Images for the Journey

1. A picture of a very serious person hanging on the wall
2. A very large parlor that was full of dust
3. Passion and Patience
4. A fire burning against a wall
5. A beautiful, stately palace
6. The man in the cage
7. The man who dreamed about the final judgment
The sixth image brings us face to face with a man who is locked in a cage of despair, has no hope, is unable to repent, and who anticipates his own judgment and misery in eternity.
“Interpreter took him by the hand again and led him into a very dark room where a man sat in an iron cage.

“Now the man seemed very sad. He sat with his eyes looking down to the ground and with his hands folded together. He sighed as if his heart were breaking. Christian said, ‘What does this mean?’ Then Interpreter encouraged him to talk with the man.”
Christian: “Who are you?”
Backslider: “I am not what I used to be.”
Christian: “What did you used to be?”
Backslider: “I was once a respectable person who professed Christ and was flourishing. I saw myself this way and so did other people. I was once, so I thought, headed for the Celestial City and had, at that time, joy at the thought of getting there.”
Christian: “I understand; but who are you now?”

Backslider: “I am now a man locked in despair, just like I am locked up in this cage. I cannot get out! I cannot get out!”

Christian: “How did you get in this condition?”

Backslider: “I failed to watch and be sober. I gave way to my own lusts. I sinned against the light of the Word and the goodness of God.”
“I have grieved the Spirit, and He is gone. I tempted the devil and he has come to me. I have provoked God to anger and He has left me. I have hardened my heart to the point where I cannot repent.”

“Then Christian said to Interpreter, ‘Is there no hope for a man like this?’ ‘Ask him,’ said the Interpreter.”
The Sixth Image

Christian: “Is there not hope? Do you have to be kept in this iron cage of despair?”

Backslider: “There is no hope at all!”

Christian: “Why not? The Son of the Blessed is very merciful.”

Backslider: “I have crucified the Son all over again. I have despised him. I have despised His righteousness; I have counted His blood as an
unholy thing; I have insulted the Spirit of grace. Therefore, I have shut myself out of all the promises, and there is nothing left for me but threats – dreadful threats – fearful threats, of certain judgment and fiery wrath, which will devour me as an adversary.”

**Christian:** “What did you do to get yourself into this condition?”
Backslider: “I went after the lusts, pleasures, and benefits that this world offered. I enjoyed them so much and promised myself much happiness. Now, however, every one of those things bites me and gnaws me like a burning worm.”

Christian: “But can’t you repent and turn from your sin now?”
Backslider: “God has denied me repentance. His Word gives me no encouragement to believe. God himself has shut me up in this iron cage. All the men in the world could not let me out. Oh, eternity! Eternity! How will I handle the misery that I must experience in eternity?”

Interpreter: “Then Interpreter said to Christian, ‘Always remember this man’s misery, and let it be a caution to you forever.’”
Christian: “This is frightening! God help me to watch and be sober; and to pray, that I may avoid the things that caused this man’s misery. Sir, isn’t it time for me to go on my way now?”
Christian’s Questions to the Man

1. Who are you?
2. What did you used to be?
3. Who are you now?
4. How did you get in this condition?
5. Is there no hope?
6. What did you do to get yourself into this condition?
7. Can’t you repent and turn from your sin now?
What The Man Used To Be

• He was a respectable person.
• He professed Christ.
• He was flourishing.
• He had a good reputation with others.
• He thought he was headed for the Celestial City.
• He had joy at the thought of getting to heaven.
Twelve Admissions

1. I failed to watch and be sober.
2. I gave way to my own lusts.
3. I sinned against the light of the Word and the goodness of God.
4. I grieved the Holy Spirit.
5. I tempted the devil (and he has come to me).
6. I provoked God to anger.
7. I hardened my heart.
8. I crucified the Son all over again.
9. I despised his righteousness.
10. I counted his blood as an unholy thing.
11. I insulted the Spirit of grace.
12. I went after the lusts, pleasures, and benefits that this world offered.
“I have hardened my heart to the point where I cannot repent.”
Apostasy vs. Backsliding

- **Apostasy** comes from the Greek word *apostasis*, which means “standing off,” hence, desertion of one’s faith.
- The OED defines *apostasy* as “abandonment or renunciation of one's religious faith or moral allegiance.”
- In Hebrews 6:6, “the author refers to apostasy; he has in mind the person who deliberately and completely abandons the Christian faith” (Dr. Simon Kistemaker).
Apostasy vs. Backsliding

- **Backsliding**, on the other hand, is used “in a figurative sense; to fall away from attained excellence, *esp.* of religious faith and practice; to relapse” (OED).

