

Are You Heaven Bound? By David J. Riggs

It matters not what else you do in life, if you miss heaven you have been a complete failure. You might gather about you great riches and fame and leave thousands of friends to mourn your departing, but if you are not ready for heaven you have been a miserable failure. On the other hand, you may die in a charity home for the poor and be buried in a potter's field without a single friend to mourn, but if you receive heaven, your life has been a marvelous success.

You can't afford to miss heaven for if you miss it, you miss all. It is the place of eternal rest (**Heb. 4:9-11**) where pain, sickness, and death will not be known (**Rev. 21:4**). It is an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that does not fade away (**1 Pet. 1:4**). It is that city built by the living God (**Heb. 11:10**).

You don't have to miss heaven. Humbly submit yourself

to the will of God (**Matt. 7:21**). Let His Word guide you (**2 Tim. 3:15**) and let no one beguile you or your reward (**Col. 2:18**). Overcome temptations (**James 1:12**) and suffer for His cause with rejoicing (**Matt. 5:11-12**). If you do these things, heaven will be yours someday for the God of heaven who cannot lie has promised it.

I quote a few words from some of our songs: "I am going to a city where the streets with gold are laid, where the tree of life is blooming, and the roses never fade. Here they bloom but for a season, soon their beauty is decayed; I am going to a city where the roses never fade." "I am bound for the promised land, promised land, I am bound for the promised land; O who will come and go with me? I am bound for the promised land." "When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun; we've now less days to sing God's praise than when we first begun."

Credit: <http://oakridgechurch.com/riggs/> ♦

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

- Hear and Learn - **Rom. 10:17** m. **10:9-10** ; **1 Pet. 3:21** ; **John 6:45; 17:3**
- Believe - **Heb. 11:6; John 6:29; 8:24**
- Repent - **Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30**
- Confess the Lord - **Matt. 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:21**
- Be Baptized - **Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27**
- Continue in the Apostles' Teaching - **Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:14-17**

About the Hillcrest church of Christ

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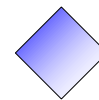


Schedule of Assembly

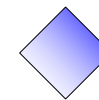
Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am
Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm*

*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month

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The Voice of Truth



January 23, 2011

"The Sin Of Backsliding" By Jimmy Pettigrew

Backsliding is a subject of great concern among all of God's faithful children. The average church is reeling with names that have gone back into sin.

Who is a backslider? No person can be described as a backslider who has not first been born into the family of God (**John 3:3-5**). "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward" (**Isaiah 1:2-4**). Who is a backslider? He is one who has gone backward instead of forward. He is one who was once obedient to the Lord, but has now forsaken Him. He is one who has gone back into the ways of the world (**2 Timothy 4:10**). He is one who left his First Love (**Rev. 2:4**). Now, if one is born again and returns to cursing, drinking, and worldliness, if he stops reading his Bible, praying, attending, and showing concern for the lost, then he has **BACKSLIDDEN!**

WHY DO WE BACKSLIDE? (1) Because of a weakness of the flesh (**Matthew 26:41; Galatians 5:17**). (2) Because of our love for money (**1 Timothy 6:10; Acts 5:1-11**). (3) Success causes some to backslide. (4) Comfort causes some to backslide; they decide that the Christian life is too demanding. (5) Pleasures causes some to backslide (**Hebrews 11:24-26**). (6) Evil companions cause backsliding (**1 Corinthians 15:33**). (7) Some backslide because they have been offended. (8) A job causes some to backslide. (9) Excuses cause many to backslide. (10) Entertainment has caused some to backslide.

Backslider, you are in for a lot of grief and heartache! The Bible warns (**Jeremiah 2:19**): "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 forgotten the Lord thy God." The Bible plainly teaches that the hand of the Lord will be heavy on the backslider. Grief came to David because of his sin with Bathsheba (**Psalms 51**). God's hand was heavy upon Cain when he sinned (**Genesis 4:13**). The prodigal son illustrates the grief and misery of the backslider (**Luke 15**). Consider what your backsliding will cost you: (1) Your good influence. (2) Self-respect and the respect of others. (3) It will cost you your fellowship with fellow Christians. (4) It will cost you your fellowship and favor with God. (5) Your greatest loss will be your soul (**Matthew 16:26**).

Backslider, here is how you can come back to God. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (**Isaiah 55:6-7**). Consider the way you once walked with God and compare that with your present walk. Realize the condition existing between you and God at this moment. Repent and turn immediately. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (**1 John 1:9**). "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" (**Acts 8:22**). "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed" (**James 5:16**).

