

Forward and Backward

- I. The Christian walk should be positive, forward, drawing closer to conformity to Jesus Christ. This is a charge of the ministry. **EPH 4:12-13.**
- A. We are to walk in newness of life. **ROM 6:4.**
 - B. We should put off the old man and put on the new. **COL 3:9-10.**
 - C. We should follow light, not darkness. **1TH 5:4-8.**
 - D. We should grow in grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ. **2PE 3:18; PRO 4:18.**
 - E. Our faith, hope and love should increase. **2CO 10:15; ROM 15:13; 1TH 3:12.**
 - F. We should grow in spiritual strength. **EPH 3:16-19.**
 - G. The fruits of our righteousness should increase. **2CO 9:10.**
 - H. We should press toward the mark's prize in Christ. **PHIL 3:13-14.**
 - I. We should not be forever stuck in spiritual infancy or stagnation. **1CO 3:1-2.**
 - J. The condition of our hearts is a major factor. **LUK 8:15.**
- II. By contrast, we are especially warned against retrogression. **LUK 9:62; GAL 4:9.**
- A. We are not to be as Israel whose hearts turned back to Egypt. **ACT 7:39.**
 - B. We are warned about Lot's wife. **LUK 17:32.**
 - C. We are not to be as those who draw back unto perdition. **HEB 10:38-39.**
 - D. We are not to be like dogs who return to their vomit. **2PE 2:21-22.**
 - E. Apostates have less worth than dung. **LUK 14:33-35.**
 - F. Going backwards is only justified when it is a return from sin. **JER 6:16; LUK 15:18.**
 - G. Backsliding is consistently condemned yet there is hope for backsliders. **JER 3:22.**
- III. A popular theme in charismatic or pentecostal systems is being "slain in the spirit," in which a so-called "anointed" preacher endowed with divine power speaks to and/or touches an afflicted person who is then dramatically bowled over backward by the power of God.
- A. Scripture commonly associates falling backward before the Lord with His enemies, not the humble, as happened in **JOH 18:6.**
 - B. The foolish high priest Eli, upon hearing of God's fulfilled judgment upon his household, fell backward and died. **1SAM 3:13-14; 4:18.**
 - C. Isaiah spoke of those who, rejecting and being confounded by the word of God, would be turned over to judgment, that "...they might go, and fall backward, and be broken..." (**ISA 28:9-13**).
 - 1. This prophecy applies to the N.T. miracle of speaking in a language one had never learned. **1CO 14:21-22 c/w ACT 2:4-11.**
 - 2. Sensational miracles like *speaking in tongues* will not perfect people who refuse to be reformed by the doctrine of holy scripture.
 - 3. Counterfeit miracles can't produce genuine spirituality (**JOB 14:4; MAT 7:17-18**) and even God's miracles will not persuade reprobates. **EXO 11:10; JOH 12:9-11.**
 - 4. Miracles only highlight and exacerbate the confusion and judgment of those who receive not the love of the truth of God's word. **2TH 2:10-12.**
- IV. Scripture shows that when humble followers of God were faced with the awesome presence of God or a display of His raw, naked power, they *fell on their faces* in awestruck adoration. **GEN 17:3, 17; LEV 9:23-24; NUM 16:45; 20:6; JOS 5:14; JDG 13:20; 1KI 18:38-39; 1CH 21:16; EZE 1:28; 3:23; 44:4; MAT 17:5-6; REV 7:11; 11:16.**
- A. Considering how averse God is to the principle of going backwards from Him, why would He bowl the sincere seeker over backwards? God draws His own unto Himself by true

miraculous power (**EPH 1:19-20; JOB 14:14-15**) and rewards sincere seekers with blessings, not bowlings. **HEB 11:6**.

- B. Who is really doing the pushing in those wildly emotional charismatic services?
 - 1. Is it the Holy Spirit or a *seducing spirit* (**1TI 4:1**) or a *lying spirit* (**2CH 18:22**)?
 - 2. It can't be both the *spirit of truth* and the *spirit of error*. **1JO 4:6**.
- C. It is true that the hireling prophet Balaam "...fell flat on his face" (**NUM 22:31-32**) when the angel of God rebuked him.
 - 1. He had already been rebuked by his ass who had the gift of tongues. **2PE 2:15-16 c/w NUM 22:28**.
 - 2. Balaam is a fit model of the fact that everyone shall one day bow before God even if the only truth they ever heard was from the mouth of a dumb ass. **PHIL 2:10**.
- V. Paul censured the Corinthian church for its overuse and abuse of the gift of tongues while trivializing the superior utility of edifying prophecy or doctrine. **1CO 14:18-25**.
 - A. If an unlearned man (one who didn't know the foreign tongue) or an unbeliever visited the service and heard disorderly babblers, they might conclude *madness*. **v. 23**.
 - B. If a visitor also saw a theater of people being slain in the spirit and falling over backward, any doubts about their madness would likely be removed.
 - C. Conversely, if the church was characterized by orderly, edifying prophecy and doctrine which facilitated understanding, the visitor "...is convinced of all, he is judged of all: And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth" (**vs. 24-25**).
 - D. Conviction by the plain truth in an orderly manner can get people going in the proper direction.