

The backslider.



The backslider.

Backsliding, which is otherwise called falling away or committing apostasy, is a term used within Christianity to describe a process by which an individual who has converted to Christianity reverts to pre-conversion habits and/or lapses or falls into sin, when a person turns from God to pursue their own desire. [Wikipedia](#)

Backslider is not a term that most Christians would readily apply to themselves and yet in Scripture we see that James goes even further with his address to the Jewish believers.

James 4:4.

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

The prodigal daughter.

Ruth 1:1-5.

In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. The man's name was Elimelek, his wife's name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there.

Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.

The prodigal daughter.

Bethlehem meaning: “House of bread”

Elimelech, meaning: “My God is King”

Naomi, meaning: “Pleasing”

Naomi asks to be called Mara: “Bitter”

The two sons of Elimelech and Naomi

Their names have been taken by some to mean "sickness" and "destruction" and have been explained as symbolic of their untimely death.

But **Mahlon** could be connected with *mahol*, meaning "dance," and **Chilion** with a word meaning: Finished, complete, perfect.

Encyclopedea.com

The prodigal daughter.

Elimelech: “God is King”

Bethlehem: “House of bread”

Naomi: “Pleasant”

Mahlon: “dance”

Chilion: “Finished, complete, perfect”

What a picture of what life in Christ is meant to be

But due to a famine, the family leaves Bethlehem:
“House of bread”

It is sad to see people going hungry in

“The House of bread” (Starving in the pews)

How is it possible to backslide if you are in regular fellowship?

Hunger in “The House of Bread”.

This may be one of a number of reasons.



A good sign the pastor caught you napping during his sermon.



The prodigal daughter.

Elimelech and his family set off for Moab, not intending to stay long.

Ruth 1:1.

In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab.

Initially the Christian who backslides, doesn't intend to stay in the world for a long time, but there is a quote.

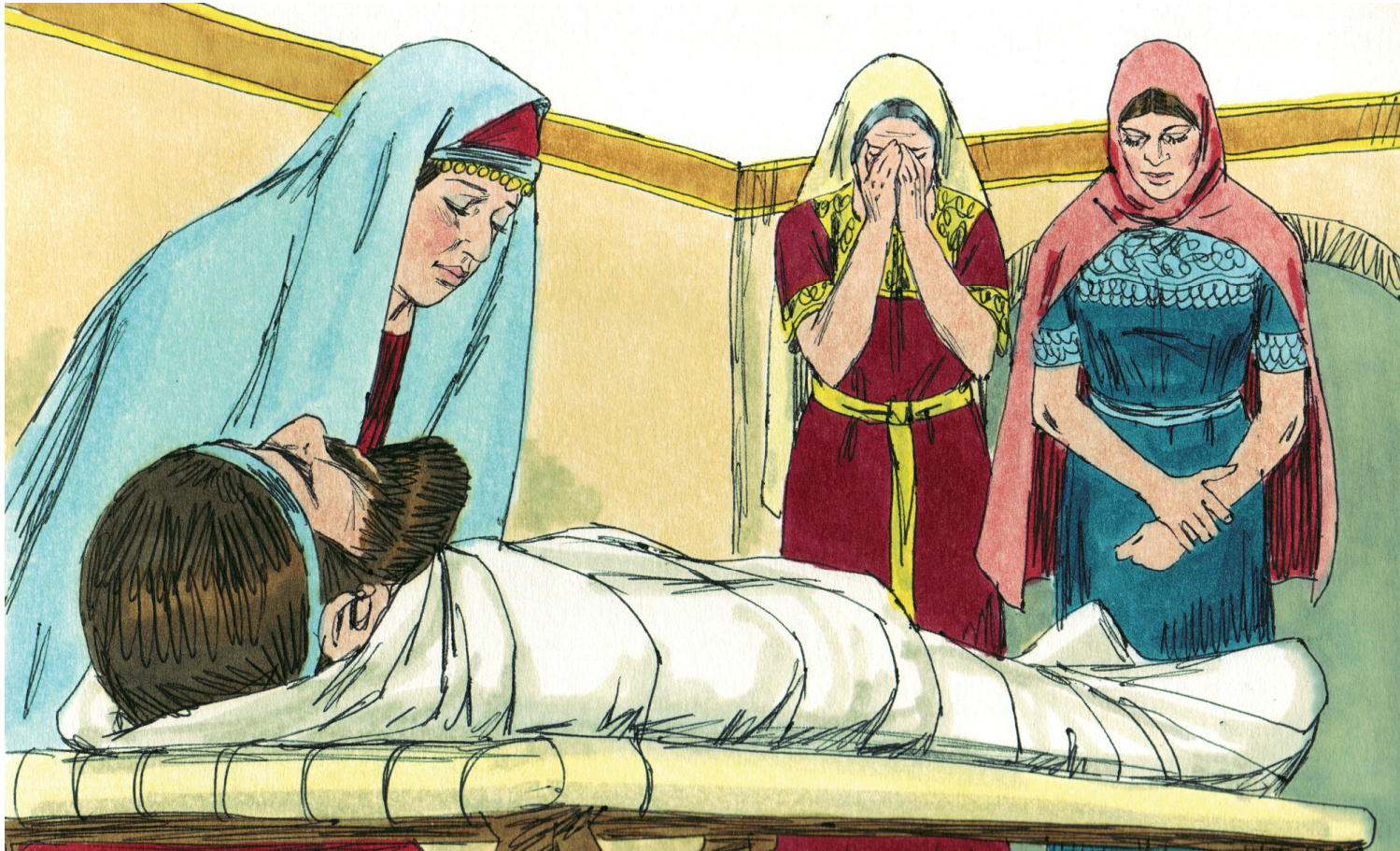
**“Sin will take you further than you want to go
keep you longer than you want to stay
cost you more than you want to pay” R Zaccharias**

