An Old Time Gospel
Message On Backsliding
PROVERBS 14:14

This morning as we continue with our OLD TIME GOSPEL SERMON SERIES I would like to preach an OLD TIME GOSPEL MESSAGE ON BACKSLIDING.

Please turn in your Bibles to the Book of PROVERBS, chapter FOURTEEN, verse FOURTEEN.

The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways, but a good man will be satisfied from above.

Before we get into today’s message, let’s ask God to bless our time of study of His word this morning.

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One of the greatest dangers we face in the Christian life is the danger of BACKSLIDING. And the fact that Church roll books are filled with the names of people who seldom, if ever even darken the doors of a Church building, reveals just how serious this problem is.

Just a generation ago, sermons on backsliding was the “meat and potatoes” of most preachers and Revival Evangelists.

But these days we rarely if ever hear a sermon on backsliding. In fact, I would dare say if you are younger than thirty years old, it is possible you have never heard a sermon on backsliding, and perhaps have never even heard the term “backslide” before today. So for
those of you who may not be familiar with the term, let me explain what "backsliding" means.

What Does Backslide Mean?

The term "backslide" simply means to "turn one’s back on the Lord" ..........or........"to turn one’s heart away from the Lord.

To backslide means to lose one’s spiritual passion, enthusiasm and interest. Backsliding also means "to fail to make PROGRESS in one’s spiritual life."

If I am NOT moving FORWARD in my spiritual life then I am moving BACKWARDS. If am not PROGRESSING spiritually I am REGRESSING spiritually. There is NO such thing as "standing still" spiritually.

BACKSLIDING is a sin that is exclusive to the CHRISTIAN.

A lost person cannot backslide because how can one turn away from the Lord if they have never turned to the LORD? And besides that one can’t slide any lower than to be in a LOST CONDITION.

Backsliding is NOT an EVENT, it is a PROCESS. It doesn’t occur over night, it occurs over a period of weeks and months and even years.

Backsliding is NOT like jumping off a cliff, but rather its like slowly drifting down a long hill.

WORD PICTURES OF BACKSLIDING

The New Testament gives us a number of "word
pictures” to describe backsliding.

LUKE 9:62  Jesus uses the analogy of a man  “putting his hand to the plow and looking back.” Jesus goes on to say such a man is not “fit for the kingdom of God.”

MATTHEW 5:13  Jesus compares backsliding “salt that has lost its savor” or “salt that has lost its saltiness.”

In II PETER 2:22 the apostle Peter gives us two very graphic pictures to describe backsliding.

- One is of “a dog returning to its own vomit.”

- The other is of “a sow going back to wallow in the mud after it has been washed.”

In REVELATION 2:4 Jesus compares backsliding to “losing our first love for Him.”

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF BACKSLIDERS

The Bible gives us many examples of people who backslid. Some backslid for a period of time then came to repentance, while others left this world in a backslidden condition.

People such as LOT, SAMSON, ACHAN, KING SAUL, KING DAVID and KING SOLOMON and the ENTIRE NATION OF ISRAEL in the Old Testament.

As well as PETER, JUDAS ISCARIOT, HYMANAEUS, ALEXANDER, DEMAS, ANANIAS & SAPPHIRA, and THE PRODIGAL SON in the New Testament.
The fact that GOD includes so many examples of BACKSLIDERS in the SCRIPTURES ought to serve as a WARNING to everyone every BELIEVER that any one of us is capable of BACKSLIDING.

As the apostle PAUL warns us in I CORINTHIANS CHAPTER TEN, VERSE TWELVE…..."Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."

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As we consider this very serious issue of BACKSLIDING, I would like to answer three very important questions this morning/evening:

I. WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF BACKSLIDING?
II. WHAT ARE THE SORROWS OF BACKSLIDING?
III. WHAT IS THE SOLUTION TO BACKSLIDING?

First let’s consider that question............

