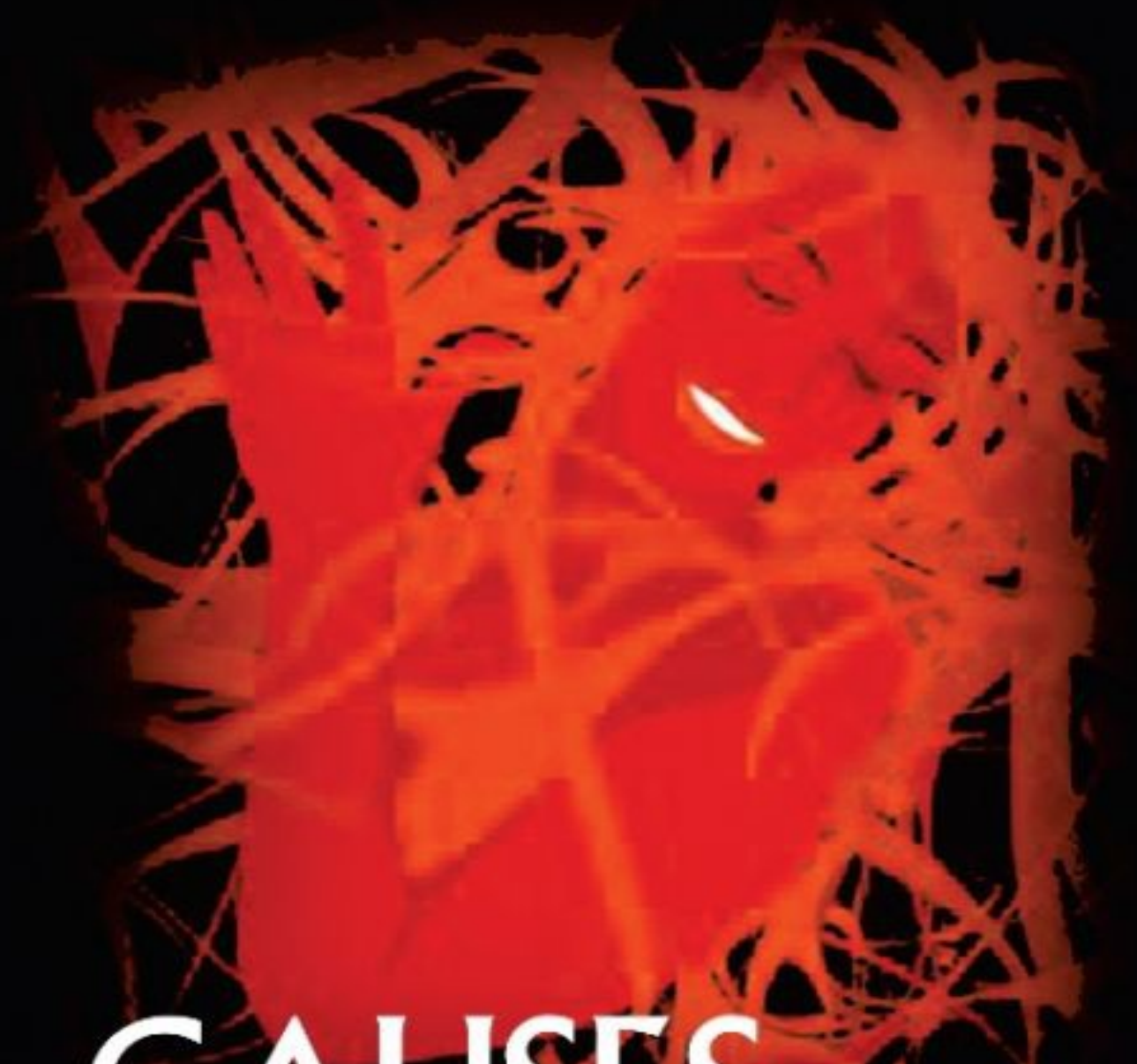
DAG HEWARD-MILLS



CAUSES OF BACKSLIDING

Causes Of Backsliding

by Dag Heward-Mills

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Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Bible

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Chapter 1

Shallowness

I know that there are many causes of backsliding, but in this book, I will try to give you the predominant causes, as the Lord has shown me. The first one, which I will discuss in this chapter, is shallowness.