In Moab (A picture of the “World”).

Elimelech: “God is King” dies

Mahlon: “dance” dies

Chilion: “Finished, complete, perfect” dies and then Naomi decides to return home.



Naomi: “Pleasant” says call me Mara: “Bitter”.

Ruth 1:20-21. *Don't call me Naomi, she told them. Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The LORD has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me.*

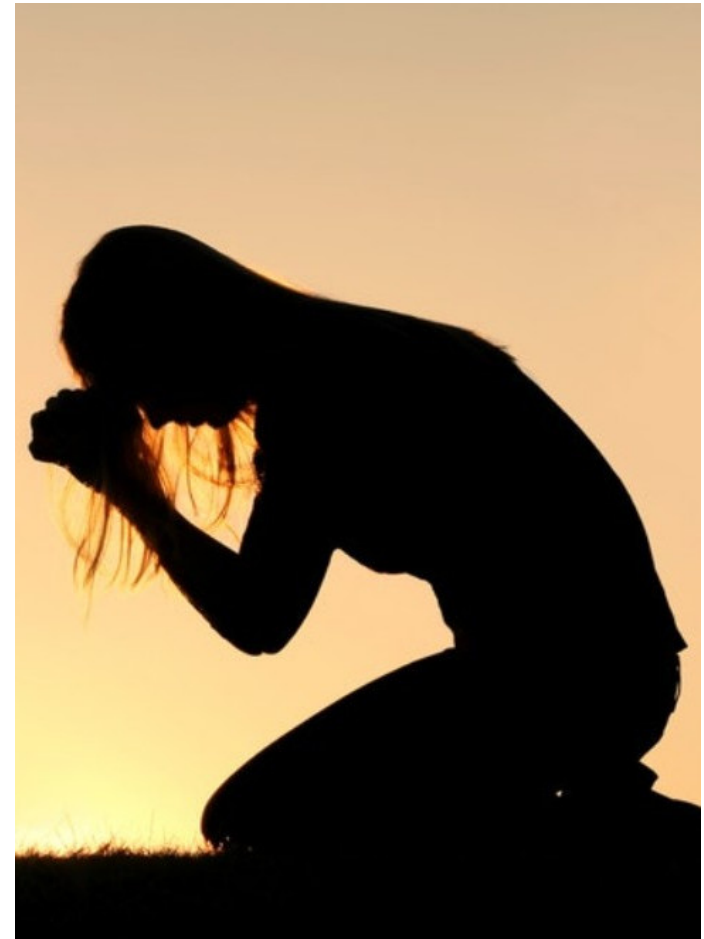


The prodigal daughter.

Sometimes for the restoration of the child of God who has backslidden, the Lord will close the heavens.

2 Chronicles 7:13-14.

When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.



The backslider.

