



Lesson #7: Backsliding (Jacob)

Genesis 35:1-15 gives us the story of a “_____ that God _____.” In a very real way it is possible for a Christian to become a “Spiritually _____.” The Bible calls these people “backsliders.” Frequently, in the pages of God’s Word, God graciously and kindly speaks to those who are displaced.

As we open to Genesis 35 we discover a backslider returning to a place called “_____.” Jacob is a portrait of a backslider coming home. “Bethel,” after all, means the “_____ of God.” Jacob named the place after he first met God there (Genesis 28:10-17). When you open to Genesis 25 you discover that God will bless the backslider when the backslider returns. You can almost hear Jacob say as he comes back to Bethel, “I’ve wandered far away from God and now I’m coming home.”

There is counsel in the story of Jacob for all those spiritual displaced persons.

YOU MUST BE _____ BY YOUR SITUATION

If you are going to “come home” you need to see your situation as God sees it.

- A. The backslider experiences _____ from the world** (Gen. 34:30a)
Jacob summarizes his life in one word – “_____.” Those who find themselves outside of God’s will find themselves in a place of abhorrence. Apply that to yourself, no matter how good you are, God says you _____.
- B. The backslider is dealing with present _____** (Gen. 34:30b)
That’s where the backslider finds himself – living in the land of fear. Proverbs 18:21 tells us that “the _____ flees when no man _____.” The unreasoning terror of the sinner arises partly from an uneasy conscience.
- C. The backslider has forsaken a _____** (Gen. 28: 15,20)
It was at Bethel that Jacob had first met the Lord _____ years earlier. So gracious had God been to Jacob that in his enthusiasm Jacob made a vow to follow God.

YOU MUST BE _____ TO GOD’S INVITATION

If you are going to come back to God you need to listen as he offers an invitation.

- A. God calls you to return no matter _____ you are**
God is under no obligation to extend an invitation to Jacob. Jacob has been wandering away from God for 30 years! It’s God’s electing work that chose Jacob and it’s God’s _____ work that brings him back to a place of obedience.
- B. God calls you to return no matter _____ you are**
In Genesis 33:18-20 we read that Jacob had come back to Canaan but had not come back to Bethel. He was just _____ miles away from the house of God. So close to God and yet still so far away!

YOU MUST BE SURE TO MOVE _____

Jacob becomes a model of making a decision to return to the Lord.

- A. The choice to return must be _____**
Jacob needed no more convincing. He realized that now was the accepted time to return to the house of God. He was losing his family and he was straying away from God. It was time to do something about that!
- B. The choice to return will be _____**
Notice how influential this decision to return to Bethel was in the life of Jacob. His whole _____ came to God. These sons of Jacob would one day become the fathers of the tribes of Israel. One man got right and a whole _____ was impacted! One person made a difference then and one person can made a difference today!

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The decision to return to the Lord must be an _____ decision. Notice what Jacob says in Genesis 35:3 – “*Let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar unto God.*” Though Bethel was only _____ miles away it was _____ feet of elevation difference. It was a journey that would require them to _____ themselves. It was a journey that would require them to _____ themselves. An altar would be built and the things of the world would be laid aside.

So God weaves into the life of this crooked man a mirror that we can look into and see how it is to return. There’s an important word in verse 9 to circle in your Bible, “*God appeared to Jacob _____!*” It is never too late to return to the Lord!

“Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord ... For I am merciful.” (Jeremiah 3:12)