Dag Heward-Mills



Staying Power

Staying Power

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 - My Last Argument

This is my final argument against backsliding. In this book, you will see in very real terms the folly of backsliding.

You will read the testimonies of real Christians who made it to the very end. You will also hear the last statements of the backslidden and lost souls, and what they said as they approached the gates of Hell. You will see how really terrible backsliding is.

In our walk with God there is a certain line that we must not cross. There is a point of no return. I have heard believers say that they will backslide, but will come back to the Lord after some time. They forget that there may be a point of no return.

The Point of No Return

We will all stand before the presence of God to account for our lives. When that time comes and you are ushered into the presence of God, what will you say?

Will you be ready? Will you have done what God wanted you to do?

A Christian brother was committing fornication when he heard a loud blast. He thought it was the sound of the trumpet heralding the return of Christ. So he jumped out of the bed, but was not caught up to Heaven. He was so worried, because he thought that he had been left behind at the rapture. This anxious Christian was overreacting to the honk of a big bus. A backslider lives in fear and uncertainty.

God Wants to Reason with You Come now, and let us REASON together…

Isaiah 1:18

God is a rational Being, and He wants to reason with you.

Many people think that when you deal with spiritual things you must put aside all reason and stop thinking rationally. But the Bible records that God wants us to reason with Him. If God tells you to reason, then He must be a God who thinks logically and sequentially! I am going to reason with you and argue with you about backsliding. You could call it “Arguments for and against backsliding”. I will show you certain people who were *happ*and *full of joy* as they entered into the rest of God. These were Christians who served the Lord and did not fall away.

On the other hand, I will show you what some dying backsliders said as they left this earth. These testimonies alone should make you decide never, never, never to backslide.

Chapter 2 - Testimonies of the Saints

First, I want you to notice what Bible saints had to say when they were moving from this world to the next.

Apostle Paul

Apostle Paul was in prison when he knew that his time of death was near. He said, “For to me… to die is gain.” In other words he was happy to be dying. How many people are happy to die? If you are confident of your relationship with God you will not fear death.

Jacob

When the Patriarch Jacob was dying in Genesis 49:33, the Bible declares that after commanding his sons, “…He gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost...”

What a way to go! He knew that he was going. He had time to instruct his children with confidence. After commanding his sons, he gathered his feet onto the bed and died. You see, the death of the righteous is very different from the death of the wicked. Balaam the prophet said,

...Let me die the death of the righteous...

Numbers 23:10

Now let’s study how some ordinary people, after living a life without backsliding, went on happily to be with the Lord.

Ignatius

Ignatius lived in 100 AD. He was the Bishop of Antioch, and a personal disciple of John the Apostle. He was sentenced to death, and as he was dying, his last words were, “I thank thee, oh God, that thou hast honoured me with thy Word, praise God!”

These were the last words of a man who was sentenced to death by burning at the stake. Some other people would have been screaming, defecating and salivating. But this man died praising God!

Father Polycarp

Father Polycarp, another disciple of John, lived during the reign of Emperor Nero. He was also sentenced to death. He was taken to court, and there, he was given an option to either denounce Jesus or be burnt

to death. Polycarp suffered much for Christ's sake. The Roman Proconsul commanded him to swear allegiance to Caesar, saying, "Swear, and I will set thee at liberty; reproach Christ." How courageous and magnificent was Polycarp's reply! He said, "Eighty and six years have I now served Christ, and He has never done me the least wrong. How, then, can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?"

Further efforts to make him deny his Lord failed, and Polycarp was condemned to be burned at the stake.

When the day came for him to be burned alive, those responsible for the burning wanted to nail him to the stake, but he protested: "Let me alone as I am: for He who has given me strength to endure the fire, will also enable me, without your securing me by nails, to stand without moving in the pile."

Finally he exclaimed, "Oh! Lord, Father of the Beloved Son Jesus Christ. I thank thee that thou has allotted me a place among the Martyrs."

Augustus Montague Toplady

Augustus Montague Toplady (1710-1778), will ever be famous as the author of one of the most evangelical hymns of the Eighteenth Century, "Rock of Ages," which was first published in 1776. During his final illness, Toplady was greatly supported by the consolations of the Gospel.