Jesus spoke about four types of backsliders in the three parables in Luke 15 - represented by:

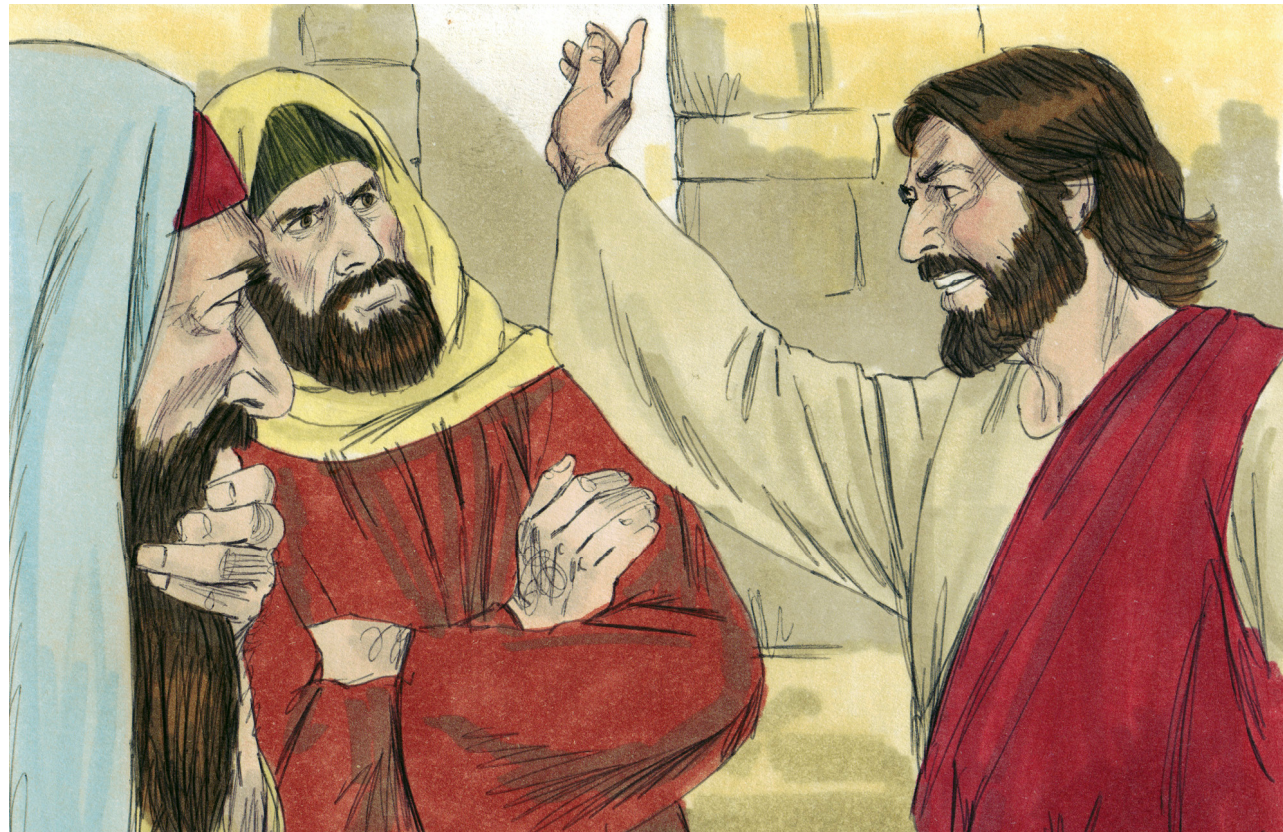
1. The lost sheep.
2. The lost coin.
3. The lost younger son.
4. The lost elder son.

The lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son.

Luke 15:1-3.

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.

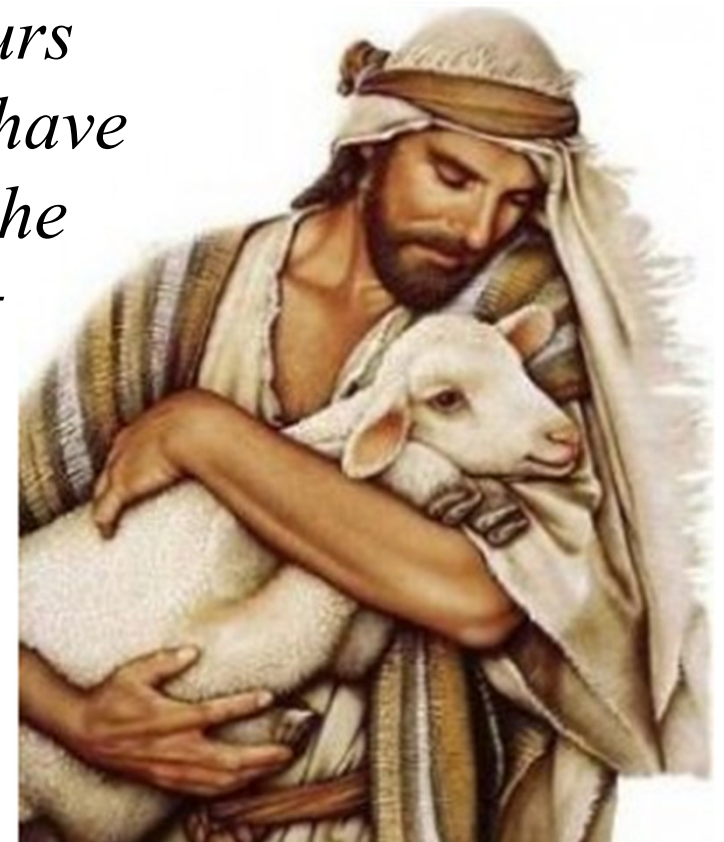
Then Jesus told them this parable:



