

# What Causes People to Backslide?

*“Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold”* (Matt. 24:12).

Only those who have been actually converted can backslide. Realizing that many now looked upon as members of the church have never been Scripturally converted, many today looked upon as “backsliders” and “inactive church members” are not actually backsliders at all. They have never known the Lord in the first place.

In this lesson, we are searching for the chief causes of backsliding.

## **I. The Devil Attacks People in Their Main Weakness.**

The devil always attacks a person where he is the most likely to give in. When Jesus was deathly hungry from His forty-day fast, the devil tempted Him to turn the stones into bread (Matt. 4:2,3). Of course, Jesus did not fall before His temptations. Simon of Samaria had always been looked up to as some great one by the townspeople of Samaria. Therefore, the devil’s first attack against Simon after his conversion was concerning the matter of pride. The devil put it into Simon’s heart to offer Peter money for the power of bestowing the Holy Spirit upon others like the apostles were able to do (Acts 8:9-21).

Those who have been heavy drinkers will be tempted with drink. Those who have loved to dance will be tempted with worldly music. Those who have had hot heads and quick tempers will be tempted with impatience. Those who have been adulterous will be tempted with lust. Cunningly, the devil strikes where people are the weakest; thus, he is able to regain many to his dominion.

## **II. Evil Companions Cause Many to Backslide.**

I Cor. 15:33 declares that evil companions corrupt good morals. This very truth is exemplified on every hand. Solomon, who had started so wonderfully, was led away from God by his evil wives (I Kings 11:1-4). God expects Christian people to find their association among His people. But, when His people begin to seek their fellowship among worldly people, it isn't long until they begin to drift from God.

A young man several years older than I, was a very outstanding Christian young person in my hometown. He usually led the song services on Sunday morning and was often called upon for prayer. Though keen in his school studies and athletics, he was always of a clean, wholesome make-up. The crucial time in his life came when he graduated from high school. Like others, he left home and went to the city to work. There, he fell in with his father (the boy stayed with his grandparents during his school days). His father was a gambler on the horse races. How my heart was hurt when I learned that after awhile, this young man had lost his touch with God and was playing the races like his gambling father! Oh, if people hope to stay true to God, they must be very careful about their associates!

## **III. The Pleasure of Sin Causes Many to Lose Their Love for God and Their Longing for Heaven.**

Temptation bears down upon a new convert. He resists as long as it seems that he can. Finally, he weakens and gives in. This taste of the world brings back his former craving, longing, and desire for the old life. Because of this, John was very strict in his warning to Christians that they love not the world, for he knew that if they did, the love of God would be driven out of their hearts (I John 2:15). Sometimes, people become fun-crazy. To them, life is one endless round of fun and hilarity. Then, the prayer meeting and Bible study become very disinteresting. Soon, it is easy for them to miss church services, and ultimately, they quit altogether.

A young lady had returned home from her first year of special

Bible training. Her home congregation was engaged in a revival meeting. At the end of the first week of the meeting, an ex-boy friend with whom she had gone before her conversion began to come around once more, even presenting her with a quite expensive bracelet. By the middle of the second week of the meeting, she was skipping the revival services and going to the nightly softball games with him. The entreaties of the church people, who had even helped finance her while in school, were unheeded. Soon, she began attending the theater. Finally, she married this non-Christian and gave birth to a baby not very long after her marriage. The thrill of sinful pleasure drowned every spiritual force in her life.

#### **IV. Earthly Interests Cause Many to Forget God.**

When a man gets interested in earthly gain rather than heavenly treasure, it is just a matter of time until he has drifted far from God. I am thinking of a man who was once faithful to Christ to the extent that he truly bore many persecutions because of the gospel. But, he bought into a post-war business that paid great dividends, and his mind was on money from sun-up until sun-down. He would not leave his store on a Saturday night to attend some special gospel services. He began to have trouble with people over money matters. Little by little, he lost interest in the church, he found fault with Bible preaching and Bible preachers, and, finally, he quit because the members were dealing with him as a backslider.

