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The Panacea to Spiritual Declension

Living in an enticing and compromising world, one of the real dangers in our daily personal walk with the Lord is *backsliding* or *spiritual declension*. It is a *slow process of waning in our love for God, His Word and His people*. It is often caused by a competing love for the world, the cares and burdens of life and a corresponding loss of interest in spiritual things. Beware that there be no interest or hunger and thirst for the Word or fellowship, for prayer or worship and no resistance against sin are symptoms of a lukewarm heart and a possible backsliding spirit. **Remember that a person can be attending nor even serving the Lord in the church and be backsliding at the same time.**



Backsliding is a sin warned against throughout the entire Bible. Prophets like Hosea and Jeremiah are called of God *to admonish and reprove a whole backsliding nation*. A sad revelation of the condition of the people was this: *“my people are bent to backsliding from me”* (Hosea 11:7; 13:9; 4:6; 5:5; 7:8; 9:11). It is a lamentable fact today that many churches are languishing today because the members are *backsliding in the pews* and slipping into worldliness and sin, and they are not warned.

We are constantly bombarded by the allurements of the world, the attractiveness of riches, worldly pleasures and enticing temptations parade daily before us in our office and even in the church. The Christian, if not careful, will slowly be conformed to the world, backsliding into spiritual indolence with a lack of desire for fellowship, worship, prayer and the Word. A sense of self-centeredness and egoistic or worldly ambition that fanned the downslide into spiritual inactivity and oblivion. Hosea spelt out the cause: *“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge”* (Hosea 4:6). **Ignorance of the Word, dullness to spiritual things, a veneration of worldly things and even we ourselves** are the chief cause of backsliding for Christians. What then, if any, is the remedy of such an urgent spiritual malady? Is there any spiritual antidote or

assistance from the Lord? There are four things most needful as a panacea for treating the disease of backsliding.

We will enumerate them here briefly. (edited from Joel Beeke, ***Backsliding: Disease and Cure, 1987***)

1 **Firstly**, the first step in remedy of backsliding takes place **in the inner closet of secret private prayer** (2 Chronicles 7:14). It stems from a heart of *true evangelical repentance*. It is the prodigal son (Luke 15:18) who must say, “*I will . . . go to my father.*” It includes, according to Louis Berkhof, a volitional, intellectual, emotional aspect. In prayer, commit to the Lord your waywardness and *ask Him to forgive you and restore you to fellowship and communion*. JR Beeke said, “We may distinguish at least five steps in true repentance: a) *searching* out sin, b) *grieving* for sin, c) *confessing* sin, d) *fleeing* from sin, and e) *bowing* under sin’s demanded punishment (JR Beeke, *Backsliding: Disease and Cure* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co 1987], 56). **True evangelical repentance involves a conscious turning away and forsaking of sin towards God** (the Greek word here, means to ***change one’s mind***, BAGD, 511) **and a turning to God in confession and the giving up of past filthy sins in the strength of the Spirit** (Acts 26:20; Ezekiel 14:6).

2 **Secondly**, the believer **must avail himself to all means of grace** (Malachi 3:16; Hebrews 10:24–25). That includes church worship, coming to the Lord’s Supper, hearing the Word, fellowship, Bible Study and corporate church prayer. There is power in these ordained avenues of Christian fellowship and worship to stir up our souls to godliness, faith, righteousness and sanctification and the believer must not be slack in availing ourselves to these blessed opportunities of growing in the faith and drawing nigh to God. Heb 4:16

3 **Thirdly**, it is **a return to daily Quiet Time and devotion, in Bible reading and prayer**. Our personal devotion to the Lord is a mark of spirituality. Do you spend quality time with the Lord in prayer, confessing your sins, interceding for others, praising and worshipping Him (Psalm 3:5; Mark 1:35)? Do you have a systematic Bible reading programme and do you strive to apply biblical principles in your daily living? This will keep you from backsliding or vice versa. We need to be *disciplined and determined* to grow in godliness, holiness and Christian piety. Nothing short of a desire for God and a holy hatred for sin will keep you away from constant temptations. **Cultivate a healthy fear for God** (2 Corinthians 7:1) **and a sense of accountability to Him** (2 Corinthians 5:10).

