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Backsliding



Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

In "Backsliding," Steve Gregg delves into the topic of turning away from God and slipping backward in one's spiritual journey. He identifies two types of backsliders: those who lose ground but remain Christians, and those who defect and apostatize from the faith. Through examples from the Bible, Gregg emphasizes the importance of maintaining a passion for truth and love for God, guarding oneself against compromise, and remaining repentant when one falls into sin. While there is hope for backsliders, returning to the faith is not an easy matter and requires diligence and vigilance.

Transcript

I don't believe I've ever prepared a topical message on the subject of backsliding before. It is a topic I've had occasion to touch on in the course of teaching through the Bible. Of course, there are a number of passages that talk about it.

The book of Hebrews is one of those that mentions quite frequently the topic of falling away. We use the word backsliding, I think, in our popular Christian vernacular, but it's not really an ideal word to use for the concept. For the simple reason it's not really a biblical word.

The word backslide is found in the Bible. It's not found in the New Testament, but it's found a few times in the Old, mostly in the book of Jeremiah and in the book of Hosea. And there we are told that Israel, the nation of Israel, had backslidden.

Unfortunately, though, backslide is not really a perfect translation of the Hebrew words that are used there. The Hebrew words mean to defect or to turn away from God, which, of course, is what we mean when we talk about backsliding. But the imagery of the English words backsliding suggests slipping backward.

And a lot of times what really has been described in those terms in the Bible is not inadvertently slipping backward, but deliberately defecting from God, just turning around and going the other way. However, since we do speak of backsliding, and I believe the concept is definitely a concept that is a reality in the lives of many, I think I want to talk about both the concept of slipping away and the and the concept of turning away, both

of which can be called backsliding the way we use the terms commonly. And I'm going to just give a simple definition of what I'm talking about when I speak of backsliding.

I'm using the term to mean slipping backward from a higher position to a lower position. If you slip backward, it's because you're moving uphill and gravity pulls you the opposite direction. If you lose your footing or the ground is slippery, you slide backward from a higher position to a lower position.

We could simply also refer to it as losing ground spiritually. If you backslide, if you slide back, you've lost ground. We're supposed to be progressing forward.

We're supposed to be going from glory to glory into the image of Christ. And sometimes we are not only not progressing, but we're actually sliding backwards. In fact, I feel most of the time if you're not pressing forward, it is not long before you are sliding backward, before you are losing ground.

Now, if we define backsliding that generically, just losing ground spiritually. Slipping back from a higher position to a lower position, spiritually speaking, then I'd have to say that I have backslidden on a number of occasions, but not in the sense that the Bible uses the term of Israel's backsliding. I would say that there are many times over the over the decades that I've served the Lord that I have lost ground, that I have been at a spiritual place which was below the level that I had previously been at at some previous time.

And most of you who've been Christians very long would probably have to say there probably have been times like that in your life as well. Not that you've ever apostatized or defected from Christ, but that you have felt like you've lost ground by not responding properly to some test, some trial, a temptation that you succumb to, depression or despondency or, you know, weakened faith. These kinds of things happen.

Christians do sometimes lose ground, but that's not really the ultimate danger in backsliding, because you may lose ground but still be treading forward in some respects. You may still be hanging on to God and still sense that you're losing something of what you once had. And a lot of times that loss is only temporary.

And and so it's not really ultimately apostasy. But there are two kinds of backsliders, I would say, and that is those who simply lose ground but have not lost their salvation. They've they've they've slid backwards somewhat from a higher position to a lower position, but they're still Christians.

And then there are those who are no longer Christians. They were, but they have actually defected. They've apostatized.

Both states could be called backsliding, though one obviously is the more serious problem. Now, I want to address some questions tonight that people have. Obviously, the whole issue of the loss of salvation, the perseverance of the saints, eternal security,

these doctrines, which are obviously controversial in evangelical community, they enter into our consideration of what backsliding is, what its causes are, what its consequences are, that if a person backslides, some would say you can backslide and still be saved.

Well, it depends on how far you backslid, I suppose, and what the nature of that backsliding is. I'd like you to look with me at a passage in Luke chapter eight, and this is where we'll begin. But we'll look at quite a number of passages tonight to examine the nature, the biblical nature of falling away or slipping away or slipping backward in one's walk with God.

In Luke, chapter eight, Jesus gives what I consider to be a teaching on the causes of backsliding. At least he answers some of the questions we have. Why do Christians fall away? Were they saved before they fell away? Are they still saved after they've fallen away? These are the kinds of questions that controversy continues to rage about.

But in Luke, chapter eight, we have the parables, some of the parables of Jesus, including the parable of the sower or the parable of the soils at his sometimes cause. And you're familiar with it, I'm sure, of the sower who sowed seed. It fell on various kinds of ground with various results.

But I'd like to turn to Jesus explanation of the meaning of the parable beginning at verse 11. The disciples asked him to explain the meaning of the parable, and this is what he said. Now, the parable is this.

The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are ones who hear. Then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation they fall away. Now, the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with the cares, riches and pleasures of life and bring no fruit to maturity. But the ones that fell on good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.

Now, there are four results that come from the same seed, which Jesus said is the word of God. The seed is the word of God falling on different kinds of soils, which obviously the soils represent different conditions of the heart of the hearer. And the first category would not be described as backsliders at all because they never really get started.

They fall, the seed falls on hard ground. It never penetrates. The birds came and ate the seed.

And Jesus said, those are those who hear the word. But in Matthew's parallel and in Matthew 13, he says they they don't understand it. And therefore, the devil comes and

snatches the seed away and nothing ever becomes of it.

Here, it says in verse 12, the devil snatches the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. So these people never believe and therefore never say they are not backsliders. They are simply pagans that have heard the word and have never moved forward with.

They've never embraced the word of God. But the second category certainly would fall in the category of what we'd normally call a backslider. The ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive the word with joy.

Now, these people have an enthusiastic, emotional conversion. But it says they have no root in themselves. It's not deep, it's shallow.

And so they believe for a while. And in the time of temptation, they fall away. And Matthew's parallel says they fall away when tribulation and tribulation and temptation come because of the word.

These people are converted. How do I know that? Because it says they believe they believe for a while. The previous one spoken of in the previous verse did not believe that they might be saved.

In other words, if they had believed they would have been saved, but the second group, they do believe and therefore they are saved for a while. The fact that the second category are indeed saved, that they are born again, is seen by the fact that they begin to grow. They come to life unless a seed falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone.

But if it dies, it comes to life and brings forth fruit eventually, if it's healthy. The seed that is planted dies and germinates and it begins to grow. This is not a dead, false conversion.

This is a true conversion. This person believes for a while, but not permanently. This is the person who has a shallow, emotional conversion.

However, enthusiasm does not equal steadfastness. Enthusiasm does not equal loyalty to God. I've known very many people because I was raised in Southern California during a time of a great revival, which was called the Jesus movement, where thousands and thousands of people of my generation were saved in a very short space of time.

But the church I was attending was baptizing a thousand a month. And I mean, it was a huge revival and some of these people did fall away. And it's very possible that some who fell away never really were truly converted.

That's always a possibility. But there are some who I have, you know, if they weren't converted, I can't imagine that anyone is. I mean, they were solid.

I had a friend who went to Germany with me when we were teenagers to to to minister over there. And he was on fire for the Lord. And when he came back to the country, to this country, he he went to college.