Near his last, awaking from a sleep, he said:

"Oh, what delights! Who can fathom the joy of the third Heaven? The sky is clear, there is no cloud. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" He died saying, "No mortal man can live after the glories which God has manifested to my soul." And with those words he went to be with the Lord.

William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare (1564-1616), the world's outstanding figure in literature, of whose life, times and works a whole library of books has been written, lived near his Bible as the numerous quotations from it in his plays and dramas prove.

A Famous Man Knew the Lord

His end came when he was only 52 years old. His last will that was

written in the year he died revealed his faith in God.

“I commend my soul into the hands of God my Creator, hoping and assuredly believing, through the only merits of Jesus Christ my Saviour, to be made partaker of life everlasting, and my body to the earth, whereof it is made.”

Matthew Henry

Matthew Henry (1662-1714), was the eminent non-conformist theologian who gave the Church the devotional commentary which held a foremost place in its field. He died a week after his settlement in London as pastor of a church in Hackney, but his end was full of confidence in the Saviour’s grace.

His last words were: “A life spent in the service of God, and in communion with Him, is the most comfortable life that any one can lead in this present world.”

John Wesley

John Wesley, the founder of the great Methodist Church said,” The best of all is, God is with us.” I really love these last words of this great founder.

John Wesley, of whom it has been said that eternity alone will reveal what the world owes to his mighty ministry, was active to the very end. Until the end, he was full of praise, counsel and exhortations.

The Great Founder Dies in Peace

In his last moments with what remaining strength he had, he cried out twice over, in holy triumph: “The best of all is, God is with us.” The very last word Wesley was heard to articulate was: “Farewell!”

Then, without a lingering groan, the evangelist of the highways and by-ways, beloved pastor of thousands, and father of the great Methodist Church, entered into the joy of his Lord. Notice again, death to the confident Christian. It was a peaceful transition from one world to another!

Adoniram Judson

Adoniram Judson was a missionary to Africa.

In fact, the first American missionary to Africa. He went to Burma, wrote

and translated the Bible into the Burmese language.

The Departure of Africa's First American Missionary

He also wrote a dictionary for them. When he was dying he said, "No one ever left this world with brighter hopes or warmer feelings. Don't be afraid, death will not surprise me. In spite of what I say, I feel so strong in Him." This is a man who had strength when most people are weak. Let's all pray for such staying power, that we may all prevail until the very end.

Charles Bridgman

Charles Bridgman died at the age of twelve. As a child he loved to read his Bible and desired spiritual knowledge. Young Charles would often rebuke his brothers if they forgot to thank God at meal times. When he became ill, he was asked whether he would rather live or die, he answered, "I desire to die, that I may go to my Saviour."

The Strength of a Little Boy

As his time drew near, his last words were:

"...Into thy hands I commend my soul! Now close mine eyes. Forgive me, father, mother, brother, sister and all the world! Now I am well, my pain is almost gone, my joy is at hand. Lord have mercy upon me. O Lord, receive my soul unto Thee."

How many young boys of today would speak the way this young man spoke?

Robert Bruce

Robert Bruce, one of the most distinguished men of his time, entered the ministry and became prominent in Edinburgh.

Scrupulously maintaining the established norms of the church, he exposed himself to much persecution for the truth's sake.

At the time of his death, he called for the family Bible and said to his daughter:

"Cast up to me the eighth chapter of Romans, and set my finger on these words, 'I am persuaded that NEITHER DEATH NOR LIFE ... SHALL BE ABLE TO SEPARATE ME from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus my Lord.'" Then Bruce said, "Is my finger on them?" "Yes," said his

daughter.

Then he replied, “Now God be with you, my children. I have just breakfasted with you, and shall sup with my Lord Jesus this night.” How exciting it must be when you know you are ready! There can be no reason to backslide when you hear these exciting testimonies.

And Many Others

Another dying Christian said,” How bright the room, how full of angels!”

Some other Christian said confidently, “The battle is fought. The battle is fought, and the victory is won.”

With those words, he went to be with the Lord.

Alexander II, full of divine faith, exclaimed:

“I am sweeping through the gates, washed in the blood of the Lamb.”

