CAUSES OF BACKSLIDING (PART I)

DECEPTION OF NEUTRALITY: Either we move forward with God or we move backward. There is no neutral ground! Jesus said we must either be for Him or against Him (Matt. 12:30). James makes it clear that any friendship with the world makes the Christian the enemy of God (James 4:4). God says of those who are lukewarm: "I will spew thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:16). Those who try to ride the fence are actually in a backslidden state!

LITTLE COMPROMISES: The book of Song of Solomon reveals that it is the "little foxes" that destroy the vines (2:15). A drop of water falling on a rock every 5 seconds appears to have little or no effect after a few hours. But let that same drop of water continue to fall: day after day, week after week, month after month and the rock will erode away. When Christians neglect Bible reading, prayer, Church attendance, and give in to "little sins;" its only a matter of time before they spiritually erode away.

NEGLECT OF RESPONSIBILITIES: David's time of backsliding started when he neglected the duties God had given him. Idleness is the devil's playground! The Bible records that when he fell into lust and immorality with Bathsheba; it was a time when "kings go forth to battle" (2 Samuel 11:1). God's requirements of labor and hard work for man to eat were for man's benefit and to deter him from evil. When God cursed the ground he added "for your sake" (Gen. 3:17). A man who keeps busy with God-given responsibilities will be less likely to give place to Satan in his life (Eph. 4:27,28).

TEMPORAL VALUES: Lot is a tragic example of the believer who backslides into major sin (Genesis 13-19). The only reason Lot was spared the wrath of God when judgment fell on Sodom and Gomorrah was because of Abraham's prayers (Genesis 19:29). Lot's troubles started when he chose the plain that was "well watered" (Genesis 13:11). Rather than having his mind on things above (valuing spiritual treasures greater than material treasures) his mind was set on things below (Col. 3:1,2). Demas forsook Paul and God because he loved this present world (2 Tim. 4:10).

NEGLECT OF SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD: A second step in Lot's backsliding was that he "pitched his tent towards Sodom." Lot, like some Christians, wanted to see how close he could live to the "world" and not get hurt. Christians are to be in the world but not of the world (John 17). Christians are not to walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners (Psalm 1). Proverbs warns "Can a man take fire in his bosom and not be burned?" Neither can a Christian have close associations with the world and still keep himself unspotted by the world (James 1:27).

REFORMATION WITHOUT TRANSFORMATION: A believer who dedicates himself to fully serve God must not only separate himself from the ungodliness and worldliness around him, but must also make sure he replaces these things with God's righteousness and holiness (Titus 2:12). For instance, the believer who stops listening to the world's rock and roll, must replace in his life harmonious music that pleases God (Eph. 5:18ff.). Ungodly friends must be replaced with Christian friendships (Psalm 1:1-

"Where art thou?" (Gen. 3:9). The prodigal son account in Luke 15 is an excellent example of God's acts of restoration. God will bring us to the end of our rope as He did with the prodigal son. The prodigal son was so desperate that "he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him." God, through such circumstances, brings us to our senses so that we may cry out in desperation to be delivered from the circumstances that we have produced by our sins.

GOD'S PROMISES OF RESTORATION: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (2 Chron. 7:14). "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:6,7).

CONDITIONS FOR RESTORATION

BROKENNESS AND A CONTRITE SPRIT: The prodigal's first step at restoration was when "he came to himself" (Luke 15:17). He recognized and admitted that the cause of his misfortune was his own doing (James 1:13-17). He knew he was deserving of God's wrath and judgment and his only hope was to plead for the mercy of God (Psalm 103:9-14). God promises to honor this type of spirit of humility: "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit" (Psalm 34:18).

CONFESSION: The Prodigal's second step was to ask forgiveness of God and his father. He confessed that he had "sinned against heaven, and before thee (his father)" (Luke 15:18). God promises "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn. 1:9). When David sought restoration of fellowship with God he prayed: "For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me" (Ps. 51:3). He not only acknowledges the sins that he has committed, but he also confesses that he possesses a sin nature that he acquired at birth. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51:5).

