

# WHY DO PEOPLE BACKSLIDE?

*By Denver Cheddie*

Although the word “backslide” does not appear in the New Testament, it is a widespread phenomenon today. People come to church for a while, appear to be passionate for God, then for no apparent reason, decide that they want nothing to do with Christ anymore. Why does that happen, and how do we prevent that from happening to us?

I wish here to avoid the debate over whether people can or cannot lose their salvation. [I have another article devoted to that.](#) Calvinists would say that people who backslide were never saved. Armenians would say that they may have been saved only to lose their salvation. Whatever. The fact is that it happens. Could it have been prevented? Could it be prevented?

## **Matthew 13**

I believe that the answers to our questions lie in Matthew 13:1-23 – the parable of the soils/sower/seeds. Here is a brief summary of that parable and its interpretation. A sower was planting seeds and the seeds fell on 4 types of ground – symbolic of 4 types of hearers.

1. Way side

- a. Those who hear the word
  - b. but do not UNDERSTAND it
2. Stony ground
    - a. Those who hear the word,
    - b. receive it with JOY,
    - c. but have no DEPTH,
    - d. and stumble when trials come
3. Thorny ground
    - a. Those who hear the word,
    - b. but allow the cares of life and the deceitfulness of riches to choke it out.
4. Good ground
    - a. Those who hear the word
    - b. and UNDERSTAND it.

## **Understanding the Word**

There are a number of concepts which I highlighted here. One is the need for understanding of the gospel. How many times do you see ministers giving altar calls without giving any real information about salvation in their message? People go up to the altar, pray a prayer, but in their minds do not understand anything that is going on. They lack even a basic knowledge of the salvation that God provides. Many of them are responding to a needs based gospel, which portrays Christ as the great need-meeter. "If you're lonely, find a friend in Christ." "If you're heart broken, he can mend the broken hearted."

Now all of these things are true, but what sinners really need to hear is that their sin has separated them from God, and they are incapable of doing anything to merit salvation, and as a result desperately need to depend on God to provide salvation for them. They need to know that such a salvation is provided in Christ. The problem is that this gospel is not being emphasized enough. People are responding to every other gospel, which is why they do not last.

## **Building Depth**

It does not matter how "on fire" for God they are. It is possible to receive the word with joy and still lack any depth in one's walk with God. What provides that depth? How do we build depth? Jesus gave a parable about 2 builders – one built his house on sand, and the other on a rock (Matthew 7:24-27). It is easy to say that that rock is Christ, so once we build our lives on Christ we can never fall. But that was not what Jesus meant when he gave that parable. Yes we need to build our lives on Christ, but the man who built his house on the rock was the man who hears God's word and does it. It is the word of God that builds depth in our relationship with God. So many people today just like these music oriented services without preaching, so they could "express" themselves. But I know people who could dance a storm and still backslid. It is the word of God that gives us root. It is meditating on the word that makes us like trees planted by the rivers of life (Psalm 1). Even during times of drought, that tree still finds water because

of its deep roots. I'd rather be a tree planted by the river than a plant in a pot, always needing someone else to water it.

## **The Love of Money**

Thorny ground refers to those who allow the cares of life to choke out the word. Now we live in a very fast pace society, where people have to work longer hours than ever before. Is Jesus referring to those who have to work so hard that they don't have enough time to pray, study the word, and attend church? I doubt that is what Jesus meant. Pastors would tell you that if your job takes away your time from church you should leave that job. Let me ask you this – are they going to feed you and send your children to school? One sure way to glorify God is to excel in our work (Colossians 3:22-25). And I'm sure you can manage your time better to be able to spend quality time with God.

Jesus was not talking about people who had to work hard. He was talking about people who allowed riches to seduce them and lead them astray. He's talking about people who had a love of money (1 Timothy 6:5-11). There are so many preachers today who are obsessed with wealth and prosperity. And they lead many to believe that a true Christian should be financially prosperous. That is the same error the Disciples believed when the rich young ruler walked away from Christ. This guy was rich, how could he not be saved. Who then could be saved, they thought. It is false doctrine to believe or teach that those who are in Christ must be financially prosperous. It is the

deceitfulness of riches and the love of money that have proved the downfall of many in Paul's day, and it is no different today. Godliness with contentment is great gain.

### **1 Timothy 6**

5) ... men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself. 6) Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7) For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8) And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 9) 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. 10) 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. 11) But you, O man of God, flee these things...

## **Conclusion**

The bible urges us to develop a heavenly perspective in this life. Seek first God's kingdom (Matthew 6:19-34). Set our minds on things which are above, not things of this earth (Colossians 3:1,2). Don't let our lives be all about making a living. We are only pilgrims passing through (Hebrews 11:13). We need to realize that the only thing that really matters in the end is our relationship with Christ.

We need to study, meditate on, and seek to put God's word into practice in our lives. I know so many people who backslid – even people I looked up to when I first became saved. I've seen people who I never thought would backslide, walk away from Christ. It is only by the grace of God that I have not also backslid. There was a time in my life, when I was so bitter against God that I tried to walk away. I tried to backslide. But God wouldn't let me. God was answering a prayer I had prayed a few years earlier. I prayed to God, "Do whatever you have to do to keep me. If I ever try to walk away, trip me, pull a chair in front of me, or tie my shoelaces together. Do whatever you have to do to prevent me from walking away."

I remember that love for God's word I had when I first got saved, and still have. I had a great desire to study God's word and gain knowledge of it. And without being judgmental, I see so many young people today who simply do not have that kind of love for God's word. They attend church, they enjoy worshipping God, but they will never develop any depth unless they learn to love God's word. And that breaks my heart. One of my main desires, in putting together this website, is to provoke people enough that they develop a love for searching the scriptures and seek God through his word.

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