



Spiritual Retrogression

Spiritual retrogression is typical of the believer who gets out of fellowship and perpetuates carnality into apostasy which is characterized by a general attitude of indifference and sometimes even hostility towards Bible truth. This retrogressive believer progressively loses their spiritual motivation and momentum and is no longer advancing in the Christian life. Hence, they are spiritually retrogressing.

We usually think of retrogressing as some type of immoral degeneracy. However, we must also remember that moral degeneracy, a self-righteous arrogant attitude and activity in life, renders the Christian just as retrogressive as the believer who is living under some type of immorality. The unbeliever becomes retrogressive by continually rejecting the Gospel, rejecting the rule of law, and rejecting the Laws of Divine Establishment. The retrogressive believer is characterized by continual unchecked negative volition toward Bible teaching.

Spiritual retrogression is turning away from God and leaving your first love. 1 Kings 11:9; Rev. 2:4.

"Now the LORD was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice," (1 Kings 11:9, NASB)

"But I have this against you, that you have left your first love." (Revelation 2:4, NASB)

Spiritual retrogression is departing from the simplicity of the Gospel. 2 Cor. 11:3; Gal. 3:1-3; Gal. 5:4; Gal. 5:7.

"But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:3, NASB)

"You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (Galatians 3:1-3, NASB)

"You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace." (Galatians 5:4, NASB)

"You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?" (Galatians 5:7, NASB)

Spiritual retrogression incurs the displeasure of God. Psalms 78:57-59.

"But turned back and acted treacherously like their fathers; They turned aside like a treacherous bow. For they provoked Him with their high places And aroused His jealousy with their graven images. When God heard, He was filled with wrath And greatly abhorred Israel;" (Psalms 78:57-59, NASB)

Warnings against spiritual retrogression are presented in Psalms 85:8 and 1 Corinthians 10:12.

"I will hear what God the LORD will say; For He will speak peace to His people, to His godly ones; But let them not turn back to folly." (Psalms 85:8, NASB)

"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall." (1 Corinthians 10:12, NASB)

Spiritual retrogression can result in a guilt complex. Num. 14:43; Psalms 125:5; Isaiah 59:2; Isaiah 59:9-11; Jer. 5:6; Jer. 8:5; Jer. 8:13; Jer. 15:6; Luke 9:62.

"For the Amalekites and the Canaanites will be there in front of you, and you will fall by the sword,



inasmuch as you have turned back from following the LORD. And the LORD will not be with you." (Numbers 14:43, NASB)

"Why then has this people, Jerusalem, Turned away in continual apostasy? They hold fast to deceit, They refuse to return." (Jeremiah 8:5, NASB)

"You who have forsaken Me," declares the LORD, "You keep going backward. So I will stretch out My hand against you and destroy you; I am tired of relenting!" (Jeremiah 15:6, NASB)

Spiritual retrogression results in self-induced punishment. Prov. 14:14; Jer. 2:19.

"The backslider in heart will have his fill of his own ways, But a good man will be satisfied with his." (Proverbs 14:14, NASB)

"Your own wickedness will correct you, And your apostasies will reprove you; Know therefore and see that it is evil and bitter For you to forsake the LORD your God, And the dread of Me is not in you," declares the Lord GOD of hosts." (Jeremiah 2:19, NASB)

Arrogance leads to spiritual retrogression. Prov. 16:18.

"Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling." (Proverbs 16:18, NASB)

There is a natural tendency to retrogress in the spiritual life. Prov. 24:16; Hosea 11:7.

"For a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again, But the wicked stumble in time of calamity." (Proverbs 24:16, NASB)

"So My people are bent on turning from Me. Though they call them to the One on high, None at all exalts Him." (Hosea 11:7, NASB)

Spiritual retrogression tends to continue and increase. Jer. 8:5; Jer. 14:7.

"Why then has this people, Jerusalem, Turned away in continual apostasy? They hold fast to deceit, They refuse to return." (Jeremiah 8:5, NASB)

"Although our iniquities testify against us, O LORD, act for Your name's sake! Truly our apostasies have been many, We have sinned against You." (Jeremiah 14:7, NASB)

Exhortations to recover from spiritual retrogression are presented in 2 Chronicles 30:6, Isaiah 31:6, Jeremiah 3:12, Jeremiah 3:14, Jeremiah 3:22, and Hosea 6:1.

