

Righteous By Faith Series
Dangers of Backsliding

Sermon Bible Notes by Pastor Cary Rodgers, Jr.

Let's continue our Righteousness by Faith Series

“But while God can be just, and yet justify the sinner through the merits of Christ, no man can cover his soul with the garments of Christ's righteousness while practicing known sins or neglecting known duties. God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place; and in order for man to retain justification, there must be continual obedience, through active, living faith that works by love and purifies the soul.

In order for man to be justified by faith, faith must reach a point where it will control the affections and impulses of the heart; and it is by obedience that faith itself is made perfect. {“Christ the Way of Life”, November 4, 1890, Review and Herald, Ellen G. White}

True or false: “once saved, always saved” - False

Once a person is “saved” or made righteous can they return to unrighteousness?

Ezekiel 18:24, 26

- 24 But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, *and* doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked *man* doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.
- 26 When a righteous *man* turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die.

Ezekiel 33:12-13

- 12 Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his righteousness in the day that he sinneth.
- 13 When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.

2 Peter 2:18-22

- 18 For when they speak great swelling *words* of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, *through much* wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.
- 19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.

- 20 For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.
- 21 For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.
- 22 But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog *is* turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

The “true proverb” that Peter is referring to is found in Proverbs 26:11

Proverbs 26:11

11 As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly.

Dogs, in a literal sense, are unclean animals to consume. The wicked who are corrupted with sin, rebellion and impure minds are compared to dogs. Dogs have been domesticated to become friends with man, but dogs do not live by the moral code of God. They operate by instinct that God placed within them. Even though we are grossed OUT, dogs eating their own vomit for various reasons is normal.

A dog's vomit is compared to sin. When a person repents and confesses his sin, he is sick of sin and vomits up the contents of his sins. He hates sin and loves Jesus. Jesus pardons his sin and he is made righteous. If that same person returns to sin, he is compared to a dog returning to his vomit, consuming and returning to his sinful ways.

The process of going from righteousness to unrighteousness is known as one who has backsliden back into sin or apostasy. They walk in the counsels of other “dogs” and the imaginations of their evil heart.

Jeremiah 7:24

24 But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward.

What are the dangers of backsliding?

Hebrews 10:26-29

- 26 For if we **sin wilfully** after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,
- 27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.
- 28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:
- 29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

Hebrews 6:4-8

4 For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

- 5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,
- 6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame.
- 7 For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God:
- 8 But that which beareth thorns and briers *is* rejected, and *is* nigh unto cursing; whose end *is* to be burned.

Those who were once enlightened with the truth and were deemed righteous but went back to sin without repentance will receive a greater punishment in the end compared to the wicked who never turned from sin.

Luke 12:47-48

- 47 **And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*.**
- 48 **But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.**

It is a deception to believe that a once righteous person in Christ and living by the truth can return to his vomit and sinful ways and EASILY return back to God.

Knowing the will of God, His power and purposefully and willfully sinning against Him is known as presumption. This is extremely serious. Satan would have others who have known the truth to play with sin and believe they cannot be destroyed by it.

Yes, it is true that a humble backslider can come back to God like the prodigal son, but backsliding is extremely dangerous. Many backsliders have exchanged their faith to doubt. Sadly, like the backsliders and apostates of Israel many don't come back to the Light of God's truth.

What is the true condition of backsliders who think they are still righteous?

Let's look at what Jesus says through His message to the church of Laodicea.

Revelation 3:17-18

- 17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:
- 18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

They stand before the courts of heaven as guilty – unrighteous. Many like the church of Laodicea do not see their true condition as Christ sees. God does not leave them without hope, but counsels them to return to Him and be tested through the fire of trials and persecution in order to be rich in faith, clothed again with the righteousness of Christ.

What judgment did Jesus pronounce on the continual backsliden state of Israel?

Matthew 23:38

38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

What does God say through the prophet Jeremiah?

Jeremiah 7:9-16

- 9 Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not;
- 10 And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?
- 11 Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen *it*, saith the LORD.
- 12 But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel.
- 13 And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the LORD, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not;
- 14 Therefore will I do unto *this* house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh.
- 15 And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, *even* the whole seed of Ephraim.
- 16 Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee.

A backslider's only hope is to humble himself, repent, confess, turn from sin, and return to righteousness through Jesus Christ by faith.

1 John 2:1-6

- 1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:
- 2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.
- 3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.
- 4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.
- 5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.
- 6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

How can you remain righteous?

Romans 6:13-19

- 13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.
- 14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

- 15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.
- 16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?
- 17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.
- 18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.
- 19 I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

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