

## Hymn Writer Loses Joy of Salvation

H. Bosch

Robert Robinson, author of the hymn "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing," lost the happy communion with the Saviour he had once enjoyed, and in his declining years, he wandered into the byways of sin. As a result, he became deeply troubled in his spirit. Hoping to relieve his mind, he decided to travel.

In the course of his journeys, he became acquainted with a young woman on spiritual matters, and so she asked him what he thought of a hymn she had just been reading. To his astonishment, he found it to be none other than his composition. He tried to evade her questions, but she pressed him for a response.

Suddenly, he began to weep. With tears streaming down his cheeks, he said, "I am the man who wrote that hymn many years ago. I'd give anything to experience again the joy I knew then."

Although greatly surprised, she reassured him that the "streams of mercy" mentioned in

his song still flowed. Mr. Robinson was deeply touched. Turning his "wandering heart" to the Lord, he was restored to full fellowship.

### Come, Thou Fount

Hymn writer — Robert Robinson

(1) *Come, Thou Fount of ev'ry blessing, Tune my heart to sing*

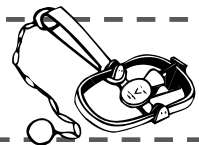
*Thy grace; Streams of mercy, never ceasing, Call for songs of loudest praise. Teach me some melodious sonnet, Sung by flaming tongues*

*above; Praise the mount*

*— I'm fixed upon it — Mount of Thy redeeming love.*

(2) *Here I raise mine Ebenezer. Hither by Thy help I come And I hope by Thy good pleasure, Safely to arrive at home. Jesus sought me when a stranger; Wandering from the fold of God. He, to rescue me from danger Interposed His precious blood*

(3) *O to grace how great a debtor, Daily I'm constrained to be! Let Thy goodness, like a fetter, Bind my wandering heart to Thee: Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love; Here's my heart, O take and seal it; Seal it for Thy courts above.*



**"Better shun the bait than struggle in the snare."** — John Dryden

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The  
**Bible View**



A free publication from: [www.OpenThouMineEyes.com](http://www.OpenThouMineEyes.com) Vol.: 961

### Who Is Your Leader?

Bill Brinkworth

Much of the opposition early Christians faced was from "religious" but unrighteous people. However, in Acts the early church started facing conflict from those who opposed biblical teachings of any kind.

One such enemy was Barjesus. The name meant "son of Jesus" or "son of Joshua". However, he used the name Elymas, which meant "wizard". Being that this sorcerer was a Jew (vs. 6), Barjesus probably had some biblical training in his past. If he did, he knew that sorcery was sinful (I Sam. 15:23, II Chron. 33:6), yet the man pursued that wickedness even though he knew God hated it. To make matters worse, this male witch tried diligently to keep someone from being saved (Acts 13:6-7).

Many have been exposed to what God says is right or wrong. They have learned His ways from good preaching, Christian education, Bible reading, or a godly upbringing. Yet,

somewhere in their lives, they ignored everything they heard and lived the way they wanted. They chose to live contrary to God's commandments, as did Barjesus.

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### Don't Go Back!

Bill Brinkworth

For a Christian, there is no way out of a backslidden condition without first working to reconstruct what is broken in one's life. After the sin is stopped and avoided, and all attempts are made to do what one used to do, the battle is not over.

Certain steps must be taken so one does not go back to the condition in which one previously found oneself.

We can learn some preventative measures for not returning to a backslidden condition by following what Nehemiah had his people do after:

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## Who Is Your Leader?

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I have repeatedly asked myself, “How can these people, who have learned God’s way, live the way they are living now?” In this account, the sorcerer was not a child of God, as he was called “... thou child of the devil, thou enemy of righteousness...” (Acts 13:10). For some that live ungodly lives, that may be the explanation, they were not saved to begin with.

For others, they may be saved, but sin has a powerful hold on them. Sin’s control can completely change how a person thinks and behaves. Romans Chapter 1 describes people like this. The people described in that chapter “knew God” (Romans 1:21), but they “... became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.” The rest of the chapter details a sad list of sins they had gotten involved with.

Why do people act ungodly? Some live a lifestyle contrary to God’s commandments because they may not know His commands or even consider obeying anything other than their desires. For others who should know better, it may be because they have purposely ignored what they have learned and lived their way. Rebellion of this type is usually

rooted in a controlling sin.

For whatever reason, one’s lifestyle usually revolves around one’s decisions. The decision God desires for each of us should be similar to the choice Joshua made, “... as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” Joshua 24:15. Whom have you chosen to obey?

## Don’t Go Back!

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◆ He returned proper worship. His situation was different than ours is today, as during his time, the Jews were still under the law. The leader ensured all who served in the temple were qualified by their lineage to be in the priesthood. Nehemiah made sure the right spiritual leaders were in service.

To return from a backslidden condition, one must ensure worship is in a good, Bible-following church. So many get far from God, and when they want to return or get closer to Him, they pick the same worship (or lack thereof) that may have helped them get in a far-from-God position in the first place.

◆ One has to make changes. Nehemiah’s charges to the people had them stop their sin and get back to obedience to God.

◆ One of Nehemiah’s most important steps to protect his people from returning to where they spiritually were was to include Scripture in their lives. Today, reading the Word of God is one of the most important measures to prevent spiritual decline. How can one know the will of God if one does not read and obey His Word?

◆ Most importantly, after the Israelites had read the Word of God, they obeyed it. There is no way to return to God today unless one obeys, by faith, what God speaks to one’s heart about and shows them in His Word.

◆ Nehemiah also rehearsed some of the spiritual errors Israel had made in the past. He made it clear what they had done to get in the condition they found themselves in so they would not do the same things in the future.

Anyone can drift away from where they should be. Some find themselves where they never wanted to be when they were close to God. They recognized the errors of their ways.

When errors are seen, and conviction causes one to reminisce about their past “better” spiritual condition, that is the time to make changes so one cannot go spiritually backwards. There may not be another chance!

## Degrees of Backsliding

*Dr. Haven*

A Christian never falls suddenly from advanced Christian life to barrenness or open sin. The stages in the descent are slow and often almost imperceptible.

Negligences of duty bring darkness to the soul and eat out spiritual joy. Little temptations betray it to the power of the enemy. By gradual departures from God and little indulgences in sin, one at length falls into total backsliding and apostasy.

The following may serve as an admonitory list of the steps taken in the downward path:

- Neglect of secret prayer: Job 15:4.
- Disregard for the Bible: Jeremiah 6:19, Hosea 4:6.
- Worldly-mindedness: II Timothy 4:10.
- A quarrelsome spirit: Isaiah 29:20-21, I Cor. 3:3.
- Dwelling on the faults of others: Matt. 7:3-5.
- Readiness to take offense: Prov. 14:17-19.
- A murmuring spirit: I Cor. 10:10.
- A critical hearing of the Word: I Cor. 3:1-4.
- Covetousness: Luke 12:15.
- Light thoughts of sin: Matt. 22:5.
- Indulgence in secret sin: Num. 32:23, Eccl. 12:14.
- Falling into outward sin: Hosea 4:16-17, Eph. 5:3-8.
- Persecuting the righteous: Acts 7:52-53.

**“You cannot run away from a weakness. You must fight it or perish, and if that be so, why not now, and where you stand.” — Robert Louis Stevenson**