Jesus said that the deceitfulness of riches would choke the Word of God out of a man's heart (Matt. 13:22), and Paul said that those who were greedy for money would err from the faith (I Tim. 6:10). Some people act the same way about their homes and cars. They get interested in buying or building a new home. For months, they are so busy getting the house built or reworked that they give God no time. They get a new car, and all that they can think about is cars, automobile gadgets, going places, and seeing things. The cares of life, according to Jesus, will also crowd God's Word out (Matt. 13:22).

## **V. Many Backslide Because of Being Persecuted.**

Standing for Jesus is bound to bring persecutions. "All that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (II Tim. 3:12). The old crowd will think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot that you used to, and they will speak evil of you (I Pet. 4:3,4). They will laugh and make fun of you in an attempt to cause you to backslide. Then, the church of the Lord has always been persecuted because of the preaching of God's Word. Jesus recognized that some would wilt out because of being persecuted because of the Word of God (Matt. 13:20,21). Thus, some depart from Christ because of what it costs.

## **IV. Many Lose Interest in Spiritual Things Because of a Lack of Vitalized Christianity.**

If there is no spiritual atmosphere in a congregation, there will be little spiritual growth. If there is not a live evangelistic program, those who were once won to the Lord will soon be lost to the Cause. Then, people who do not abound in prayer, who do not bring their tithes and offerings to God, and who do not study the Bible make very poor brothers for a new babe in Christ. But, isn't this the kind of "brothers" that the average new convert finds in the average congregation? If the preaching is dry and impractical, not really heart-searching, soul-convicting, life-challenging, then backsliding will mount higher and higher. Devitalized "Christianity" today does not develop, challenge, nor utilize those who have accepted Christ; hence, backsliding abounds on every hand.

## **VII. Many Backslides Because They Become Discouraged.**

Some get discouraged over the bad examples of others who are supposed to be Christians. Some get discouraged because the church is small, and they can't get any outsiders interested. Some get discouraged over trouble that arises in the congregation. Some get

discouraged because they can't see any spiritual growth in their own lives. Then, others become weary in well doing and quit.

Really, there is no end to enumerating the things that cause people to backslide. However, those that we have listed rank high among the many weapons that the devil uses to get men, women, and young people to backslide.

## QUESTIONS

1. Where does the devil usually attack one?
2. What Bible character was led away from God because of his wives?
3. What will the pleasure of sin replace in a backslider's heart?
4. What did the Parable of the Sower say would choke out God's Word.
5. How can the condition of a congregation cause one to backslide?

# How to Prevent Backsliding

*"But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin"* (Heb. 3:13).

It will not do much good just to weep over the trend toward backsliding and the doom of backsliders. We must do our utmost to prevent others from backsliding who are now living for Christ.

Thank God for having a plan for the prevention of backsliding. God has given us His plan for marriage and the home, and if we heed it, we can have happy, successful homes. He has also given us a plan for the church, and if we heed that plan, we shall find

that backsliding will not be the great problem that it is today. Christ not only said for us to win men to Christ, but the last part of His great commission commands us to develop and use those lives to His glory (Matt. 28:19,20). Here are some of the things involved in preventing backsliding.

### **I. The Church Members Must Remove all Occasions of Stumbling From Their Lives.**

We who already know Christ must set the proper example before new converts. They are new babes and are not seasoned to severe spiritual shocks. They expect to find perfection in the church. We must do our best to live in such a way that our lives will not be stumbling blocks to them. Rom. 14:21 says that "it is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." Only a clean congregation can stem the tide of backsliding.

### **II. Brethren Must be Brotherly, Helpful, and Encouraging Toward One Another.**

Brethren should be true brothers in Christ. They should love one another (Heb. 13:1). They should rejoice with one another, and they should weep with one another (Rom. 12:15). They should gladly help one another and bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2). Paul says that they should be considerate one of another and should provoke one another to greater love and good works (Heb. 10:24). As brethren, they should "exhort one another daily lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:13). Oh, if the brethren were only brotherly! If Christians really cared as they should! But, no, they plod along and let souls go to hell through drifting until they become so hardened that nobody can do anything with their hearts. No sane man ever tried to grow out a bunch of baby chick by putting them into the refrigerator, and neither will new converts grow up to be strong, spiritual Christians in cold, unfriendly, unbrotherly congregations.