...and these have no root, which for a while believe...

Luke 8:13

The parable of the sower gives various reasons why some of the seeds could not grow. Some seeds could not grow because they fell on rocky soil. Jesus explained that these are the ones who receive the Word of God with joy, and even believe for a while. But in the time of testing, they fall away because they have no root.

Everyone Will Be Tested

A time of testing will surely come for every Christian. If you are *shallow*, in the time of testing, you *will* fall. Through experience I have noticed that many Christians do not have deep roots. They do not know God for themselves. They cannot even explain why they do the things they do. They don't know why they belong to a particular church. They do not know why they speak in tongues. They do not even know why they give offerings. When they face a little criticism, they get confused and have no defense.

Having no personal experience with God, these are the people who can never say, "God spoke to me." **They have no convictions of their own.**

A close friend who brought me up in the Lord deviated from Christianity, and became a member of a cult. But I did not follow him into that cult because I had my own deep-rooted convictions.

I know why I am serving the Lord, and so my father, mother or closest friend cannot change my mind. **Many Christians who are not rooted in sound biblical doctrine can easily be persuaded to follow fables.** Some born-again believers fall away because they do not know the difference between the true Gospel, and the beliefs of sects like the Jehovah Witnesses.

I Witnessed to the Jehovah's Witness

Once, I was standing at an intersection in the city of Accra, when a Jehovah's Witness came up to me to try to convert me to his faith.

He asked, "Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?"

I replied, "I certainly do!"

Then I asked him, "Have *you* heard of 'speaking in tongues'?"

He said, "Yes. But I don't believe in it."

So I asked him, “What is *this*…?”

Then I released a string of tongues in the direction of this sincere (but sincerely wrong) gentleman.

This ended our conversation. He fled! If I were not convinced that speaking in tongues is an ability which comes with the Holy Spirit, he could have confused me. But I knew my Bible, and I knew (as I still do today) that the Holy Spirit is from God, and speaking in tongues is one of His gifts.

Don’t just speak in tongues because others are speaking in tongues. You must know why tongues sounds like a monotonous and repetitive language.

It is because the Bible says, “For with stammering lips and another tongue will He speak to this people” (Isaiah 28:11).

Tongues is described as a stammering tongue. It is not just an ordinary language. It is a heavenly language that comes out in a stammering fashion.

Will You Fall at the Next Crisis?

You may be in a church, but if you are not *“deep”* you will fall away at the next shaking and crisis. Next time there is a problem in the church, your membership and commitment will be shaken.

Only a *shallow* Christian would fall away when a great man of God gets into some scandalous sin. **What have the sins of that man of God got to do with your own salvation? Why on earth would you think of leaving Christ because of your pastor’s mistakes?** Christians behave in this way because they themselves are shallow!

Don’t Follow Me, If I Don’t Follow Christ

I am the pastor of a very large church. I know many people would do anything I tell them to. But I always tell my church members not to follow me if I do not follow Christ.

After all, I am also a man, and can make mistakes. I tell them, “If I tell you to do something that is not biblical, do not do it. Only do things which can be supported by the Bible.”

If you are not sure about anything your pastor is saying, just ask him, “Please Sir, what is the scriptural basis for this new revelation?”

Not abiding by this principle is the reason why some so-called pastors can bathe their members in the nude (what they call “holy” baths). Some so-called ministers are also able to dupe people out of all their earthly possessions. This is because the pastors know that they are dealing with shallow people.

