

Lesson 123 - Avoid Backsliding

1. What does a backsliding person follow? **Proverbs 14:14**

EGW: (no comment)

2. What two descriptions are applied to backsliding? **Jeremiah 2:19**

EGW: God declared through His prophet Jeremiah, "My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Then He asks the question, "Is Israel a servant? Is he a home born, slave? Why is he spoiled? ... Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way? And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt to drink the waters of Sihor? Or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river? Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee; know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord the God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord of hosts." This people reveal that notwithstanding their advantages as His chosen people they are not the light of the world. {Ms142-1898}

3. What is backsliding considered? **Jeremiah 14:7**

EGW: Exposed to the power of their enemies, the children of Israel at last realized the perils of their situation, and the futility of all their efforts against the oppressor. Then they began to seek help from Him whom they had so forsaken and insulted. They saw in some measure, how far they had separated themselves from the only One who could help them. "And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, saying, We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim." {ST, August 18, 1881 par. 1}

But infinite wisdom saw that they sorrowed because of the consequences of their sin--the suffering which it had brought upon themselves,--rather than because they had offended God. The Lord answered them, through one of his faithful prophets:-- {ST, August 18, 1881 par. 2}

"Did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines? Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods; wherefore I will deliver you no more." {ST, August 18, 1881 par. 3}

4. What is backsliding compared to playing? **Jeremiah 3:6**

EGW: (no comment)

5. What role did Judah play when Israel was backsliding? **Jeremiah 3:7**

EGW: (no comment)

6. What did that role lead Judah to do, which shows the danger of exposure and influence? **Jeremiah 3:8**

EGW: (no comment)

7. With both Israel and Judah in a backslidden state and able to point to each other accusingly, what did they try to become? **Jeremiah 3:11 [Hint: It is an attempt to not get punished.]**

EGW: (no comment)

8. Despite the backslidden state, what is God willing to be if they would only turn away from their backsliding and come back to God? **Jeremiah 3:12**

EGW: The worldling may pronounce this sorrow a weakness; but it is the strength which binds the penitent to the Infinite One with links that cannot be broken. It shows that the angels of God are bringing back to the soul the graces that were lost through hardness of heart and transgression. The tears of the penitent are only the raindrops that precede the sunshine of holiness. This sorrow heralds a joy which will be a living fountain in the soul. {DA 300.4}

9. But if backsliders were to turn back to God, what does it require to acknowledge? **Jeremiah 3:13**

EGW: In the whole Satanic force there is not power to overcome one soul who in simple trust casts himself on Christ. "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." Isaiah 40:29. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The Lord says, "Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God." "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you." 1 John 1:9; Jeremiah 3:13; Ezekiel 36:25. {COL 157.3}

10. What relationship do we still have with God once we profess to be His people yet are in a backslidden state? **Jeremiah 3:14**

EGW: In the Bible the sacred and enduring character of the relation that exists between Christ and his church is represented by the union of marriage. The Lord has joined his people to himself by a solemn covenant, he promising to be their God, and they pledging themselves to be his, and his alone. He declares, "I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies." [Hosea 2:19.] And again, "I am married unto you." [Jeremiah 3:14.] And Paul employs the same figure in the New Testament, when he says, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." [2 Corinthians 11:2.] {GC88 381.1}

11. In that relationship while backsliding, what are we considered towards God? **James 4:4**

EGW: The unfaithfulness of the church to Christ in permitting her confidence and affection to be turned from him, and allowing the love of worldly things to occupy the soul, is likened to the violation of the marriage vow. The sin of Israel in departing from the Lord is presented under this figure; and the wonderful love of God which they thus despised is touchingly portrayed. "I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine." "And thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty; for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee.... But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown." "As a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the Lord;" "as a wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband." [Ezekiel 16:8, 13-15, 32; Jeremiah 3:20.] {GC88 381.2}

In the New Testament, language very similar is addressed to professed Christians who seek the

friendship of the world above the favor of God. Says the apostle James: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." {GC88 382.1}

12. If God's people cease from backsliding, what type of pastors should they listen to here on out?

Jeremiah 3:15

EGW: (no comment)

13. What does God promise to do with the backsliding if we return to God? **Jeremiah 3:22, Hosea 14:4**

EGW: The last days are upon us, and Satan is working with all his hellish arts to deceive and destroy souls. Reproofs by testimony are met almost universally, by the ones corrected and reprov'd, with "I believe the testimonies, but I do not understand them." The Lord has corrected their wrong ways in order to save them from unhappiness, deception, and ruin; but they pass on the same as if light and warnings had never come to them. If they were in harmony with God, they would not be departing from Him. It is because they are so far departed from God that they do not hear His voice as He calls to them, "Return unto me, and I will return unto you," "and I will heal your backslidings." {CTr 143.2}