### **III. The Church Must be Spiritual Minded and Spiritually Engaged.**

Sin is catching, but so is spirituality when men are disposed to become spiritual. Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness are bound to thrive when with those of like ideals. Praying together greatly strengthens brethren in Christ. Considering God's Word together is a great spiritual privilege. Then, let the church discard all the nonsense and tomfoolery and become absorbed in serving Jesus and winning lost souls, and backsliding will be reduced greatly. Let the church be Christ-centered, and the devil will have a hard time getting a foot-hold.

### **IV. The Church Must Have Proper Teaching and Preaching.**

Such teaching and preaching from God's Word are designed to prevent backsliding. God's Word is spiritual food that sustains life and promotes growth. Proper preaching will encourage when encouragement is needed, will rebuke when rebuke is needed, will instruct when instruction is needed, will comfort when comfort is needed, and will challenge when challenge is needed. Therefore, every congregation should seek to have much Bible teaching and preaching.

May God help us of His church to keep men from falling. To restore the fallen is fine, but to prevent them from falling in the first place is better.

#### **A Fence or an Ambulance**

'Twas a dangerous cliff, as they freely confessed,  
Though to walk near its crest was so pleasant;  
But over its terrible edge there had slipped,  
A duke and full many a peasant.  
So the people said something would have to be done,  
But their project did not at all tally;

Some said, "Put a fence around the edge of the cliff,"  
Some, "An ambulance down in the valley."

But the cry for the ambulance carried the day,  
For it spread throughout the neighboring city;  
A fence may be useful or not, it is true,  
But each heart became brimful of pity  
For those who had slipped over that dangerous cliff;  
And the dwellers in highway and alley  
Gave pounds or pence, not to put up a fence,  
But an ambulance down in the valley.

"For the cliff is all right if you're careful," they said,  
"And if folks even slip and are dropping,  
It isn't the slipping that hurts them so much  
As the shock down below when they're stopping."  
So day after day as these mishaps occurred,  
Quick forth would these rescuers rally  
To pick up the victims who fell off the cliff  
With their ambulance down in the valley.

Then an old sage remarked, "It's a marvel to me  
That people give far more attention  
To repairing results than to stopping the cause  
When they'd much better aim at prevention.  
Let us stop at its source all this mischief," cried he,  
"Come, neighbors and friends, let us rally,  
If the cliff we will fence, we might almost dispense  
With the ambulance down in the valley."

Better guide well the young than reclaim them when old,  
For the voice of true wisdom is calling:  
"To rescue the fallen is good, but 'tis best  
To prevent other people from falling."  
Better close up the source of temptation and crime  
Than deliver from dungeon and galley;



Better put a strong fence 'round the top of the cliff  
Than an ambulance down in the valley.

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## QUESTIONS

1. What does the Bible say about stumbling blocks?
2. How can exhortation keep one from backsliding?
3. Comment upon how proper teaching and preaching can prevent backsliding.
4. Give the gist of the closing poem on "A Fence or an Ambulance".

## Bringing Backsliders Back

*"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted"* (Gal. 6:1).

Knowing that a backslider is in a lost condition, it should be one of our chief desires to see him brought back to the heavenly Father. We are not to count him as an enemy, but we are to consider him as a brother who needs help (II Thess. 3:15). Inasmuch as he is our brother, it should be normal for us to be concerned about his spiritual welfare. Though the world may laugh at him for his failure, yet we can never feel that way about it. We must look at the situation the way that God looks at it, and we know that God doesn't laugh. When the Bible says that God isn't willing that any should perish (II Pet. 3:9), this surely means that God isn't willing for the backslider to perish either. God expects us to do our utmost to bring backsliders back to the fold. The following material sets forth how to bring backsliders back to God.

## **I. We Should Pray for Backsliders.**

Jesus, the night of His betrayal, called Peter to Him and said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren: (Luke 22:31,32). The Savior set us a wonderful example of the deep concern that we should have for one on the verge of wavering. Jesus prayed for Peter, and we should pray that God will deal with their hearts by bringing chastening circumstances to bear down upon them so that they will feel their lost condition and will see their need of returning to God. In fact, if we love backsliders as we should, we cannot refrain from praying for them, for we would desire to see them back in the strait and narrow way that leads to live.

