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REV. J. McLEOD.]

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"THAT GOD IN ALL THINGS MAY BE GLORIFIED THROUGH JESUS CHRIST."—Peter.

[EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.]

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A SERMON.

THE BACKSLIDER IN HEART.

BY REV. W. McDONALD.

We are told by the wise man (Prov. xvi. 14) that "the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways."

The prudent business man frequently examines his affairs—takes account of stock, that he may know his exact business position. He does not allow himself to go on recklessly for any considerable length of time without ascertaining what are his profits or losses.

Our religious interests are infinitely more important than our business successes, it becomes us carefully examine our spiritual state, that we may know what progress, if any, we are making, or "whether we be in the faith."

It is possible for persons to be backsliders in heart and not be fully conscious of the fact, until their condition has become serious.

Let the reader, at this point, call aside all prejudice, and surrender himself to the dictates of conscience and the voice of the Spirit, that he may obtain spiritual profit.

THE CHARACTER HERE DESCRIBED—"A BACKSLIDER IN HEART."

He is not a backslider outwardly, but inwardly; not in life, but in heart.

1. He does not neglect the ordinary means of grace. He is found in his pew, giving respectful attention to the Word preached. He receives monthly the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. He is often at the prayer and other social meetings of the church, and when called upon, prays with propriety. All these things he does as a member of the church.

2. He is liberal, yet benevolent in his gifts. He does not clutch his gold, miser-like, and "turn away the poor unclean." He gives liberally for the support of all the institutions of the church, as well as for the "heavenly in-blessings."

3. He is a man of business integrity. Business men have confidence in him as an honest man. He is not suspected of being tricky, and his word is regarded as good as his bond.

4. He is considered by many to be a pious man. He does not believe in being extravagant religious, and the community does not suspect him of being in danger of religious fanaticism. But he is looked upon as a consistent religious man; and his conduct is often quoted as a justification for doing certain things which he is regarded as narrow in their views, question the propriety of doing.

5. He is not suspected of being a backslider. Some, it is true, do not consider him remarkably spiritual; but they are disposed to attribute this to his having failed to make progress, rather than to his real condition—heart backsliding.

Notwithstanding all these recognized excellences, the man of whom we speak may be a backslider at heart. His heart has drifted from Jesus. He is not where he once was, and he knows it; or might know it if he would stop long enough to make a careful examination.

WE NOTICE SOME OF THE EVIDENCES WHICH SHOULD CAUTION A PERSON THAT HE IS A BACKSLIDER IN HEART.

1. He has not the witness of the Spirit as formerly. The time was when he could joyfully say, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God," and

"The Spirit answers to the blood, And tells me I am born of God."

But many months, perhaps years, have passed since he enjoyed such a witness. No man should be without such a testimony, as it belongs to all God's children.

2. Religious duties are less a pleasure to him than they once were. He talks now of God from principle. Duty, not love, prompts service. Formerly it was his delight to speak of the love of Jesus. His heart was often lost within him, and he longed to speak that he might be refreshed. It is not so now. The heart is pleased, and he is not conscious of losing much if he is absent from the social meeting. If he should honestly put his experience into song, it would be—

"But now, when evening shades prevail,
My soul in darkness mourns;
And with the morn the light reveals,
No light to me returns."

3. Spiritual religion has less charms for him than formerly. He used to listen with rapt attention to the glowing testimonies of the people of God—the rich, the sweeter and the higher, the better for him. When believers described a higher experience than is found at conversion, his heart felt a strong desire to know the experience. It is not so with him now. He does not listen to the testimony of others about holiness. The very terms, holiness and sanctification, though so frequently employed in the Word of God to describe Christian character, are distasteful to him. He was heard to say that the use of these terms almost, if not quite, made him angry.

4. He is becoming more and more displeased with the subject, and wishes he could never hear it spoken of again. He would even oppose a minister occupying the pulpit where he worships, if it were known that he urged the people to seek heart purity. Here is evidence that the heart has drifted from God, and has lost its interest in the "beauty of holiness."