He lost his faith. He fell away. He died of a heroin overdose some years later in a in obviously a fallen away condition.

He had been previously a zealous, enthusiastic, Evangelistic Christian, but apparently did not have deep roots. But I would disagree with anybody who would say, well, since he fell away, he never really was saved.

You see, that is the Calvinist doctrine of perseverance of the saints. If you're if you're ever really saved, you do persevere, according to this doctrine. But if if you fall away, it proves you never really were saved.

That's what Jesus said. These people believe for a while the seed came alive. It started to grow.

It just didn't grow deep. It remained shallow. The conversion was shallow and emotional, enthusiastic, but not steadfast.

And so this person fell away because of tribulation, because of temptation and because they never really did business with God at a very deep level, sincere enough to begin growing in the Lord, but not loyal enough to grow through the seasons of. Parched sunlight, they didn't have the roots to draw the moisture and they just didn't go very far downward with the roots. And so they fell away.

The third one is also a case of another kind of backslider. The ones that fell among thorns, verse 14, those are those who when they have heard presumably they the indications they heard and they received the word because they do begin to grow. But they go out and they are choked with cares, riches and pleasures of this life.

And they bring no fruit to maturity. Now, they are choked and therefore their life is choked out of them by by thorns in the parable, by thorns that grew up. But the thorns here are the cares of this life.

Now, these things grow gradually up in the life of some people and choke out their spiritual life. In fact, I I wouldn't be surprised if there's some people here tonight who could say that they've had that very experience, that when they first came to Christ, they were concerned only about the things of God. They were only obsessed with the kingdom of God.

All they cared about was getting people to go to heaven and getting people to live lives to glorify God. But you'd have to say some of you might be able to say, you know, but I just got caught up with the cares of this life. I got in debt.

I got over my head, I had to work two jobs, I had to become obsessed with working, got all stressed out and the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches just choked out the life or at least reduced the quality of the spiritual life I once had. Now, is this person lost, this person who is choked out by the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches? I'm thinking they are based on what Paul said over in First Timothy, chapter six. In First Timothy, chapter six, Paul said in verse eight and following and having food and clothing with these, we shall be content.

But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. Paul knows of cases, many of them, he said, who have strayed from the faith, who have become snared and drowned in perdition and destruction.

This is not the language of salvation in scripture. This is the language of damnation. This is the language of not being saved.

And they were drawn away by riches. They were drawn away by the things of this world. So these are some of the causes that people fall away.

Some never are saved in the first place, some actually start attending church, enjoy the fellowship, enjoy the music, they start to feel good about themselves, they start to feel like they've got a little bit of security for the next life, but they've never surrendered to Christ. They've never they've never received the gospel. And they are like those that the birds have snatched the word away and nothing ever happens.

And when people begin to become religious but have never been converted, it's sometimes very difficult for onlookers to tell if they are saved or not. And when they fall away, it's hard to know, is this a case where they never were saved, as is no doubt often the case, or is this a case of someone who really was saved that they did not continue? Now, if your theology is. That, you know, a true Christian never falls away or that even if a true Christian does fall away, they're still saved because of an unconditional eternal security doctrine.

Then you'll find that that is not this. Neither of those are the assumptions I'm coming to the scriptures with. I'm not going to bring those assumptions to the scripture and therefore we won't find them there.

You have to bring them there to find them there because the Bible nowhere indicates that security is unconditional. Faith is always the condition to persevere in faith is what is required to be saved. Whoever endures to the end shall be saved, Jesus said in Matthew 24.

And this is just one of many passages that say such things. And so salvation is what we're concerned about here. But I mentioned there is such a thing as a kind of backsliding that isn't the loss of salvation, but it's still not to be desired.

It always incurs great loss and it can lead to the more severe kind of backsliding, actual apostasy. Let me define what I'm talking about. I'm making a distinction here between compromise in the life of a believer and apostasy, which is a denial of the faith or a defection from God entirely.

Now, every Christian is to live a holy life. It is incumbent on us to obey God and to pursue after God with all our heart and all our mind. But we know that not everyone who's a Christian is wholehearted all the time.

Now, I'll tell you this. I used to wonder whether somebody who was not wholehearted was even really correctly referred to as a Christian, because all of the entire standard for being a Christian that we read of in the teaching of scripture is you love the God, you love the Lord with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, all your mind. You're totally committed.

You said unless you forsake all that you have, you can't be my disciple. It sounds pretty wholehearted. Whoever doesn't take up his cross and follow me can't be my disciple, Jesus said.

You have to hate your father, mother, wife and children in order to be my disciple, he said in Luke chapter 14. And so, I mean, it sounds like following Christ is it's all or nothing. It's wholehearted or it's or it's not genuine at all.

And, you know, I'm willing to believe that's true, but I'm starting to think that that may not be true because I do know people who I think they are Christians. I think they are. They do love the Lord, but through various weakness or whatever, they are distracted.

They are the ones in danger of being choked by the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches, by the thorns and the thistles. And, you know, I don't believe that as soon as someone starts to drift to coolness in their heart, that they are no longer a Christian. Jesus wrote to the or dictated letters to the seven churches of Asia in Revelation chapters two and three.

And some of these were really what I would call backslidden. The Church of Ephesus had left its first love. And yet Jesus talked as if they were still Christians so far, although he indicated that if they continued in this way and did not repent, then he would remove their lampstand from its place, which would suggest they will no longer be in his presence.

They will no longer be his church, his lamps. But they already had lost ground. They had left their first love.

There was compromise in their heart, there was coolness setting in, but they were not yet apostate. Likewise, with the church of Latter-day Saints, it's hard to tell. Jesus said they were lukewarm and it was nauseating to him.

And he said, if if you don't repent, I'm going to vomit you out of my mouth. Well, that's fair warning. He hadn't done it yet, but they were near it.

He was very unhappy with the state the church was in. It was backslidden in some respects, but it was not apostate, not yet, but it was very much in danger of being expelled from the body of Christ. That's what he implied, he'd vomit them out of his mouth, a rather violent imagery, not intended to to lull them to sleep, but to alert them that they were in danger of being expelled from the body of Christ.

There were other churches that he wrote to that had other kinds of compromise. There were there was one that had a prophetess, a false prophetess who is teaching some of the people to commit fornication and to eat meat, sacrifice to idols and so forth. This is pretty bad for a church.

And she was already gone. She was already slated for destruction. But there were people in the church that were still in between kind of being deceived.

But he was indicating that they could repent and he called them to repent because he had not totally given up on them yet. What I understand is that the only biblical norm for Christianity is be wholehearted, period. But there is sub normalness in the lives of some true Christians.

This is not supposed to be, but it does occur. There are things that ought not so to be, but but do occur in the life of the believer. In James, James talked about how it ought not to be that we would bless God with our mouth and curse men with the same mouth.

But he implied that that was happening in some cases. It was incongruent. It wasn't correct.

It wasn't right, but it was happening. James actually said in his book, in many things, we all stumble. I assume he has included himself when he said we all Christians.

Fall short, they stumble and they fall short of what they should be, but true Christians must be vigilant and repent as soon as they know that they have done so, lest stumbling becomes a pattern. And once you begin to stumble, you're not going to be making any progress forward. And in my life, you could be slipping backward.

You can regain ground if you fall and you repent truly and genuinely and deeply. But if you don't, you do lose ground. And eventually it leads to complete defection from Christ.

