



## Lesson #8: The Backslider Returns to Bethel (Genesis 12-13)

Genesis 12-13 traces the path of God's friend, Abram, as he follows God's commands and begins to walk in a life of faith. Each of these important steps are recorded there because of their significance. Specifically we read in Genesis 12:8 that Abram moved to Bethel which means "\_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_." There he builds an altar which signifies Abram's dependence and declaration of the faith of God.

I wish I could tell you that this friend of God continued there in Bethel. I wish I could tell you that he remained steadfast and strong in his faith. But the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> verses tell us of Abram's backsliding. "*Abram went down to \_\_\_\_\_*" (12:9). Abram, who will take up 25% of the book of Genesis, is recorded here making a grave mistake. Abram went down to Egypt. Egypt represents life \_\_\_\_\_ from God.

But there is good news in this passage – there is always a path of restoration available to God's pilgrims. When our \_\_\_\_\_ fails, \_\_\_\_\_ doesn't!

### BACKSLIDING CAN COME WHEN WE ARE IN A PLACE OF \_\_\_\_\_

Abram enjoyed two blessings that are enjoyed by all of God's friends.

1. Abram enjoyed the \_\_\_\_\_ of God on his life (12:1)
2. Abram enjoyed the \_\_\_\_\_ of God on His life (12:7)

But in spite of all this we still read in verse 10 that he "went down to Egypt."

#### A. Backsliding often comes during times of \_\_\_\_\_

Do you realize that very often we find ourselves under attack when we are taking those baby steps or continual steps of dedication to follow God? It is then that we find ourselves under \_\_\_\_\_ attack. So it is often in God's Word that we are taught we are just \_\_\_\_\_ step from failure.

#### B. Backsliding often comes during times of \_\_\_\_\_

"*There was a famine in the land*" (12:10). Abram is overwhelmed. He was not wrong to be concerned about the famine and how he was to feed his family. But Abram acted \_\_\_\_\_. Abram's sin here was not intentional as it was \_\_\_\_\_. He did not deny God; He simply forgot Him.

### BACKSLIDING LEADS TO BECOMING IN OUR \_\_\_\_\_

Suddenly the morally righteous Abram is making morally repugnant choices. Abram's plan is for his wife to pretend to be his sister as they go down to Egypt (12:11-12). But why do his ethics change?

#### A. Our ethics change because we tremble in \_\_\_\_\_

Abram feared what might happen to him in Egypt. His plan was certainly motivated by \_\_\_\_\_. When you backslide away from God it leads you to the land of fear.

#### B. Our ethics change because we are not longer \_\_\_\_\_

Abram's situational ethics led him to think, "I'll tell the truth when it's to my advantage and when it's to my advantage I'll tell a \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_." Abram demonstrates that backsliders become ingenious in their falsehoods even to cover their fears.

#### C. Our ethics change because we \_\_\_\_\_ our allegiance

When we backslide we fudge on our allegiance. We don't want people to know where we go to church or what we really \_\_\_\_\_. But when we hide our faith we fall into all kinds of other problems.

### BACKSLIDING IS OVERCOME BY TAKING BACK TO \_\_\_\_\_

There is good news as we turn to Genesis 13. Every person who would honestly admit that they are living in the land of the backslider can return to Bethel.

#### A. To come back to God you must \_\_\_\_\_ His hand on your life

With the chastening hand of the Lord Abram pays a price for the pleasures of Egypt. This should come as a wonderful comfort to God's people. If you are without chastening when you backslide you are \_\_\_\_\_. God will chasten all his children who backslide away from Him (Heb. 12:6-7).

#### B. To come back to God you must \_\_\_\_\_ to serve Him once more

Abram has discerned the hand of God and he decides to go back to the place where God would have him to be (13:3). Abram began to live again in the place where \_\_\_\_\_ would guide him. He goes back to Bethel, "*the house of God*" (cf. 12:18). He goes back to the altar he had built! The great news of the Bible is that there is \_\_\_\_\_ after \_\_\_\_\_.

### Concluding Thoughts

Genesis 12 paints on both sides of the canvas when it tells us the story of Abram.

- 12:1-9 – We read the record of Abram's \_\_\_\_\_
- 12:10-20 – We read the record of Abram's \_\_\_\_\_

In these verses we learn that everyone, regardless of their spirituality, is capable of backsliding. Even the "friend of God" was prone to failure. But, when our \_\_\_\_\_ fails, God' doesn't! "*\_\_\_\_\_ ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings*" (Jeremiah 3:22).