5. Another evidence of heart backsliding is found in the fact that he is not quite as conscientious as formerly. This is seen, (1) in regard to religious duties. He is not as careful in attending to his closest devotions as formerly. If business presses, he can pass it by for this time, or conclude to pray less frequently. And if the pressure is great, he can omit family devotions for this once. The Bible is not read with the constancy and heart interest as formerly. It is a little wet, or unconfortably warm, it is sufficient excuse for abandoning himself from the house of God on the holy day, but more especially from the social meetings. His conscience seems to yield to his inclinations without any serious protest. (2) He is not quite as conscientious in his business relations as formerly. Once he felt that the same code of morals should govern him in his business transactions which governed him in his family and church. Now he insists that business men, to succeed, must resort to the tricks of the trade. (3) He is not as conscientious in regard to worldly amusements. Formerly he believed in coming out from the world; in loving not the world, nor the things in the world. The idea of a Christian attending a theatre was abhorrent to him. He could not have done it without great violence to his conscience. He believed with Paul, that it was "the favorite haunt of sin." But now he does not speak against it, but when absent from home, and where not observed, he has been known to attend. He would not like to have his neighbor see all the church know it, fearing it might affect his standing.

These are marked evidences of heart backsliding; and, if any one discovers them in their heart or life, they have reason to be greatly alarmed. They portend a dark future.

THE RESULT OF HEART BACKSLIDING.

"He shall be filled with his own ways." It may be proper to inquire, *What are his ways?*

1. *This is a way of doubt.* We are kept by the power of God through faith; and when doubt supplants faith, then the heart begins to drift away from God. Already the heart backslider begins to doubt. He doubts whether it is possible for a soul to maintain constant communion with God. He doubts some of the things in the Bible. He doubts some of the long established doctrines of Christianity. He begins to question whether God will punish the wicked forever. He even does not believe in people being so very pious.

"This man is in the way to be filled with doubt," says the Lord (Jer. ii. 13). "He has committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

It is first, forsake God, and then embrace error. The person of whom we write can already do with greater ease than formerly. *Full of doubt.* What a state to end life in!

2. *Lawrence Shirley, Earl of Ferris,* was a great doubter. He was arrested for crime and lodged in the Tower. He was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to be executed. On the morning of his execution, there was found on his table in the Tower the following lines written by himself:

"In doubt I've lived, in doubt I die,
And, to a dread extent,
I urge my way through rugged paths."

This is the end of a man full of doubt—doubts living, doubts dying, and finds it a rugged path to the eternal future! How unlike Paul, who knew the truth. He was contented to death. But just before the sentence was executed, he addressed a letter to his son in the Gospel, in which are these words:

"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. I have not seen a doublet. Hence the 'crown of righteousness,' which awaited not only him, but all believers."

3. *This is a way of fear.* He does not feel safe now. His mind is restless. Often the question comes to him with great force,

"Am I his, or am I not?"

He does not feel that he is ready to die. He is quite sure, if death comes, he must have a little time to get ready, or his future safety is doubtful.

This is but the beginning. If he continues as now, to move away from God, he will, in the near future, be filled with fear. No hope comes to light up his pathway. No voice from the good Shepherd, saying, "Come unto me."

Mr. _____, was once a professed follower of Jesus; yes, more, a minister of the Gospel, a member of the New England Conference. The early minutes of his appointments here and there. He was young, handsome, eloquent, popular, and, for a time, proud. But pride crept into his heart, and opened the door for other sins to enter. His piety began to wane, and his interest in saving souls subsided; and, having become a heart backslider, the burden of the ministry was a burden too heavy to be borne. He located—left the ministry—left the church—abandoned religion for the world. He entered one of the learned professions, which he followed to the end of his life. After a few years he united with a church, into which any workman may enter without a change of heart. He once said to the writer, who inquired of his future prospects, "Had I died when a Methodist preacher, I am sure I would have gone to heaven; but at present I am not so clear."

