

Spiritual Declension versus Apostasy

*The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways,
but a good man will be satisfied from above.*

~Proverbs 14:14

Distrust of self and full trust in God is the sure way to prevent backsliding. It is never safe to depend upon past experiences for future blessing, or to rely on one's own ability to stand in the hour of temptation. "He gives more grace" (James 4:6).

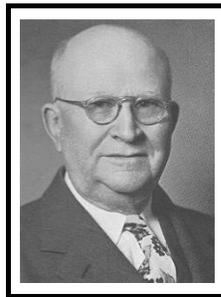
We see this in the account of Peter's failure. Had his dependence been upon the Lord Himself, he would not have failed so miserably in the hour of stress. It is important to realize, however, that there is a vast difference between spiritual declension and apostasy. No matter how genuine one's Christianity may be, he is never beyond the possibility of failure or backsliding while in this world, but no real believer will ever become an apostate, for that involves a definite turning away from the truth of Christ and His redemptive work. The Spirit of God will reclaim the backslider, but there is no such promise for the recovery of the apostate.

The downward path is an easy and rapid one. Peter's boastfulness, when warned by the Lord Jesus of danger, was mistaken for true courage, but when courage was really needed he became a coward and denied all that once he had gloried in.

Call Thy people back, O Lord,
As in the early days,
When love was warm, and fresh, and bright,
When first we knew Thy grace;
When first Thy light broke through our night,
And set our hearts ablaze.
Lord, call us back!

Call us back to those sweet days
When hearts were knit as one,
When prayer was as the breath of life;
Ere we were so undone,
Ere souls were rife with endless strife;
For Jesus' sake, Thy Son,
Lord, call us back!

—H. McDowell



Harry A.
Ironside

Spiritual Declension versus Apostasy

*The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways,
but a good man will be satisfied from above.*

~Proverbs 14:14

Distrust of self and full trust in God is the sure way to prevent backsliding. It is never safe to depend upon past experiences for future blessing, or to rely on one's own ability to stand in the hour of temptation. "He gives more grace" (James 4:6).

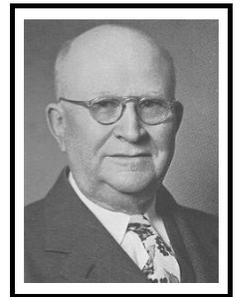
We see this in the account of Peter's failure. Had his dependence been upon the Lord Himself, he would not have failed so miserably in the hour of stress. It is important to realize, however, that there is a vast difference between spiritual declension and apostasy. No matter how genuine one's Christianity may be, he is never beyond the possibility of failure or backsliding while in this world, but no real believer will ever become an apostate, for that involves a definite turning away from the truth of Christ and His redemptive work. The Spirit of God will reclaim the backslider, but there is no such promise for the recovery of the apostate.

The downward path is an easy and rapid one. Peter's boastfulness, when warned by the Lord Jesus of danger, was mistaken for true courage, but when courage was really needed he became a coward and denied all that once he had gloried in.

Call Thy people back, O Lord,
As in the early days,
When love was warm, and fresh, and bright,
When first we knew Thy grace;
When first Thy light broke through our night,
And set our hearts ablaze.
Lord, call us back!

Call us back to those sweet days
When hearts were knit as one,
When prayer was as the breath of life;
Ere we were so undone,
Ere souls were rife with endless strife;
For Jesus' sake, Thy Son,
Lord, call us back!

—H. McDowell



Harry A.
Ironside