## **II. We Should do Anything That We can to Restore Them to God.**

Gal. 6:1 says that the spiritual are to restore those who are overtaken in sin. In the latter portion of that verse, Paul reminds us that we should not overestimate our own strength by forgetting that someday we may need someone to help recover us out of the snare of the devil. If we are the brethren that we should be, there may be many ways in which we can help a backslider come back to God. If our lives are pure and devout, he will find no occasion of stumbling in us. If he knows that we are humble and not Pharisaic in approaching him, he will likely listen. If he knows that we love him sincerely, he will be made to consider his need of Christ. There may be many worthwhile things that we can talk over with him to help him out of his difficulties. It was with this thought in mind that James wrote, "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and ONE CONVERT HIM; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (Jas. 5:19,20). But, before you go to some backslider, be sure to seek God's help and be sure to do your best not to make mistakes that will drive him farther and farther away.

This word of warning is needful, for it is possible to do more harm than good in going to a backslider. Some dear souls will never be restored simply because somebody went to them in the wrong way and in the wrong spirit. Learn HOW to restore fallen brothers and sisters to Jesus.

### **III. The Right Kind of Preaching Will Bring Backsliders Back.**

When Israel drifted into sin, God sent the prophets. They were men with a message from God to a backslidden people, and they delivered it in desperation. They boldly denounced Israel's sins, actually pointing out particular sins. They showed them that their present calamities were the result of their sin. They called upon them to repent in view of coming doom. They also promised wonderful things to them if they would repent. We see that Jesus sent the same kind of message to the backslidden congregations in Asia. See Rev. 2 and 3. Christ pointed out the congregations sins, called upon them to repent, warned them if they didn't repent, and promised them mercy if they would repent and be overcomers. This is the type of message that it takes to bring backsliders back. We must preach against sin until sinning men are convicted. We must show them God's wrath against all sin. We must call upon them to repent while they still have the opportunity. And we must preach the wonderful mercy of God offered to all who will return to Him. Such preaching will get mighty results. What a mistake many congregations make in wanting preaching that is not stirring! They deliberately cast their votes against bringing backsliders back to God.

Prayer, personal attention, and proper preaching will restore the backsliders if they are to be restored. I know that these will work. I have seen many backsliders return to Christ in answer to prayer. I have seen men brought to repentance through personal counseling and personal help. I have seen many return to God under the power of convicting preaching. Let us, then, give ourselves to much prayer for every backslider whom we know; let us do what we can to restore our fallen brothers and sisters; let us provide the type of

preaching that will call backsliders to repentance. This is God's way of bringing backsliders back.

## QUESTIONS

1. Why should we want to retrieve backsliders?
2. Can prayer actually affect a backslider's case?
3. Explain Gal. 6:1.
4. What should our going to them do?
5. How can proper preaching restore backsliders?

# What a Backslider Must do to be Saved

*“Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee” (Acts 8:22).*

As we have already seen, the Bible shows that a backslider is a lost man. If he dies in that condition, he will go to hell. What must he do to be saved? Must he go back and be baptized all over again, or just what does God require of him? When we speak about saving the backslider, we must help him in two ways: (1) we must show him how he can get forgiveness and get back to fellowship with God again, and (2) we must show him how he can keep from backsliding again after he has gotten back into divine fellowship. If a backslider would realize this two-fold salvation, he must do the following things.

### I. He Must Repent of His Sins.

When Simon of Samaria sinned by offering money for the power to impart the Holy Spirit, Peter immediately said, "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness..." (Acts 8:22). This is the very first thing that a backslider must do. He cannot be saved unless he repents. We notice that Jesus' message to the backslidden congregation of Asia was always one of repentance. See Rev. 2 and 3.

God's message through the prophets to backslidden Israel was always one of repentance. So, if you are a backslider, you must repent, or you will never be saved.

## **II. He Must Confess His Sins.**

He must confess his sins to God if he expects to be forgiven. I John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." God forgives no sin that is not acknowledged to Him. This divine requirement breaks down human pride because it demands a complete surrender of the backslider and a humiliation before God against whom the backslider has sinned. If one's sin has been of a public nature so that it has brought public reproach upon Christ and the church, it should be publicly confessed as well. Justice demands this.