I believe. Let me give you the example of these two different things. One is compromise

in the life of a real believer.

The other is apostasy. And we have, I think, an example of these two things in two people who live together in the city of Sodom. That would be Lot and his wife.

When I teach through Genesis, I've always taught that Lot is an example of a backslider. He starts out in a Christian home, believing apparently in the Christian God or at least embracing the religion of Abraham. But there comes a time where he makes a selfish choice and he chooses to go and live near Sodom, probably for economic reasons more than anything else.

The grazing was good there. There was he had large flocks of sheep and therefore it was a good place for him to prosper in his business. And he pitched his tent near Sodom, although he knew, as everyone in the area knew, that Sodom was a very wicked place.

Now, there was no sin in doing this. He did not violate any command of God by pitching his tent near Sodom. It was just not a wise decision, and it's almost certainly not spiritually motivated.

He was a believer. The Bible speaks of Lot as a believer, as one who is righteous. In second Peter, it says righteous Lot.

And yet he started to make some bad decisions. The decision to camp near Sodom was not a sinful decision. It was just not wise.

And I'm sure it was it was based not on the most spiritual motivations. And sure enough, as soon as he began to compromise that way, it was just another short step into Sodom. And so the next time you find him in the book of Genesis, he's got a house there in the city.

Furthermore, he's actually sitting at the gate of the city, apparently, excuse me, involved in the city's political structure. He's become integrated in the city. But although we I would say he was a compromised individual.

And I believe that he is making bad decisions and these will cost him dearly. He lost many family members because of these bad decisions. They were destroyed.

The Sodom. Yet he was a saved man. He escaped.

God saved him. He was a righteous man that God saved. And we're told that even while he lived in Sodom, he was a righteous man.

It says that over in 2nd Peter, as I was mentioning earlier, 2nd Peter, chapter two, an interesting comment about Peter, about Lot that Peter makes, one that we would not have known from reading Genesis alone about this man. But in verse seven and eight of 2nd Peter, chapter two, Peter says that God delivered righteous Lot. That is, when he

destroyed Sodom or he delivered Lot who had lived there.

And it says who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked for that righteous man dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds. Now, I consider Lot to be a compromised individual who made some bad, carnal choices that cost him a great deal. It cost him financially, ultimately, and it cost him his family, more importantly.

But he was a man whose heart was not in Sodom. He lived in Sodom. There were things about Sodom that attracted him.

They weren't spiritual things, and he lived in Sodom, but he lived there uncomfortably. He vexed his righteous soul day by day by the unlawful deeds around him. He it tells us his heart was not approving of the wicked things in Sodom, but he was compromised enough that he just couldn't tear himself away from it.

Even when the angels came and told him he couldn't tear himself away, the angels actually had to physically remove him from the city. So I consider Lot to be an example of a man who had faith in Yahweh. He believed and was apparently righteous on the same basis that Abram was.

Abram believed in the Lord. It was counted him for righteousness. And yet a compromised man and his compromise cost him his compromise always will.

And we don't know, but that he might have repented later on. But he ended up in a pretty bad situation last we read of him. And he lost his wife and he lost some of his daughters and his sons in law in the city when it was destroyed, such as the result of compromising and backsliding to the degree that he did.

But I would consider Lot's wife to be another kind of example. Jesus actually said in Luke chapter 17 to his disciples, remember Lot's wife. And this was a warning.

Not to do what Lot's wife did, Lot's wife was not saved, she died, she died in the judgment of Sodom. There's a good chance that she was of heathen background. I mean, everyone who wasn't a Jew was a heathen and there were no Jews.

This was back before Abram had any children, so there were no Jews. So she obviously came from some pagan background, probably some pagan religion. It's possible that she didn't share deeply in the faith of her husband.

And it's possible that she did not vex her righteous soul day by day by the unlawful deeds of Sodom, she seemed to be comfortable there. She was a woman of some means and comfort there. And and even when she got out of the city, she looked longingly back, apparently not wishing to leave it all behind.

Lot kind of got his wife out of Sodom, but he never got Sodom out of his wife. And because of that, she was never saved. And the difference, I believe, between Lot and Lot's wife, besides the fact that one was saved and the other was lost, was that while they were both involved in what is compromised, I believe that one of them had their heart in Sodom and the other did not.

I don't believe Lot's heart was in Sodom, else he would not have been vexing his soul, having this inward torment all the time about the things that were going on there. Now, therefore, there is a difference, I think, between total apostasy and a mere compromise. A person who is compromising is backsliding.

They're slipping backward. They're losing ground spiritually, but they're not necessarily lost yet. Now, how does a person get into a backslidden state? I believe this can happen two ways.

It can start out in behavior, in behavioral compromise, not really intending to sin, but not intending strongly enough to avoid sin, either. A person who really wants to be a Christian, but they really love the world, too. And I believe that many Christians are professing Christians today secretly admire the world.

They secretly love the world. And this is a dangerous situation to be in. They want to maintain a heart for the Lord, but their heart is divided.

And it says whosoever loves the world, the love of the father is not in him. First John, chapter two. And so when you begin to love the world and you begin to toy with the world, you begin to make compromises in what you'll do for entertainment, the things that you maybe when you're doing better with the Lord, you would never have considered doing.

Maybe you're thinking about pursuing goals in your career. Or establishing friendships that in a more spiritually virulent period of your life, you would have not been attracted to. And yet these are things that have some advantages for you in the world.

They may advance your career. They may advance your popularity. They may advance your standard of living.

They may simply stimulate you in the case of certain kinds of entertainment and things that when you're a virulent on fire Christian, you would just have no taste for and would never do. Sometimes the cares of this world, the sequels, they begin to creep in like thorns to choke you out. And if you don't spot them and if they grow, they will choke you up.

And it begins with compromises that you did not intend to make, but it can progress toward a dullness of heart. A carelessness about the things of God, and eventually your heart can go cold and become spiritually dead. Backsliding can also begin with the heart.

A person can become bitter against God. Because of some great disappointment, some great loss, I've I was just thinking about these fires down in Southern California recently, I don't know what the current tally is, but this morning when I woke up, they said nearly 3000 homes have been destroyed by fires. Some of these homes, of course, are probably Christians homes.

I'm sure demographics of Southern California being what it is, the majority of them are not owned by Christians. The majority of people down there are not Christians, but there are a lot of Christians down there. And the likelihood is great that a number of Christians have lost their homes.

Now, that'd be a very hard thing to to endure, even if you're insured and you know you can get repaid for your home. You've lost stuff in the home that you can never replace. No matter no amount of money would do it.

And it's a great grief. And sometimes periods of great grief cause people to question God's goodness and begin to say, God, if you're really a good God, why did you let this happen to me? Why didn't you let the rains come and put out the fires? Why didn't you have the firefighters there in my neighborhood instead of somewhere else? And great losses, great trials, the loss of a child sometimes causes people to turn bitter against God if a child dies or some other thing, some other crisis like that. A person is under trial and instead of responding in faith, they respond in resentment toward God and their heart turns bitter toward God.

It's they haven't been making moral compromises. They haven't been making behavioral compromise. The problem starts inside with bitterness toward God, disappointment with God, an unwillingness to resign oneself to the will of God.

One sets themselves against God's purposes and say, God, if that's what you want, if that's the kind of God you are, I don't want anything to do with you anymore. And people fall away like that. Now, when they do that, that's outright apostasy.