The lost sheep.

Luke 15:3-7.

Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbours together and says, Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep. I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.



The lost coin.

Luke 15:8-10.

Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn't she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.

In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.



The lost son.

Luke 15:11-32.

Jesus continued: There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, Father, give me my share of the estate. So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.....



The “lost sheep” backslider.

The lost sheep is a picture of a born-again believer who backslid and went off track because of lack of fellowship.

Maybe there was no good church nearby, or perhaps someone offended him. Or perhaps, he did not realize the importance of fellowship with other believers, or expected fellow Christians to be perfect, and when he saw faults in others he saw them as hypocrites and left the church

Perhaps he was the self-confident type, they believe that they can look after themselves and watch Christian TV instead of relying on the local church for spiritual food.

There is no mistaking that this is how a lion gets it's prey, he separates it from the rest of the herd or gets the weak and the old that are lagging behind.

The “lost coin” backslider.

The lost coin was lost due to carelessness of the woman.

The woman did not take proper care of her coins and she is a picture of the church.

The lost coin is symbolic of a Christian who is lost due to the church neglecting it's duty to take care of the inexperienced and the weak.

This believer backslid due to neglect, due to a lack of love and concern, maybe because in our busyness we don't pay attention to those around us and are only concerned about feeding and looking after ourselves.

We have a responsibility for one another. This parable is directed more at the church (the woman) who was careless enough to allow a coin to be lost.

The “lost son” backslider.

The younger son represents another type of backslider.

He is self seeking, loves pleasure and self fulfillment, so he rebels against his father and leaves home.

Here is a believer who wants to receive everything he can, from God and from his elder brothers, but after he has received everything, he leaves them.

In their eyes, the church and God are there to serve them and satisfy their ambitions and desires, and when they feel that the Lord, or the church has failed them, they leave.

They do not see the Bible as an instruction book for life and behaviour, but as a promise box of all they can get. This type includes the carnal Christian that has fallen prey to the health and wealth gospel, and eventually ends up back in the world.

The “lost son” backslider.

The lost son also pictures the believer who doesn't like discipline and being subject to God-appointed authority.

Many like this younger son, frustrate God's purposes for them, and end up with the pigs! Only then do some of them come to their senses and return to the Father's house in brokenness and repentance.



The “eldest son” backslider.

The elder son is a type of the believer that doesn't look like a backslider. He is a proud, self-righteous believer who feels that he has lived a better life than others.

Instead of humbly acknowledging God and His amazing Grace as his source, he becomes proud of himself and his accomplishments and spiritual stature and loyalty. But God resists the proud and very soon Satan is able to drive a wedge between him and God (His father).

The first three backsliders in these parables finally came home, but at the end of the story, the elder son is seen outside the house. This is the worst backslider of them all, and is in the most dangerous predicament.

Our attitude Towards “lost sheep” backsliders.

The Good Shepherd went after the lost sheep until He found it, and we as under-shepherds must have the same attitude.

We must go after those who have backslidden from the church through their carelessness, lusts and Satan's deception. We must be "shepherds after God's own heart", and seek out the many such lost sheep around us today. Many criticize these lost sheep, saying that they should not have wandered off on their own, or listened to the voices of false shepherds, but God is looking for shepherds with His heart for the “Lost” who will go after these sheep and bring them back to the fold.



Our attitude Towards “lost sheep” backsliders.

Ezekiel 34:1-12.

The word of the LORD came to me: Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: This is what the Sovereign LORD says:

Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock.