GENUINE REPENTANCE: We are admonished in Scripture to not only confess our sin, but also to forsake it (Prov. 28:13). The Prodigal left the things of the world and went back home to his father: "I will arise and go to my father" (Lk. 15:18). Repentance means that we turn from our wicked ways. We must have the mind of Christ toward sins: We must hate the very sin that we once loved so much. We should hate what that sin has done to our relationship to God, to our families, and to our friends. Our love for God and our repentance is only genuine to the extent that we walk in obedience: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments" (1Jn. 5:3).

RESTITUTION: The prodigal was willing to become a hired servant in his father's household in order to compensate for his riotous living and squandering of his inheritance (Luke 15:19). It is important for the backslider to repair the damage he has done. In David's case, it was impossible for him to bring back Bathsheba's husband whom he had killed. David knew there would be lasting consequences of his offense

3 Prov. 13:20). The man who removed the "unclean spirit" in Matthew 12:43-45 still had an "empty house." He had reformed his life, but he had not been transformed by the power of God. Consequently, the same unclean spirit returned with 7 other spirits more wicked. "The last state of that man is worse than the first" (12:45). He had taken out the unclean but hadn't replaced it with the clean!

NEGLECT OF THE LOCAL CHURCH: Christians are commanded to meet together on a regular basis for worship, fellowship, prayer, ministry of the Word of God, mutual exhortation and communion (Acts 2:42ff., Heb. 10:25). All through the week Christian soldiers are on the battlefield of life. In the battlefield soldiers often get discouraged, wounded, fearful, or even possibly face the pressure to desert from the battle. Hebrews 3:12 warns Christians that they might have "...an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." The solution is daily and weekly accountability with other Christians (Hebrews 3:13). In the Church soldiers can receive the encouragement and refreshment they need to continue on as a "...good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 2:3). The soldier who fights alone in the battle will very soon quit the battle.

NO PRAYER WATCH: Jesus instructed his followers to "watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41). The key to overcoming temptation is not to enter into it. If we enter into it, we will be overcome by it! By spending time in prayer with God, we are prepared by God to "foresee the evil and hide ourselves from it" (Prov. 22:3). In the Lord's prayer we are told to pray: "and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matt. 6:13). Through prayer God alerts our spiritual sensitivity to evil, so that when faced with temptation, we are **IMMEDIATELY** able to bring our thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:4,5).

PITY PARTY BECAUSE OF FAILURE: The question is not: "will the Christian fall?" The question is: "what will the Christian's response be when he falls (Romans 3:23)?" Romans 7:15-25 is a common experience to all Christians at one time or another. Satan is called the "accuser of the brethren" (Rev. 12:10). Satan uses failure as a club over our head to discourage us and cause us to give up. He tries to convince us that we will never find genuine victory and joy in serving the Lord Jesus Christ. God reveals that a "just man falls seven times, and riseth up again" (Prov. 24:16). When there is genuine repentance and confession, God will "restore...the years that the locust hath eaten" (Joel 2:25). He will give the believer "beauty for ashes," the "oil of joy for mourning," and the "garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." He will "build the old waste places" (Isaiah 61:3,4).

PITY PARTY BECAUSE OF CIRCUMSTANCES: Satan tries to convince us that God has put too much on us! A root of bitterness develops towards God, and we then feel justified in giving into sin. Job's wife encouraged him to "curse God, and die" (Job 2:9). She tried to convince Job that God really didn't care about him and that his circumstances were more than he should have to bear. God warns Christians to "fret not thyself in any way to do evil" (Psalm 37:8). God never puts too much on any person. He will not allow us to be tempted "above that we are able" (1 Cor. 10:13).