Jas. 5:16 shows that there are times when men should confess their sins to others, and when is it more appropriate than when we have publicly reproached the name of Christ and the church? Also, one who publicly acknowledges his backsliding is far more apt to stand by his decision to live for Christ than one who tries to smuggle his way back into the fold. It helps a man to go on public record in such a situation. Then, if a man openly comes clean for God, the brethren can trust him and give him responsibility, but if he tries to sneak his way back, they have a right to wonder just what sin may allure him next. Of course, if one publicly returns to the Lord, the brethren can thus pray for the man and fellowship him as a brother in fellowship with God, whereas if he doesn't make some kind of a

public indication, he will be robbed of such special blessings. So, if you are a backslider, acknowledge your sin to God; then, let the brethren know that you have repented of your backsliding.

### **III. He Must Pray for Forgiveness.**

Not only was Simon told to repent of his sin, but he was also told to pray for forgiveness for it (Acts 8:22). When a person who once knew the Lord determines to get right with God, it is not necessary for him to be baptized again in order to be forgiven. He must come to God in prayer and ask His forgiveness for those sins. Like the publican, he must cry out, "God, be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). When God sees a backslider thus humbled before Him and knows that he is sorry for his sins and is determined to give his life to God, He forgives those sins that have been committed. So, if you are a backslider, having repented of your sins, confess them to God, and ask His forgiveness for them.

### **IV. He Must Avoid that Which Caused Him to Backslide Before.**

The preceding things will restore him to his salvation. The next three things will keep him in Christ and keep him from going astray again. These next three are so important! Time and time again, I have seen individuals return to God in bitter tears, but before I knew it, they were right back at their same old sins. What was the matter? They had not avoided that which had caused them to backslide the first time, and it got a hold of them again. Whenever a backslider responds to the invitation, I make it a point to talk with him or her privately afterwards that I might help that person stay right this time. I have found that such personal counselings with people returning to the Lord have proven great blessings to them, and I feel obligated to give them this special attention and help.

Suppose that a man has had a particular weakness for drink. I strictly charge him to stay away from drink, especially the smell of it, and to stay away from the drinking crowd also. They will cause

him to backslide again. In other words, whatever has caused a person to go astray once may cause him to go astray again unless he carefully guards against it.

#### **V. He Must Consecrate Himself to the Lord and His Word.**

Every Christian is to be consecrated to the Lord as a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1). Our whole body, soul, and spirit, according to Paul, are to be sanctified unto the Lord ((I Thess. 5:23). Thus, one becomes deeply rooted and grounded in Christ. As a living branch abiding in Christ (the vine), he has life through the vine (John 15:4,5). The spiritual power to remain faithful comes only to those who truly live for Christ in prayer, searching the Scriptures, regular attendance at gospel services, financial stewardship, personal work in soul winning, and in building Christlike character. Only he who does these things can be assured of not being barren and unfruitful. He that doeth these things will not fall. Study II Pet. 1:5-11.

#### **VI. He Must Determine that He will Never Leave the Lord Again.**

There is great moral power in a definite decision. When a person comes back to God, he must have no other intention than to stay true to God until the day of his death. If he doubts whether he will "hold out" or not, I can assure you that he will certainly fall. When people say, "Oh, I'm afraid that I am going to backslide," you can just be sure that they are going to backslide. I have never seen it fail yet. We are told to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and MAKE NOT PROVISION FOR THE FLESH, to fulfill the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13:14). In other words, when one returns to God, he must not plan to go out and sin again. Several times during Jesus' earthly ministry, He told individuals, "Go thy way and sin no more." The forgiven backslider must hear and heed these commanding words of Jesus, "Go thy way and sin no more!"

## QUESTIONS

1. Prove that a backslider must repent.
2. Show that he must confess his sin.
3. When should he confess his sin publicly?
4. Prove that he must ask God for forgiveness.
5. What must he be careful to avoid in the future?
6. What determination must he have?
7. Why must he consecrate himself to the work of Christ?

