

Canons of Dort–5th Head: 7-8– Restoring the Backslider!

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: Believers can fall far back into sin – so far back that they might even doubt they are believers –doubt their own salvation. But God, out of his mercy, brings every single backsliding believer back to himself. You heard about that last week. **Today, you will hear “how” God brings backsliders back to himself** and the reassurance he gives those who come back.

Our headings are:

God’s Renewal of the Backslider

God’s Reassurance to the Backslider

Our goals are: **That you will not despair when you (or your loved ones) backslide, but you will let God reassure you through his Word, that you are his child, and you will let him bring you out from the filth into which you have fallen.**

God’s Renewal of the Backslider

Article 7: Renewal to Repentance - For, in the first place, **God preserves in those saints** when they fall the **divine imperishable seed** from which they have been born again, lest it perish or be dislodged. Secondly, by the **Word and Spirit**, God certainly and **effectively renews them to repentance** so that they have a **heartfelt and godly sorrow for the sins** they have committed. They seek and obtain, through faith and with a contrite heart, forgiveness in the blood of the Mediator. They experience again the grace of a reconciled God. **Through faith they adore God’s mercies**, and from then on more eagerly they work out their own salvation with fear and trembling

1. A believer may fall into sin and stay there for a time (backslide), but he is never totally lost, and can never be totally lost.

He cannot lose his salvation because God planted his eternal, imperishable seed in him.

1John 3:9 Whoever has been **born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him...**

This is not saying that a man in whose heart God’s seed is planted never sins; it is saying the believer does not continue in sin; he does not perpetually live as a non-believer – though he may be stunted for a while.

1Peter 1:22 Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, **23** having been born again, not of **corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,**

A corruptible seed is perishable. And incorruptible seed is imperishable.

Arminians disagree with the Bible and teach that the seed God planted in man can die—that it is corruptible. In reality, then, Arminians minimize the greatness of God’s salvation. God’s seen in man will grow because it is **incorruptible seed.**

2. How does the renewal begin for the backslider?

God sends a message through preaching to the backslider, and the Holy Spirit uses that message to make the backslider feel a godly sorrow for his sins, like when the Lord called David through Nathan when he had stolen Bathsheba, killed her husband, and lived in a backslidden state.

2Samuel 12:7 Then Nathan said to David, **“You are the man!** Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. 8 ‘I gave you your master’s house and your master’s wives into your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if that had been too little, I also would have given you much more! 9 ‘Why have you despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon.

This is why you must never miss the preaching of the Word of God – even if you travel, even if you are tired, even if the government bans worship, or even if the kids are making life difficult. Don’t miss personal and family devotions daily – even though your lives are busy. **It is most common that those who are living in a backslidden state are not hearing the Word of God.** Their souls are in drought.

3. When the backslider feels godly sorrow for sins, he repents, like David did.

Psalms 51:8 Make me hear joy and gladness, That the bones You have broken may rejoice. 9 Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities. 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Paul addressed this issue head-on: True sorrow **will** lead to repentance:

2Corinthians 7:9 Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that **your sorrow led to repentance.** For you **were made sorry in a godly manner**, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. 10 For **godly sorrow produces repentance** leading to salvation...

Salvation is used in a general sense. Apostle Paul was rebuking backsliding Corinthians.

4. Being emotionally sorry for their sins isn’t enough.

Some, like Judas and Esau, who are emotionally sorry never truly repent. They never had faith in Christ.

Hebrews 12:16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. 17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was

rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he **sought it carefully with tears...**

So there may not be true repentance though there be many tears... crocodile tears! They were fake believers.

1John 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that **they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.**

So the one who never returns shows he was never truly a believer! Maybe he was emotional, but that's all.

5. The renewed backslider, by the working of the Holy Spirit, then regains the joy of knowing and serving the Lord, rests in him, and fights the Devil, the world, and his flesh.

This is what "working out your salvation with fear and trembling" means. The believer does these things which reassure him of his salvation.