Paul said, “Follow me as long as I follow Christ.” He was a man subject to like passions, so whatever he did had to be scrutinized by the book of books: The Bible!

Did you know that Aaron led the people of Israel to build a golden calf after God had delivered them from Egypt?

These people were saved all right, but were shallow in their experience with God.

When Moses was held up on the mountain, the Israelites in their shallow faith, turned

shortly to idols and declared, “These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.”

Don’t be shallow and light, blown about by every wind of doctrine! Don’t just follow the crowd! It is shallow people who just follow the crowd.

Following the Crowd Can Be Dangerous

Many became calf worshippers in the days of Aaron because they followed the crowd.

Many murmured and were destroyed in the days of Moses and the ten spies because they followed the crowd.

Many got involved in the killing of Jesus, the Son of God because they followed the crowd.

Following the crowd can be dangerous! Don’t be a shallow Christian. Be deep. Don’t be a believer for just a while. Let your roots grow deep. As the songwriter says, *“Draw me deeper, Lord!”*

Chapter 2

Emptiness

...I am no better than echoing bronze...

1 Corinthians 13:1 (Ronald Knox Translation)

The word "echo" in this Scripture denotes the emptiness I am talking about in this section of the book. There are many Christians who are empty. There is nothing in them. I call them *airy Christians.*

They have little or none of the Word in them, neither are they full of the Holy Spirit or of love. They may speak in tongues, but the Bible says whenever they do so, they are just making a lot of noise. I think the Ronald Knox Translation of 1 Corinthians 13:1, which I have quoted above, really brings out the concept of *spiritual emptiness*.

If I have no love, "I am no better than *echoing* bronze or the *clash* of cymbals." I say once again, the *echo* and the *clash* are a result of the emptiness within.

Empty Christians Are Targets

Emptiness will attract other things to fill that empty space. A spiritual vacuum will be filled with spiritual things, either positively or negatively.

Nature abhors a vacuum, and every space will be filled.

And when he [an evil spirit] cometh, he findeth it unoccupied...

Luke 11:25 (Goodspeed Translation)

Empty Christians are targets for the enemy. The devil will try to fill you with evil and backsliding tendencies because of the emptiness within you.

... and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost ...

Acts 6:5

As you can see, Stephen was full of something positive. That is why he did not backslide, but went on to become a great evangelist.

There is the saying that empty barrels make the most noise. These are the *echoes* 1 Corinthians 13 is talking about.

This same principle definitely applies in Christianity. **Empty Christians are loud and notice able but not substantial**. There is the need for every Christian to be filled with the Spirit, with love and with the Word.

What are you filling your spirit with? Fill your spirit with the Word of God, with faith, with good Christian music. By the way, don't mess around with non-Christian music. It will fill your mind with junk!

Fill your time with church activities. If you don't fill your life with these good things something

else will fill it.

Drive away the emptiness from your spiritual life. This is a fundamental key to staying power for the Christian race.

Chapter 3

Lust

For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world...

2 Timothy 4:10

Demas loved the world. That is why he deserted Paul. If you love somebody, you will eventually gravitate towards that person. This explains why young ladies will leave their loving parents and marry virtual strangers. Love or lust is one of the reasons for that gravitational pull.

If you love the world - its money, its women, its men, its glitter - you will find yourself gravitating towards these things. It is therefore important that the Christian should not have any strange love in his heart.

I have one love for my Lord, and a second love for my wife. I cannot allow any other love to exist in my heart.

Strong Desires Are Dangerous!

There are many Christian ladies who have such strong desires to marry that they will sacrifice all principles and all the rules in order to get married.

To lust after something is to have a strong, excessive desire for something. Usually it is an uncontrollable, sometimes obsessive desire for a particular thing. One dictionary calls lust an animal desire.