Are you aware of your backslidden condition? Samson was not aware of his (**Judges 16:20**). The five foolish virgins thought everything was all right (**Matthew 25:1-13**). The elder brother thought he was in good shape (**Luke 15:25-32**). Many at the judgment will be surprised (**Matthew 7:21-23**). Have you examined yourself carefully in the mirror of God's Word to see yourself as you really are and as you ought to be (**James 1:22-25**)? Paul writes,

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"Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Prove yourselves. Do you not know yourselves ... (2 Corin-

thians 13:5)?" Have you examined yourself carefully today to see whether or not you are a backslider? If you are and are willing to admit it, then come home today for salvation. ♦

"Paul's Preparation For Eternity"

By Jarrod Jacobs

"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Tim. 4:6-8). In this, the last letter he wrote, the apostle Paul knows he does not have much longer to live; and states he is ready to die. How could he say this? He was ready to die because he had made preparations for eternity as we all must do. What did this man do to prepare for eternity?

Fought A Good Fight

As Paul looked at his life, he likened it to a fight. Sadly, before his conversion, he fought "tooth and nail" against the Lord (**Acts 7-9**). Since that time, he fought just as hard, if not harder, for the Lord (**II Cor. 11:23-28**).

After his conversion, Paul the apostle wasted no time in declaring the truth (**Acts 9:17-22**). He waged a battle for the hearts and souls of men in such places as Damascus, Jerusalem, and Paphos (**Acts 9:23-25, 29-30, 13:6-12**). He also fought against the unbelieving Jews in Antioch in Pisidia (**Acts 13:38-51**). He and Barnabas also entered into Iconium, preaching the gospel to those who eventually would refuse the truth (**Acts 14:1-7**).

Please note that Paul was not simply fighting with people, but fighting a "good fight." He told Timothy that he must wage a "good warfare" (**I Tim. 1:18**). How can this be? Most people, even some Christians, look at preachers who are willing to fight for the truth as "trouble-makers." Evidently, these same people lived in Paul's day, too. They thought he was "fickle, changeable," "contemptible," and "rude in speech" (**II Cor. 1:17, 10:10, 11:6**). Paul could truly say he fought a "good fight" because he was standing for the truth!! He was not afraid of folks' words, nor dismayed by their looks (**Ezek. 2:6**). He stood for the truth and proclaimed it regardless of the consequences! As a result, he could truly say, "I have fought a good fight." Are you fighting the "good fight" for God? Do you support others who are fighting? (**Matt. 10:40-42**)

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15:58). Timothy was told, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (**I Tim. 4:16**). Are we keeping the faith? If not, let us repent today and follow the apostle Paul's example (**I Cor. 11:1**).

Backwards Looking Christians

By Jonathan L. Perz

Are you a backwards looking Christian? Lest you think this an unkind question, it is not asked in a derogatory sense. Quite the contrary. Phrased differently, we might ask, "Are you one who has begun to follow the Lord, only to be plagued by the constant tendency to look back at that which you have left behind?"

While speaking to those who would become His disciples, Jesus strongly condemns this tendency. "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (**Luke 9:62**). What is it that was left behind that continues to hinder our ability to press forward?

Family, friends and loved ones are one of the greatest attention grabbers for backwards looking Christians! Jesus warned, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds His life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it" (**Matt. 10:37-39**; cf. **Luke 14:26-27**).

For many, being a disciple of Christ means leaving behind loved ones—this is because the path disciples choose to follow takes them in an entirely different direction from the path unbelieving loved ones have chosen. Looking back and longing after the unbelievers expresses a desire to follow them, instead of the Lord, therefore rendering one unfit for the kingdom of God. We don't have to rejoice in the sad choice loved ones have made to follow something other than "The Way" (**John 14:6**), but neither should we regret our choice (i.e., look back).

Remembering places left behind is another stumbling block for backwards looking Christians. The Hebrew writer says, "And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them" (**Heb.**

Conclusion

What is the result of preparing? We receive a crown given to us by the Lord (**v. 8**). What have you done to prepare for eternity? Think about it! We must prepare ourselves while we can (**II Cor. 6:2**).

Credit: www.southside-churchofchrist.com ♦

11:15-16).

The faithful will not long for the land from which they came. We are not talking about a hometown, so much as we are talking about that state that we left behind—the state of sin. The hymn that proclaims, "This World is Not My Home" expresses the desire of a disciple. It is not for that abode which was left behind, but it is for that abode which God has prepared. Lot's wife is a prime example. We are not told why she turned back, but we are told that they were commanded not to look behind them. She looked back and she became a pillar of salt (**Gen. 19:17, 26**).

Unless we are looking back to learn from our mistakes, our responsibility is to set our gaze and affection on Him who goes before us—our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul articulated it best when he wrote, "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (**Phil. 3:12-14**).

Therefore, let us not turn back to things left behind. Neither let us set our gaze backwards. A half-hearted commitment to the Lord is simply not enough to become His disciple—a Christian. The Lord wants and commands—by His very sacrifice on the cross of Calvary—our complete and total devotion, service and affection. The next time that you feel the urge to look back, reflect on Who and what it is that you must remove your gaze from to do so.

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