The Danger of Backsliding
Hebrews 3:12-13

Thesis: To discuss the dangers of backsliding and the cure.

1. One of the saddest scenes witness by the Lord was seeing many of His disciples going back and walking no more with Him (Jn 6:66). Yet, even today He is still witnessing the same scene because of the problem of backsliding.

2. The danger of backsliding is very real and possible. This should serve as a wakeup call for preachers, elders and members alike to be aware of this problem.
   A. God warns us to take heed (1 Cor 10:12).
   B. We are to be on guard (1 Pt 5:8-9).

3. Backslide: to slide back; to lapse morally and spiritually in the practice of religion. Thus the backslider is one who has gone back in the ways of the world and has lost the zeal and interest they once had for the things of God.

4. With this sermon let’s examine more fully the reality of backsliding by answering three Questions. 1. What causes backsliding. 2. What are the signs of backsliding. 3. What is the cure for backsliding?

I. What causes backsliding?
   A. A lack of giving heed to what we have heard (Heb 2:1).
      1. Hebrews is full of warnings for Christians not to go back on their faith in Christ. One of the very first warnings given is found in (2:1).
         a. The warning is to pay close attention to/ give heed to what we have heard.
         b. The reason is to prevent drifting away.
      2. It is easy to go with the flow, follow the crowds and drift along in life. Jesus warned against it (Mt 7:13-14; Lk 13:24). It is evident one is drifting when.
         a. They did not come for the right purpose (Jn 6:26).
         b. There is a failure to count the cost of following Christ (Lk 14:25-33).
            Total commitment is what He desires.
      3. The immature Christian is in danger of being blown about (Eph 4:14).
         a. Taking heed will cause one to grow to maturity.
II. What are the signs of backsliding?

A. Neglecting the word of God.
   1. Man needs God’s word for his soul just like he needs bread for his body (Mt 4:4).
   2. Your desire for God’s word is essential to growth (1 Pt 2:2).
   3. Nothing can substitute for personal time spent with God’s word (2 Tim 2:15).
   4. When one begins to neglect God’s word, they are in danger of backsliding. How much time did you spend with God’s word last week?

B. Losing one’s desire for prayer.
   1. Prayer is a very special way to draw near to God. Through prayer, we pour out our hearts to God and approach the very throne of Heaven itself (Heb 4:16).
2. Prayer is also a very special privilege for the child of God (1 Jn 5:14-15).
3. We are to pray sincerely and often (Jm 5:16; 1 Th 5:17).
4. When one loses their desire to pray, they are in danger of backsliding. How much time did you spend in prayer last week?

C. Increasing interest in worldly pleasures.
   1. Paul said one of the characteristics of the last days is men would be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God (2 Tim 3:4).
   2. Jesus said the hearts that were consumed by the cares, riches and pleasures of life are represented by the seed that fell among the thorns (Lk 8:14).
   3. Moses was willing to give up the pleasures of sin to suffer with God’s people (Heb 11:24-26).
   4. An increasing interest for pleasures, leisure time, sports, fishing, keeps you wondering when the preacher is going to finish or if it causes you to occasionally skip out on worship altogether you are in danger of backsliding.

D. Beginning to make trivial excuses for missing worship.
   1. Excuses are the way of life for some people. When we make them it allows us to escape or lesson responsibility. Thus it is not my fault.
   2. Notice our excuses.
      a. We meant to come but the alarm clock did not go off. So, it was late when we woke up.
      b. We were going to come but we were getting ready to go on vacation and needed more time to pack.
      c. We were going to come but it was so late when we went to bed on Saturday night.
      d. We were coming but just as we were leaving company came over.
      e. We were coming but I looked up and realized it was almost time for church to start so we did not have enough time to get ready.
      f. We were coming but we had a ball game/ practice so . . . . .
   3. Jesus very plainly expresses what he thinks about excuses (Lk 14:16-24).
      a. The invited guest (representing the Jews) made excuses as to why they could not come.
      b. vs. 24. They did not enter in and neither will we if we continue to make excuses.
III. What is the cure for backsliding?

A. Look within your heart.
   1. Be honest with yourself.
      a. There are some who are backsliding among us.
      b. Are you willing to admit that it is you?
   2. If you're willing to be honest with yourself, search your heart, examine yourself (2 Cor 13:5).
      a. Examine whether you have the right relationship with Christ and are living the Christian life.
      b. In this way, you can know if they are in Christ. There is the possibility some might fail the test.
   3. Based upon your answer, ask “Am I really willing to change?”

B. Renew your commitment to Christ.
   1. Remember from where you have fallen (Rev 2:4-5).
      a. The Lord knew the actions and hearts of the church at Ephesus.
      b. He knows your heart and actions also. Have you left your first love? Think back to the commitment and dedication you have when you first became a Christian.
   2. If you are being honest with yourself, you will be willing to repent. Although we have strayed Christ is ready and willing to forgive you.
   3. Repentance and prayer is the answer (Jam 5:19-20). No shame in repentance.

C. Put forth an intentional effort. Give diligence.
   1. Put forth the effort to grow.
   2. Put forth the effort to change.
   3. Put forth the effort to encourage others by being an example (1 Tim 4:12) and trying to encourage them to be more faithful (Heb 3:13).
   4. Put forth the effort to take up the challenge (2 Pt 1:5-11).

Conclusion:
   1. The danger of backsliding is very real. The evidence among is among us.
   2. Be honest with yourself. Are you in the faith? Is your commitment to Christ what it should be?
   3. The greatest danger in backsliding is the real possibility of losing your salvation (2Pt 2:20-22).