

some marks indicating wanderings from God are not present. Few live in the genial temperature of a perennial spring of holy affections. Buds of promise are often nipped by killing frost. Every close observer knows of some who cherish too favourable an opinion of themselves, the blessedness they knew has departed, the beauty of Christ fails to attract, and earth has a witchery that allures them, still they say peace, peace. Others are known to be tremblingly alive to their state as having gone back, and cry, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him;" while a third class have settled down in a state of apathy, regarding their condition as past recovery, they seem to stand as lonely pillars by the sea of Sodom, like Lot's wife, who looking back became a monument of wrath. Hence it becomes necessary to unfold Bible truth on this subject. We have no sympathy with any system of teaching that prepares an expectation of falling into this backsliding condition. The true development of religion in the soul is life, growth, progress, victory; nevertheless, conscious that there are many cases of spiritual declension, we desire to advance such views as may tend to the restoration of wanderers. It is the declaration of God, "I will heal their backsliding."

Backsliding implies going back from a former position, and involves, when the process is commenced, acceleration of speed and easy progress in the fearful direction of going downward to hell. This state is not that of the staggering believer falling into sin but fighting against it. One spot is not a mark of the leprosy. It is when sin is unrepented of, when the contest with inward sin expires, when the delight of the soul in spiritual things is dead, when the way to the closet is full of proofs that it is unfrequented, *then* has a soul backslidden. It may be open or secret. When known to men it is open. In *open* backsliding a distinction is to be made between those who apostatize from a profession of religion, and such as fall into sin who yet have the root of the matter in them. Judas by transgression fell, and many went back and walked no more with Jesus; but the case of David is widely different, his prayer was, restore unto me the joy of thy salvation. In *secret* backsliding the transgressor does not all at once by a sudden leap spring from virtue to vice. There are gradual approaches. Wiles of the Devil reach heights and depths by almost imperceptible inclines,—that is how the engineering is done. Outward appearances may be fair, while black, crawling, loathsome creatures revel within, rendering the beauteous fruit a mass of corruption; so it is in the heart that has said, come in, to the accursed caitiffs that murdered Christ. The secret duties of religion are no longer practised, or if kept up in form, the relish of former days is gone. The life of public service is exchanged for interest in the world. Religion does not live.

See the guilt of the Backslider. Every sin is black, black as hell, but this is against light and knowledge. It dishonours his own profession, it treats religion as vain, and forsakes the fountain of living waters. The Son of God is trampled under foot, and the Holy Spirit grieved. What does such guilt deserve? But, ah, the loss it brings to the soul! O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself. There is loss in the forfeiture of God's approval. Sweet communion has fled. Torturing apprehension prevails. Power to resist sin is paralyzed, as when the spider weaves its thread around its insect victim and leaves its prey by each additional coil the weaker, thus is it with the ensnared