I. What Are The Symptoms of Backsliding?

1. Let’s go back and read our scripture text from PROVERBS 14:14 again.

   The backslider in HEART will be filled with his own WAYS, but a good man will be satisfied from above.

   Proverbs 14:14 NKJV

2. Backsliding is a HEART condition. And because it is a sin of the heart, its symptoms may not always be obvious to anyone, including the one who has backslidden.

3. Sometimes the symptoms of backsliding are very obvious and easy to identify.
For example, let’s say someone accepted CHRIST years ago and for a time they were active in the church and faithful in their Church attendance. But over the course of time they became less active and their Church attendance became more sporadic. And now that individual rarely if ever darkens the doors of a Church building.

Well its obvious that individual is a backslider, isn’t it?

4. Or, lets say someone professes to be a Christian, yet lives a very worldly and sinful lifestyle. Well again, its very obvious that individual is in a BACKSLIDDEN condition.

5. But remember the writer of PROVERBS tells us BACKSLIDING is a SIN OF THE HEART.

In other words, there may be things going on inside of one’s heart long before any outward symptoms are visible.

6. I submit to you this morning/evening that it is very possible for one to be in Sunday School and Church every week and yet be backsliding in their heart.

It is possible for one to TEACH A SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS every week..............or...........
SERVE AS AN ELDER OR DEACON........or even STAND BEHIND A PULPIT TO PREACH every Sunday and yet be a backslider in heart.

7. Could you be a BACKSLIDER in heart? Could you be a BACKSLIDER and not realize it yet?

8. Earlier I listed a number of people in the Old and New Testaments who backslid for
a period of time or permanently.

I went back through that list of names and compiled a list of symptoms that existed in the lives of these people while they were in their backslidden state.

9. Using that list of symptoms, I came up with TWELVE SOUL-SEARCHING QUESTION every Christian needs to ask himself or herself on a regular basis. As I ask these questions, ask yourself, do I have this symptom?

QUESTION 1: Like LOT, do I spend little or no time alone with GOD?

QUESTION 2: Like KING SAUL and KING DAVID, have I lost my spiritual joy and enthusiasm?

QUESTION 3: Like ACHAN, SAMSON, DAVID, JUDAS and ANANIAS & SAPPHIRA, is there a "secret" or "habitual" sin in my life?

QUESTION 4: Like DEMAS, have I lost my passion for lost souls?

QUESTION 5: Like ANANIAS & SAPPHIRA, am I obsessed with money and material things?

QUESTION 6: Like ANANIAS & SAPPHIRA, am I short-changing GOD in my giving?

QUESTION 7: Like MANY OF THE HEBREW CHRISTIANS, have I made a habit out of missing Church services on the Lord’s day?
QUESTION 8: Like THE CORINTHIAN CHRISTIANS
Do I regularly partake of the Lord’s Supper without examining my relationship with Christ?

QUESTION 9: Like THE APOSTLE PETER, am I currently following the Lord “at a distance?”

QUESTION 10: Like DIOTROPHES, do I have a self-righteous spirit and seek to be more important than the other members of our Church?

QUESTION 11: Like KING SAUL, do I have a sense of detachment from GOD?

QUESTION 12: Like the EPHESIAN CHRISTIANS, have I lost my FIRST LOVE for JESUS CHRIST?

10. By no means are these all the symptoms. Any pattern of sinful speech or behavior………..Any kind of an addiction……………any loss of appetite for spiritual things or increased appetite for worldly things are all symptoms something is going on inside your heart.

11. The late evangelist Vance Havner used to say, “If there was ever a time when your were closer to Christ than you are now………if ever there was a time when your prayers were sweeter and your worship more meaningful than it is now, you have backslidden.”

Well let’s consider our second question…………..
II. What Are the Sorrows of Backsliding?

1. Let’s look again at our scripture in PROVERBS 14:14.

   The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways.