You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally.

Our attitude Towards “lost sheep” backsliders.

Ezekiel 34:1-12.

So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them.

Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD:

As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, because my flock lacks a shepherd and so has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals, and because my shepherds did not search for my flock but cared for themselves rather than for my flock, therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD:

Our attitude Towards “lost sheep” backsliders.

Ezekiel 34:1-12.

This is what the Sovereign LORD says:

I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves.

I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them.

For this is what the Sovereign LORD says:

I myself will search for my sheep and look after them.

As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep.

I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness.

Our Attitude Towards “lost coin” backsliders.

The woman who lost her silver coin was eager to find it, so she did two things: She lit a lamp and swept her house diligently, until she found it.

These are the two things every church needs to do. The Church first of all, needs to light a lamp.

The light of God’s living Word (Jesus) and His written Word, will renew our minds and reveal God’s will regarding the lost and the light of conscience will expose our wrong attitudes and selfishness and lack of concern



Our Attitude Towards “lost coin” backsliders.

The woman did something else.

She swept her house diligently, until she found it.

The church needs to do some sweeping. There needs to be a sweeping away of our sin and lack of concern, conviction of conscience is not enough action is needed.

Move the furniture

(Things that are set in place,
old habits & traditions)
only then will the lost
coins be found.

**There is effort involved
in finding a coin that is
lost and that effort will
only be put in by those who see value in the coin.**



Our attitude towards the “lost son” backslider.

The father of the prodigal son did not go looking for his son when he was lost. He allowed his son to reap the consequences of his rebellion. And when his son came to an end of himself, he came home on his own.

He was not carried home on anyone's shoulder, like the lost sheep. He came back when he was totally sick and tired of himself.

God's love for such backsliders is shown in His not going after them, but allowing them to reap what they have sown.



Our attitude towards the “lost son” backslider.

Many believers however lack wisdom and run after these rebellious sons and try to placate them and get them back to Church, sometimes they are even offered positions and bribed in other ways to return to the fold. These same believers however don't do show this same concern for the lost sheep and they end up consoling those who should be rebuked, and rebuking those who should be consoled.

Hosea 5:15.

I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.

Proverbs 14:14.

The backslider in heart will be filled with the fruit of his ways, a good man will be filled with the fruit of his ways.

Our attitude towards the “lost son” backslider.

Feeding a rebellious son of God won't help. It would not be an act of compassion but foolishness, making him stay out in the far country even longer, perhaps forever.

When the prodigal son returned, the Father didn't place him on probation or make him live in the servant's quarters, because his son had come back in brokenness and repentance on his own, without anyone having to persuade him.

Jeremiah 3:14-15.

Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion: And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

Our attitude towards the “lost son” backslider.

When a rebellious son returns to the church in true brokenness and repentance, our hearts must be open to welcome them. Here is where we see the difference in attitude between those who are like God and those who are like the Pharisees. It will take time for confidence to be restored in such a prodigal son who was once rebellious. But if he has repented, he must be accepted immediately, and wholeheartedly.

Jeremiah 3:22.

Return, faithless people; I will cure you of backsliding. Yes, we will come to you, for you are the LORD our God.

Hosea 14:4.

I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.

Our attitude towards the “eldest son” backslider.