- “Judas fell away from Jesus and never returned to him; Peter fell into sin but soon afterward saw the resurrected Jesus. The two concepts (apostasy and backsliding) may never be confused” (Kistemaker).
“For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame” (Heb. 6:4-6).
The Road To Apostasy

- **Intellectual and instinctive knowledge of God:** “For even though they knew God...” (Rom. 1:21).

- **The suppression of truth through wickedness:** They know something of the truth of God but try to drown it or hold it down to keep it from challenging their worldview and lifestyle (Rom. 1:18).
Cornelius Van Til (1895-1987)

“No man can escape knowing God. It is indelibly involved in his awareness of anything whatsoever. Man *ought*, therefore, as Calvin puts it, to recognize God. There is no excuse for him if he does not. The reason for his failure to recognize God lies exclusively in him. It is due to his willful transgression of the very law of his being.”
The Road To Apostasy

• **The refusal to glorify Him as God:** Those who reject God refuse to acknowledge His glory and have no interest in honoring Him (Rom. 1:21).

• **Base ingratitude to God:** “Nor gave thanks to Him” (Rom. 1:21). How many millions go through each day without ever having one thought of gratitude for His good gifts?
The Road To Apostasy

• **Distorted thinking:** “They became futile in their speculations...” (Rom. 1:21). “It should not surprise us that brilliant thinkers compose very intricate, complex systems of philosophical thought that rise up in opposition against the character of God. In fact, if a person is logically consistent, there is a certain sense in which the more brilliant he is, the further he will remove himself from the conclusion of the existence of God” (Sproul).
The Road To Apostasy

• **Moral obtuseness** (dullness; insensitivity; stupidity): “Their foolish heart was darkened” (Rom. 1:21). “Men’s hearts are ‘darkened,’ not because the light is not shining, but because they have deliberately drawn the blinds” (John Blanchard).

• **Idolatry:** “…and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image…” (Rom. 1:23). “As they push God out of the back door, they welcome self-made idols at the front door” (Blanchard).
God or Idolatry

“One has only the choice between God and idolatry. There is no other possibility.”

- Simone Weil
The Road To Apostasy

• **Immorality**: “God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity…” (Rom. 1:24). Those who behave immorally not only dishonor God, but themselves. “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!” (Isaiah 5:20).
The Road To Apostasy

• **Claim to superior wisdom:** “Professing to be wise, they became fools” (Rom. 1:22). They believe their reason and logic, their conclusions and conduct, comes from their superior wisdom, assuring them that God is either non-existent or irrelevant.
The Road To Apostasy

• **God’s inevitable response:** “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom. 1:18).
“Anyone who rejected the laws of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?”
“Falling away from God finds it origins, development, and impetus in unbelief. Unbelief – characterized by mistrust and unreliability – first comes to expression in disobedience, which in turn results in apostasy. The signs of apostasy are hardening of the heart and an inability to repent. The following series of contrasts can be made:
Unbelief – Faith
Disobedience – Hearing obediently
Neglect – Steadfastness
Apostasy – Entrance to life
Hardening - Salvation
“Hardening is demonstrated by a refusal to hear the voice of God and a determined desire to act contrary to everything classified as faith and faithfulness. As a sly, deceptive agent of Satan, sin enters the heart of man and there causes the growth and development of unbelief, which becomes evident in hardening of the spiritual arteries.”
“The man who falls is the one who forsakes the Word of God, who extinguishes its light, who denies himself the taste of the heavenly gift, and who gives up partaking of the Spirit. This is complete renunciation of God. We can now see who are shut out from hope or pardon. They are the apostates who have estranged themselves from the Gospel of Christ which they previously embraced and from the grace of God. This does
not happen to anyone unless he sins against the Holy Spirit. The man who violates the second table of the Law, or who in his ignorance transgresses the first is not guilty of this rebellion, and certainly God does not deprive any others of His grace except those who are wholly reprobate. There is nothing left for them.”
"Such men are deprived, as they deserve, of the Spirit of God, and are given over to a reprobate mind, so that they are delivered to the devil and go on rushing to their doom. Thus it comes about that they do not cease from adding one sin to another until they are so hardened that they despise God or rail at Him in furious hate like men in despair."
All those who are apostate come to this end, that either they are smitten with insensibility and have no fear, or because they cannot escape they curse God who is their Judge.”
“We have to be continually reminded of what we believe. Neither this belief nor any other will automatically remain alive in the mind. It must be fed. And as a matter of fact, if you examined a hundred people who had lost their faith in Christianity, I wonder how many of them would turn out to have been reasoned out of it by honest argument? Do not most people simply drift away?”
Pay Close Attention & Hold Fast

• “Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it” (Heb. 2:1).

• “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful” (Heb. 10:23).