FIGHTING RATHER THAN FLEEING TEMPTATION: Twice Paul told Timothy to "flee temptation" (1 Tim. 6:11, 2 Tim. 2:22). The more you fight temptation, the more

brother, Absalom, had Amnon, her rapist, killed (2 Sam. 13:29)! This son, Absalom, attempted to overthrow his father's throne (2 Sam. 15). He further disgraced his father through disgraceful immorality (2 Sam. 16:22). LOT: Lot's wife became a pillar of salt (Gen. 19:26). Lot's daughters gave birth to future enemies of Israel by an incestuous relationship with their drunken father (Gen. 19:31ff).

EFFECT UPON HEALTH: A Christian's involvement with drug addiction, alcoholism, and sex (AIDS and V.D.) will result in physical handicaps that hinder fruitful service to the Lord (Deut. 28:20ff.).

EFFECT UPON WEALTH: Lot's great prosperity when separating from Abraham (Gen. 13:6) was soon depleted through his backslidden condition (Gen. 19:30). Gambling, drinking, drugs, and the like can quickly devour a man's life savings.

EFFECT UPON FREEDOM: God allowed the nation of Israel to suffer captivity because of their sin (Deut. 28:33ff.). Today, many backsliders are behind bars of captivity!

EFFECT UPON LIFE: Continuing in a hardened state of disobedience could cause an untimely death. The Bible speaks of a "sin unto death" (1 John 5:16). Some of the Corinthian Christians died because of partaking of communion "unworthily" (1 Cor. 11:29). Ananias and Sapphira met sudden death when they lied about their gift to the Church (Acts 5).

RESTORATION OF THE BACKSLIDER (PART III)

IMPROPER MEANS OF RESTORATION: When a Christian has fallen into the miry clay of sin, he must be careful to seek deliverance in a Biblical fashion. Seeking help through humanistic manmade programs will cause the Christian to encounter worse difficulties (Matt. 12:43-45). What are the danger signs of humanistic help programs? # 1 - Identifying the problem as a "weakness" or "disease" -- the Bible calls it sin (1 John 1:8-10)! # 2 - Reference to God as "higher power" or "power within" -- the Bible affirms that Jesus Christ must be man's source of help (1 Jn. 2:22,23). Jesus Christ is **THE COUNSELOR ABOVE ALL COUNSELORS** (Isaiah 9:6). # 3 - Blaming family, society, or circumstances for the problem -- the Bible declares that each person must take personal responsibility for his or her own sin (Prov. 28:13 Gal. 6:7). # 4 -Offering counsel without the use of the Bible -- One of the God-ordained purposes of God's Word is for "correction" (2 Tim. 3:16). The Christian is instructed not to walk "in the counsel of the ungodly" (Psalm 1:1,2). The Scripture warns that "he that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed" (Prov. 13:20). King Saul (1 Samuel 28), King Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:10), and King Amaziah (1 Kings 22:3) all sought counsel from the wrong sources and suffered the devastating consequences of it.

GOD'S WILL IS RESTORATION: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual restore such an one" (Gal. 6:1). The great theme of the Bible is God seeking out and bringing sinners to reconciliation with Himself. When Adam and Eve sinned, they hid from God, but it was the Lord God who sought Adam out and said:

you give into temptation. For the next minute, try not to think about the number 8. You will discover that every time you purposely reason not to think of the number 8, you are repeatedly thinking of it. In the same manner, whatever we fight against, we are overcome by it. If we fight with the truth we will be overcome by the truth (John 8:32). The way to overcome evil is not to fight the evil but to overcome the evil by the doing of good (Romans 12:21). Add two plus two. Subtract three from your answer. Add 9 to your answer. Multiply this answer by 10. Through following these instructions, you did not think about the number 8. In the same way if Christians will "walk in the Spirit," the Bible promises they will not "fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16).