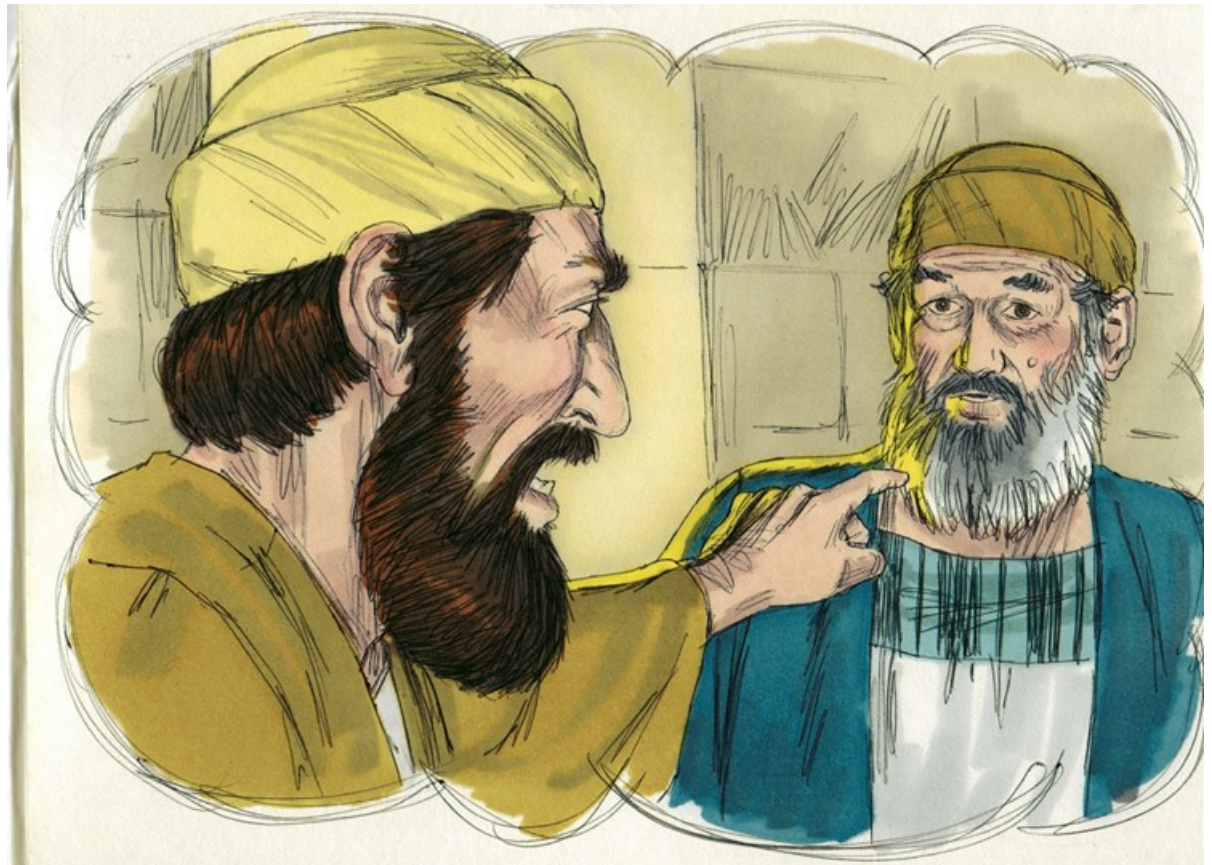
In the case of the elder son, the father went outside the house and pleaded with him repeatedly. But the older boy would not yield. Jesus left the story open-ended at this point, leaving it to our imagination to decide what happened to him finally.

There are two possibilities: Either, he may have yielded to his father's pleadings and finally come back home, with his head held high. Or he may have rejected his father's pleading and stayed out of fellowship. Whichever way he may have chosen, he lost the place of honour in his home, for that had already been given to his younger brother. The father had already given his ring and the seat at his right hand to his younger son.

Our attitude towards the “eldest son” backslider.

There is a big difference between "elder brothers" and "prodigal sons".

Elder sons have to be repeatedly spoken to, before they are convinced, and even when they are convinced, they want to come back to their place of honour in the church as kings and not as slaves.



Our attitude towards the “eldest son” backslider.

Prodigal sons however are convinced of their sin on their own and repent deeply and seek no place of honour in the church. They only want to be slaves until the end of their lives. They are truly broken.



Our attitude towards the “eldest son” backslider.

King Saul knew that he had sinned. But he wanted to confess his sin privately to Samuel.

1 Samuel.15:30.

I have sinned; but please honour me now before the elders of my people and before Israel.

King David also sinned, far more seriously than Saul, but he acknowledged his sin publicly. God hates pride more than any other sin.

There is little hope for a backslider who wants to justify himself before men.



Our attitude towards the “eldest son” backslider.

Psalm 51:3-4.

