



**Main Text: Rev. 2:5**—(5) Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

**Introduction:** While driving on the freeway, if your car suddenly pulls to one side, it is likely you hit a rut—a long, deep, groove made by the repeated passage of the thousands of tires passing a particular point on the pavement. When a tire rolls over the groove it is pulled along the groove's pattern, causing the car to veer off course. If the driver does not forcefully steer the car out of the groove and back into the intended direction, the result could be disastrous! We can also run into spiritual ruts—habits or patterns of behavior that become dull and unproductive but hard to change. Like ruts on the highway, spiritual ruts develop over time and cause us to veer off the spiritual path God intended, leaving us unproductive for the kingdom of God, our family, and ourselves. The church of Ephesus was in a spiritual rut and needed to get back on track! Thankfully, God told them how to climb out: "...remember... from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works..." Everyone is susceptible to falling into a spiritual rut, and climbing out is not always easy. But the good news is we *can* climb out! By the grace of God, we can make corrections and get back into alignment with the word and will of God.

**What is a Rut?** 1. A long deep track made by the repeated passage of the wheels of vehicles. Similar: wheel track, furrow 2. a habit or pattern of behavior that has become dull and unproductive but is hard to change.

### How do we Fall into Spiritual Ruts?

- **We Become Inattentive: 1 Pet. 5:8**-- Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

**Note:** The first Christians were warned to be serious minded and alert as a guard against becoming prey for the devil. When a person is born-again, everything thing becomes new! There is a sense of attentiveness (vigilance). However, over time we begin to lower our guard. This happens because we were born into the world and are comfortable with things in the world. The world influences us daily; chipping away at our vigilant edge. Eventually, we begin to feel at ease in the world like we did before our conversion, and become inattentive to the devil's traps.

- **We Become Discouraged: 1 Sam. 30:6**-- And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.

**Note:** One of the easiest ways to fall into a rut is through discouragement. Discouragement is being disheartened, dejected, or depressed. One of the greatest examples of a discouragement is when David's family were taken captive. Out of all the other things that had happened and were happening

to David, returning home to find his family and the families of his men taken, was more than he could bear. “David was greatly distressed,” meaning he was worried, concerned, and upset! When worry, concern, and anger overwhelm us, we can become discouraged in our walk with God. If not corrected, we can fall into a spiritual rut.

- **We Stop Praying:** Ephesians 6:18-- Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; Matt. 26:41-- Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.

**Note:** Watching and praying are often spoken of together in scripture for a reason: they reinforce each other. Watching implies spiritual vigilance or being alert. Prayer is communication with God! The more often we communicate with the Lord in prayer, the more attuned our spirit becomes to the supernatural. The reverse happens when we reduce or worse yet, quit praying. We fall out of touch with God. We lose spiritual discernment, and our thinking becomes carnal.

- **Cooling Off Spiritually: Rev. 3:15-16**—(15) I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. (16) So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

**Note:** When a fire is started, it will eventually go out if left unattended. The only way to maintain a fire is to periodically add fuel to it! The same is true in our walk with God. If we do not add spiritual fuel to our life we will eventually cool off or grow cold! This is what happened to the people in the church of Laodicea. They allowed their spiritual fire to decrease, and they became lukewarm. This can happen when we take our salvation for granted. After being saved a while, we lose our sense of wonder, worship, and willingness to conform to the image of Christ. Like the Laodiceans, we soon develop a nonchalant attitude toward our walk with the Lord. We become stuck in a spiritual rut and may not realize it.

### **How to Climb Out of a Rut:**

- **Realize You are In a Rut: Ps. 32:5**-- I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.

**Note:** People who are admitted to a hospital know that something is wrong with them. But some people who are not in a hospital should be! However, they may not be aware that they should be admitted. Their illnesses may not be apparent. Or they may know something is wrong and refuse to see a doctor! The point is the first step to climbing out of a rut is to realize that you are in a rut. David said, “I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid...” Since being in a rut is to live in behavior that is dull and nonproductive, if we are in a spiritual rut, we are not pleasing God. When we know we are in a rut we must repent! Repentance is important because it indicates our need for God’s strength and forgiveness. After David repented he said, “thou [Lord] forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” Repentance may be the first rung on the ladder to climbing out of a rut, but it is the most important rung.