"The couriers went throughout all Israel and Judah with the letters from the hand of the king and his princes, even according to the command of the king, saying, 'O sons of Israel, return to the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, that He may return to those of you who escaped and are left from the hand of the kings of Assyria.'" (2 Chronicles 30:6, NASB)

"Return, O faithless sons," declares the LORD; 'For I am a master to you, And I will take you one from a city and two from a family, And I will bring you to Zion.'" (Jeremiah 3:14, NASB)

The believer in spiritual retrogression is commanded to recover from their condition. Psalms 80:3; Psalms 85:4; Lam. 5:21.

"O God, restore us And cause Your face to shine upon us, and we will be saved." (Psalms 80:3, NASB)

"Restore us to You, O LORD, that we may be restored; Renew our days as of old," (Lamentations 5:21, NASB)



Tempting other believers to retrogress spiritually results in divine discipline. Prov. 28:10; Matt. 18:6.

"He who leads the upright astray in an evil way Will himself fall into his own pit, But the blameless will inherit good." (Proverbs 28:10, NASB)

"but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea." (Matthew 18:6, NASB)

Spiritual retrogression is not a hopeless situation. Psalms 37:24; Prov. 24:16.

"When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong, Because the LORD is the One who holds his hand." (Psalms 37:24, NASB)

"For a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again, But the wicked stumble in time of calamity." (Proverbs 24:16, NASB)

We should endeavor to assist the spiritually retrogressing believer to recover. Gal. 6:1; James 5:10; James 5:20.

"Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted." (Galatians 6:1, NASB)

"let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins." (James 5:20, NASB)

God administers divine discipline to encourage the spiritually retrogressing believer to recover. Hosea 5:15.

"I will go away and return to My place Until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face; In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me." (Hosea 5:15, NASB)

The sin of spiritual retrogression should be confessed to God the Father just as all sin should be confessed. 1 John 1:9; Isaiah 59:12-14; Jer. 3:13-14; Jer. 14:7-9.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9, NASB)

"Only acknowledge your iniquity, That you have transgressed against the LORD your God And have scattered your favors to the strangers under every green tree, And you have not obeyed My voice,' declares the LORD. 'Return, O faithless sons,' declares the LORD; 'For I am a master to you, And I will take you one from a city and two from a family, And I will bring you to Zion.'" (Jeremiah 3:13-14, NASB)

The promise of pardon to the spiritually retrogressing believer is presented in 2 Chronicles 7:14, Jeremiah 3:12, Jeremiah 31:20, and Jeremiah 36:3.

"and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:14, NASB)

"Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a delightful child? Indeed, as often as I have spoken against him, I certainly still remember him; Therefore My heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him," declares the LORD." (Jeremiah 31:20, NASB)

There is a promise of healing to the spiritually retrogressing believer. Jer. 3:22; Hosea 14:4.



""Return, O faithless sons, I will heal your faithlessness." "Behold, we come to You; For You are the LORD our God." (Jeremiah 3:22, NASB)

"I will heal their apostasy, I will love them freely, For My anger has turned away from them." (Hosea 14:4, NASB)

There are blessings to those who stay away from spiritual retrogression. Prov. 28:14; Isaiah 26:3-4; Col. 1:21-23.

"How blessed is the man who fears always, But he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity." (Proverbs 28:14, NASB)

"And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach— if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister." (Colossians 1:21-23, NASB)

Spiritual retrogression incurs righteous indignation from mature believers. Psalms 101:3.

"I will set no worthless thing before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not fasten its grip on me." (Psalms 101:3, NASB)

Spiritual retrogression is exemplified by Israel in Exodus 32:8, Nehemiah 9:26, Jeremiah 3:11, and Hosea 4:16.

""They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it and have sacrificed to it and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!'" (Exodus 32:8, NASB)

"Since Israel is stubborn Like a stubborn heifer, Can the LORD now pasture them Like a lamb in a large field?" (Hosea 4:16, NASB)

Spiritual retrogression is exemplified by King Saul in 1 Samuel 15:11, Solomon in 1 Kings 11:3-4, and Peter in Matthew 26:70-74.

""I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following Me and has not carried out My commands." And Samuel was distressed and cried out to the LORD all night." (1 Samuel 15:11, NASB)

"He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away. For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been." (1 Kings 11:3-4, NASB)

*"But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you are talking about." When he had gone out to the gateway, another servant-girl saw him and *said to those who were there, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." And again he denied it with an oath, "I do not know the man." A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Surely you too are one of them; for even the way you talk gives you away." Then he began to curse and swear, "I do not know the man!" And immediately a rooster crowed." (Matthew 26:70-74, NASB)*

The seven steps toward spiritual retrogression are presented in Ephesians 4:17-19.



"So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness." (Ephesians 4:17-19, NASB)