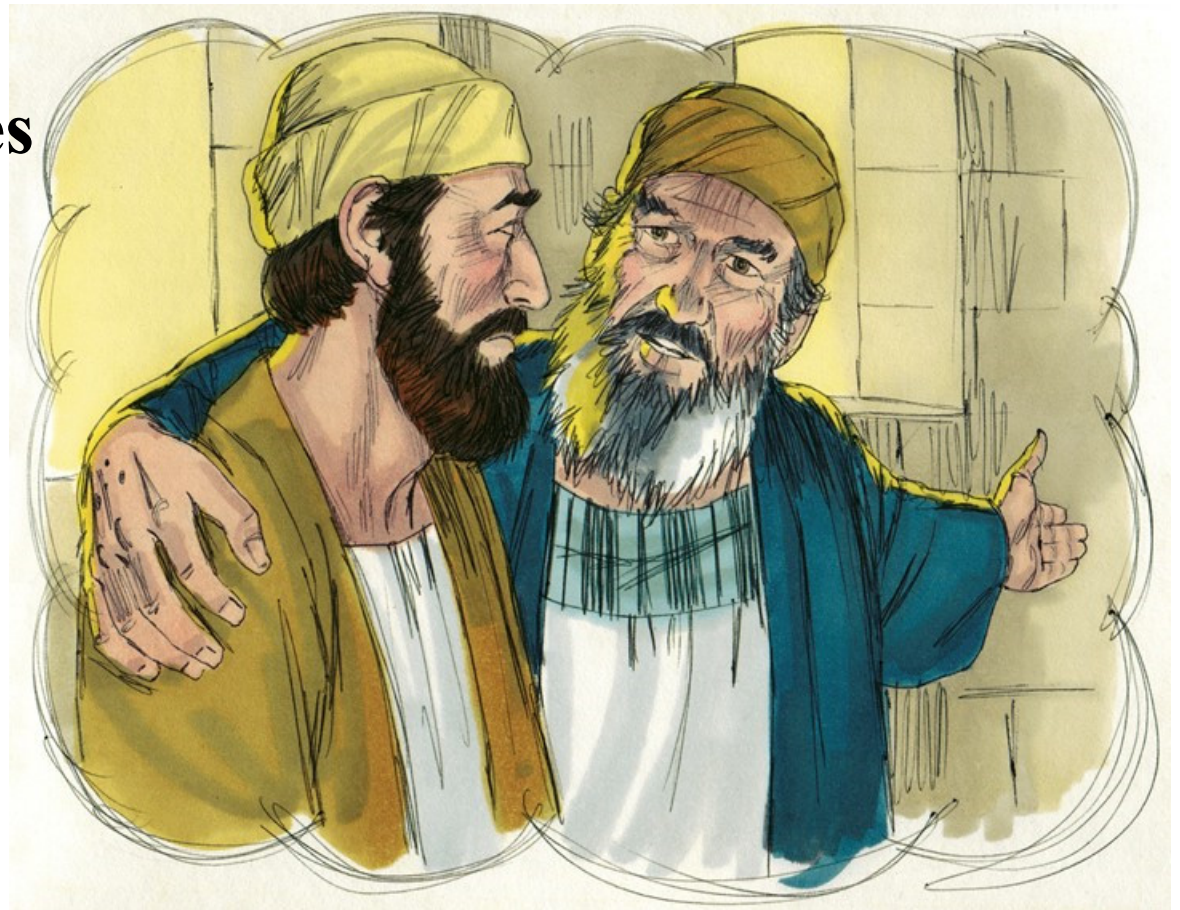
For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.

Jesus to the Pharisees

Luke 16:15.

You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts.



Our attitude towards the “eldest son” backslider.

What is your attitude towards the lost sheep, towards the person who has turned away from God and succumbed to the lure and attraction of the world?