I believe when a person's heart turns against God and they they walk away from God, they're backslidden in a sense that I believe results in a loss of salvation. Now, we'll talk later about whether they can get back to the Lord. But there is a difference between that kind of backsliding that is merely behavioral compromise, but that can progress to a dullness of heart and to a total turning against God, because the things you compromise with can become addictive.

I'm not talking about addictive, you know, literally like like alcohol and drugs are addictive, but sin gets it's gets a grip on your heart. And one way or another, the devil is out there to destroy your walk with God and the ultimate destruction of your walk with God comes when your heart is no longer the Lord's. And that can start with outward behavior, can start with the heart itself turning against God.

In either case, once the heart has turned from God, the person is gone. The person is gone from the faith and is apostate or is as defected from God. In Proverbs 14, the only place outside of Jeremiah and Hosea that we find the word backslider, it kind of makes this point in Proverbs 14, 14, it says the backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways, but the good man will be satisfied from above the backslider in heart.

Interesting statement, because we usually know that someone's backsliding when we see that they've exchanged their Christian behavior for worldly behavior. They're not going to church anymore. They're going to the bars.

They're partying, they're drinking, they're taking drugs, they're, you know, chasing women or whatever they're doing, they're not behaving like Christians anymore. That's when we recognize, oh, that person's backsliding. But this is talking about something in the heart, the backslider in heart.

That's where the danger is greatest. And as I say, it can start there, it can progress there. The word the word backslider there in the Hebrew means one who draws back.

One who draws back in his heart from God, there's a contrast to that in Psalm 44, the opposite of one who draws back from God in his heart is described in Psalm 44. And this is a person who's been under great affliction, yet remains faithful to God. The verse 18 says, our heart has not turned back.

Nor have our steps departed from your way, and yet this is in the context where there's been great afflictions, great testings that this person has had, but their heart has not turned back from God. Now, it's absolutely essential. That in the final analysis, it can be said of you, our heart has not turned back from God, if you're a backslider in heart, you're gone.

And it's hard to get back in many cases, the Bible does not encourage us to believe that the restoration of a backslider is an easy matter. We'll see the scriptures that talk about that in a few minutes here. But I want to really consider this question.

How could a person and someone actually say almost rhetorically, can a person who really knows Christ, who really knows God, can a person really completely fall away from Christ? And in answering that, I say, I don't know how they can. I confess, I don't know how somebody who really knew Christ can. I don't I don't believe I could really fall away from Christ.

I mean, I could anyone can presumably. But the thing is, I don't know how I could. I can see and I can understand well enough how a true Christian can be attracted momentarily into sub Christian behavior, how a Christian can be overwhelmed momentarily by a temptation, even fall into sin.

But that's a different thing than departing from Christ, because when a Christian sins.

They repent and they get right with God again, but departing from Christ means you've given up on that, you've given up on repenting, you're going to you're going to embrace the sin and live in it. I don't see how anyone could know Christ very deeply and very well.

And really fall away like that, but I can't say that can't happen because the Bible actually says there are cases of it. We are warned about it and there are actual cases given. Let me give you some of the case histories.

Well, before we look at the case histories, let's look at some of the general statements about it and then we'll look at some case histories in scripture. We'll see what caused certain people to fall away and we can be instructed by their their example. Probably the key verse, the most famous verses on this would be Hebrews chapter six, verses four through six.

I've lost count long ago of how many times people have asked me about this verse, this section and its meaning, and it has its difficult parts, but it says, for it is impossible for those who were once enlightened and have tasted the heavenly gift and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come. We would expect to say to fall away, it's impossible for such a person to fall away, but it doesn't say that it says in the Greek, it says and have fallen away. Now, your translation might say if they fall away, as if this might be hypothetical, but in the Greek it actually says and have fallen away.

So we're talking about people who did they know God? Well, it sounds like it. They were enlightened. They've tasted the heavenly gift, which we presume is salvation.

They become partakers of the Holy Spirit. This is only true of Christians. They've tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age come and they have fallen away.

It says it is impossible in such case to renew them again to repentance since they crucify again for themselves the son of God and put him to an open shame. Now, we'll talk more about that latter part, how it's impossible to renew them to repentance, because that's that should be a major concern here. But the point I want to bring from this is simply that it describes people who truly are saved.

They've had the Holy Spirit. They've had salvation. They've been enlightened.

All the things that are said of them are things that are said of Christian people elsewhere in scripture. And yet they have fallen away and they've fallen away so hard and so far that renewing them to repentance is not going to be an easy matter by any means. And their their soul is very, very much at risk of of eternal loss.

In Hebrews, chapter 10, another very well known passage about people who knew Christ, but who fall away. And it's very clear if you look at the passage carefully that they did know Christ. Beginning at verse 26, Hebrews 10, 26, for if we sin willfully and some

translations would prefer to run to this, if we go on sinning willfully, sin is in the present tense or the imperfect tense.

So it speaks probably of a continuing life of sin, not just a single act. But if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Now, this is people who have known the truth.

But they're in danger of experiencing the same fate as God's adversaries. Anyone who rejected Moses law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses of how much worse punishment do you suppose? Will he be thought worthy who has trampled the son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing and insulted the spirit of grace? This person was sanctified by the blood of Christ. This is a person who was once saved, but they have now insulted the spirit of grace.

They've trampled on the son of God and counted the blood of the covenant, which had sanctified him as a common thing. And he says, for we know him who said vengeance is mine. I will repay, says the Lord.

And again, the Lord will judge his people. It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But recall the former days in which after you were illuminated, that is, after you were converted, you endured great struggle with sufferings, partly while you were made a spectacle, both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated.

And then skip down a little bit, verse thirty five, therefore, do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward for you have need of endurance so that after you've done the will of God, you may receive the promise. Now, there's a quote from Haggai here, excuse me, Habakkuk, excuse me, Habakkuk two, three and four. It says for yet a little while and he who is coming will come and want Terry now.

Verse thirty eight. Very important, very important verse. This is quoted from Habakkuk.

Now, the just shall live by faith. But if he draws back, anyone is not in the Greek in the the original, it's if he draws back, my soul has no pleasure in him. Drawing back is about the closest image we have to backsliding.

Here's a person who is a just person who lives by faith. That means they've been justified by faith. This verse from Habakkuk is quoted a number of times by Paul in his letters to prove the doctrine of justification by faith.

This is talking about someone who's saved by his faith. But if he draws back who he who is justified by faith, if he draws back, if he backslides, if he draws back from faith and no longer believes my soul has no pleasure. Well, does that mean he's lost? Well, look,

verse three, but we are not of those who draw back to perdition.

Perdition suggests damnation. But of those who believe or go on believing to the saving of the soul. Now, the writer says there are people who draw back to perdition.

Hopefully we're not there. He says we haven't done that yet, but there are some who do. And if they draw back, these are the ones, according to the quotation from Habakkuk, who were justified by faith, but they've drawn back from their faith, they've departed from their faith and they have drawn back to damnation.

In second Peter, chapter two. There also seems to be confirmation that it is possible for people who know the Lord to fall away and be worse off than before they were converted as far as their salvation is concerned, because it says in verse 20, second Peter to 24, if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now, what do you know? What is that? But salvation, you've come to the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And have thereby escaped from the pollutions of the world, from the from the defilement and the sin and so forth through Christ, if they are again entangled in these things and overcome the latter end is worse for them than the beginning, that is, they're worse off in a backslidden state than they were before they were converted in the first place. Why? Well, because they've before they were converted, they were pre-Christian. Now they're post-Christian.

