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Biblical Appraisal of Spiritual Declension

In the midst of a continuing, raging unprecedented global pandemic and besides the austerity measures to manage this deadly and contagious COVID19 with vaccinations, there is need for a spiritual remedy and action against

a more serious malady affecting many in the churches today. There are Christians who are slowly falling away from the Lord without knowing it themselves. They may miss their Quiet Time, church prayer meeting and corporate sabbath worship in the house of God, but they do not think it is anything significant or that it can be a detriment to their souls at all. They are quite happy staying at home and doing their own thing, to the neglect of God and the eternal wellbeing of their souls. Some of them are oblivious to the Lord's will in this health crisis and are willingly ignorant of His word, and that makes them vulnerable to diabolical attacks and falling away from Him unwittingly. How do we know if we are described above? Consider the following signs of a backsliding Christian and do a spiritual audit of your life.



1. Indifference to Depravity and Sinfulness

One sign of the backsliding Christian is that he or she will be more prone to sinful thoughts and are willing to accept unbiblical worldviews and practices like abortions, homosexuality, worldly music, obsession with unedifying websites, unhelpful company and unsound activities. Other attitudes creep in, like being covetous, angry, emotionally unstable or resentful, ungrateful or may even have a malicious tongue and presumptuous against others. He or she may be unresponsive to outreach or very sensitive to others, yet can be nonchalant to his or her sinfulness and may not receive Christian counsel and guidance and is often very conscious of self and pride, and may not be open to advice or assistance.

2. No Fear of God and Slackness in the Study of Word and Prayer

One of the sure marks of a person who is far away from God is his or her ignorance or indifference to seek the word of God nor the will of God in his or her life. He or she tends to do things his or her way without consulting God. This makes the person susceptible to wrong directions and to the wiles of the evil one, and slowly he or she loses direction and may fall away even further from the Lord.

The person will also lose their reverence and fear of the Lord and will be self-confident, proud and even arrogant. Generally, he or she lacks interest in reading the word of God and shows no desire to pray together with God's people or to come for Sabbath worship, Sunday School class, NBC or group prayer meeting. The Word of God will keep us from sin and falling away or sin will keep us from reading and obeying the Word.



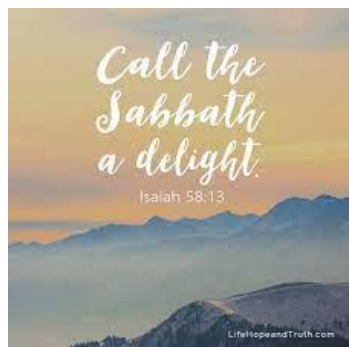
3. No Regard for the Sabbath day and the 10 Commandments

One of the sure signs of a backsliding person is his or her total disregard for worship on the Lord's day and the laws of God. A fallen person will be rebellious and disobedient to the instructions of God and he or she will neglect the corporate worship of God on Sunday in the house of God, pay no attention, or disobey the laws of God. Idolatry or pride sets in slowly and he or she is distracted from God. So, when it comes to tempting situations of breaking the law and backbiting, murmuring, lying, theft or smoking, drinking alcohol, gambling, he or she is prone to do all this as he or she does not have a high regard for God's laws. For example, this person may take the sabbath lightly or without reverence and may not turn up to worship God in the house of God on the Lord's day at the slightest excuse. What can stop a person

from worshipping God tells us a lot about that person's spirituality.

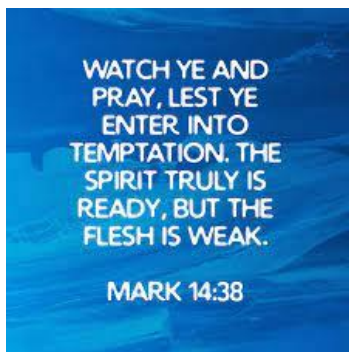
4. Wandering Thoughts during Worship and the Grieving of the Holy Spirit

One mark of a healthy God honouring Christian is the high regard for God in regular Sabbath worship. A person who is not close to God will not enjoy sacred worship and may even find the service insipid and boring. The singing of hymns, prayer and the hearing of the word of God will not mean much to him or her and he or she may even complain or murmur about the Lord's work in criticism of the worship service, the length or content of the sermon, the hymns, chosen by the chairman leading or the pianist or organist and so on. Beware of these distractions that draws you away from God.