14. What is the first creature that comes out of the forest during the backslidden state? **Jeremiah 5:6**

EGW: (no comment)

15. In reality, who does it match up with, showing that a backslidden state is a state in which we can easily be devoured? **1 Peter 5:8**

EGW: Our chief adversary is the devil. He is represented as going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. When he finds men and women who have become self-exalted, as he himself became in heaven, and full of jealousy, and ambitious for power and prominence, he knows just how to lead them by his temptations so that they will prostitute their powers to his use, and become his agents in ruining their fellow-men. He is ready to work through his human agents in such a way as to conceal himself from view, in order that he may set in operation a train of circumstances that will

lead men away from God, lead them away from the association and companionship of those who are connected with Christ, and influence them to do the work of annoying, distressing, and discouraging those who love Jesus. The spell of temptation holds these souls like a bewitching charm. "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." Yielding to the voice of the tempter, the tempted one surrenders virtue and principle, and in place of turning at once to God with contrition and repentance, he severs the last link whereby God's power can work for him, and hell triumphs because he has become the prey of the enemy. When the adversary thus bewitches the soul and entraps the unwary feet, he then represents God as inexorable and unforgiving, declaring that it will be of no use to make a confession of sin now, for God will not pardon. Let not the tempted soul listen to the voice of the accuser and destroyer, and take the way of the hopeless apostate, and plunge into midnight darkness. Remember the promise of God. He says, "Return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord; say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." The Lord answers, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him." Break with the enemy, and seek the presence of Jesus; with tears of confession and with penitential grief urge once more your suit at the throne of grace. The Lord will hear, the Lord will answer; return ere it be too late. {RH, December 11, 1894 par. 10}

16. What can a little backsliding lead to? **Jeremiah 8:5**

EGW: "Why," the Lord inquired, "is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding?" Jeremiah 8:5. In the language of the prophet it was because they had obeyed not the voice of the Lord their God and had refused to be corrected. See Jeremiah 5:3. "Truth is perished," he mourned, "and is cut off from their mouth." "The stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but My people know not the judgment of the Lord." "Shall I not visit them for these things? saith the Lord: shall not My soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" Jeremiah 7:28; 8:7; Jeremiah 9:9. {PK 414.3}

17. What do backslidden people trust in? **Jeremiah 49:4**

EGW: (no comment)

18. When people are faced with the errors of their ways, what can backslidden people still be?
Beginning of Hosea 11:7

EGW: The Lord had rebuked Israel for their evil doing and had pleaded with them to mend their ways. "I have also spoken by the prophets," he said, "and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets." Hosea 12:10. Through the prophet that appeared to Jeroboam before the altar at Bethel, through Elijah and Elisha, through Amos and Hosea, God had repeatedly set before Israel the sure result of disobedience. But notwithstanding reproof and entreaty, Israel sank lower and lower in apostasy. "Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer," the Lord declared. Hosea 4:16. "My people are bent to backsliding from me." Hosea 11:7. {RH, January 29, 1914 par. 6}

There were times when the judgments of heaven fell heavily on the rebellious people. "Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets," God declared; "I have slain them by the words of my mouth: and thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth. For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me." Hosea 6:5-7. {RH, January 29, 1914 par. 7}

19. What two things help with not backsliding? **Psalms 26:1**

EGW: (no comment)

20. What needs to be in our hearts to avoid backsliding? **Psalms 37:31**

EGW: When true conversion takes place, the soul is eagerly ready to have this work done. Self is no longer exalted. The judgment, sanctified, sees how impossible it would be for the spirit cherished in the past to be admitted into the inner court of the sanctuary of God. The soul is strongly drawn to choose what the judgment has been taught to approve. "I delight to do Thy will, O my God." The psalmist speaks thus of the godly man: "The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide." Is not this a great promise? Shall we not appreciate it? Who will now watch and pray three times a day as did Daniel; for the enemy is watching constantly to find us off guard. Will you now earnestly consider the call from Christ to return to your first love? Let every one remember that the first work to be done each day is to surrender the will and way to God. The Lord will surely arouse His people who are watching and waiting and praying. "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold; but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." {Ms122-1905}