4 **Finally**, it is faithful and meaningful **involvement in the church in worship and in service and ministry of the Lord** (1 Peter 4:10–11). Involvement breeds commitment. Avail yourselves to the means of grace and come to the SHBPC worship service, Sunday School, Church Wednesday night Prayer Meeting, Chinese Fellowship meeting, seminars and the church camp. How can one combat against worldly influence but to be in good Christian company and fellowship (Malachi 3:16)?

Make a conscious effort to be part of the ministry of the local church to bring the gospel to others, to intercede for one another, to encourage and strengthen the faith of other believers. This is a sure check against personal backsliding if you put the Lord first in your own life and honour Him with your time, talent and treasure in the ministry. **There is a balm of Gilead for backsliding sinners** in the all-sufficient blood of Christ; for sinful creatures, a Christ-centered satisfaction and a white-robed righteousness is available (Romans 5:8–11).

How can we check against this spiritual decline? The following below are some suggested steps towards this end.

Directions for Preventing Backsliding

1. Be well grounded in the doctrines and reasons of true saving religion (know your Bible and why you believe and obey it).
2. **Get every sacred truth into your heart when the word is preached and pray that all are digested into daily life and practiced. Beware of a dullness of hearing and a barren familiarity with spiritual things that breeds contempt.**
3. Take heed of the dangerous sin of presumption and take heed lest you fall away slowly and subtly (Psalm 19:9, Joshua 23:11).
4. Take heed of the company that you mix with, that they be godly men and not worldly companions who will mislead you into sin (1 Corinthians 15:33).
5. Be watchful against the sin of pride, especially the pride of the spirit of knowledge or personal standards of right and wrong and comparing with others, which can be spiritual pride in disguise (1 Corinthians 13:1-2, 1 Peter 5:5).
6. Take heed lest the world or anything steal your heart away from your God (Matthew 6:21) no matter how subtle it can be.
7. Keep a strict discipline and control of your fleshly appetite and physical senses (1 John 2:15–16).
8. Keep as far as you can from temptations and all occasions and opportunities of sinning (remember Joseph in Genesis 39:9).
9. **Make not a small matter of the beginnings of your backsliding (Proverbs 28:13). Confess and repent of your sins daily.**
10. Pray and search the Scriptures and ask for strength over daily temptations and trials (Psalm 119:105).
11. Remember the grave consequences of sin, the loss of effectiveness in service / testimony and fellowship with God. It is too high a price to pay (Isaiah 59:1–2).
12. Remember that the Lord is always near to forgive us, if we repent and return to Him sincerely, forsaking our evil ways (2 Corinthians 7:10).
13. **When we backslide, we lose our spiritual influence and effectiveness to witness for Christ; bless, edify and exhort others. Beware of a spirit of indifference and lethargy in spiritual things.**

14. **Be sensitive to the prompting and leading of the Holy Spirit as He guides us against the impending sin of backsliding. Obey Him immediately in everything and not rebel against it.**
15. Recall the prodigal son and how readily he was accepted by his father when he returned and that he was willing to renounce his past ways. This is the case with God, our loving heavenly Father (Luke 15:11-30). Come back to Him now, He is waiting for us.
16. Beware of the deceitfulness of sin and the allurements of the adversary who promises pleasure and sin but delivers a lie. We are not ignorant of his diabolical devices. Put on the full armour of God always (Ephesians 6:10-18).
17. Be vigilant, alert and watchful at all times against the wiles of the evil one (1 Peter 5:8).
18. If we have backslided, we need to acknowledge it and repent and heed John the Baptist's admonition in Matthew 3:8, '*Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance*' and God's reply in Hosea 14:4,7; "*I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. . . . They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.*"

We are vulnerable to the wiles of the evil one daily. We need to **constantly examine ourselves** to check if we are straying from the Lord and if we are, we need to make a conscious effort to repent and return to the Lord immediately.

Conclusion

Our Thrice holy God is weary of our backsliding and our impenitence. Our need is urgent, and our case is desperate. Come to *God's throne for clemency and restoration*. If you have backslidden, return to the Saviour who redeemed you, loves you and who will be a comfort and balm to you if you forsake your sins (Proverbs 28:13). **Did not our Saviour say, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely"** (Hosea 14:4)? The Lord commanded the backsliding Ephesian Christians in Revelation 2:5, "*Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*" May the Lord revive our hearts to true repentance and then to greater heights of devotion to Him.

