

## “Backsliding”

Perhaps the best way to understand the dangers of backsliding is to examine the biblical account of how one believer fell into this trap. He was none other than Simon Peter, one of Jesus’ closest disciples. In Luke 22, we are given the account of his spiritual regression. His story serves as a warning that even the most mature believers have the potential to fall if they let their guard down. ►

LUKE 22:31-62 NKJV

And the Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. <sup>32</sup> But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.”

<sup>33</sup> But he said to Him, “Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.”

<sup>34</sup> Then He said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.”

<sup>35</sup> And He said to them, “When I sent you without money bag, knapsack, and sandals, did you lack anything?” So they said, “Nothing.”

<sup>36</sup> Then He said to them, “But now, he who has a money bag, let him take it, and likewise a knapsack; and he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.

<sup>37</sup> For I say to you that this which is written must still be accomplished in Me: ‘And He was numbered with the transgressors.’ For the things concerning Me have an end.”

<sup>38</sup> So they said, “Lord, look, here are two swords.” And He said to them, “It is enough.”

<sup>39</sup> Coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him. <sup>40</sup> When He came to the place, He said to them, “Pray that you may not

enter into temptation.”

<sup>41</sup> And He was withdrawn from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and prayed,

<sup>42</sup> saying, “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.”

<sup>43</sup> Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him.

<sup>44</sup> And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

<sup>45</sup> When He rose up from prayer, and had come to His disciples, He found them sleeping from sorrow.

<sup>46</sup> Then He said to them, “Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation.”

<sup>47</sup> And while He was still speaking, behold, a multitude; and he who was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them and drew near to Jesus to kiss Him.

<sup>48</sup> But Jesus said to him, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”

<sup>49</sup> When those around Him saw what was going to happen, they said to Him, “Lord, shall we strike with the sword?”

<sup>50</sup> And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear.

<sup>51</sup> But Jesus answered and said, “Permit even this.” And He touched his ear and healed him.

<sup>52</sup> Then Jesus said to the chief priests, captains of the temple, and the elders who had come to

Him, “Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs? <sup>53</sup> When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.”

<sup>54</sup> Having arrested Him, they led Him and brought Him into the high priest’s house. But Peter followed at a distance.

<sup>55</sup> Now when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them.

<sup>56</sup> And a certain servant girl, seeing him as he sat by the fire, looked intently at him and said, “This man was also with Him.”

<sup>57</sup> But he denied Him, saying, “Woman, I do not know Him.”

<sup>58</sup> And after a little while another saw him and said, “You also are of them.”

But Peter said, “Man, I am not!”

<sup>59</sup> Then after about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed, saying, “Surely this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean.”

<sup>60</sup> But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are saying!” Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed.

<sup>61</sup> And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.”

<sup>62</sup> So Peter went out and wept bitterly. ♥

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**A**s believers we have been given a “new nature” — a part of us that spiritually hungers after God, a supernatural inclination to do what is right. Unfortunately, being human, we also have an “old nature” — a natural inclination to do wrong. Sometimes Christians begin to fall back spiritually or “backslide.” God speaks of this:

**“Return, you backsliding children,  
And I will heal your backslidings.”**

**Jeremiah 3:22 NKJV**

- **Self-Confidence and False Security**

Not only did Peter reveal his unfounded confidence in himself (his claim that he would “die” with Jesus), but he also directly contradicted the Lord’s prediction that he would fall (Luke 22:34). He denied his own weakness to sin. The Bible warns:

**“Therefore let him who thinks he stands  
take heed lest he fall.”**

**1 Corinthians 10:12 NKJV**

- **Prayerlessness**

Even after Jesus specifically instructed Peter to pray, he decided to sleep instead. In Matthew’s account of this incident, Jesus had even warned them:

**“Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation.**

**The spirit indeed is willing,  
but the flesh is weak.”**

**Matthew 26:41 NKJV**

Yet Peter felt no weakness and saw no need to be prayerful and watchful. Prayerlessness is as much a sin as directly breaking a commandment, for throughout Scripture God has specifically instructed us to pray.

- **Following God at a Distance**

A lack of closeness and fellowship with the Lord will always be at the foundation of all spiritual regression. Although Peter was still following Jesus, he wasn’t following as closely as he could have been. There are some Christians who want to try to live in both worlds. They want to be believers, but they don’t want to be too committed. We endanger ourselves if you live this way.

- **Warming Up at the Enemies’ Fire**

Following in the distance, Peter became cold and was attracted to the fire. Peter hoped to go unnoticed in the larger crowd, so he settled in with the very people who were responsible for arresting his Lord.

The Bible tells us:

**“Blessed is the man  
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,  
Nor stands in the path of sinners,  
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; ...”**

**Psalms 1:1 NKJV**

Tragically, Peter was doing exactly the opposite. When that spiritual passion in our heart begins to die, that fire for Jesus Christ will grow cold, and we will look elsewhere for warmth.

- **Denial and Disassociations**

Peter reached this final step of spiritual regression when he denied knowing or ever being with Jesus. Matthew’s Gospel tells us that he began to curse and swear, which means that he took an oath, saying:

**“Then he began to curse and swear, saying,  
‘I do not know the Man!’”**

**Matthew 26:74 NKJV**

Peter had lost all sense of reality and seemingly all awareness of God. Despite Peter’s fall, he was restored. In Luke 22:61, his eyes met those of Jesus, and Peter cried bitterly. As he grieved over his sin, Jesus saw his heart.

The Bible says:

**“For godly sorrow produces repentance  
leading to salvation, not to be regretted; ...”**

**2 Corinthians 7:10 NKJV**

Interestingly enough, three days later, after Jesus’ resurrection, the angel at the tomb specifically told Mary:

**“But go, tell His disciples — and Peter —  
that He is going before you into Galilee;  
there you will see Him, as He said to you.”**

**Mark 16:7 NKJV (emphasis added).**

Jesus wanted Peter to know that He still loved him.



As Christians, we will sin. Scripture says:

**“If we say that we have no sin,  
we deceive ourselves,  
and the truth is not in us.”**

**1 John 1:8 NKJV**

But the Holy Spirit will lovingly convict us of that sin and lead us back to the cross, where we can confess it and turn from it. Remember, when we sin we should run to—not away from—the Lord.

~ from *New Believer’s Bible Notes*