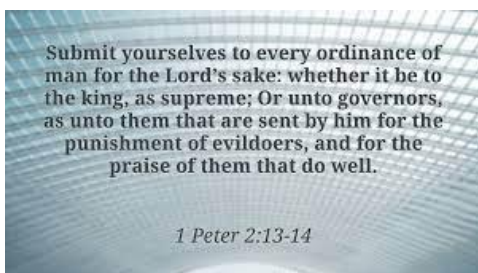
5. A Lack of Spiritual Vigilance and Watchfulness

A backsliding person will often be in spiritual slumber or lethargy and will be weak in spiritual warfare and hence more vulnerable to pitfalls and temptations of the evil one. For example, he or she will not be alert to the seductions of the world and prone to laziness, idleness, excessive financial gain, lying, stealing and may fall easily into the trap of the evil one that will lead him or her into deeper sinful entanglement which may cause him or her to face the wrath of God and the possible consequences later.



6. No Respect for Civil or Spiritual Order and Authority

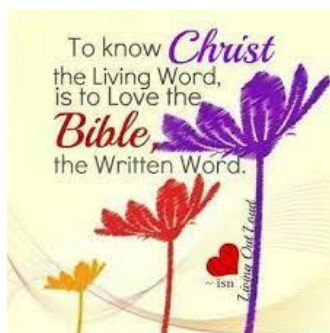
The person who is fallen far away from God will also not likely respect God or human authority like our parents or the teacher, the manager, the pastor, preachers or elders or deacons or the officer in charge or their superiors and he will often quarrel with him or her or disregard his or her instructions. A self-centred person, he or she will not honour those whom God has put above us but may defy the will and laws of God and the



people that God has authority over them.

7. A Low View of Biblical Teaching of the Word of God and Quiet Time

He or she will generally have no interest in the preaching of the inspired word as he or she is enamoured with many other worldly things and is distracted by the things of the world rather than focused on the will and word of God. He or she will not dutifully do his or her Quiet Time with God nor be interested in reading the bible nor prayer or the reading of Christian books. He or she will prefer their own idols like the handphone games or K or J pop groups, YouTube or Tik Tok or MTV videos, fashion, worldly websites, magazines and are often obsessed with other interests or distractions of this life along with his or her activities, rather than seeking the everlasting word of truth.



8. Forgetfulness of God's Faithfulness and Goodness in Times Past

A backslider is often an ungrateful person. He or she will be prone to forgetting or neglecting or forgetting God's blessings and past goodness shown to him or her. Gratitude is a mark of a Spirit filled Christian (1 Thess 5:18) and the opposite is also true. He or she will be unmindful and ungrateful of what the Lord had done for him or her in the past as he or she is often concerned only for the present. There are serious consequences for such, as the Lord is not to be taken for granted.

9. No Burden for Souls, nor Desire to Serve or to Glorify God

There is a general reluctance for a backsliding person to witness from Christ, give of himself or herself to seek, worship or serve God in any capacity. There is no motivation to do so as they are not concerned about pleasing God and receiving the favour of God or eternal rewards. He or she is mainly concerned about himself or herself and his or her own ways or pleasures or physical welfare, and generally not keen on God or others in saving souls, spiritual things of eternal value, of the sacraments and prayer, missions, stewardship, responsible giving to the Lord, and the matters of discipleship and Christian fellowship.

Conclusion

Psalm 139:23-24 says, '*Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*'

We need more than regular tests and a vaccine programme to neutralise the effects of this Coronavirus (which is necessary), we desperately require a sober examination of our lives before God as we search ourselves and to see if we are backsliding and drifting away from God, possibly without us knowing it.

The author once read this in a poster in a Christian book room, "*If God seems far away, who moved?*" God is waiting for us to return to Him and to confess and repent of our sins, and He will forgive us and restore us back to Him again. Something to seriously pray and think about. We conclude with this warning and invitation from Hosea 14:4 which says, '*I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.*'



Let us return to the Lord and seek Him for his mercy and pardon. It is time to reflect and to repent and be revived and live for Him again. Nothing is impossible with God. He is waiting for us and He is coming back soon and we are to be ready to meet Him anytime.

Jack Sin



Welcoming new visitors, reaching out to members and teaching the Word to build up our faith in the Word of God



Good Friday Service

WHO KILLED JESUS?

Luke 23:1-26

Friday 2 April 2021, 8pm

Resurrection Sunday Service

The Implications & Impact of the Resurrection

1 Cor 15:1-21,51-58

Sun 4 April 2021, 10am

Lessons learnt from SHBPC Sermon on 7 Mar 2021 by Pastor Jack

Hosea 14:1-9 talks of the people of Israel backsliding away from God & why they need to repent & come back to GOD.

Speaks of the grave need for us to:

1. Repent of our sins
2. Revival (refusing the world) towards God
3. Return to the Lord without delay

Meaning of backsliding is explained in Prov 14:14 ie starts from the hearts, falling away from our love and devotion to God in due time.