Jack Sin

*(For deeper studies, read Joel Beeke, **Backsliding: Disease and Cure**, [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co 1987], which is consulted and edited here.)*

EXODUS - SUPERNATURAL GUIDANCE IN THE WILDERNESS OF LIFE

LORD'S DAY PROGRAMME FOR JULY - SEPTEMBER 2024

JULY

- 7** Overcoming the Bondage of the World [Exodus 1:1-22]
- 14*** Divine Preservation in the Plan of God [Exodus 2:1-25]
- 21** God's Answers for Man's Excuses [Exodus 3:1-22]
- 28** When God Used Human Vessels [Exodus 4:1-21]

AUGUST

- 4** Powerful Display of Divine Power [Exodus 8:1-28]
- 11*** Typology of the Passover Lamb [Exodus 12:1-27]
- 18** Song of Gratitude & Praise [Exodus 15:1-27]
- 25** When Teamwork & Prayers Matter [Exodus 17:1-16]

SEPTEMBER

- 1** The Wisdom of Collective & United Service [Exodus 18:12-27]
- 8*** Relevance of the Moral Laws [Exodus 20:1-17]
- 15** When An Idol Displaced God [Exodus 32:1-23]
- 22** Using Our Gifts & Talents to Build the House of God [Exodus 35:21-35]
- 29** Why Jesus Matters in This & the Next Life [John 14:1-14]

Camp Thanksgiving & Sharing

I attended this year's church camp retreat at Lotus Desaru with joy and gratitude. SHBPC invited Rev. David Khobal from Myanmar as the thematic camp speaker, and Pastor Jack Sin conducted a workshop on "**Biblical Steps to Managing Anger.**"

In this sharing, I will focus on the insights from Rev. Khobal's messages. Although other speakers such as Pastor Jack Sin's Anger Management workshop, Elder Jeffrey Cheong, Brother Joseph Wee, and Brother Andrew Chong's devotional sharing were equally edifying and splendid, I will not mention them due to space constraints of this writing.

Rev. David Khobal holds multiple roles: he is the principal of both the Biblical Reformed Seminary and the Myanmar Theological Seminary, pastoring a small church, and serves as the president of the Reformed Churches Council in Myanmar. This is truly no easy task. As the Chinese saying goes, "Those who are capable work harder, and those who are capable also teach others.

"(能者多劳，亦是能者为师)，

which aptly applies to him.

Our theme for this year is "**Biblical Pathway for Church Growth & Health.**" Initially, I did not understand why, when discussing church growth and health, the speaker was not a pastor from a megachurch like Joel Osteen, T.D. Jakes, David Yonggi Cho, or some famous authors like Rick Warren or Bill Hybels, who are known as "church-growth specialists." Why invite a speaker from a third-world country with pastoring only a small congregation?

When I opened the church camp handbook and read the four articles he would be sharing, I finally understood why he was chosen to address this topic with very biblical and pertinent content.

Paul Washer once said, "*Don't look for the nearest church to your house. Find the church closest to the Bible.*" **In the first session, Rev. Khobal prioritized centering worship on God's Word.** I found this arrangement very appropriate. By emphasizing the Word of God in worship, we aim to honour and obey God's teachings, gain spiritual insight and guidance, and deepen our understanding of our faith. The first message on the centrality of the Word of God in worship highlights the importance of Scripture as a foundational element of Christian devotion and practice. It guides believers in their relationship with the divine, strengthens their faith, and consequently influences their outward behaviour.



On the same day, he shared the **second message about the place of personal and corporate intercession**. I believe Rev. Khobal had his reasons for placing it second. E.M. Bounds wrote eleven books in his lifetime, nine of which focused on prayer. He said, *“God shapes the world by prayer. The more praying there is in the world, the better the world will be, and the mightier the forces against evil.”* Rev. Khobal emphasized the importance of personal and corporate prayer for believers' spiritual life. Indeed, I believe that both personal and corporate intercession are profoundly important in spirituality and practice. They play a crucial role in fostering a connection with the divine, demonstrating care and compassion for others, and seeking heavenly intervention in times of need. I must confess that I often do not spend enough time communicating with God due to my busyness, and this session reminded me of that.