Be wary of all forms of lust, whether it is financial lust, sexual lust or power lust. Lust corrupts. Remember the Scripture,

… **having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.**

2 Peter 1:4

The prodigal son had a strong desire for the world. He wanted to leave home so he could have the pleasures of the world. He was deceived and wanted something else. But there was nothing else! He soon found out that the situation out there was not as good as it was at home.

Often, Christians feel they are missing out on something in the world. Sometimes they feel they are losing out on money, sex, glamour and so on.

Apart from the love of Christ, if you have any other love in you, you need to be careful of it. **If you have any strange lusts in you, you must kill them now, or they will grow up and take over your life.**

I Killed it!

I once saw a baby snake in my garden. It looked very much like an ordinary worm but it was definitely a snake.

So I said to myself, “If I don’t kill it now, one day it could kill me.”

I decided, “It is too dangerous to leave this thing alive. Let me kill it now.”

That is how we must deal with some of those desires lurking within us. Deal with them like I dealt with that snake. Kill them now, when they are small and harmless. If you allow them to grow and to develop, they will destroy you one day.

Chapter 4

Bitterness

...lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you...

Hebrews 12:15

Many people who walk out of a church are offended Christians who became bitter. They were probably genuinely offended, but their wounds never healed.

When my wife was pregnant with our second son, Joshua, I sometimes went with her to the antenatal clinic. To while away the time, I engaged in conversation with one of the doctors. One morning as I chatted with this doctor, I noticed that one of his toes was missing.

He Had a Missing Toe

So I asked, "What happened to your toe?" He answered, "I am a diabetic patient, and I once had an injury to that toe."

You know, the wounds of some diabetic patients don't easily heal.

He continued, "I hit my toe on an object, but after some time the wound did not heal. This wound deteriorated until it affected my whole leg."

He lamented about how the doctors had even considered amputating his whole leg. However, in the end they decided to cut off only the toe in question. "It was a very traumatic experience for me. That's how I ended up without a toe," he concluded.

As I mused over the story of this missing toe, the Spirit of God spoke to me and said, "This is what happens to Christians who get hurt and never fully recover from their hurts."

The Holy Spirit showed me how many Christians and pastors allow their hurts to degenerate into unhealed, gangrenous wounds of the heart. He continued, *"They separate themselves from other Christians in the name of being cautious and not wanting to be hurt all over again.* This separation eventually leads to total isolation from the Body of Christ - and backsliding."

Sometimes I think of all the hurts I've experienced in this ministry, and how they have tended to isolate me. I can remember when my former pastor offended me, and refused to support me when I started out in ministry!

None of Them Came to My Wedding

I invited all the pastors I knew to my wedding. But none of them attended. When it was time to take group pictures, the Master of Ceremonies called out for all pastors to come forward. But there was no one. I was totally rejected by the other ministers in the city.

A close family friend and neighbour once called me the leader of a cult! I have had trusted pastors betray me and turn against me. I have experienced midstream desertion in ministry by trusted people. I have had faithful church members I invested a lot in, fight against me!

I even decided at a point to stay away from interactions with many people. But, as I thought about this man's toe, I realized what was gradually happening to me. I was being cut off from the rest of the church in Ghana, just like this man's toe. And it was all because of unhealed wounds and hurts. I decided then to allow my wounds to heal.

I have noticed that there are many seniors in the ministry who have become disappointed, disillusioned, and unforgiving.

I have watched as great ministers who once affected the whole nation, become isolated and cut themselves off from the rest of the Body of Christ.

He Could Not Hide His Wounds From Me

One time I was in the office counselling, when a young man came to me.

He boldly stated, "I have decided to be in your church because I believe this is where God wants me to be."

I queried, "Why did you leave your former church?"

He replied, "I was led by the Spirit to come here."

I asked, "Apart from the Spirit's leading did anything else happen to make you decide to leave that church?"

He hesitated, "Well…there was a slight problem…" And he went on and on about problems that had arisen in his previous church. I immediately knew that what I suspected was true. This man was hurt, and his unresolved hurts had caused him to be cut off from his church.