A post-Christian heart is one that has known the truth and turned against it and hardened against truth. A pre-Christian heart may not have hardened oneself. They don't even maybe know the truth yet.

But one who has known the truth and decided to reject it is one who is in a worse state, much more difficult to reach than the one who's never been converted in the first place. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than having known it to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. It has happened to them, according to the true proverb, a dog returns to his own vomit and a sow having washed to her wallowing in the mire.

This quotation from Proverbs about the dog returning to its vomit and a sow returning to its wallowing in the mire, sometimes it's thought to prove that these people never really were saved. They were washed like a pig, but they were still a pig. They were still unclean.

They were still not converted. They were still a dog or an unclean animal so that the reason they go back to the mire is that they were never changed internally. A pig, if you wash it, is not changed inside.

It's just cleaned on the outside and therefore it goes back to its piggy ways. But I don't

believe that Peter is suggesting that these people were always pigs and were never sheep, because he has said that they have known the way of salvation and they've escaped the pollution of the world through the knowledge of Christ. And after all, even those of us who are saved still have our flesh, which is still kind of piggy.

We still have a flesh that lusts against the spirit. And a spirit lusting against the flesh. These are contrary to one another.

And if the flesh, which is still unreformed and unconverted because the flesh doesn't get converted in this life, I guess if that reasserts itself, it's like, you know, the pig was washed, but it goes back. But the persons in question have all the descriptive elements of having been Christians before this condition. One other verse on this matter showing that true Christians can be in danger of falling away is in Matthew, chapter 24.

There are others, but I'm going to give some actual cases from the scripture of people who fell away, who knew God. But Matthew 24 is another one of the generic statements on the subject. Beginning of verse 45, Jesus says, Who then is a faithful and wise servant whom his master made ruler over his house to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant when his master, whom his master, when he comes, finds him so doing.

Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him a ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, my master is delaying his coming and begins to beat his fellow servants and eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come in a day when he is not looking for him. And at an hour that he is not aware of and will cut him in two and appoint him as portion with the hypocrites.

That's not salvation. And there should be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Now, here we have the same servant in both scenarios.

Blessed is that servant who, if his master comes, finds him doing what he's supposed to be doing. But if that servant, the same one, if that servant proves to be an evil servant and he says, my Lord is delaying his coming, he goes out and lives like a like the pagans. Well, then he'll have the portion of the pagans when his master comes.

There is a picture here of a servant who is a true servant appointed by God, entirely capable of experiencing heavenly rewards if he's if he's faithful to his commission. But he's also capable of defecting from that commission and turning from it and defecting from his master and becoming a pagan and sharing in their fate. So it is apparently possible for a true Christian, a true servant of God to defect from God.

Now, as far as examples from the Bible, both Old and New Testament give us examples of those who have known God and have fallen away. Israel as a nation. Is is the only entity that is said to have backslidden in the Old Testament, Israel has backslidden as a nation, and Paul describes that process of Israel backsliding, if you'll turn over to First

Corinthians chapter nine and 10, because Paul actually uses the example of Israel's backsliding as a sort of a warning about us backsliding.

Even Paul shows some caution about his own danger of backsliding, and he bases it upon Israel's backsliding. If you look at First Corinthians nine, verse twenty four, and then to the end of that chapter and into chapter 10, Paul says, do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize run in such a way that you may obtain it? This is one of those passages that indicate that wholeheartedness, whole, full commitment is what is required for success in Christian life. You can need to run like a runner in a race determined to win against all the competition.

And everyone who competes for the prize, he means in the Olympic Games, is self-controlled in all things. That is, when you're in training for an athletic competition, you you you subject yourself to temperance and self-control in your eating and your sleeping habits and all these things. Now, they do it to obtain a perishable crown.

Actually, a wreath made of leaves is all they got when they won. But we do it for an imperishable crown. Therefore, I run thus not with uncertainty.

Thus, I fight not as one who beats the air, but I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. The new King James says reprobate is the word in the Greek, lest I should become reprobate. Now, reprobation in the scripture is always a reference to a condition other than salvation.

In fact, in Second Corinthians 13, Paul said, do you not know that Christ dwells in you unless you are reprobate? So it's very clear that reprobate is the opposite of having Christ dwelling in you. Paul says, I have preached to others, but I, like anyone else, could become reprobate. And I am determined that it won't happen.

I discipline my body. I keep it under subjection. I fight the good fight.

I run the good race because I'm determined not to have this happen to me. Well, why was he thinking of that as a possibility? Look at chapter 10. Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and the sea.

And they ate the same spiritual food, drank the same spiritual drink. What he's pointing out is that the Jews who came out of Egypt experience experiences that are parallel to ours. They were believers, they were delivered from bondage, they were in a sense were baptized like we are and being baptized through going through the water.

They were led by the spirit. They drank spiritual drink and spiritual food. But verse five, with most of them, God was not well pleased for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

Now, these things became our examples to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted and do not become idolaters as some of them did. As it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play, nor let us commit sexual immorality as some of them did. And in one day, twenty three thousand of them fell.

That is by a plague that God sent. Nor let us tempt Christ as some of them also tempted and they were destroyed by serpents, nor complain as some of them complained and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now, all these things happen to them as examples and they were written for our warning admonition upon whom the ends of the age have come.

Now, therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall. You see, Paul didn't make the mistake of thinking that he would stand even if he was careless. He said, I discipline my body so that I don't become a reprobate.

Because some have, including the whole nation of Israel, the backslid, they were all saved in one sense. They came through the Red Sea. They were delivered from Egypt.

They had God with them. They had all the advantages of saved people. But they lusted after fleshly things, they worshiped idols, they committed sexual immorality, they complained about God's.

Providence in their lives, they weren't content, these are the things they did wrong, and this led to their backsliding, he says, therefore, beware. If you think you're standing, if you think you're secure, be careful, you might not be. Israel fell away and Paul indicates that their example should be a warning to us.

King Saul fell away. King Saul was a humble, believing man when he was ordained to be king of Israel. He was filled with the Holy Spirit.

According to scripture, yet. He became inflated with pride and he rejected the word of the Lord and he began to modify the things that God said to do and began to do what he wanted to do instead. And Samuel came to him in first Samuel 15 and verse 17 says, when you were little in your own eyes, God called you from your father's house and made you the shepherd over Israel.

But he says in verse twenty to twenty six, but now you have rejected the word of the Lord and the Lord has rejected you. Now, the man, this man fell away and he became demonized, an evil spirit from the Lord came to him and he was tormented by demons until the day of his death. He died under the judgment of God because he resorted to occultism.

He persecuted David, God's chosen one. This man died in an unbeliever and is in hell today. He even died an ignominious death, committing suicide.

One of the few people in the Bible who are recorded to have committed suicide. All who did so are those who betrayed trusts. Judas would be another one, Ahithophel would be another, the only people who ever committed suicide in the Bible are people who were apostates, with the exception of Saul's armor bearer, who just killed himself out of loyalty to Saul when he saw Saul had done the same to himself.