But the dying day came, and such a day! His newly adopted views of religion gave him no comfort. Fear seized him and held him with a strong grip. Not one ray of hope came to his heart. "Lost! Lost! Forever lost!" was his dying cry. Comfortless, hopeless, filled with fear, he passed the last of his earthly life, and commenced his fearful downward course with heart backsliding.

3. *To say that he is a way of despair,* is to repeat and emphasize what we have already said.

Despair is a hopeless state. Our heart backslider already feels the premonitions of what he is destined to be filled with. He despairs of ever being as happy and faithful as he used to be. Already hope begins to leave him.

Mr. _____, was my bosom friend—member of the same church, singing in the same choir, and bowing at the same Lord's table. For a time he was faithful to religious duties, but finally grew cold, and was found less frequently at the house of prayer—still a member of the church, and not suspected of being entirely backslidden.

Sickness suddenly seized him, and made quick assistance I might be able. But I found him in a sad state of mind. All hope had fled. He confessed that he had been a backslider, and a long time, but had kept up the form of religion, while he knew himself to be destitute of what he professed to enjoy.

As I approached him, he seemed greatly distressed, and did not receive me with any degree of cordiality. I said, calling him by name, "Shall I pray with you?" "No," he said; "it is too late." "Praying is of no use; it is too late." "It is never too late to pray," I said. "Shall I sing you one of our old family hymns?" "No," he replied, "no good deed, how I am a lost man—lost, lost." A Christian lady, standing by his side, said, "God is good, and you can trust Him. Do you know really what you say?" Looking steadfastly in the face, he said, "Mrs. M.—I know where I am and my religious state; and I want you to remember that, in a few moments, I shall be dead and damned." And in less than five minutes his spirit had departed, and he was with the dead. Filled with despair! This is the end of a heart backslider in heart.

WHAT IS THE IMMEDIATE DUTY OF THE BACKSLIDER IN HEART?

1. He should call a halt. He cannot afford to advance any further in the way he has commenced to travel. It is too perilous. It is the way to death.

2. He should at once retrace his steps. He has gone too far already from the right and safe way. Every hour he takes him further from God and hope, and every step taken renders it less likely that he will ever return.

3. He should confess his backsliding to God, and with such confession he should trust for pardon and immediate reclamation. No one is more willing than Jesus to receive him, and in no place would there be more joy over his return than in heaven. Heaven knows, as we cannot know, the importance of his return. It is reclamation or damnation with the backslider in heart. The thought should be of immediate action. O, let there be no delay!

How sad to witness dissipation where the King claims to be enthroned! Jesus claims the human heart. He claims heart loyalty—soul purity. He seeks our love more than our wealth, our church-going, our outward forms, or our mere morality.

May not the cause of so few conversions in these times be traced to the heart backsliding in the church? Such persons have no power with either God or men. They do not secure a blessing upon their own souls, and how can they upon the souls of others? Their prayers are weak, their testimonies are indefinite, and their lives are not "living epistles, read and known of all men."

In a little chapel in Rome, known as "*St. Peter in Chains*," may be seen the famous statue of *Moses*, the companion of *Moses*. The artist has sketched the great law-giver of Israel as he comes from the Mount with the tables of the Law in his hands, and as the sound of the dancing idolaters in the camp first breaks upon his ears. He has thrown into the countenance of the great law-giver an expression of mingled astonishment and regret.

It is said that the artist, as he was adding the finishing touches to the almost breathing marble, became greatly excited. He saw in that statue a mirror of himself for himself. Standing for a moment looking upon his finished work, he exclaimed, "Why don't you speak to me?" But he could not. He repeated the inquiry with increased emphasis, "Why don't you speak to me?" But he could not, and has not to this day, for one reason only, want of life. He looked as if he might speak, but in the absence of life he was dumb as death. How many professed Christians resemble Michael Angelo's *Moses*. They look as if they might speak and work for God and man, but do not. Ask them why, and they never respond. Press the inquiry, and they remain silent; for one reason only, want of spiritual life—backsliding in heart, tells the story. They stand beautiful monuments of the divine workmanship; but they cannot fall to the earth without the aid of the living word of Christ.

