

Why Do God's People Backslide?

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The theory is often made that if a frog is put suddenly into boiling water, it will jump out, but if the frog is put in slightly warm water which is then brought to a boil slowly, it will not perceive the danger and will be cooked to death. We have all heard about the frog in the water. As we begin this

study, I'd like to suggest that maybe you are the frog in the water. Maybe you have slowly been cooked by the world system, by your own lustful goals and desires, and have lost your former testimony as a Christian, your faithfulness to God, and today you are in a backslidden as a Christian.

Like the frog, we can slowly, almost imperceptibly, be overcome by the world system. We can begin to slowly move away from the Lord's way and purpose for our life and from close fellowship with God without even knowing it or perceiving what is really happening to our lives. We can sometimes begin to lose our spiritual edge on life without even realizing what is occurring. Then one day we will find ourselves spiritually depleted before the Lord without any trace of our former days of commitment and fellowship to the Lord.

What is backsliding? Backsliding means that I have moved away from my former love for God, my commitment and faithfulness to God's will for my life, and from a close walk and fellowship with God.

Proverbs 14:14

"The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man *shall be satisfied* from himself."

Is this a picture of your life today? Have you lost a sense of what God wants for your life and how He expects you to live? Have you wandered far away

from the place where you used to be as a dedicated Christian? Have you lost the spiritual edge and testimony you once possessed? Have you lost your commitment and faithfulness to God?

Someone described the effects of backsliding in this way:

“Where is the blessedness I knew,
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul refreshing view
Of Jesus, and His Word?”

Backsliding begins in such a subtle way that most of us are unaware of it. You may be backslidden today and not even realize it. Backsliding begins with wrong choices and small compromises, which eventually lead to bigger and even momentous changes in our lives. They are changes which bring their own misery and woe upon our lives and the lives of our family members and friends. We sometimes look back and wonder how it happened. How did we backslide from our former position of fellowship and commitment to the Lord? The answer is found in our texts which deal with backsliding.

God does not want us to backslide in our Christian life.

This is illustrated in the choices of Abraham and Lot.

A. Consider Abraham

The background which leads into our main text reminds us of Abram’s own backsliding. Abram needed to learn his own lesson concerning backsliding so he could properly counsel Lot.

1. Abram went down

Genesis 12:10

“And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land.”

Here is the general reason why God's people backslide. It's because they choose to go in the wrong direction. Sinning, doing wrong, and backsliding is a choice.

James 1:14

"But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed."

We are responsible for our own sin – not God or anyone else. You alone own your lust and backsliding. In this case, Abram chose to go into Egypt. Of course, Egypt is an illustration of the world system which seeks to dominate our lives today. Although Egypt was south of Canaan, where Abraham lived, the expression "down" also seem to have a spiritual application related to backsliding. Whenever we find someone running away from God's will and purpose for their life, we find them moving downward, traveling in a downward direction in relation to their spiritual life. Such was the case with Abram at this point in his life.

Even Abraham, a man of great faith, had some lapses and setbacks in relation to his faith. During a time of serious famine, Abram left the place of God's choosing (Canaan) and fled to Egypt, which is a symbol of the world. He went down to Egypt, not only from a geographical standpoint, but by way of application, he also went down in relation to his spiritual life.

The Bible commands us to "Love not the world neither the things that are in the world" (1 John 2:15). The world is an organized system, made up of a set of ideas, people, activities and purposes that are opposed to God and which take us away from God. The world has its own culture, success, plans, programs, purposes, pleasures, fashions, dominating principles and motives. The world is an evil system that seeks to take us down spiritually. The "lust of the eyes," the "lust of the flesh," and the "pride of life" (1 John 2:16) are the three main components of the world system that eventually take us down. Everything associated with the world system falls into one or all three of these categories.

Spiritually speaking, "going down to Egypt" means compromising with the world system or allowing our lusts, desires, and will to win out over God's will and purpose for our life. Whenever we follow our will at the expense of

God's will, it's then we have become worldly and can in time lapse into a backslidden state.

Jonah had the same experience as Abraham. When backsliding, Jonah also was said to go down.

Jonah 1:3

"But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord."

When you start to backslide you begin a downward journey. Don't miss what the Bible is saying. You go down, down, down! When a person allows the world to control and conquer their hearts and lives they fall from their former spiritual position. And how great is the fall! Today many Christians doubt God's promises and run to the world for answers, help, and satisfaction. This is what Abram did. He saw the famine in the land and ran to Egypt, which was a foreign land, a place outside of God's blessing.