But the point here is. Saul was a believer, Saul was God's choice as the leader of his people, he was filled with the spirit, but later he was not filled with the spirit, he was filled with the demon, he was filled with pride and he was rejected by God. That's backsliding.

David. Kind of backslid, but now here's an example of one who did not backslide into apostasy. This was compromised when he sinned with Bathsheba and when he had her husband killed, this obviously was him succumbing to lust and to pride, wanting to cover his sin and so forth.

But when he was confronted by the prophet of God, he was smitten in his conscience and his heart was still the Lord's. He was a compromised man, but he still wanted to be right with God. And he repented and was restored.

Unlike Saul, who never did repent and was never restored, Solomon compromised and backslid and he probably became an apostate, though there's reason to believe from the book of Ecclesiastes that he came back to the Lord at the very end of his life. But we do read in First Kings, chapter 11, that Solomon married a lot of women and it says his wives turned his heart away from the Lord. The desire to please his wives and to accommodate their religious ideas, which were not godly, caused him to his heart departed from the Lord.

The Bible says his wives turned his heart from the Lord and he became an idolater and God judged him and he had been a man of God. Now, I believe he came back at the end of his life in the book of Ecclesiastes suggests this, the prodigal son that Jesus fabricated for a parable, but obviously to give a true to life kind of example in Luke, chapter 15, the prodigal son was his father's son, but he defected from his father and he was, as his father later said, dead and lost, though he did come back to his father and he who had been lost was found and he who had been dead was now alive.

But the son, in alienation from his father, was a lost individual. He had known his father, but he had defected. There's a man named Demas that Paul mentions in some of his writings.

He was a lawyer, actually, but a Christian. And he and he traveled with Paul some of the time. And he was a man who was a partner in ministry with Paul.

Certainly, Paul would not have included him on his team if he wasn't fairly convinced the

man was a Christian. But near the end of Paul's life, in the last epistle he wrote in the last chapter of that epistle, Paul had to give this disappointing report about Demas. In Second Timothy, chapter four and verse 10, he says, Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world.

Certainly the suggestion is that Demas has forsaken the Lord, too, as well as forsaken Paul, because he didn't do it out of some noble spiritual reason for going a different direction. Paul, he loved the world. He got reabsorbed into the world.

He backslid and apparently defected. Judas Iscariot is an obvious example from the Bible. Some people say Judas never was saved.

Others believe he was truly saved and he backslid. I believe the latter. I believe there's strong evidence that Judas was a true disciple of Jesus initially and that he had the same spiritual credibility and authority that the others had.

When Jesus sent out the twelve in Matthew 10 to cast out demons, raise the dead. There's every reason to believe that Judas was able to do this like the rest. We don't ever read that the demons said to Judas, Jesus, we know and Peter, we know.

But who are you? The disciples all came back saying, Lord, even the demons are subject to this in your name. Judas seemed to have the same spiritual authority and the same spiritual credibility as the other disciples. However, he began to give place to the devil in his heart and he became possessed by the devil.

Satan entered his heart and he became an apostate. Peter and the other disciples also fell away from Christ. Briefly, Peter denied the Lord three times and all the disciples forsook Christ in the garden.

But unlike Judas, they all repented and they all came back again. This was compromised, but not apostasy completely. They did not apostatize completely, but they did compromise.

And we could say that they backslid briefly from Christ and from their loyalty to him. The whole Galatian church, according to Paul in the book of Galatians, had backslid and they had embraced another gospel. They'd been beguiled by false doctrine and they had fallen from grace and were alienated from Christ.

They were estranged from Christ, according to Paul in Galatians 5, 4. And then we already mentioned the churches in Revelation. Many of them were somewhat backslidden. We don't know that I don't think any of them were so far gone that they couldn't come back or that Christ had totally disassociated.

They were all still among the seven lampstands and he was still circulating on them. But many of them were very much on the verge of being removed from that position. Now,

when we read of people like this, backsliding apostles, prophets, kings of Israel, writers of scripture like David, you know, falling.

The question has to come to mind, how can I know that I won't backslide? How can I be sure I'm going to make it to the end? Well, the Bible says in Proverbs chapter four, guard your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. As long as your heart is the Lord's, you will not fall fully away. You might you might you might briefly stumble or be deceived into sin.

But if your heart is Lord's, you'll be convicted and you'll repent. You won't go far away while your heart is the Lord's. But you see, a person whose heart is the Lord's.

When they sin, their heart wants to repent. But if the time comes where you really don't want to repent and you really want to make excuses for your sin and continue it, then your heart is not the Lord's anymore. You see, I've been asked a lot of times recently by people saying, you know how, you know, can you lose your salvation if you start doing some bad things after you're a Christian and how bad of things you have to do to lose your salvation? It's not about the bad things you do.

The bad things you do are an issue, because if you sin and love to sin, you will stop wanting to repent and then your heart will become hardened against God. You'll find God's conviction to be an annoyance, an irritation, something you want to get away from. You'll close down to God in your heart.

But the the loss of Christ is the loss of your heart. And sometimes when you sin, well, actually, this is a very excellent way to know where your heart is. If you fall short of the glory of God, if you sin, what is the response of your heart? Do you desperately want to be right with God? Do you desperately want to repent and be cleaned and get back on the road with Jesus? If so, then your heart is the Lord's.

You have not turned from him in your heart. But if you think you begin to love your sin or you begin to resent God because he forbids you to sin or you may resent God for some other reason, something he's disappointed you in or some trials he subjected you to and your heart turns from God and you don't want to repent and you want to live in your sin, then your heart is not the Lord's. And if your heart is not the Lord's, then there's no limit to how far from God you may end up.

And it's a very dangerous thing. Now, some of them might say, well, doesn't God promise to keep us? Aren't there promises of God that God will keep us? Didn't Paul say, I know whom I believe and I'm persuaded he's able to keep that which I've committed to him against that day. Doesn't the Bible say that God is able to keep you from falling? Doesn't the Bible say we're kept by the power of God? Yes, it does.

God does keep us. But the Bible teaches that God keeps those who keep themselves.

This is one sense in which the Bible does say something like that old adage, God helps those who help themselves, because the Bible indicates that the ones that God keeps are the ones that keep themselves, as I'll show you in the scripture.

It actually says this. I many years ago, I was involved. A pastor down in southern Oregon asked if I'd debate him about eternal security in his church.

I did. I came down to debate him. And in the course of the debate, he said, the Bible teaches that Jesus will keep us and it never says we have to keep ourselves.

Well, this is a case of enthusiasm getting ahead of his head. He wasn't thinking very straight because the Bible many times commands us to keep ourselves. Keep yourselves in the love of God, keep yourselves from idols, keep yourself pure, keep yourself, keep yourself, keep yourself.

The Bible repeatedly tells us to keep ourselves, but it also tells us that God will keep us. But what it teaches us is the relationship with God is two way. It's not one way.

Just like any relationship between two real people, God's a real person, you're a real person, therefore, a relationship requires cooperation on both parts. You need to keep yourself faithful and he will definitely keep himself. He'll keep his hands on you while you're doing that.

It's like a marriage. Both parties are expected to keep themselves from other entanglements outside the marriage and other relationships. But if one doesn't keep themselves, then the other one hardly has anything they can do to keep the marriage together.

Let me show you the scriptures that teach that God keeps those, in a sense, who are keeping themselves. If you look at John chapter 17, where Jesus is praying for his disciples. He says in verse six, as he describes his disciples and speaking to the father, he says, I have manifested your name to the men whom you've given me out of the world.