Return, O holy Dove, return,
Sweet messenger of rest;
I hate the sin that made Thee mourn,
And drove Thee from my breast.

The dearest idol I have known,
What e'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only Thee.

So shall my walk be close with God,
And truth shall surely set me free;
And pure light shall make my road,
That leads me to the Lamb.

THE HEAVENLY FATHER'S CARE.

It is, then, not merely a fact, but a necessity, that God, as infinite in knowledge, or omniscient, should know the smallest thing as well as the greatest. This is the end of our work, the most radical change before the throne in the seventh heaven. Seest thou not, then, O child of God, what this means for thee, even for us, to the conscious humiliation and littleness, they fear the distrust of the divine care, they dread of what thou hast called the contingencies of life? We see in the light of the truth, not merely the exceeding comfort, but the philosophy and literal truthfulness of those passages of Scripture which assure us that the little sparrow cannot fall to the earth without the notice of your Father; that the very "hairs in your heads are all numbered" by him. We are numbered, not only on account of the graciousness of his nature, but of its necessity. You understand, then, why, even you, though you may not be able to do all his work, may not care for you, even for you, and by reason of his very Godhead, cannot help caring for you.

the greatest evidences of the Christian religion is that it is a practical religion. Its ability, its teachings one with another, this implication and confirmation of its smallest truths, so called, by its greatest; this "analogy of the faith," as the old theologians call it. All those precious, minute truths about the heavenly Father's care for the lowliest individual child of his; of even the falling sparrow; his numbering the hairs of our heads; his answer of individual prayer; his providence, erroneously called special providence, extending to our smallest interests—all are philosophically true and necessary, as corollaries, as consequences, as absolute, as infinite. The Christian metaphysics herein appear as the highest Christian ethics; and dogmatic theology becomes experimental, practical theology. No penitent's prayer can be answered, no good deed, howsoever obscure, can fail of his regard and compensation; no good, misunderstood, and suffering man can be misunderstood of him, or fail of his vindication in the last day; no trial or grievance can be without its reward; no parental sympathy and blessing. If the hairs of our heads are all numbered, what, then, of our repentant tears, our prayers, our good endeavors, our trials—are they not numbered? And if we have such a God and Father, what shall we pledge them to for your safety and comfort. We do not, then, as we do, command of our prayers. You are just as well off, then, as you could be did you wield them all yourself. Though you sometimes think that, had you his power, you would do otherwise for yourself than he seems to do; yet had you his wisdom as well, you would see to it to be the best as he does. Believe this, and trust and pray on. Commit your ways unto him, and he will direct your paths. In the darkest hour believe this, and walk quietly forward; for remember that this is your pilgrimage, your probation. You need, as a reclined sinner, preparation for the ultimate blessedness he has in reserve for you. Let him guide you in the preparation, though it be through fever water. "For our light affliction, which is but a moment, worketh in us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."—*Dr. Abel Stearns.*

There are some voices which adhere to us only because of others; and which, when the trunk is removed, fall away like branches.—*Pascal.*

To rejoice in another's prosperity is to give comfort to your own lot; to mitigate another's grief is to alleviate or dispel your own.—*Edwards.*

LIVING WITNESSES.

In Dr. Stevens' "History of the Methodist Episcopal Church," an interview between Philip Enbury and his cousin, Barbara Heck, is graphically described, which will illustrate the value of a consistent, living testimony—a testimony for Christ, that is destined to repeat itself from age to age.

Philip Enbury, a local preacher and class-leader, had no doubt become discouraged with his little flock in New York City, immigrants from Ireland, and members thereof of the Wesleyan Connection. We are told that "with the exception of Enbury and three or four others, they all finally lost their sense of the fear of God, and became open worldlings." Like many a diffident, doubting professor of his own religion, Enbury well-nigh ceased to bear testimony against sin. But God had a witness at hand.