This is one of the commonest reasons for people backsliding and leaving churches.

Backsliding Love!

Married couples also backslide in their relationships towards each other. They start out with hot, strong and fiery love, which is often blind and unseeing. However, many couples after several years of marriage either just co-exist or even hate each other. How did they backslide from love to hatred? Often the hurts and offences of marriage were never fully resolved until they were virtually cut off from each other. This is one of the favourite tricks of the devil.

If he can isolate you through hurts, he will have the opportunity to speak to you and make you backslide. You see, you are more vulnerable when you are isolated. The book of Hebrews warns us that bitterness can trouble us greatly.

…**lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you…**

Hebrews 12:15

Chapter 5

Sinfulness

My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.

Proverbs 1:10

Many of the Christians who walk out of church and backslide have often been living in sin.

Although they were in church, some of them used to commit fornication, adultery, stealing, and other sins. These are the church members who easily become annoyed with their pastors for preaching about their evil deeds. They do not want certain portions of the Scriptures to be referred to. They feel uncomfortable when certain subjects are preached in church.

They Don't Like Hot Sermons

They also hate hard-hitting, Holy Ghost inspired messages that lay bare the realities of righteous living.

One morning, a friend of mine was chatting with her colleague in the office.

She asked him, "How was your weekend?" "Oh, it was fine! I went to church on Sunday," he replied.

"How was church?" she asked.

He answered, "I'm not impressed with my church anymore. I don't think I'll go back there again."

She was surprised and wondered, "What's wrong with your church? You've been going there for sometime now."

He answered, "The pastor's sermons are not uplifting. I tell you, we are not blessed!"

He went on, "If he wants to preach, he should just preach. But all this going on about fornication, and people having girlfriends isn't necessary."

You see, this married man was having an affair with a young lady in the office and he didn't like his sin being exposed. I tell you, there was nothing wrong with that pastor's preaching. Fornication is a subject in the Bible which must be addressed.

Such Christians can easily leave church to avoid the confrontations of God's Word, instead of admitting their sins and repenting. When a believer sins and acknowledges his mistake, he is on his way to being healed.

Address the sin in your life. Correct the mistakes. Deal with every evil thought and habit. This will keep you in the Lord. Sin is definitely a primary cause of backsliding.

My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.

Proverbs 1:10

Chapter 6

Without Truth

My parents taught me never to tell lies. My mother kept telling me throughout my childhood that my father didn't tell lies, so I was not supposed to tell lies. As I grew up I found it difficult to tell lies.

These six things doth the Lord hate…a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood.

Proverbs 6:16,17

Liars are compared to wicked people who shed innocent blood. There are born-again Christians who habitually lie through their teeth. They lie to God and to man without batting an eyelid.

Stand your ground then, with truth for your belt…

Ephesians 6:14 (Twentieth Century New Testament)

This belt of truth holds the whole armour together. *Truth, honesty and sincerity are things that hold your entire Christian life together. Without sincerity, your Christian life will disintegrate and you will backslide.*

I remember being in a service once with some other brethren. There was a young lady who had been prophesying and holding up the whole service for periods of time.

The Demon-Possessed Girl

She would stand up whilst the leader was preaching, and interrupt the service with very long prophecies. She would command the priest to stop the administration of communion. This young girl would prophesy and make the entire congregation kneel down and stand up at will.

Many of the leaders were inexperienced, and didn't know what to do. So they would stand back as this young lady dominated the entire service. I had been told about this young lady who had been controlling the meetings, but had never seen her myself.

That day, I realized that I was seeing the live manifestation of an evil spirit. This young lady stood up and began to take over the service with her prophecies just as had been described to me. So I got out of my seat, took a couple of brothers with me, and escorted her into the basement of the building. I knew that an evil spirit was controlling this young lady. As soon as we got into the basement, the young lady's eyes widened and blazed.

She looked straight at me and said, "Do not quench the Spirit!"