The children of Israel also longed for Egypt:

"We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick" (Numbers 11:5).

Where is your heart today? Where are you at in relation to your Christian life? What do you really long for in life? Have you lost your faith and commitment to God? Do you desire fame, position, greater riches, or sexual gratification outside the marriage bond?

Abram "went down into Egypt." In Egypt Abram lied about his wife (Gen. 12:11-13) when calling her his sister. His lie caused heartache for himself, his family, and also brought great trouble upon Pharaoh's life (Gen. 12:17-20).

Genesis 12:17 says:

"And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife."

The truth is this, when a believer sins, it normally affects others. Abram's sin effected himself, his wife, Pharaoh, and later on it would impact Lot's decision to go to Sodom. Abram certainly was not thinking of his wife when he went down into Egypt. What if Pharaoh would have married his wife? What about the promise of the coming Redeemer? Abram should have first thought of the welfare of his wife and not of himself.

Ephesians 5:25 says:

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."

Ephesians 5:28-29 adds:

"So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church."

Abram should have considered the spiritual welfare of his wife. In fact, he should have never taken his wife to Egypt in the first place! Think of it. Abram took his wife down into Egypt! A husband out of the will of God can bring untold trouble and misery upon his wife and family.

As men, we should be careful where we take our wife and family. Men, we ought to be ashamed of ourselves when we take our families down into Egypt and tempt them with the world system. We need to be very discerning today.

I was talking to a Christian a while back who said he and his wife were in the movie theater. He told me that the cursing was so bad that he looked over to his wife and said, "Honey, I think it's time to leave." Good for him! Here is the main point. Whenever my will wins out over God's will and purpose for my life, I can be sure that I am going down in relation to my spiritual living. I can "go down" in many ways and sometimes the downward spiral is slow and imperceptible, like the frog in the water.

Whenever I become overcome and dominated by the pleasures and practices of the world system, whenever my will replaces God's will for my life, I can be sure that I have gone down in my spiritual life! I have gone down into Egypt.

What sin or sins have taken you down and caused you to backslide? Has rock music taken you down? How about gossip? How about an unforgiving spirit? How about pornography on the computer? How about your general neglect and unfaithfulness to God's House? What about lack of devotions with God? Perhaps it is just general neglect in your Christian life. What has taken you down? What has caused you to lapse into a backslidden state?

If you know that you have drifted from your former days of commitment, service, and living for God, then you need to realign your life to God's will and purpose once again. How do we overcome our backslidden state? The Bible gives us the answer to this in our next point.

2. Abram went up.

Genesis 13:1 records these words:

"And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south."

Abram moved out of Egypt but in doing so, he also moved out of the place of defeat. You will notice that the way out of a backslidden state is to go back the place of blessing. Go back to the promise land of blessing. The good news is this. Abram eventually came out of Egypt. He did not remain in Egypt. He went down but he eventually came up and out of this backslidden state. And in coming up, he wised up! There is an important lesson in this for us today. We cannot stand in the middle of the ladder. We are either going down or up!

Not long ago, I attached a cable to my house and ran the cable into the attic, so I could attach to a TV antenna and receive some free channels. I was up and down the ladder for about an hour. I could feel it the next day! My legs were sore. Here is my point. We normally don't remain standing on the middle section of the ladder. We decide to go up or come down. In relation to our Christian life, if we have gone down, we must come up! Abram made the right choice after making the wrong choice. Friend, don't keep making wrong choices! If you choose to stay down in Egypt, you will reap the consequences of your choices, neglect, and sin (Gal. 6:8). You must choose to come up from Egypt once again and put your life back together.

This is what Abram did. He came back to the place of original fellowship and blessing with the Lord.

Genesis 13:3-4 says:

“And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai; Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the Lord.”

“Back to Bethel” should be the rallying cry for all who have wandered from the Lord. Abram knew that he had done wrong by leaving the Promised Land of blessing. So after returning into the Land, he made things right between him and the Lord by building an altar of confession (1 John 1:9) and worship in Bethel, which was the original place he had worshipped the Lord.

Genesis 12:8

“And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord.”

Abram went back to Bethel! Dear friend, when you disobey the will of God there is only one thing to do. You must go back to the place where you left Him and make a new start or beginning with the Lord. No failure is permanent in the school of faith. You may need to go back to Bethel today! You have been down in Egypt too long! “Back to Bethel” is the rallying cry for all who have wandered from the Lord! Are you ready to come up out of Egypt? Are you ready to come out of your deadened, uncommitted, worldly, and selfish living? Abram decided to come up from the land of Egypt and God blessed him once again in the Promised Land! If you want God’s true blessing, you must come out of Egypt! There is no blessing and joy in Egypt! Maybe you need to rebuild your altar of fellowship and worship with the Lord once again.