The third message was on the necessity of responsible stewardship and fellowship. My

understanding is that responsible stewardship involves the wise and ethical management of resources, including the environment, finances, time, talents, and opportunities. It



requires us to act with integrity, accountability, and foresight. And Fellowship strengthens one another through God's word and the sharing of blessings, supports those in need, and fosters a sense of belonging and solidarity within the body of Christ. This reminded me of what John MacArthur has said: *“Stewardship with integrity demands giving that is voluntary and from the heart, that is faithful to the finish, and that is proportionate.”* Rev. Khobal's focus on stewardship emphasized caring for all creations and environments, bringing great joy and satisfaction to Christians. Regarding fellowship, he highlighted three key points: 1. sharing, 2. participation, and 3. association.

The fourth and final session on Thursday was on Vision for Evangelism and Church-Based Missions, which brought us back to the Great Commission given by Jesus to the church (Matthew 28:16-20). Many scholars throughout history have shared insights and experiences in evangelism. I think the greatest evangelist in history is not George Whitefield, John Wesley, Dwight L. Moody, or neither Luis Palau nor Billy Graham. I believe it is Paul the Apostle: he was a key figure in spreading Christianity to the Gentiles. Of course, the ultimate evangelist is the Lord Jesus Christ himself: He is the supreme evangelist, sharing the message of God's love and redemption with the world. Rev. Khobal pointed out that individual efforts are not enough for evangelism; there must be good communication and cooperation among churches. He presented eight aspects from the New Testament on this matter in his message.

Overall, listening to Rev. Khobal's messages at the church camp retreat was a sumptuous spiritual feast. Although most of the content was published in the camp retreat handbook, hearing it personally delivered by the speaker was a different experience, providing a deeper understanding of the related topics.

I once asked Rev. Khobal how much time he spent preparing his messages. He said it took him four months in total, which was quite surprising. In this fast-paced era, we might use ChatGPT to create several sermons in just less than four minutes. Rev. Khobal's meticulous approach, spending a lot of time and effort, extensively reading various works (by the way, he quotes many authors and scholars; his messages are quite academic in a way) and briefly explaining the Hebrew and Greek words of the Old and New Testaments, is rare practice in today's churches.

Another thing that caught my attention was that Rev. Khobal did not use PowerPoint for his messages. I found this quite good. I know in other churches, many speakers habitually project numerous PowerPoint slides. Unfortunately, these slides often lack power and clear points! Rev. Khobal's messages were powerful and addressed the topics directly to the point, which is worth mentioning!

I had few private conversations with Rev Khobal and Elder Habakkuk about the current political situation in Myanmar. They shared that the situation there is not optimistic. The political crisis has had a profound impact on the common people of the country. The political instability has disrupted daily life, affecting access to essential services such as healthcare, education, and employment. The ongoing crisis has created a climate of fear and uncertainty, therefore many young people are either leaving their small towns or going abroad in search of better job opportunities. The young, strong men who stay in the country may be conscripted to reinforce the military. The economy is worsening, which is seriously affecting the lives of the local people and the growth of the church.



Although Rev Khoabl and Elder Habakkuk appeared open, cheerful, optimistic, and proactive during the church retreat, and had much interaction, exchange, and communication with other brethren, I believe that deep in their hearts, they were constantly thinking about the believers in their home country's church and the group of children in the Gilead Balm orphanage home.

Personally, I gained a lot from this church retreat. I learned biblical principles for church growth and health. More importantly, during these four days of learning and gathering with brethren from other churches, we shared fun, laughter, and jokes during group discussions and meals (e.g., everyone joked about being an IBM—an

International Big Mouth—for the sake of the gospel, spreading the Good News to every corner). This time together fostered deep understanding and fellowship in the Lord.

Nevertheless, I would like to conclude my writing with a heartfelt prayer for Myanmar, its local churches, and the suffering Christians:

Dear Heavenly Father,

We humbly come before You with heavy hearts, lifting up the nation of Myanmar and its people to You. We ask for Your divine intervention and mercy to be upon this beautiful land.

Lord, we pray for the church in Myanmar. Strengthen and protect Your people, both the church leaders and the laymen who serve amidst persecution and hardship. Fill them with Your Holy Spirit, empowering them to lead with courage, grace, and unwavering faith.

We also pray for our suffering brothers and sisters in Christ. Many of them endure threats, violence, and displacement because of their faith. We ask for Your comfort and protection to surround them. Shower them with Your surpassing love and peace. Provide for their physical and spiritual needs, sustaining them with Your constant presence.

In the midst of darkness and despair, may Your light shines even brighter through Your church in Myanmar. Let them be a beacon of hope and love, drawing many to experience Your saving grace. Grant them resilience and the assurance that You are with them, even in the most trying times.