God's Reassurance to The Backslider

Article 8: The Certainty of This Preservation - So it is not by their own merits or strength, but by **God's undeserved mercy**, that they neither forfeit faith and grace totally nor remain in their errors to the end and are lost. With respect to themselves this not only **easily could happen**, but also undoubtedly would happen. Yet with respect to God it cannot possibly happen, since the **divine plan cannot be changed**; God's **promise cannot fail**; the **calling according to divine purpose** cannot be revoked; the **merit of Christ as well as his interceding and preserving** cannot be nullified; and the **sealing of the Holy Spirit** can neither be invalidated nor wiped out

1. God reassures the backslider of his graciousness to help him – his true love-because he knows the backslider cannot return by his own strength.

If God did not show mercy to the backslider, he would have forfeited his grace, remained in his errors, and finally be lost. **God's love moves the backsliding Christian's feet!**

2. While hell is the natural and sure direction of the backslider, yet it is impossible for the backslider to go to hell!

God assures the backslider of this! How does God give this assurance?

a. The backslider learns the Divine plan for God's elect children cannot change.

Psalms 33:11 **The counsel of the LORD stands forever**, The plans of His heart to all generations.

b. The backslider learns God's promises to his elect children cannot fail. Even threats to Christians from wicked people, God will nullify so that he might do what he has promised.

2Thessalonians 3:3 But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.

John 10:28 "And I give them eternal life, and they **shall never perish; neither shall any one snatch them out of My hand.** 29 "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.

God promised to change the whole world, expand his people, and remove every obstacle in the way!

Isaiah 54:10-For the mountains shall depart and the **hills be removed**, But My kindness shall not depart from you, Nor shall My covenant of peace be removed," Says the LORD, **who has mercy on you.**

c. The backslider learns God's work in his children cannot be stopped. Once it begins, it will continue.

Romans 8:29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, **these He also glorified.**

You will have noticed Apostle Paul used the past tense even for future events. He spoke this way to show certainty...as if these events occurred already. Your glorification is as good as done. These sure events make up an unbreakable golden chain.

Romans 11:29 For the gifts and the **calling of God are irrevocable.**

d. The backslider learns Christ's benefits of his life and death, and Christ's prayer for the saints cannot be nullified. He substituted for all their sins on the cross; he did this for eternity!

Hebrews 9:11 But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. 12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood **He entered the Most Holy Place** once for all, **having obtained eternal redemption.**

Christ's paid for Abram's adultery and Josiah's arrogance. He continues to cover his people's sins with righteousness.

Zechariah 3:1 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him. 2 And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?" 3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel. 4 Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, "Take away the filthy garments from him." And to him He said, "See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and **I will clothe you with rich robes.**"

He prays for the backslider! Peter fell away from the Lord and denied him. Look what Jesus did for him. And he continues to do the same thing for his saved children today. Jesus assumed Peter's restoration!

Luke 22:31 And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. 32 **"But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail... 1John 2:1...if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father,** Jesus Christ the righteous.

e. Those who are sealed by the Holy Spirit cannot have that seal removed or invalidated though they fall into serious sins and remain there for a while.

Ephesians 1:13 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were **sealed with the Holy Spirit** of promise, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance **until the redemption** of the purchased possession...

Arminians wrongly credit man's preservation, not on God's electing and sustaining power, but on the supremacy of man's will. They believe God may help man, but ultimately it is up to man whether he perseveres or not. But remember the words of a preacher: **"To say that God's sovereignty is limited by man's freedom it to make man sovereign."** Arminians should stop making man sovereign.

Conclusion:

God renews the backslider's heart so he returns in godly sorrow and repentance. **God reassures the backslider of his help** so he returns. God does these things even if backslider **continues in sin for a long time.** God does these things **because of his electing love** for his children whom he redeemed through Jesus.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. I am sure you know someone who has left the church and are worried about him. But leave worry aside.

2. Let love lead you to the person who has fallen away and express God's love. Let God's Word, which expresses that **love at the cross,** flow from your lips and ring in their hearts. Let it be like honey to the starving. Let it nourish their souls so they return to the Lord. There is not more beautiful picture in the world!

3. And let this be a warning to you also: Feed yourself with the love of God from God's love letter so that you not stray. Let the cross ever be before your eyes.

Finally, while the backslider is graciously brought back to his rightful home, those who are not God's children are simply left on their own, holding on to the Devil and running to hell. But it doesn't have to be that way. God calls you today to ask him for a new destiny...heaven ...and if you ask him, he will clear the obstacle in your life, sin, for which Christ died, and give you a new direction.