They are yours. You gave them to me and they have kept your word. They have kept your word.

And so he says in verse 11, now I'm no longer in the world, but these are in the world. And I come to you, Holy Father, keep them through your name. And in verse 15, he says, I don't pray that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil one.

Keep who? Those who have kept his word. The ones who are keeping his word, God has promised to keep them and that these two are connected to each other inseparably, as seen by the statement Jesus makes in Revelation chapter three in verse 10, which is

perhaps based on those verses we just looked at in Revelation 310. Jesus says to the Church of Philadelphia, because you have kept my command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial, which shall come upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth.

When the hour of trial comes to test you, you need to be kept and you need to be kept by Christ. You need to be kept by God. Who does he promise to keep? Those who have kept his command to persevere.

Because you've kept my command to persevere, I will keep you because you are keeping me and keeping yourself connected to me. I will hold on to you and I'll keep you. In first John, chapter five, verse 18, first John five and verse 18, it says, We know that whoever is born of God does not sin, but he who has been born of God keeps himself and the wicked one does not touch him.

The devil can't snatch you away from Jesus if you're keeping yourself. No one can snatch you out of the father's hand if you keep yourself there, but we are commanded to keep ourselves there. If you look at Jude, which only has one chapter, it's the book before Revelation in verse twenty four, it says now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

Now, God is able to keep you from stumbling. But look what he says in verse twenty one, a few verses earlier. Keep yourselves in the love of God.

You keep yourself in the love of God and God will keep you from stumbling. You have a part to play and he has a part and you do need to make sure that you don't drift. You need to take your bearings once you want to say, have I drifted, have I drifted away or am I keeping myself right where I'm supposed to be in first Peter, chapter one and verse five.

It says that we are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time God's power keeps us. But he does it through faith. That is our faith.

We are trusting in him. We're trusting in his power and his power keeps us as we are trusting in him. It's through faith.

If we keep ourselves in the faith. Then his power is deployed against all challenges to our perseverance, and he will keep us by his power through our faith in First Thessalonians, chapter five. Now, there's an interesting series of verses here that I'd like to show you in beginning of verse 16.

First Thessalonians 5, 16 says, Rejoice always pray without ceasing and everything gives thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the spirit. Do not

despise prophecies.

Test all things and hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. Now, may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely and may your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What's interesting is that in verse 23, it says that God will preserve us, our whole body, soul and spirit blameless at the coming of Christ and sanctify us completely. However, that's not in a vacuum. We are to be abstaining from all forms of evil.

We're supposed to be praying without ceasing. We're supposed to be keeping ourselves in the disciplines of the Christian life, thanksgiving and rejoicing and prayer and abstaining from evil, not quenching the spirit. And.

God will then preserve us. There is there are there's man's part and there's God's part in this deal. So what do I have to do to make sure I don't fall away? There's well, a number of things we saw in Jude, verse 21, keep yourself in the love of God.

What does that mean? Well, it certainly means that we don't allow ourselves to love the world because it says in first John, chapter two, if anyone loves the world, the love of the father is not in him. We need to make sure that our hearts never get drawn away into the lust of the flesh and less eyes in the pride of life. That is that we don't begin to love these worldly things.

Because as we begin to love them, they are the enemy of God, it says in James, who several be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. The world is opposed to God. And it's hard to swim upstream against the stiff tide of our culture.

But we have to stand and say the culture may be corrupt, but I will not embrace it. I will if necessary, like what if I have to live there, I will vex my righteous soul day by day with their unlawful deeds. I will not ever make myself allow myself to feel comfortable with the compromise and the sin of the culture.

And I said, well, then we'll just seem like a bunch of grumpy people who just don't participate. In normal life, we're going to look like some kind of, you know, negative, you know, unhappy, grumpy people. Well, I suppose a lot probably look that way in Sodom.

I don't think we need to be grumpy. And we have other sources of happiness than the world, but we we do have to sometimes look like we don't belong. We do have to take a different route.

We need to swim upstream. We need to take another road. Peter said your friends of the past think it's strange that you don't run with them to the same excess of right.

And they speak evil of you. Well, that's just the break. Sometimes people just speak evil

of you because you don't run with them.

And it's a good thing you don't, because they're running straight to hell. You need to run the other direction and we all want to blend in. We don't want Christianity to seem like something that's not relevant to modern culture.

We want to we want to look like everyone else. We want to look like our you know, our homes are like everyone else's and that we you know, we we don't want to look too different. We don't want to be ostracized.

We want to be accepted. Well, you have to decide who you ought to be accepted by. Accepted by God or accepted by the world.

You need to keep yourself in the love of God. And since that's contrary to the love of the world, it means you're going to have to not allow your heart to be to embrace the world and its loves and its values. We need to live in the fear of God.

And one thing you really need to do if you want to avoid backsliding is be careful about your associations with unbelievers. You cannot avoid all unbelievers. Paul made that very clear.

In First Corinthians, chapter five, he said, I warned you not to associate with fornicators, but I didn't mean fornicators of the world, you'd have to leave the world to avoid all of them. But although he doesn't want us to avoid unbelievers altogether, we have to be careful about the nature of our association with them. In fact, Jude gives some very interesting advice about that in the connection of keeping ourselves in the love of God.

He tells us how to relate to unbelievers. And he says in verse twenty two and twenty three on some have compassion, making a distinction, but others, save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh. There are some people that we have dealings with that we do so fearfully, knowing that contact with these people may be defiling and we may have to do our best to snatch them out of the fire, but we have to do so with a sense of standoffishness about the whole the defilement that's associated with with contact with some people.

The Bible says that true religion and undefiled before God and father is this to visit fatherless and infliction and keep oneself unspotted from the world, keep yourself unspotted from the world and you get spotted by the world largely through contact and especially friendship with people who are worldly, because our hearts tend to be sympathetic toward our friends. And if we have worldly friends, that's that it's not wrong. Sometimes having worldly friends is the best way to reach worldly people.

There's no sense in being unfriendly. But but you have to be careful when you have worldly friends. That means your heart is going to be sympathetic toward them.

You're always going to be sympathetic toward your friends. And if your friends are enemies of God, you need to be careful that they don't make you enemies of God by your sympathy with them. Being a friend of the world is to be the enemy of God, James said.

One of the main things to avoid backsliding is that you need to maintain in the forefront of your life and of your heart a passion for truth. And to love truth more than you love. Pleasure.

Paul said in second Thessalonians that God will send strong delusion to some people so they believe a lie. Well, who are these people? They're those who did not receive the love of the truth, but had pleasure and iniquity. Sometimes the truth is not as attractive as pleasure is at a certain level.

But we must commit ourselves to the truth and say no matter no matter how unpopular it is, no matter how unpleasant, no matter how restrictive it is, I'm going to be loyal to the truth. I'm not going to fall away from the truth because that's what the Galatians did. They became estranged from Christ because they fell away from the truth.

Paul said that he did not put pleasure first. He buffeted his body. He disciplined his body.

He kept his body under because it was so important for him not to become a reprobate. You know, one of the things that I believe is usually present in backsliders that is so avoidable and that is prayerlessness. If you pray.

Regularly, fervently. I know it's a discipline, a lot of people don't like to pray very much, they like to pray when they're in trouble, but they like to shoot up short prayers and get back to the business of having fun again. But actually, to make a vocation of prayer is not at all a waste of time in an age like this in which you could become a statistic.