## “O Prodigal, Return!”

*“Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye unto 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).*

Dear friend, are you a backslider in God’s sight? Have you failed to grow in the Christian life? Do you do less for Christ now than you used to do? Are you back drinking at some fountain of sin? Do you have a backslidden heart? Oh, if so, the wrath of God is upon you, and you had better come back to God while you still have earthly life and opportunity! As you read these final lines, won’t you consider them as for eternity?

### I. See Yourself as You Truly Are!

Surely, if you see yourself as God’s Word pictures you, you cannot keep from being moved over the seriousness of your condition. Here is how God’s Word pictures you.

As a sinning child of God, you are a rebel against God, for sin is the transgression of God’s law (I John 3:4). Therefore, being a



sinner makes you a rebel.

The church is the army of the Lord. But, as a backslider, you are a deserter of that divine army. The church is in conflict with the world. But, since you now love the world, God beholds you as a traitor to Him.

Since you are not your own, but you belong to Christ who purchased you on Calvary (I Cor. 6:19,20), you are a thief in God's sight. You have taken that which is not your own (your life) and have used it as you pleased instead of as God pleased.

You have proven unfaithful to your holy wedlock by loving the world instead of God. Jas. 4:4 says that you are thus guilty of adultery and are, consequently, an enemy of God.

As a stubborn, wayward son, you have brought grief to the heart of a loving Father in heaven.

You are pictured as the fruitless branch. As far as God is concerned, your life is empty and wasted.

Your going back into sin is so repulsive that God pictures you as a sow that was once washed that returns to her wallowing in the mire and as a dog that returns to his awful vomit (II Pet. 2:22).

Peter says that you are blind (II Pet. 1:9). You cannot see that you were once purged from your sins. You cannot see Christ as the pure and spotless one that He is. You cannot see your responsibilities to Him. You cannot see the life that you ought to be living. You cannot see the souls all about you who are perishing because you are a shirker. You cannot see the judgment of God that is coming. You cannot see the wonderful glories of heaven. You cannot see the awful terrors of hell. Surely, you cannot see yourself as God sees you, or you would do something about it.

## **II. Let Us Reason Together!**

What do you find wrong with God and Christ that you do not love them enough to live for them? Once you professed to love them. If you really loved them once, why don't you love them now? What have they done that has caused you to turn away from them? In what way have they changed so that you can no longer love them? What

new things have you learned about them that cause you to part from them?

What is wrong with the Bible that you no longer heed it? What is wrong with its commandments and standard of life? Why do you not revere it now? Why do you not heed its warnings? Why are you not living according to it?

What is wrong with the Christian life? Is it the wrong life to live? Did you make a mistake by starting out to live it? Did you fail to find the Christian life as Christ had promised it to you? Is the life of sin to be chosen instead of the Christian life? Is that your honest decision?

What is wrong with Christianity (Bible Christianity)? Is it false? Is it valueless? Is it something to be opposed, or should it be supported by men's lives? Why are you not backing it as you should?

What is wrong with heaven for an eternal abode? If you were ready for heaven, don't you believe that you could truthfully sing, "When we all get to heaven, What a day of rejoicing that will be!"? Have you actually given up the hope of going to heaven?

On the other hand, look at your life now. What is right about it? What is beautiful about it? Would you want everybody in the world to use your life as a model or standard? Would you advise others to do what you do, to say what you say, and to think what you think? Would you want people to follow you in life, to follow you to death, and to follow you to the place in eternity that your present life is leading? Would you say that you have found the real peace, joy and satisfaction that your soul longed for? Would you say that your future is bright and promising?

In the honest consideration of your own heart, surely you cannot justly accuse God, Christ, the Bible, the church, the Christian life, and heaven. And, if you will be fair and honest, you cannot keep from seeing that sin is wrong, that death as a backslider is awful, and that hell is fearful. Why do you turn away from Christ? Why do you waste your life? Why do you choose the life of sin? Why do you accept the death of a sinner?

### **III. Your Only Wise Conclusions!**

In view of preceding thoughts, common sense forces you to two definite conclusions.