- **Cut Off Occasion: Ephesians 4:27**— Neither give place to the devil.

**Note:** Not giving place to the devil means not giving the devil an opportunity to work in our lives. The goal of repentance is not simply to return to the things that had us in the rut in the first place, but to stay free of the rut! The devil loves nothing more than to keep us living in behavior that is spiritually

dull and unproductive. He seeks every opportunity to perpetuate rut-behavior because he knows we cannot please God if we are in that condition. To climb out of our rut, we must not give the devil an opportunity to keep us operating outside of the will of God.

- **Do the First Works: Rev. 2:5**—(5) Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. **Acts 2:42**-- And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

**Note:** A rut is a pattern of behavior. The word pattern implies giving a repetitive form to something. A pattern is repeated behavior. When we repeat a behavior, our brain eventually locks the behavior in as normal. Once that occurs, we feel comfortable with the behavior. Any attempt to do something inconsistent with the pattern feels awkward, and we resist or abandon it. To climb out of a negative pattern, we must break the pattern of sinful behavior. But how? The saints in the church of Ephesus were instructed to repent first, which we have already discussed, then they were told to, “do the first works.” This is an important instruction! Before we fell into a rut, we were not in a rut! Makes sense? What were we doing prior to our rut condition? Our behavior was exciting, productive, and full of passion! We enjoyed reading God’s word! Prayer meetings were not a bore! We were excited to take part in Communion! We loved fellowshiping with the saints! Those behaviors are consistent with the “first works” of the first Christians! But once we fell into a spiritual rut, we stopped doing those things. If we want to climb out of our spiritual rut, we must return to them!

- **Hone Spiritual Practices:**

**Note:** A well-worn but powerful axiom is “Practice makes perfect.” Even children who may not know that phrase can demonstrate that the more you do something the better you can do it! You don’t believe me? Give a child who is unable to read and write a smart phone, and watch how quickly he or she learns to use it! The speed at which they master that phone will astound you! How can they become so proficient with such a complex device? Easy. Unless someone takes that phone, a child will never put it down! Practice makes perfect. What if we did the same with spiritual disciplines such as solitude, meditation, prayer, fasting, and submission? It would not take long to climb out of any spiritual rut.

- **Develop a Spiritual Addiction: 1 Corinthians 16:15**—(15) I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) (16) That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with *us*, and laboureth. **Eph. 5:18-19**—(18) And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; (19) Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

**Note:** The word addiction carries a negative connotation. But it can be positive. The apostle Paul encouraged the saints in Corinth, by pointing out that the household of Stephanas had addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints. When someone is addicted to something they have a repeated pattern of behavior that is difficult to break. Paul told the People in Ephesians not to be drunk with wine—a sure way to become addicted to alcohol—but to be full of the Spirit! Being full of the Holy Ghost helps us become addicted to the things of God. That sort of addiction is sure to help us climb out of any spiritual rut.

**Summary:** If you are exhibiting habits or patterns of behavior that are dull and unproductive for the kingdom of God, but hard to change, then you may be in a spiritual rut. If so, you are not alone. Anyone can fall into a spiritual rut. Fortunately, unlike ruts along the freeway that come up without

warning, there are tell-tell signs that you are heading for a spiritual rut. For example, you have become inattentive to Satan's desire to devour you. You are discouraged in your walk with Christ. You have reduced your prayer time or stopped praying entirely. Or, you have lost your zeal for God. If you have any of these symptoms, do not stay in that spiritual rut, climb out! First, repent! God always honors genuine repentance. Second, do not give Satan room to operate in your life. Third, return to the first works of faith you did as a new convert (Acts 2:42). Fourth, practice spiritual disciplines such as prayer, fasting, solitude, meditation, and submission. Finally, addict yourself to God's way of living. If you do these things, you will not be in a rut for long. You will climb out and get back on track with God.