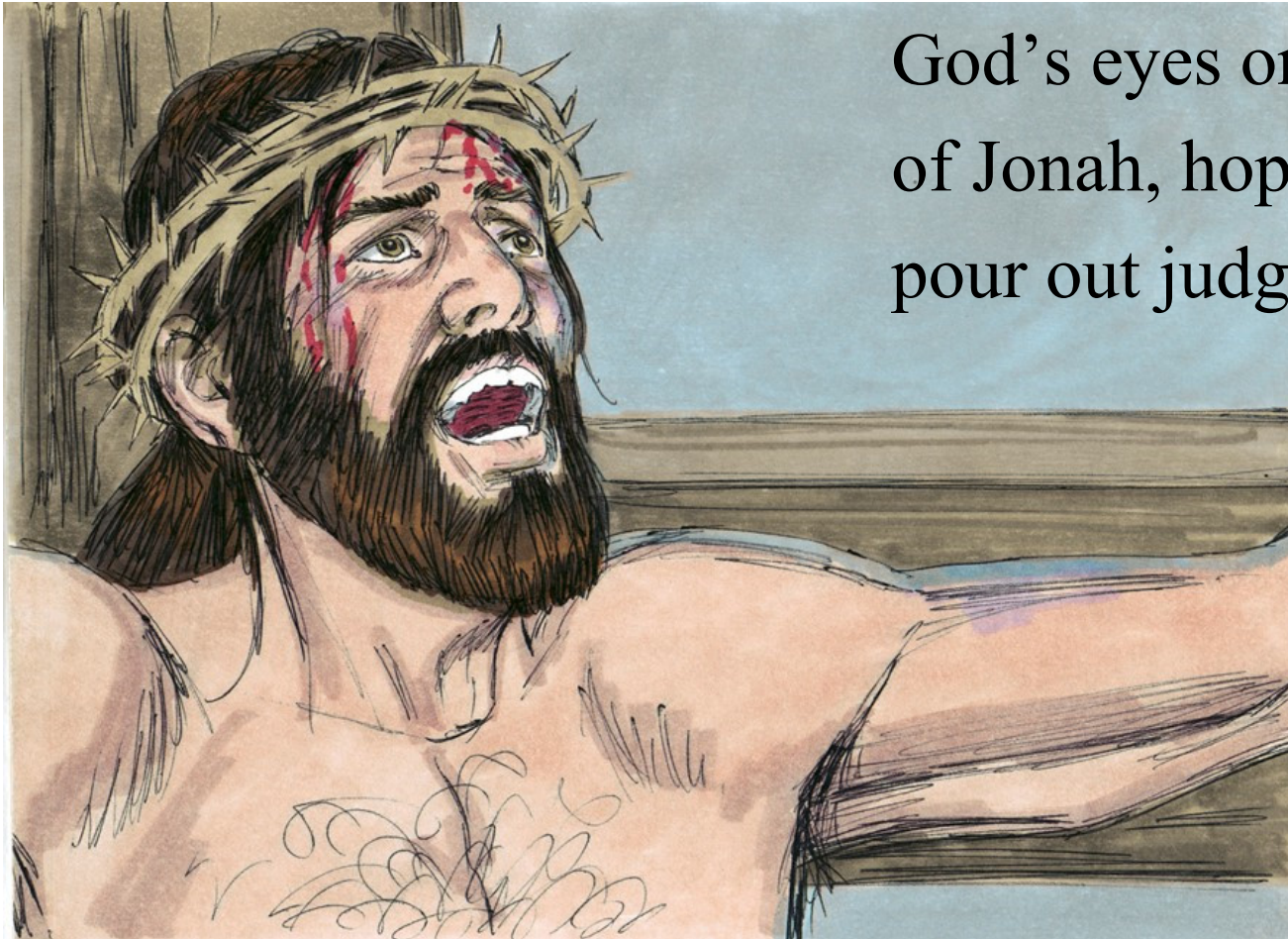
Are you an elder brother?



Our attitude towards a lost and sinful world.

When you look at the world do you see the unsaved as Jesus saw them from the cross, saying **“Father forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing”?** **OR**

Do you look at Nineveh through God’s eyes or through the eyes of Jonah, hoping that God will pour out judgement?



Moses attitude towards Miriam, his sister.

When the Lord struck Miriam with leprosy as she together with Aaron rebelled against Moses.

Numbers 12:13.

So Moses cried out to the LORD, “Please, God, heal her!”



Moses attitude towards the Israelites in their sin.

Are you a Moses standing in the gap and interceding for those who have turned from the Lord and saying Lord have mercy?

Exodus 32:9-11.

I have seen these people, the LORD said to Moses, and they are a stiff-necked people. Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation.

But Moses sought the favour of the LORD his God. LORD, he said, why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?

Moses attitude towards the Israelites in their sin.

Exodus 32:30-32.

The next day Moses said to the people, You have committed a great sin. But now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin. So Moses went back to the LORD and said, Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold. But now, please forgive their sin, but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written.



Are you an intercessor like Jesus?

Ezekiel 22:28-31.

Her prophets whitewash these deeds for them by false visions and lying divinations. They say, This is what the Sovereign LORD says, when the LORD has not spoken.

The people of the land practice extortion and commit robbery; they oppress the poor and needy and mistreat the foreigner, denying them justice.

I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found no one.

So I will pour out my wrath on them and consume them with my fiery anger, bringing down on their own heads all they have done, declares the Sovereign LORD.

The Lord's word to the backslider.

Isaiah 57:17-18.

Because of the iniquity of his unjust gain I was angry, I struck him; I hid my face and was angry, but he went on backsliding in the way of his own heart. I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will lead him and restore comfort to him and his mourners.

Jeremiah 3:14-15.

Return, faithless people, declares the LORD, for I am your husband. I will choose you, one from a town and two from a clan and bring you to Zion.

Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding.

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