2. What this verse is saying is that when one’s heart is in a backslidden condition, he invites all kinds of SORROWS and TROUBLES into his life. HE will REAP what he SOWS!

3. I believe one of the clearest pictures of the MANY SORROWS that fall upon a backslider can be seen in the life of KING DAVID in PSALM 38.

   Turn with me to that 38th PSALM if you would.

BACKGROUND: Like PSALM 51, this 38th PSALM is classified as a “Penitent Psalm.” And like the 51st Psalm, David wrote this Psalm after he committed adultery with Bathsheba and arranged to have her husband, Uriah, killed in battle.

4. As we read through the first eleven verses of this Psalm, let me point out the SORROWS David brought into his own life as a result of his BACKSLIDING into SIN.

*In VERSES 1,2 we see the SORROW of GOD’S DISCIPLINE upon David. (READ—VS. 1,2 )

*In VERSES 3,5,7 & 8 we see the SORROW OF PHYSICAL SUFFERING David brought upon himself. (READ: VS. 3,5, 7 & 8 )

*In VERSES 4,6,8 we see the SORROW of
MENTAL and EMOTIONAL SUFFERING David brought upon himself. (READ: VS.4,6,8)

*And in VERSE 11 we see the SORROW of RELATIONSHIP problems David brought upon himself. (READ: VERSE 11)

5. CHRISTIAN, God wants you and me to know, that when we BACKSLIDE, when we NEGLECT our RELATIONSHIP with HIM, we invite all kinds of misery and sorrow into our life.

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Well we have answered two of our questions: WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF BACKSLIDING? AND WHAT ARE THE SORROWS OF BACKSLIDING?

Let’s look at our final question....

III. WHAT IS THE SOLUTION FOR BACKSLIDING?

1. Let’s suppose you are sitting here this morning/evening, and you now realize your relationship with GOD is not as it should be. And you are wondering, WHAT CAN I DO TO MAKE THAT RELATIONSHIP RIGHT AGAIN?

2. I believe JESUS’ PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON in Luke 15, provides us with some
valuable insight as to what we must do when we have backslidden.

You remember after receiving his portion of the inheritance from his loving Father the Prodigal ran away to the “Far Country” and wasted all his money on wild, sinful living.

When he was PENNYLESS, FRIENDLESS and HOPELESS, he finally came to his senses.

It was then the PRODIGAL said, “I will arise and go to my Father, and I will say to him, “Father I have sinned against heaven and before You, ‘I am no longer worthy to be called Your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.”

3. But the most beautiful part of JESUS’ parable comes in VERSE 20

“And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a GREAT WAY OFF, his Father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.”

4. Oh brothers and sisters, don’t miss the valuable TRUTH God is revealing here:

WHEN HE WAS STILL A GREAT WAY OFF ......HIS FATHER Ran TO HIM!

5. OUR HEAVENLY FATHER wants you and me to know, that when we BACKSLIDE, the ROAD BACK TO HIM is SHORTER than the ROAD that took us away from HIM.

6. When OUR HEAVENLY FATHER sees us coming back to Him with a repentant heart, HE runs to meet us and wraps HIS LOVING, FORGIVING ARMS around us to welcome us home.

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CONCLUSION

Where do you go, when you’ve come to the end of your road? And you feel like the only one and you’re all alone?

When you’ve seen all you wanted to see. And become all you wanted to be. And you still don’t really know where you belong?

You go to the place where life begins. To the love that never ends. To the One whose arms are open wide, You run on inside.

And HE tells you........ “You should have come sooner! You should have come sooner!”

Christian, aren’t you tired of running? Aren’t you tired of going through the motions in your Christian life? Aren’t you ready to come back home to your LOVING HEAVENLY FATHER who longs to forgive you and make you whole again?

HE’S WAITING WITH OPEN ARMS! WHY DON’T YOU COME HOME TODAY/TONIGHT?