Someone else said, “I wish I had the power of writing to describe how pleasant it is to die.” Another one exclaimed, “Oh! That I could tell what joy I possess. I am full of rapture, the Lord shines with such power upon my soul. He is come, He is come.”

One surviving believer said, “I shall soon be with Jesus. PERHAPS I AM TOO ANXIOUS!”

Is it Always Sweet to Die?

Another person said, “IT IS SWEET TO DIE.” How will you be able to say, “It is sweet to die” when you have backslidden and you know judgement awaits you?

One Christian brother questioned, “Can this be death? What? It is better than living. TELL THEM I DIED HAPPILY IN JESUS.” Another one said, “They sing. The angels sing. IS THIS DYING? NO, IT IS SWEET LIVING.”

One lucky backslider, Oliver, a doctor of philosophy, had lived the life of an infidel. But shortly before his death he repented and turned to the Saviour. His final word was one of deep regret: “Would that I could undo the mischief I have done! I was more ardent to poison men with infidel principles than any Christian is to spread the doctrines of Christ.”

Chapter 3 - Testimonies of the Sinners

Now, let us consider what some backsliders and sinners said as they were dying. The pride and rebellion of these wicked people did not help matters as they approached the gates of Hell and accountability.

Some of these people were backslidden Christians. They died as frightened, screaming and hopelessly lost souls.

The first person I want us to consider in this category is a man called Tom Paine.

Tom Paine

Tom Paine (1737-1809) was considered to be a literary giant.

He wrote *The Age of Reason* and lived during the revivals of John Wesley and George Whitfield. *He lived a life that was against God, and drew people away from God.* I believe that this is one of the people who have made Europe so anti-Christ and atheistic in their way of thinking. One person who witnessed his death said, “He is truly to be pitied.”

Although he did not believe in God, at the hour of death on his bed he said, “I would give worlds, if I had them, that ‘Age of Reason’ had not been published. Oh! Lord help me. Oh! God, what have I done to suffer so much?” Then after that he said, “But there is no God. Yet if there is a God, what will become of me in the world after? If ever the devil had an agent, I have been that one.”

He Was Frightened to Die

When an elderly woman attending him wanted to leave the room, he said, “Stay with me. For God’s sake, I cannot bear to be left alone. For it is hell to be left alone.” The very last words of Tom Paine were “My God, my God why has thou forsaken me?” And with these words he died. This is the death of the wicked. Utterly helpless and hopeless in the presence of a righteous God!

Voltaire

Whenever I go to Geneva, I cross over into Ferney-Voltaire, a little French village named after a noted infidel Voltaire (1694-1778). One night I drove with the pastor of my church in Geneva to look at a statue of this man. I saw all of the tributes that were written to his name and all of the good works that he was said to have done for the community. But this man also lived and fought against Christianity.

The Man Who Cursed Christ

Notice what this noted French infidel said of Christ our Saviour: “Curse the wretch!” How on earth can you gather so much confidence to curse Christ and call Him a wretch?

He once boasted, “In twenty years,

Christianity will be no more. My single hand shall destroy the edifice it took twelve apostles to rear.”

These are the people who have laid the foundations for the atheism that is so prevalent in Europe today.

Shortly after his death, the very house in which he printed his foul literature became the depot of the Geneva Bible Society. The nurse who attended Voltaire said: “For all the wealth in Europe I would not see another infidel die.”

He Was Helpless and Desperate on His Deathbed

The physician, Trochim, who was with Voltaire at his death said that he cried out *most desperately*: “I am abandoned by God and man! I will give you half of what I am worth if you will give me six month’s life. Then I shall go to hell, and you will go with me. O Christ! O Jesus Christ!”

Notice the desperation and helplessness of this blasphemer as he descended into the abyss. He admitted that he was on his way to Hell. My dear Christian friends, let’s make no mistakes about the reality of Heaven and Hell.

Thomas Hobbes

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1674), was a noted English political philosopher whose most famous work was *Leviathan*.

This cultured, clever skeptic corrupted many of the great men of his time. But what regret was his at the end of the road! What hopelessness permeated his last words: “If I had the whole world, I would give it to live one day. I am about to take a leap in the dark!” The good news is:

Christians do not take leaps into the dark! When they die they go to Heaven!