I could virtually see the demons dancing in her eyes. This almost unsettled me as I wondered, "Was I *quenching* the Holy Spirit?"

Then I said, "You foul spirit, in the name of Jesus. I command you to stop your activities

and come out of this girl."

She immediately went into all sorts of writhing movements. The spirit began to manifest, spoke to us using the girl's voice and said many things. I cannot give all the details of this deliverance episode in this book. However, there was one thing that struck me, which I want to highlight here.

I asked the demon spirit, "How did you come into this lady?"

That spirit said, "*The belt of truth was loose.*"

The demons had gained access to this young girl's life because the protective armour of truth, sincerity and honesty was deficient in one way or the other.

I cannot tell you exactly how this girl's belt of truth was loosened. That is not important to you. What is important is your belt of truth.

Lying Opens the Gate to Evil Spirits

Are you honest? Are you sincere? When you make a mistake do you admit it easily? Are you truthful to yourself and to God? I tell you, there are many people who lie to themselves continually and tell themselves, "I am okay", when they know they are not.

Do not deceive yourself! Be honest and sincere! Be straightforward! Jesus said, "You will know the truth and the truth will make you free." Don't be angry when you hear the truth. It is the truth that you need.

Chapter 7

Rebellion

There is one sin which is compared to witchcraft in the Bible. That is the sin of rebellion.

For rebellion is as [like] the sin of witchcraft...

1 Samuel 15:23

Rebellion is the fight against all authority. Rebellion often camouflages itself as the fight for independence. Many so-called freedom and independence fighters are actually downright rebels.

Africa, for instance, has had its fair share of rebels. There have been rebellions and uprisings against governments all over Africa.

There are also many rebellious elements in the church. There are rebellious pastors who break out of their rightful positions as branch pastors, assistant pastors and so on. There are rebellious church members who break out of their God- given places within churches. I assure you that rebels usually have very spiritual reasons for the things they do!

Rebellion stems from the heart. And every rebellious child of God has rejected legitimate authority in his life. The result therefore is backsliding. I have known Christians who do not want anything, be it human or divine, to instruct them concerning their lives. Rebellion is a cardinal factor in the backsliding phenomenon.

It was rebellion against his father's authority that led the prodigal son to leave home. The rebellion in the prodigal son's heart led him to eat with pigs. I am sure you don't want to end up eating with pigs. Don't be a rebel. All rebels are destined to end in one way. Ask the prodigal son, ask Judas, ask Absalom, ask Adonijah, ask Ahithophel, ask Shimei, and ask Lucifer to tell you what happened to them when they rebelled.

All rebels are headed for one judgement - EXECUTION!!

Chapter 8

Foolishness

He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool...

Proverbs 28:26

Many Christians do foolish things. They venture into places only fools would dare. There are some situations, and some people who will lead you into trouble. Some young unmarried Christian couples court disaster when they engage in certain things.

During courtship, some Christians can be found in unhealthy situations after midnight. Then when you become pregnant before your wedding, you appear surprised that you fell into sin! Why should you be surprised?

What Is a Business Lunch?

There are some ladies whose specialty is to wine and dine with married men. And their excuse is that they work with these men. “Oh, It’s just a business lunch,” they say. But I tell you, they are playing with fire.

I have seen Christian brothers and sisters live in the same flat, and even in the same room, all in the name of saving money. The next thing that happened was they fell in love. Then before you could say, “Jack Robinson” they had a baby. Foolishness has a price.

All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient...

1 Corinthians 10:23

Some types of behaviour are straightforward foolishness. **You should never overestimate your spiritual strength.**

God has continually drummed it into me that being a pastor does not make me immune or special. The Lord has made it clear that He will treat me as He treats everyone else. So no matter who you are, if you walk in foolishness and absurdity, you will backslide. It is as simple as that!

Fools make a mock at sin...

Proverbs 14:9

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