We place our trust in Your sovereign power and commit Myanmar and its people into Your loving hands. May Your will be done, and may Your kingdom come in this land.

In the mighty name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

All glory and praise to the Lord, forever!



(Roman 11:36,
Revelation 7:12,
Ephesians 4:15-16, Acts
2:42, Hebrews 10:24-25,
1 Thessalonians 5:11, 1
Corinthians 10:31, James
1:17)

Paul Kong

(Revised on 22/06/24)

Thank you for sharing this group photo of the SHBPC Camp. Praise God for the very good attendance.
Thanks also for sharing the letter from Rev David Khobal.
May God continue to bless your ministry with him and his Theological Seminary in Myanmar.
Thank you also for your preaching of God's Word in the message on Biblical steps in Managing Anger. We thank God that it is very helpful and needful. May God bless you.

Rev and Mrs Edward Paauwe
Hope BPC, Adelaide

P.S. Thank you for the wise quote for Blessed Father's Day! Very timely.

Pastor,
We just got great present snack and accessories. We are really blessed. Thank you so much for your prayer and caring for our family. May The Lord bless you more and more. Hope we see you again Pastor.
My brother-in-law (Eld Habakkuk) told us how much you all care for him. We really thank and feel how much you all love and serve the Lord with all your heart.

Esther
Gilead Balm home



Dear Rev Jack,
Thank you very much for the books that you donate for our BIT Library which are brought by Habakkuk. May God bless you richly.

Rev Dr Thwang Neil Bil
Principal. Biblical Institute of Theology
Yangon, Myanmar

Date: June 19, 2024

Rev. Dr. Jack Sin
Sovereign Hope Bible Presbyterian Church-Singapore

Thank you for allowing me to speak at the church camp of 2024, which was taken place on June 11-14, 2024, in Malaysia. That was the first time that I ever participated at the church camp like this. That was really a meaningful and fruitful time that we spent together in studying the Word of God, discussion on each message, and praying together for one another.

I enjoyed very much on studying the Word of God and having fellowship and sharing with brothers and sisters in the Lord. I am very grateful that the members of SHBPC have been very kind to us and they really have shown the warm love to us.



I pray that the Lord will continue to bless SHBPC as she has been doing for the Lord's kingdom.

Sincerely in Christ,
Rev David Khobal
Biblical Reformed Seminary
Yangon, Myanmar



Memory Verse

Exod 1:21 And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses.

Announcements

1. Welcome to our Worship Service! If you are here for the first time, do leave us your contact numbers in our guest book before you leave. Those who share the church vision to acquire a place of worship in due time, may designate your offerings to the SHBPC Church Building Fund.
2. Pastor brings us God's Word this morning on "**Overcoming the Bondage of the World [Exod 1:1-22]**", starting a new quarterly study on the "**Book of Exodus – Supernatural Guidance in the Wilderness of Life**."
3. Next Sunday, Pastor will preach on "**Divine Preservation in the Plan of God [Exod 2:1-25]**".
4. Sunday School classes after the worship service continue as follows:
 - How to Interpret the Bible (Pastor)
 - Studies in Ezra (Dr Kwong Leen)
5. Chinese Fellowship meets on every Sunday night at 7pm via Zoom with both local and overseas brethren. We have systematic studies on Old Testament Foundations and the 10 Commandments. Join us for a time of profitable learning. [**Zoom ID:883 9662 4157 Passcode: 218178**].
6. Do send your prayer items to Pastor and join us for Church Prayer Meeting on Wed at 8pm via Zoom. The prayer list is available in church. [**Zoom ID:863 7527 5431 Passcode: 625551**].
7. Pray for:
 - Medical: Samuel Wong [multiple health conditions], Aunty Chwee Lian [hip fracture], Daniel Phang [high blood pressure], Kin Hoong [monitoring of heart and lungs pressure], Anthony [lung cancer].
 - Missions in Yangon: Rev Khobal (BRS, MTS), Eld Habakkuk (Gilead Balm Home, BIT), Pr Myitta, Pr Lapui
 - Missions in Bengaluru: Ps Babu (New Covenant BPC, KinderBees Preschool), Ps Lazarus (Calvary Reformed Church).
8. 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**

Kindly indicate "**Church Building Fund**" if you would like to designate towards this cause.