Thomas Cromwell

Thomas Cromwell (1540), who became Earl of Essex, was the noted

English statesman who was next to the King in power and influence. He was responsible for the digging up of the bones of Thomas Becket, and their burning, as those of a traitor.

The Man Who Was Seduced

Over-ambitious, Cromwell lost his influence and also his head, for he was executed. Historians tell us that as he died, he said in a speech:

“THE DEVIL IS READY TO SEDUCE US, AND I HAVE BEEN SEDUCED, but bear me witness that I die in the Catholic Faith.” Notice how people want to associate with God at the last moment. This man was insisting that he was in the faith!

Thomas Cork

Thomas Cork cried out in anguish as he was dying. He said, “Until this moment I thought there was neither a God nor a devil. But now I know, and I feel that there are both.” He exclaimed, “I am doomed to judgment by the judgment of the Almighty.”

Robert Green Ingersoll

He Wrote About the Mistakes of the Bible

Robert Green Ingersoll (1833-1899), famous American lawyer and prominent agnostic, lectured on biblical inaccuracies and contradictions. His famed lecture, *The Mistakes of Moses* led one defender of the Bible to say that he would like to hear Moses speak for five minutes on *The Mistakes of Ingersoll*!

Do I Have a Soul?

When he came to the gates of Hell he was frozen with terror and he said, “OH GOD, IF THERE IS A GOD, HAVE MERCY ON MY SOUL - IF I HAVE A SOUL.”

Sir Francis Gilfort

Sir Francis Gilfort, was taught early in his life about the Gospel.

The Potential Minister Who Backslid

He was a backslidden Christian. In fact, it was expected that he would become a minister, but he fell into bad company. When he was passing on to eternity, he said, “From where is this war in my heart? What arguments do I have to assist me in matters of fact? Do I say there is no

hell when I feel one in my bosom?

AYE, AM I CERTAIN THAT THERE IS NO JUDGMENT WHEN I FEEL PRESENT JUDGMENT? Oh, wretch that I am. Whither shall I flee from this? That there is a God, I know, for I continually feel that of His wrath. That there is a hell, I am surely certain. Oh! That I was to lie upon the fire that never quench for a thousand years to purchase the favour of God, and to be reverted to Him again. But it is a fruitless wish.

Millions and millions of years will bring me no nearer to the end of my torment. Eternity, eternity!"

Do You Want Anyone to Pray For You?

As the distress of this man increased, he was asked whether he wanted some people to be invited to pray for him. He responded, "Tigers and monsters, are you devils to come to torment me? Will you give me the prospects of Heaven to make my hell more intolerable?" Then he said, "Oh! the insufferable pangs of death." And with that he died. How frightening!

William Pope

William Pope, was a born-again Christian, and knew the love of God. But he backslid when his wife died, and he followed Tom Paine. Not long after he backslid, he contracted tuberculosis, which was known at that time as the consumption.

He is said to have been the leader of a company of infidels who ridiculed everything religious.

They Kicked the Bible and Tore it Up

This was a classic backslider who said when he was dying, "No case is comparable to mine, I cannot revert, God will damn me forever." One of the exercises of he and his friends was to kick the Bible about the floor, or tear it up. Friends who were present in his death chamber spoke of it as a scene of terror.

A Frightening Scene of Death

His eyes rolled to and fro as he was dying on his bed, and he lifted up his hands as he cried out, "I have no contrition. I cannot repent. God will damn me. I know the day of grace is past ... You see one who is damned

forever... Oh!

Eternity! Eternity... Nothing for me but hell. Come, eternal torments... Do you not see? Do you not see him? He is coming for me. Oh! The burning flame, the hell, the pain that I feel. Eternity will explain my torment."1 And with these words, he died.

These were the very last words of a backslider!!

Dear Christian friend, what else can I say? I have shown you the real life testimonies of real people just like yourself. If that is not enough to make you believe and stay with God, then perhaps… I have bargained for your soul, sharing with you all that a pastor can. I have shown you how people who backslide behave when they approach the gates of eternity. On the other hand, I have shown you the happy farewells of Christians with staying power to the very end. My prayer for you is that you will find Christ and STAY in Christ. For on Christ the solid rock we stand. Amen!!!

1. Quotations from *Last Words of Saints and Sinners.*

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