"THE BACKSLIDER IN HEART SHALL BE FILLED WITH HIS OWN WAYS"

Proverbs 14:14

THE RESULTS OF BACKSLIDING (PART II)

The scandals involving T.V. evangelists have brought attention to the disastrous results of backsliding. Not only are the evangelist's own ministries greatly damaged or completely ruined, but it has effected many other ministries around the world and disgraced the work of the Lord. God warns in His Word that "there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hidden that shall not be known. Therefore, whatever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in private rooms shall be proclaimed upon the housetops" (Luke 12:2,3). This explains why God is currently exposing many spiritual, political, and civil leaders! It also cautions each of us to not be deceived by Satan that deeds done in secret will never be known by others. Every Christian should seriously consider the devastating possibility and results of backsliding. The Bible says "let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). God is willing and able to keep a Christian from backsliding if he will humble himself and seek God's face. (1 Cor. 10:13, James 4:6ff., Jude 24). There are consequences to be suffered when a Christian backslides. Jonah "rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord" (Jonah 1:3). God "prepared a great fish" to bring Jonah to his senses (1:17). The Bible warns: "He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Pr. 29:1).

SPIRITUAL RESULTS OF BACKSLIDING

BLASPHEME GOD: When King David committed adultery and had Bathsheba's husband killed, God instructed him: "Howbeit because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme" (2Sam. 12:14). Paul told the Jews in Romans 2:24 concerning their ungodly conduct, "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you."

LOSS OF FELLOWSHIP: "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me" (Psalm 66:18). Unconfessed sin in the believer's life will hinder his prayer and fellowship with God (1 John 1:7-10). Even though God has promised that the presence of His Spirit will never leave the Christian (Matt. 28:20 Eph. 1:13), His Spirit can be "grieved" through sin (Eph. 4:30). The Christian can lose fellowship with God, but his relationship to God never changes (Rom. 8:35-39).

LOSS OF REWARDS: God tells us that He saves us to serve Him (Eph. 2:10). He will also reward us for this service (Mark 9:41). We have an eternal treasury. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. For where your treasure is there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:19-21). Moses realized that God's rewards were far more precious than all the treasures of Egypt, and far more lasting than all the pleasures of sin which last only for a season (Heb. 11:24-27).

CURTAILMENT OF USEFULNESS: Every Christian should consider it a great honor to serve the Lord! Our ambition should be to hear Him say "Well done, thou good and faithful servant... enter into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. 25:21). King David realized that in his backslidden state he could not serve the Lord, and asked the Lord to restore him to service (Psalm 51:13-15). God prescribes careful guidelines concerning leadership and ministry in the local Church (1 Tim. 3:1-13). A moment of pleasure and indulgence of the flesh could result in limitations of service within the local Church (2 Tim. 2:19-21). You can be sure Satan desires to hinder the usefulness of every Christian (1 Pet. 5:8). Paul's labors for Christ were in constant awareness that he could disqualify himself from effective ministry by his own sin (1 Cor. 9:25-27).

STUMBLING BLOCK TO OTHERS: Although we may not be in the national spotlight, many people are effected by our disobedience to Christ. One man's sin caused the entire army of God to be defeated (Joshua 7). When one member of the body of Christ suffers, the whole body suffers (1 Cor. 12:26). We are to labor for Christ in such a way "that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way" (Rom. 14:13).

PHYSICAL RESULTS OF BACKSLIDING

CHASTISEMENT: If we continue in sin and never receive any chastisement from the Lord; then we are not a child of God and need to be saved. "For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye illegitimate, and not sons" (Heb. 12:6,8). This chastisement can be in the form of sickness, accident, or any other means whereby God brings us to the end of our rope. Through His chastisement He brings us to godly sorrow and repentance so that the "peaceable fruit of righteousness" may come forth in our lives (Heb. 12:11)!

EFFECT UPON THE FAMILY

DAVID: Backsliding can do great harm to our families and even our descendants. God told King David that the child born from his adulterous relationship would die (2 Sam. 12:14). He also told David the sword would never depart from his house (2 Sam. 12:10). David's son, Amnon, raped his stepsister, Tamar (2 Sam. 13:14). Tamar's