All of us know people who have fallen away. And I would say I know an increasing number of people who are falling away at this present time. In the past couple of years or so, I've been astonished at how many people who seem to be solid Christians have just bit the dust and become statistics.

I don't know what is going on. I don't know why there's this increase, but we are living at a time where you can't be overly prayerful. You can't be too careful.

You can't be overly confident. If anyone thinks he stands, let him take heed lest he fall. Jesus said to the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane in Matthew 26 for not twenty six for twenty six forty one.

Watch and pray lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. You need to be aware that your flesh is weak, even if your spirit is willing, your flesh is weak and you need to count on God, not your your own strength to stand in the

time of temptation.

You will be tested. The devil has got your number. He wants you.

He knows whether you have a price or not. He knows what you're you know, he knows whether you can be bought or not. And if he does know that you can't be, he'll offer that price.

He'll do whatever he has to do to get you. And the temptation is great and you need to make sure that you do not become another statistic and you don't fall. And how do you avoid it? Jesus said, watch and pray.

Stay awake and pray. Conduct warfare in prayer on behalf of your own soul. Jesus said in Luke chapter twenty one, we're just about done here on this point.

Luke twenty one thirty six. Jesus said, but that's twenty two thirty six, twenty one thirty six says, watch therefore and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all of these things that will come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man. There is a time of great testing that Jesus speaks of here.

It's a time where he said, if it's possible, even the elect would be deceived. He says, because iniquity will abound, the love of many will grow cold. This is a time of danger to the soul, and Jesus, you need to get through this.

You need to escape this and stand before the Son of Man. You better watch and pray always. To pray and watch that you're not falling, temptation is apparently important enough that Jesus integrated into the short prayer that Christians are supposed to pray regularly, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the wicked one.

I doubt if anyone has ever backslidden while praying that prayer. At least pray sincerely and fervently, I dare say that when people backslide, one of the first things to go before anything else is their prayer life. Because people who don't backslide their prayer life goes by the boards, people who actually love God are often negligent in prayer.

How much more when a person's heart is beginning to cool toward God, the first thing that's going to go is prayer. As long as you are praying for God to keep you, for God to not let you fall away, for God to give you strength in the trial, as long as you're praying that God's will will be done in your life and that he'll deliver you from temptation. I don't think you can fall away while you're doing that.

It's when you decide to stop doing that, when you neglect it, when you give up on praying, that the power of God that you're tapping through prayer ceases to be, ceases to be there. Now, so it is possible to not backslide even under great provocation if you keep yourself untainted from the world, if you're careful about your associations with worldly people, if you keep yourself in the love of God, if you live in the fear of God, if

you love the truth more than you love pleasure. And if you keep praying, keep yourself in prayer.

But what about the person who's already backslidden? Is there any hope for them? We read in Hebrews chapter six, it's impossible to renew them to repentance. And that makes it sound like there's no hope for them. Yet we read of backsliders coming back.

In fact, in Jeremiah, chapter three and verse 12, God appeals to backslidden Israel to return. Apparently, something that is a possibility for them or else God wouldn't invite them and appeal to them. In Jeremiah three and verse 12.

Go and proclaim these words toward the north and say, return, backsliding Israel, says the Lord. I will cause my anger to fall on you. I will not cause my anger to fall on you, for I'm merciful, says the Lord.

I will not remain angry forever. Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the Lord, your God. Now, those who are backslidden can, in some cases, come back.

But why did the writer of Hebrews say it's impossible to renew them to repentance? And there's different ways people have understood this in my way is might not be the right way. But as I understand it, there are certain conditions that some people are in that make them so difficult. To convert that, it's essentially impossible, apart from unusual, miraculous intervention, Jesus said that was true about rich men, he said, it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man.

To enter the kingdom of God, the disciples of women who can be saved, you said, well, with God, everything's possible with man, it's impossible. It's as impossible for a rich man to be saved as it is for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, and that is impossible except with God. But a rich man, apparently, Jesus singles them out as one who has more challenges.

Then one who isn't rich, riches tend to enslave the heart, riches tend to render somebody comfortable and complacent about their state, riches tend to be a master that prevents one from serving the other master, Jesus, you can't serve two masters, you can't serve God and mammon. And therefore, the possession of wealth is a tremendous challenge, so much so that Jesus said with men, you can't convert someone like that. You can't get someone like that to come into the kingdom of God yourself.

God, God can. But he indicates that that kind of person is in greater danger, much harder to convert, even impossible apart from God to convert. But that's what I think the writer of Hebrews is saying about those who have been once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and of the powers of the age to come and of the good word of God and partaken of the Holy Spirit.

And they have fallen away. It's impossible to renew them to repentance, too, in the same sense. It's humanly impossible.

They are in a condition that is more difficult than the average person, much more difficult. It takes an unusual intervention of God. To bring about the conversion of such a person, but it can happen and it sometimes does happen.

The prodigal son was an apostate, but he came back and there are other cases known in scripture in James, chapter five, verses 19 and 20. It says, brethren, if any of you depart from the truth and one converts him, let him know that he that converts the sinner from the error of his way shall save his soul from death and shall hide a multitude of sins. Apparently that is a possibility.

Paul talks in Romans, chapter 11, of how the Jews who have rejected Christ have been cut off of the tree of salvation because of their lack of faith. They're not part of that tree anymore. But he does say this in Romans 11, 23.

And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in for God is able to graft them in again. These are, in this case, Jewish people who have rejected Christ. They've turned on him.

They've been cut off from the position they once held in God's. Saved community, but they can come back if they don't remain in unbelief. But when a person has known the truth and fallen away, their their latter end is worse than the first, they're much more it's much more difficult to convert them.

Impossible, even in most cases. And that means this, that if a person has backslidden, you should not give up all hope on them. Praying for them, reaching out to them, seeking to bring them back on the one hand, there is hope for the backslider, but on the other hand, you shouldn't take it lightly.

You shouldn't figure, well, I'll just backslide and come back to the Lord when I'm getting old and near my deathbed. You may not. To return to the Lord is not something that is that easily done when you've turned from the Lord, when the heart has turned from the Lord.

It's not easy just to throw a switch and turn the heart back to the Lord. You need to maintain your heart, keep your heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life. I am broken hearted over many people I know who once served God and are now lost.

I have hope that some of them may return and I pray for them on a regular basis, but I realize that some of these people are very hardened. And it just seems like it may never happen, and it's a terrifying thing because some of these people served God for years before they fell away and it's a terrifying thing. And I would warn anyone within the range of my voice to keep yourselves, guard yourselves against this.

Beware of all compromise. As soon as you compromise, you're not necessarily a non-Christian, but you're going that direction. Don't ever get to a place where you take sin lightly or that you take your salvation for granted as if it's something that it's in the bag and you can be careless about it.

You can never be careless. You've got an adversary, the devil, who's walking out like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, whom resist steadfast in the faith. You need to be steadfast in the faith to resist him, else you will be devoured as you would be consumed by a roaring lion.

That's that you could not resist if you're not steadfast in your resistance. So these are the the warnings that I think the scripture gives. There's actually some of the passages we passed over somewhat lightly that could have would have been good to look at in more detail, but we simply don't have the time to do that tonight.

So we'll we'll we'll stop at that point and hopefully some of those scriptures will stick with you.