B. Consider Lot’s backsliding

In Genesis 13:5-12, we see another example of why God's people backslide. This example gives us more detail on the process of backsliding and moving away from the Lord's will and purpose for our life.

I live in a place called Lancaster County. Farmers spread a lot of manure on their fields to help the crops grow. I'm certain of one thing. No person would want to trade their lunch for a bag of manure. And yet, Christians often trade their life of blessing and fellowship with the Lord for the stench of the old life and nature, which seeks to destroy and dominate their lives, and quite frankly, stink up their lives!

There are three reasons why God's people backslide.

1. The forsaken counsel

Genesis 13:5-9

"And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left."

Abram was an uncle to Lot. Abram was given the promise of the land by God and yet he was willing to share it with Lot. This is a real act of grace and generosity. It reminds us of how God wants to share His life and blessings with us. If we are willing to obey God and receive His blessings, then we will find great fulfillment in life.

Genesis 13:9

"Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand (northern Canaan), then I will go to the right (southern Canaan); or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left."

Abram, who was now in fellowship with the Lord, counseled Lot to look north and south throughout the entire Promised Land (“the whole land”). Abram did not instruct Lot to look east and move outside the Promised Land of blessing. His counsel was wiser than this. Abram had learned his lesson well. He had learned what happens when we take matters into our own hands and move outside God’s true blessing. Moving outside the place of blessing brings heartaches. Abram knew this and was giving Lot wise counsel at this point. He was to go north and south but not east, which was outside the borders of the Promised Land, no matter how inviting it might look.

The Jordan River was the eastern border of Canaan that continued south from the southeastern end of the Salt (Dead) Sea and southwest toward Kadesh Barnea (10:19). It then proceeded to the Great (Mediterranean) Sea along the Wadi el Arish (Brook of Egypt - Num. 34:1–29; Josh. 15:1–14). The text contrasts “the land of Canaan” with “the cities of the plain” or valley (Gen. 13:12) where Lot was dwelling. The place Lot chose to settle was on the eastern frontier (border) of the Promised Land (Gen. 13:11). In spite of Abram’s advice, he chose to actually remove himself from the Promised Land and settled for something that was outside God’s true will and blessing. This is why the hymns says:

“On Jordan's stormy banks I stand,
and cast a wishful eye
To Canaan's fair and happy land
Where my possessions lie.”

Some of you are standing on Jordan’s stormy banks today. You are on the outside looking in! You are outside the fair and happy land. Why don’t you come back into God’s Promised Land of blessing today? Instead of playing around the borders of the world (“the plain of Jordan” – vs. 11 and “the cities of the plain” – vs. 12) you need to put your feet into the place of blessing once again! God wants to bless and renew your life if you are willing to take that step of faith. This is true regarding your salvation and sanctification in the Christian life.

There is another important lesson we learn from Lot’s location on the borders of the land. Satan always wants us to live on the borders, or just

outside God's blessing. He keeps us just far enough way, so we miss out on God's true blessing for our lives. He sells us the old lie of Eden (Gen. 3:1-6) that there is satisfaction outside the borders or parameters of God's will. This has always been Satan's lie from the very beginning. His tactics have not changed.

Lot forsook the wise counsel of Abram. He made the wrong spiritual choice after viewing how the valley was well-watered for his animals. Lot forsook Abram's counsel concerning the land. Instead of following the counsel of Abram to take the entire northern or southern part of Canaan (vs. 9), he opted for the eastern border to the land. He wanted to be a fence-rider as we say! We have a lot of Christians like this today. They want God's blessing while they ride the fence! They want one foot in the church and one foot in the world.

When we forsake the counsel of those who are trying to help establish our lives in a godly pattern, we begin our spiritual downfall. How often have we forsaken the wise counsel of an older brother and sister in the Lord, so we might follow our own path and pleasure? How often have we forsaken that wise counsel of a pastor or Christian friend, who really cared about us, and who wanted us to stay in God's will and the place of blessing? Like Lot, we often fear the future, instead of trusting God. Like Lot, we do not follow the wise counsel that is given to us. Instead, we make a decision based on fear and what seems right to us at the time. Lot's decision was the wrong decision. Instead of following wise counsel he went his own way. The forgotten counsel haunted him and his family!

