

**"ARE YOU A GOOD BACKSLIDER?" or
"A MISS IS AS GOOD AS A MILE"**

TEXT: Jonah 1:1-3

THESIS: To show that being backslidden is simply not fulfilling God's purpose for your life.

INTRO.: A. Someone said that "close only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades!" There is some truth in that. In baseball it doesn't matter if you "almost" hit the ball - **"A MISS IS AS GOOD AS A MILE!"**

ILLUS.: Little Johnny picked up his bat & ball...threw the ball in the air, swung & missed...3 times! He then raised both hands triumphantly in the air, jumped up & down & exclaimed: "Wow! What a pitcher!" But the fact remains that Johnny struck out. He may have come close to hitting the ball all three times, but he didn't hit the ball.

B. Our churches are full of Johnny's, who think that if they just come close to pleasing God, that is good enough. It isn't. But we can learn from Johnny. Johnny wasn't going to be a failure & the truth is, Johnny wasn't made to be a failure. Neither are you. God has a job to do & God made you to do that job. God needed someone like you & He made you to do that job. He doesn't make the job for the man, but the man for the job. A backslider may be a nice person & read his or her Bible every day, attend church regularly, etc., but if he or she is not doing what God made him or her to do, he is a backslider. He may be a *'good backslider'* but a backslider nonetheless. **"ARE YOU A GOOD BACKSLIDER?"**

TRANS.: Jonah had a job to do & God made him to do that job. But Jonah didn't want to obey. Jonah didn't start drinking or cheating on Mrs. Jonah or shooting up drugs. He was a *good backslider!*

I. BACKSLIDING IS DETERMINED BY GOD'S PURPOSE:

NOTE: A backslider is one who is NOT doing what God made him or her to do. It is not how FAR AWAY you have gone, but IF you have gone. It is not a question of how far into sin you have gone, but IF you have gone into sin! And the sin may be one of omission as well as commission. It wasn't that Jonah had to go far away, but that he went away period!

ILLUS.: A plug one inch from a receptacle is as powerless as one a mile away! If it is not plugged in there is no power! The distance between you & God is not the crucial factor. God doesn't judge our spiritual condition by how far into sin we've gone, but whether we have gone into sin, by being out of His will.

A. The Question Is: "Are You In The Will Of God & Doing The Will Of God?"

1. We have the idea that the number of "bad" things we do determines the degree of backsliding.
2. God sees the tragedy as being that you are not doing what you were made to do, not that you are doing the things you were not made to do.

- a. The tragedy is in the uselessness.
- b. God entrusts us w/time, talents, abilities, gifts, etc. to be used for His purpose.
- c. Whatever hinders us from His purpose is backsliding.

ILLUS.: If the Dr. is in the next room drinking coffee or down the street in the tavern drinking hard liquor is irrelevant, in neither case is he in his operating room treating his patient.

B. The Question Is Not: "What Are You Doing That Is Wrong?" But "What Are You Not Doing That Is Right?"

II. BACKSLIDING IS ANYWHERE AWAY FROM GOD'S WILL:

A. The Question Is NOT How Far You've Gone, But When Did You Leave?

- 1. Backsliding doesn't start when you start doing bad, but when you stop doing good.
- 2. The sin is not only being where you should not be, but in not being where you should be.
 - a. If you are not where you should be you are just as backslidden as if you where you should not be.
 - b. God's plan is not to get you out of somewhere but to get you in somewhere.

ILLUS.: some of the "best" backsliders here never smoke, do drugs, drink booze or commit adul-

tery. They just never go soul-winning, spend more time w/TV than w/TB (The Book), live by sight & not by faith. ***("Whatsoever is not of faith is sin!" Rom.14:23b)***

B. The Question Is Not Just "Am I Clean?" But "Am I Useful?"

1. God doesn't measure the depths of sin by how far you've gone, but how useless you are to Him.
2. All God's commands are active:
 - a. There are some definite "don'ts" but there are many more "do's"!
 - b. "Keep my commandments," "Love one another," "Go...preach..." "Be witnesses,"

1 Thes.5:14-22 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. 15 See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. 16 Rejoice evermore. 17 Pray without ceasing. 18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. 19 Quench not the Spirit. 20 Despise not prophesyings. 21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. 22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.

3. God's purpose for your life is not to get you to stop something, as much as to get you started doing something.
4. If you quit what you should not do & do not start what you should do, you are still back-

slidden.

ILLUS.: The worst thing about watching soap operas (besides polluting your mind & distorting your morals) is that it keeps you from reading God's Word or going soul-winning or praying, or - ? The child who is obedient & doesn't "eat the potato chips or drink the soda" but also doesn't eat his meal will still be undernourished.

III. BACKSLIDING IS CURED BY SEEKING GOD AGAIN: (2:4,7-9)

A. The Question Is Not "Will You Stop?" But "Will You Start Again?"

1. The issue is to get back in harness for God again.
2. The issue is one of rededication not just repentance.

B. The Question Is Not "How Far Is God from Us?" But "How Far from God Are We?"

ILLUS.: God was just as near to Jonah in the "Whale-Belly Bible Institute" as when he was in Joppa. Jonah had removed himself from God's will. The Lord was just as near to Peter when he was warming himself by the enemies fire & denying the Lord as when he was on the Mt. of Transfiguration.

1. God's love is as great for the "Bad Backslider" as it is for the "Good Backslider."
2. Returning means coming back to a Person, not a thing.

ILLUS.: It should not be "I want my peace (joy, thrill, etc.) back" - but "I want my Savior back!"

- a. Perhaps your backsliding is nothing more than not living by faith, not trusting the Lord for your needs.
- b. Perhaps your backsliding is nothing more than failing to right when you can rather than doing wrong.
- c. Perhaps your backsliding is more doing nothing than doing something.

CONCL.: A backslider by any other name is still a backslider. **"Good Backsliders" or "Bad Backsliders"** are still not conforming to God's plan or purpose. They are still not doing what God created them for. What are you involved in that keeps you from fulfilling His purpose in your life? What are you NOT doing that you should be doing? Come back to Him, backslider!

A believer seeks fellowship w/His Savior & when that ceases he becomes a backslider. The unsaved have no fellowship w/Him & cannot do God's will here & will never be able to fellowship w/Him hereafter.