Don't continue a backslider. There is not one legitimate reason why you should be a backslider any longer. All the odds are against you. Everything that is holy and good and wonderful, you are losing and sacrificing to the wind. In return for such losses, you have the mere fancy of a wild life of sin, the momentary pleasure that sin gives, and the empty shell of what might have been a wonderful life. Sit down with pencil and paper, and enumerate the reasons why people should backslide instead of staying true to God. List the blessings that you have found in backsliding that you didn't have when you were living for Jesus. In other words, write a letter that you might send to a Christian, giving your recommendations for living the life of a backslider. You will, then, see that the recommendations that you would not give to another you are following in your own life! Oh, cease being a backslider!

Don't die a backslider. If you do, only a hell, a terrible, Godforsaken, mercy-minus, and endless hell awaits you. Rev. 14:11 says that in hell, there will be no rest either day or night. Haven't you gone through nights when you could not rest! The only thing that you looked forward to was the breaking of day when you could stir around in hope of relief. But, in hell, there will be no rest either night or day. Surely, you do not want to die a backslider and spend all eternity in hell. But, you will if you don't come back to God.

#### **A Letter that Would Break my Heart**

There is a letter that would break my heart, were I to receive it. Suppose that I turned out to be a spiritual wretch, would leave the Lord entirely, and would fall into the depths of sin and shame. Suppose that one day when I went to the post office, I found a letter from my parents. Not having heard from home for sometime, I hastily opened it to see what the news was. But, as I began to read, my heart grew heavy, a lump came up into my throat, and my head began to

hurt, for the letter read as follows:

Dear son Donald:

We are writing you a letter that is hard for us to write. But, we ask you to read it carefully and understandingly.

Before you were born, how we longed for your arrival! How we planned for happy times in the future! How we dreamed about what you would become! When you were born, you were fair, and you looked much like your parents. How we loved and cared for you! We worked hard to provide for you, to feed you, clothe you, and give you a good home! When you were sick, we walked the floor with you and spent sleepless nights. We did our best to teach you the right way. We always took you to church, and we always tried to set the proper example before you. We spanked you when a child, even though it almost broke our hearts to do so. We sent you to school and gave you a good education. We sacrificed that you might be prepared to go out and face life as a man.

But, son, it just seems that you don't care for us anymore. It seems that you have completely disregarded everything that we taught you and tried to bring you up to observe. In spite of all that we have done for you, you have just wasted your life and made a terrible mess of it. People know about your life, and how it breaks our hearts as we hear them talking so about you, our very son! You have disappointed every fond hope that we had for you, you have brought shame to the family, and we sit here at home in our declining years with grey hairs, dimmed eyes, and **BROKEN HEARTS**. Oh, son, how can you treat your dear old father and mother in such a way? Son, won't you straighten up and come home? We still love you.

Dad and Mother.

As I looked at the letter, its shaky handwriting and a precious tear drop that had blurred the ink of a couple of words, my own tears began to pour down my cheeks as I saw how wicked I was.

Friend, I can think of nothing that would break my heart more than to receive such a letter from my father and mother. But, I not only have an earthly father and mother—I also have a heavenly Father,

and so do you if you have become a child of God. If you have now become backslidden and prodigal, God is sending a letter to your heart through this booklet, telling you that after He has loved you, planned for you, brought you into the family, provided for you, made every possible sacrifice for your welfare, taught you the right way, disciplined you when necessary, and done many other wonderful things, you have disregarded Him, you have trampled His will underfoot, you have gone back upon everything that He taught you, you have made a terrible mess out of your life, you have caused His church to be criticized and reproached, and you have broken His heart!

Oh, prodigal son, won't you see what you have done? Won't you hear the loving entreaties of the Father calling to you? Won't you see that there is bread and to spare at your Father's table while you famish in despair as you are? Won't you return to the heavenly Father who anxiously and hopefully waits. Won't you conscientiously say this very day:

I've wondered far away from God;  
Now I'm coming home.  
The paths of sin too long I've trod  
Lord, I'm coming home.  
Coming home, coming home,  
Nevermore to roam.  
Open wide Thine arms of love;  
Lord, I'm coming home!

## QUESTIONS

1. What are some Bible pictures of the backslider?
2. Which picture would touch you the most if you were backslidden?
3. What was some of the material presented under, "Let Us Reason Together?"
4. What are two wise conclusions for a backslider to come to?