Matthew Henry said:

"None are so deaf as those who will not hear."

Proverbs 11:14 states:

"Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety."

The word "counsel" means guidance. It's actually a nautical term used of steering a ship. The "steerings" or counsel of godly, wise, and discerning advisers can be helpful (Prov. 15:22; 20:18; 24:6). A wise person is open to

the opinions and counsel of others. Without such counsel, he may make serious mistakes.

Proverbs 24:6

“For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety.”

Someone said:

“If you're old, give advice; if you are young, take it.”

The football coach challenged his high school team: "Remember, football develops individuality, initiative, and leadership. Now get out there, and do exactly what I tell you!" The point is this. We must learn to follow sound counsel and advice if we are ever going to become a spiritual leader that can give wisdom and advice to others. The truth of the matter is this; we will never be a leader if we are not a follower!

The wisdom of the proverbs tells us that wise counsel will keep us dwelling safely in God's plan and purpose for our lives. Where there is no guide, direction, and leading, we can find ourselves falling and backsliding in life. This is what happened to Lot. He forsook the counsel of Abram. He settled for the borders of the world (his own way) instead of the blessing of the Promised Land. He followed the world instead of the wise counsel of Abram.

Lot chose to live on the borders of the world!

Someone once said:

“Lot got grass for his cattle while Abram got grace for his children.”

Genesis 13:15-16 records:

“For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.”

God would move in grace and bless Abram and his descendents as He promised in the Abrahamic Covenant. As we will see, Lot lifted up his eyes

and saw what the world had to offer (Gen. 13:10). But now God invited Abraham to lift up his eyes and see what Heaven had to offer (Gen. 13:14). Lot had said, "I will take" (Gen. 12:11) but God said to Abraham, "I will give" (Gen. 12:15). What a contrast! What a lesson! When we wait on God, He will always give to us and our children what is best! When we take matters into our own hands we will always bring misery and woe upon ourselves and family.

We need to be willing to follow the godly advice of those who have weathered the storms and who can give spiritual direction and aid to our lives. So often we forsake the counsel of others and make wrong choices.

Someone said:

"If one man calls you a donkey, pay him no mind. If two men call you a donkey, get a saddle."

We need to be open to the godly advice of others!

2. The foolish choices

Genesis 13:10-11

"And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other."

The Bible stated, "Then Lot chose." We often make decisions that take us outside the boundaries of the promised blessing. Some of you may be on the brink of making a decision that will change the course of your life and family in some way. I don't know what the decision might be but let me say something from a pastor's heart. Don't make the same kind of decision that Lot made. Lot made a choice that ruined his family! When we take matters into our own hands and make wrong choices, we always move outside the parameters of God's true blessing and will, and reap the consequences of our choices.

Galatians 6:8

“For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”

Lot was told to travel to the south or to the north. Instead, he traveled to the east and ended up outside the parameters of God’s blessing. He made the wrong choice and it was a foolish choice. The Bible says that “Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east” (Gen. 13:11). It’s interesting that Adam, Eve, and Cain traveled east after they sinned (Gen. 3:24; 4:16) and that the people of Babel came from the direction of the east before rebelling against God (Gen. 11:2). Lot’s move to the east was a similar move. It was a move associated with a sinful direction. The Jordan River was on the eastern border of Canaan and moving in this direction was moving away from the Promise Land of blessing.

Lot made one wrong choice and move which led to a series of other wrong choices and moves. One wrong choice can create a snowball effect. The first step in Lot’s fall or backsliding is when he *looked toward Sodom* (“Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan” - Gen. 13:10). Lot knew that there was a fertile plain along the Jordan River and that the cities of the plain were in it. Satan normally gets us through the eyegate or “the lust of the eyes” (1 John 2:16; Josh. 7:21).

Second, Lot *pitched his tent near Sodom* (“pitched his tent near Sodom” - Gen. 13:12). Lot wanted to live near enough to Sodom to enjoy its supposed advantages but not get caught up in its life. When will we learn that flirting with the world eventually results in compromising with the world (1 Cor. 5:6)? If you play with fire sooner or later you will be burned. God wants us to stay far away from the line, so we don’t end up crossing the line.

John Eastwood said:

“People do not decide to be drunkards, drug addicts, prostitutes, murderers, or thieves, but they pitch their tent toward Sodom, and the powers of evil overcome them.”