Barbara Heck, a company engaged in playing cards, was thoroughly roused in spirit. Hastening to Enbury, she earnestly appealed to him to come forward and use his gifts. "He consented, and she collected four persons, who, herself, constituted his audience. After singing and praying he presented to them, and enrolled them in class." On that day the Methodist Church began.

The divinely-authorized word of a single woman was the germ from which was to spring the abundant harvest of centuries. It was not because Enbury had not known Christ up to that hour, but because he had grown lukewarm in the service. He had in a measure fallen away from an experience of which he had written: "The Lord shone into my soul by a glimpse of his redeeming love, being an hour of profound solemnity; a time in which new religious forces were to start in the earth of wonderful potency. The Omnipotent mind alone could compass the far-reaching results, that according to our finite view, seemed to emanate from a single awakening word."

But have we not just said that this simple story of God's love to lost sinners—man's state and God's remedy, a full, free salvation offered, the time came for the man to resume work, and the preacher came back to the shaft to ascend to a mission to worldly practices, that brings religion into disrepute; of that greed for earthly here, and that desire for worldly distinction which are opposed to every precept of the Gospel.

Who will say that this hour is less eventful, is not as significant as when Barbara Heck witnessed 1 One weighty word of experience reached further, multiplied itself more rapidly, than then. Testimony now may have higher range. Upon the wings of lightning it may travel over continents and seas. Along the silver paths of trade, upon the hilltops of civilization, in the most influential seats of learning, the living word of Christ must be spoken. Needed! O yes. Slumber, the sign of death, is everywhere. Souls are actually dying. The Church, charged with the responsibility of witnessing must arise.

Is this life! If not, why should so many of the Church of God give it all up to absorbing pre-eminence? Motives fast as eternity urge us to fidelity. The hungry souls, famishing for the bread in every land, wait for us to give. The command of our blessed King has passed along the whole line, "Go ye." Living words are committed to the Church by him. Living witnesses can only bear them. That life, by which we may witness effectively before the world, is in Christ, and in him alone. He waits to give it to all. Arise, then, and come into him, O Zion, beloved of thy Lord!

HINTS AND HELPS TO PREACHERS.

Be punctual; start early; be on the spot a little before time; and be ready as the hand of the clock points to the hour. It is neither pleasant nor profitable for members of a congregation to see the preacher rush in five minutes after time, hurrying into the pulpit or desk, and give out the first hymn while he wipes the perspiration from his brow.

2. Select your lessons and hymns beforehand. It looks badly to see a man turning over a hymn-book or Bible as if uncertain which to announce; besides, selections made hurriedly are very apt to be unsuitable.

3. Speak slowly and distinctly rather than loudly. If you begin quickly and loudly, you will not be able to hear your own voice, and you will not be able to hear the voice of your hearers, but on their behalf—that is, in their name. You are, for the time being, their mouthpiece.

4. Do not let your notices mar the effect of your preaching; give them out after the sermon, and in as few words as possible. Remember that you are not only praying for your hearers, but on their behalf—that is, in their name. You are, for the time being, their mouthpiece.

5. Avoid a pompous style in prayer. Let your sentences be simple and your words plain. Let them be as far as possible, as your hearers would be felt by your congregation. Remember that you are not only praying for your hearers, but on their behalf—that is, in their name. You are, for the time being, their mouthpiece.

6. Do not let your notices mar the effect of your preaching; give them out after the sermon, and in as few words as possible. Remember that you are not only praying for your hearers, but on their behalf—that is, in their name. You are, for the time being, their mouthpiece.

7. Do not grieve after service. A shake of the hand and a few words of kindly and judicious talk with such of your congregation as you may be able to reach, may do good; "whatsoever is a good before you return home, be careful to let your words or demeanor counteract the influence of your preaching. Remember that what a man is and does, often tells more upon others than what he says.—*Lay Preacher.*

THE QUEEN AND THE GOVERNESS.

