

How to Get Back to Full Fellowship With God

~Other Speakers M-R: John R. Rice:

If you are a backslider, then I have good news for you. The simplest and shortest part of this sermon is how to get back to God. Simply turn to God in your heart, confess your sin and backsliding, and He will receive you with open arms and forgive you of all your sins, failures and mistakes.

In I John 1:9 is this sweet verse for Christians, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Isn't that simple? We simply confess our sins honestly, then God is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us.

Notice the terms "faithful" and "just." What a strange saying about God! Why, that would seem as if God owed it to us to forgive us and cleanse us when we, His wayward children, confess our sin! A man is faithful when he keeps his promises, when he does his duty. Yes, and that is what God is. God is faithful and just to forgive us, when we confess our sin, our backsliding, because that is within God's bargain! The keeping, the forgiving, the cleansing day by day is all a part of God's covenant with us when we were saved. All that was purchased for us on Calvary and is promised to every child of God, and so God simply keeps His promise faithfully. Every time we confess our sins, our backslidings, He quickly forgives them and cleanses us from them.

As a young preacher, I preached on the prodigal son. I pictured the long, hard way home. How tired the poor fellow was! How his feet hurt as he stumbled along the rocky road without any shoes! Would he ever get home? And would the father receive him or send him away with scorn? I had that poor, prodigal boy plodding a long, painful way back to the father's house.

Then one day I discovered that I had made that up out of whole cloth. It was not even hinted in that wonderful story as Jesus told it in Luke 15:11-32. In one moment the boy is saying, "I will arise and go to my father." And the very same verse that tells us that the boy "arose, and came to his father," we are told that "when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him."

What a lesson for anybody who wants to come to God! Whether for a lost sinner who wants salvation, or a backslider who wants his blessing renewed and his joy restored, it is only one step to the Father's house! Oh, believe me, if you honestly in your heart confess your sin to God, He will forgive you and cleanse you in a moment!

Be sure that you do not excuse your sin. Be sure that you do not make an alibi for it and cover it over. Any honest confession will mean you have a penitent heart that turns from your sin with shame.

And if you feel like weeping, you may weep. I suppose the prodigal boy wept when he came home. I know that when I was a backslider and seemed a long way from God, I wept as I came back to confess my failures and my sins. But remember this: whether there is weeping or no weeping, God wants honest heart-confession of your sin. And when you have confessed your backsliding, your coldness, your lack of joy, then you ought to believe that God has forgiven it as He promised, and that He has cleansed it.

I think it would help you if you would get on your knees and read the fifty-first Psalm and let that divinely inspired prayer be the heart-cry of your own soul. It is the prayer of David, a backslider, and you might let it be your own, too. But remember this: All you need do is to make an honest heart-confession of your sin to the Father and believe that He forgives you as He promised, and that He cleanses you from all your sins. And then you will have sweet fellowship with the Father.

My six daughters are all different. Each one has her own peculiar temptations. One is better about one thing, another is better about another thing. But one of these girls I have never been able to whip very much. For just as certain as she was caught in some sin, some disobedience, she would run and throw her arms around me, and weeping, say, "O Daddy, I'm sorry! I'm so sorry! Forgive me, Daddy!"

And so, if the prodigal son has already returned, why should the father send the sheriff and bloodhounds after him? And if the poor backslider is sorry for his sins and is willing to confess them to God, should God lay on the lash of chastisement?

So, backslider, come back today to God with your hungry heart and find peace and forgiveness.

There is a life of victory and joy for every Christian, and you may have it. Since you are still a sinner, you will

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find that you will need daily to commit your sins to God. First John 1:7 says, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." You may walk in the light every day. When a sin appears, confess it quickly to God, ask Him to forgive it, and He does then and there. And so every day you may live in the smile of God's presence, in a conscious communion of His blessed Spirit. You need not wait to fall into outbroken sin and shame but can have rich blessing and victory every day.

Perhaps some backslider who reads this today is ready to come back to God. It would comfort my heart, and I believe would make the matter more definite and clear and joyful in your own, if you would write it down and say so. Suppose you write me the following letter, or one similar to it, and send it to me, if you today, dear backslidden Christian, will come back to the Father's house.