

Rise Up And Build

"So They said, 'Let us rise up and build,' Then they set their hands to do this good work," Neh. 2:18

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Restoring The Erring Christian

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The Bible clearly teaches that Christians can backslide (i.e. that is, go backward instead of forward) in their spiritual lives. Satan does not give up on a person when he becomes a Christian. If anything, he becomes more intent on destroying him. He is the adversary of children of God and *"as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour"* (I Pet. 5:8). Paul warned the Corinthians against falling. *"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall"* (I Cor. 10:12). To the Galatians, he said, *"ye are fallen from grace"* (Gal. 5:4).

A terrible fate awaits the child of God who errs from the truth and does not repent of his sins. *"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them"* (2 Peter 2:20-21). An erring child of God who persists in sin is under sentence of spiritual death. *"For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. But a certain fearful looking of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries"* (Heb. 10:26-27).

Our Duty To An Erring Brother

We are our *"brother's keeper."* We have the responsibility to exhort an erring brother to come back to the Lord. *"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted"* (Gal. 6:1).

We are obliged by love to be observant of the needs of our brethren. *"look not every man to his own things, but every man also on the things of others"* (Phil. 2:4). This does

not mean that we are to be nosy or that we have a right to pry into people's lives. But it does mean that when some open and clear signal of weakness is detected in the life of a brother, such as absence from the services, or apathy toward the work of the church, we must not ignore them,.

We must pray for the erring. We cannot pray for God to forgive their unfaithfulness until such a time as they actually repent. But we can and should pray that God will help us bring them to repentance. We can pray that they will not be involved in further temptation which might cause them to become even more deeply involved in sin.

We should go to the erring brother and appeal to him to come back to the Lord. There is a right way and a wrong way to make the approach. One must never go to such a person with a self-righteous spirit lest he be repulsive and drive away the one he intended to reclaim. Instead he should be humble and sincere. He must do whatever is in his power to discuss the person's problems in strict confidence. He must do whatever he can to advise the erring, from the Word of God and to help him reestablish a right relationship with Christ and the church.

The erring Christian must be turned around and brought back to the truth. *“Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins”* (Jas. 5:19-20). One errs from the truth when he accepts a false doctrine instead of holding to the truth. Or he can refuse to live by the demands of truth by some sinful act of misconduct. In either case, the plight of the individual involved is desperate. Falsehood and sin lead to death and damnation. Only truth and one's obedience to it can purify and save. He must be turned from his error and back to the truth. To bring him to repentance is *“to save a soul from death”* (James 5:20).

What the Erring One Must Do

After we have done all we can to reclaim a brother, the one who has erred from the truth must himself make the final and decisive move which will secure his cleansing from sin and restore him to a right relationship with God. What he must do is illustrated in the Parable of the Prodigal Son: *“And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, father I have sinned against heaven and before thee. And am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants”* (Luke 15:17-19),.

When he *“came to himself”* he determined what he should do. The erring Christian must come *“to himself.”* He must admit his lost and unhappy plight. He must yearn for home and his heavenly Father. He must repent of having sinned against the Father. This one must turn around and come back to the Father. The humblest servant in the family of God is better provided for than the richest man in Satan's service. There is no *“bread of life”* in the devil's kingdom. So people today can get along in this world without God, but theirs is a swine's existence compared to what they can enjoy if only they would come to the Father house.

He must resolve to go back to the Father. No more *“well I know what I should do but...”* type of holding back and hesitation. There must be a firm decision. Like the Prodigal Son, he must say, *“I will arise and go to my Father.”* Leaving his Father was the cause of all his woe, a return would correct his misery. Sinners will suffer until they make up their minds to turn to their Father. They cannot hope to enjoy the blessings of God in that *“far away country”* of sin.

One must carry out his resolve immediately. No amount of resolutions of good intentions can replace the actual return home the place where the Father is, the church. He cannot stay away

from the church and be saved. He cannot be out of fellowship with the Father, for the church is the family of God (I Tim. 3:15).

He must confess his sin, and ask forgiveness. No rationalization or attempts at justifying what has happened. No saying, "If I have sinned I ask to be forgiven." The prodigal son said, "*Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight and am no more worthy to be called thy son*" (Luke 15:21). This is the only appropriate sentiment for one who has run away from home and is coming back in penitence.

A warning should be sounded against what might be called "slipping back in through the back door." Just imagine, if you can, a man leaving his wife and children and then three years later — coming home without a word of explanation, confession, or apology. He just comes in one afternoon with the evening paper, sits down in his old easy chair, eats dinner with his wife and children and watches TV with the children until bedtime. Does it happen like this in human families? Of course not, and it should not be done in the family of God!

Some brethren abandon the Lord for long periods of time and finally realizing how wrong they have been, become disturbed over their lost condition. They begin attending the services again, remain faithful in attendance and finally take an active part in the work and worship of the congregation. No confession of sin has been made. Their sin, though it may have been forgiven by brethren, has not been forgiven by God. "***If*** *we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (I John 1:9). The confession here contemplated is a humble acknowledgement of wrong, a penitent attitude, essential to forgiveness. God has promised to forgive us on the condition that we confess our sins; He is faithful and will not fail to do so. "*For all the promises of God in him are **yea**, and in him Amen*" (2 Cor. 1:20).

Let every child of God resolve in his heart not to be among the number of brethren who err from the truth. We must love the truth. Some will be lost "*because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved*" (2 Thess. 2:10). We must obey it (Gal. 5:7). We must display its "*fruit of the Spirit*" in our lives daily (Gal. 5:22). Let us resolve to live a godly and faithful life. Let us live so as to be able to say: "*We are not of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul*" (Heb. 10:39). Let us work diligently to reclaim those who have erred from the truth