Satan is a master deceiver who preys on the emotionally and spiritually weak and tempts and deceives them slowly step by step till they are trapped and lose interest in God and His Word. Do not give in to the wiles of the evil one.

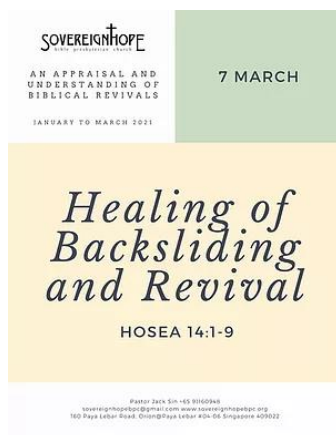
Luke 15 :17 to 20 talks about the prodigal son who:

1. Had the realisation for change for the better.
2. Took action to mend his ways. ie. he arose and went back to the Father.
3. Sought forgiveness from Heaven first and then from his earthly father.
4. Was well received by the Father who was waiting for him.

We need to examine ourselves and to seek God's will humbly to help us to address our current circumstances in the right manner and to dare to do the right things in the eyes of God.

We are not to be obsessed with or idolize anything or anyone more than God. But to humbly seek and submit, and choose the ways of the Lord and make a conscious effort to come back and walk with the Lord and not of the world.

Dewi Senan



Lessons in Godly Prudence from a Wise King

Studies into Ecclesiastes

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04

APRIL 2021

- 2 **Good Friday: Who killed Jesus?**
(Luke 23:1-26)
- 4 **The Implications & Impact of the Resurrection** (1Cor 15:1-21,51-58)
- 11* **The Matters of the Heart**
(Eccl 1:1-18)
- 18 **The Meaningless of Labour under the Sun** (Eccl 2:18-26)
- 25 **The Opportune Time for Everything** (Eccl 3:1-12)



05

MAY 2021

- 2 **The Beauty of Two in God's Economy** (Eccl 4:4-21)
- 9* **The Management of the Tongue** (Eccl 5:1-13)
- 16 **The Mindless Pursuit of Wealth** (Eccl 6:1-12)
- 23 **The Basis for True Spiritual Discretion** (Eccl 7:1-17)
- 30 **Reverence and Fear of God** (Eccl 8:1-13)



06

JUNE 2021

- 6 **The Intervention of God**
(Eccl 9:7-18)
- 13* **Speech and Danger of Laziness**
(Eccl 10 :12-20)
- 20 **Wise Counsel for Young and Old**
(Eccl 11:1-10)
- 27 **Gospel Sunday: Fruitful Aging and the Chief Purpose of Man**
(Eccl 12:1-13)

Memory Verse

Acts 8:22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.

Announcements

1. Welcome to our Worship Service! For our visitors, do leave us your contact numbers in our guest book before you leave.
2. Pastor Jack speaks today on "**The Dangers of False Revivals/Conversions**" (Acts 8:5-24), the final sermon in the 2021 Jan – Mar sermon series on "An Appraisal & Understanding of Biblical Revivals".
3. Pastor Jack speaks on **Good Friday, 2 Apr 2021, 8pm** on "**Who Killed Jesus?**" (Luke 23:1-26). The Lord's Supper will be served. Bring someone to hear the Word of God.
4. Pastor Jack speaks on Resurrection Sunday, 4 Apr 2021, 10am on "**The Implications and Impact of the Resurrection**" (1 Cor 15:1-21, 51-58).
5. Sunday School classes continues in church after the worship service:
 - WCF Shorter Catechism Class – Pastor Jack
 - "Rules for Walking in Fellowship by John Owen" – Dn Choo Siang
 - Studies in Leviticus – Dr Kwong Leen
6. Chinese Fellowship meets on Sunday night at 7pm via Zoom with both local and overseas brethren. We continue our series of study and discussions on Church History tonight.
7. Do send your prayer items to Pastor and join us for Church Prayer Meeting on Wed at 8pm via Zoom. The Mar prayer list is available from Dn Choo Siang.
8. Monthly Neighbourhood Bible Class will meet on Friday, 9 Apr at 7.30pm in church on the study of 2 Samuel. Do come and join us for a time of learning God's Word.
9. The Pandemic book can be purchased through Dn Yue Kay (Hp: +65 97450311) or via email at sovereignhopebpc@gmail.com.
10. Do kindly observe the safety measures of the church and assist with the weekly cleaning of the premises.
11. Love gifts, Offering and Tithes to the Lord can be given in the following ways:
 - **Cheque** payable to **Sovereign Hope Bible Presbyterian Church** and mail to church address. (Kindly write the full name of the church as indicated.)
 - **Fund transfer** to Church **UOB** Account **392-308-825-1**
 - **PayNow** to Church UEN: **T19SS0116FSOV**