Grace Greenwood is authority for the following beautiful and touching anecdote of Queen Victoria:

When I was in England I heard several pleasant anecdotes of the Queen and her family from a lady who had received them from her friend, the governess of the royal children. This governess, a very interesting woman, was the orphan daughter of a Scottish clergyman. During the first year of her residence at Windsor her mother died. When she first received the news of her mother's serious illness, she applied to the Queen to be allowed to resign her situation feeling that to let her mother die, even a more sacred duty than to her Sovereign. The Queen, who had been much pleased by her, would not hear of her making this request, but said, in a tone of the most gentle sympathy:

"Go at once to your mother, child; stay with her as long as she needs you, and then come back to us. Prince Albert and I will hear the children's lessons; so in any event let your mind be at rest in regard to your pupils."

The governess went, and had several weeks of sweet, mournful communion with her dying mother. Then, when she had seen that her form laid to sleep under the daisies in the old Kirk-yard, she returned to the palace, where the

loneliness of royal grandeur would have oppressed her sorrowing heart beyond endurance had it not been for the gracious womanly sympathy of the Queen—who came every day to her school-room—and the considerate kindness of her young pupils.

A year went by, the first anniversary of her loss dawned upon her, and she was overwhelmed as never before by the utter loneliness of her grief. She felt that no one in all that great household knew how much goodness and sweetness passed out of mortal life that day a year ago, or could give her any thought, to the grave under the Scottish daisies. Every morning before breakfast, which the elder children took with their father and mother in the pleasant crimson parlor looking out on the terrace at Windsor, her pupils came to the school-room for a brief religious exercise. This morning the voice of the governess trembled in reading the Scriptures of the day. Some words of Divine tenderness were too much for her poor, lonely, grieving heart—her strength gave way, and, laying her head on the desk before her, she burst into tears, exclaiming, "O mother, mother!"

One after another the children came out into the room, and went to their mother to tell her how sadly their governess was feeling; and that kind-hearted monarch, exclaiming, "O, poor girl! it is the anniversary of her mother's death," hurried to the school-room, where she found Miss _____ trying to regain her composure. "My poor child!" she said, "I am sorry the children disturbed you this morning. I meant to have given orders that you should have this day entirely to yourself. Take it as a sad and sacred holiday—I will leave the lessons of the children." And then she added, "Toshie you said I have not forgotten this mournful anniversary. I bring you this gift," placing on her arm a beautiful mourning bracelet, with a locket for her mother's hair, marked with the date of her mother's death.

TOO CHEAP.

A preacher of the gospel had gone down into a coal mine, during the noon hour, to tell the miners of that grace and truth which came of Jesus Christ. After telling them the simple story of God's love to lost sinners—man's state and God's remedy, a full, free salvation offered, the time came for the man to resume work, and the preacher came back to the shaft to ascend to a mission to worldly practices, that brings religion into disrepute; of that greed for earthly here, and that desire for worldly distinction which are opposed to every precept of the Gospel.

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Is this life! If not, why should so many of the Church of God give it all up to absorbing pre-eminence? Motives fast as eternity urge us to fidelity. The hungry souls, famishing for the bread in every land, wait for us to give. The command of our blessed King has passed along the whole line, "Go ye." Living words are committed to the Church by him. Living witnesses can only bear them. That life, by which we may witness effectively before the world, is in Christ, and in him alone. He waits to give it to all. Arise, then, and come into him, O Zion, beloved of thy Lord!

HINTS AND HELPS TO PREACHERS.

Be punctual; start early; be on the spot a little before time; and be ready as the hand of the clock points to the hour. It is neither pleasant nor profitable for members of a congregation to see the preacher rush in five minutes after time, hurrying into the pulpit or desk, and give out the first hymn while he wipes the perspiration from his brow.

2. Select your lessons and hymns beforehand. It looks badly to see a man turning over a hymn-book or Bible as if uncertain which to announce; besides, selections made hurriedly are very apt to be unsuitable.

3. Speak slowly and distinctly rather than loudly. If you begin quickly and loudly, you will not be able to hear your own voice, and you will not be able to hear the voice of your hearers, but on their behalf—that is, in their name. You are, for the time being, their mouthpiece.

4. Do