

Elder Bobby Willis



Hosea 14:4, **“I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.”**

When I was a kid I remember traveling to a church many miles away and we would stay overnight with some of the church members. This time there was a boy my age for me to play with. After church, while lunch was being prepared, my new found friend got two pieces of cardboard from somewhere and took me to a steep hill on the other side of the church yard away from the lunch tables. Good thing, because there would have been no sliding down the hill on the cardboard if mom or dad had known what we were doing. Sliding down the hill was easy and fast. You had to walk back up the hill slowly as it was really steep. It was much harder to go back up than it was to go down the hill. It just didn't work to slide up the hill.

Israel had turned away from God and were following strange gods and were even looking to others (nations) for help rather than to God. They even were taking credit for the work of their own hands and not giving thanks to God for His deliverances. However, there came a time when they realized their error and turned back to God, begging mercy and His forgiveness. The Lord said, **“I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.”** When God forgives, it is total forgiveness due to His unconditional love. Unlike God, we are often unable to totally forgive those who have offended us. The Lord said, **“I will love them freely:...”** Jeremiah talked of the Lord appearing unto him and saying, **“Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love:”** (Jeremiah 31:3). According to the law, the priest would make an atonement for the sins of the children of Israel and the Lord said, **“and it shall be forgiven them...”** (Numbers 15:25-26). There was a time when David asked the Lord to **“Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt”** (Psalm 123:3).

While we were having fun sliding down that steep hill on cardboard, we never once considered the danger or consequences. We never payed attention to the

concrete covert that ran along the side of the road near where we would go flying off the cardboard sleds. We were having too much fun to see the danger. This happens oftentimes to many of God's children. Too much fun, too much living it up in worldly attractions and enticements to see the danger of worldly pleasures rather than serving the one true and living God. Notice closely the words of Joshua as he confronted those that were transgressing the covenant of the Lord as they had gone to serving other gods and bowing down to them, **“And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which our fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”** (Joshua 24:15). Israel again repented of their backsliding and said, **“God forbid that we should forsake the Lord...”** (Joshua 24:16).

Just as we overlooked the danger of sliding down that hill on cardboard, God's people often do not see the danger of their walk when it is contrary to the teachings of God's word. It is far better to chose to **“suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;...”** (Hebrews 11:25). What we forget is the joy and happiness found in a life of serving God. Then we can say as David did in Psalm 90:14, **“O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.”** *Think About It*