Third, as time went on, the same compromising spirit that brought Lot to the valley, eventually brought him into the city. So we read that Lot *was*

living in Sodom (Gen. 14:12; 19:1). What a downfall! All of this took place because Lot made a wrong choice which led to a series of other wrong choices! We sometimes look at the well watered plains of Jordan and think that the grazing land is better outside the Promised Land (Gen. 12:10). This has always been Satan's attraction. The grass is greener on the other side! Satan wants us to see something that looks better than God's will and make a decision based upon feelings, unbelief, and the moment!

Lot looked down from the heights of Bethel, where he was standing with Abram, to the plain of Jordan. He saw that it was well watered, like the Garden of Eden ("the garden of the LORD" – Gen. 13:10) and productive like Egypt ("like the land of Egypt"). It has been said that Lot left Egypt but Egypt never left Lot! The city's pleasures and profits were still part of his heart. Many times what you are determines what you see, and what you see determines what you do!

Lot looked in the wrong place and made the wrong choice and many foolish choices. We do the same thing when we get our eyes off of God's will and what is best for our lives. We want to run from the will of God and the true blessing in order to find some temporary fix for our lives and make something happen which will supposedly enhance or stabilize our lives. But in the end, we bring misery and disaster upon ourselves and upon our entire family.

Lot's family was living among the wickedness of homosexuality and terrible debauchery (Gen. 12:13). Look what happened to Lot and his family! Lot's daughters married men of Sodom and broke the spiritual yoke they were to have with God's people (2 Cor. 6:14-18). Lot's wife so longed for the city that she refused to break with it completely, even at the time of its destruction, and she was judged by being turned into a pillar of salt (Gen. 19:26). Lot made the wrong choice and the foolish choice to associate with the wrong people and his family suffered greatly because of it.

Let us remember that bad company still corrupts good morals!

1 Corinthians 15:33 declares:

"Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners."

Psalm 1:1 also says:

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.”

If you follow the wrong *counsel*, then you will eventually stand with the wrong *companions*, and finally sit with the wrong *crowd*. This is the spiraling and downward effect that sin has upon our lives.

We must remember to stay away from foolish people.

Proverbs 14:7

“Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge.”

Proverbs 4:14-15

“Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.”

Lot made the choice to move from the highlands to the lowlands of life. Many of us make the same kind of mistake as Lot did. You may think that you are different from Lot but you really are not. Think about this. If you have put your job ahead of your family’s spiritual well-being, if you have put your social advancement ahead of a proper association with God’s people, if you have let your choice of buying and maintaining a home keep you from serving in church ministry, then you have moved from the highlands to the plain of Jordan.

Some of you have come down off the highlands of Bethel and have settled into the plain of Jordan. You are outside the place of true blessing. You have made the wrong choice and other bad choices will follow! Lot chose material things over God’s will and the results were terrible. Foolish choices affect our lives and the lives of our family. Men, we need to rise up as men of God today and start making better choices. We need to get out of Egypt, out of Sodom, and back to the heights of Bethel, where we can build an altar once again and worship God. Satan wants to keep us in the lowlands instead of the highlands!

On the top of a hill in a Midwestern state stands a courthouse. It's situated in such a way that raindrops falling on one side of the roof travel by way of the Great Lakes into the Atlantic, while drops landing on the opposite side find their way through the Ohio and Mississippi to the Gulf. Just a breath of wind one way or the other may determine whether a single raindrop will end up either in the Gulf or in the Atlantic.

In a similar way, one single decision is enough to determine a man's destiny, either Heaven or hell. It may also determine the course of his life and family? Have you made the right decision? The first question that comes to our soul is about Heaven or hell. Will we choose Heaven or hell as our eternal destiny? The second question is about Heaven or earth? Will we serve God or the world (Matt. 6:29)?

3. The forgotten companions

Genesis 13:12-13

“Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.”

Lot forgot Abram and his family and embraced the culture and wickedness of Sodom. Abram was dwelling in the land of Canaan (the place of blessing) while Lot was dwelling among the cities of the plain (the place of backsliding). Where are you living today? Where are you dwelling? Are you in the land of Canaan or the tents of Lot?

Think of this. Lot had gone after the world and forgotten about Abram who was his godly companion and spiritual advisor. This is why he was found dwelling among the surrounding cities and why he eventually would end up in Sodom. Let us learn the lesson well. When we forget about our godly companions, who have directed us and set a godly example before us, we will eventually fall prey to the vices of worldliness and wickedness.

Forgetting our godly companions will not aid us in our spiritual walk. However, remembering these companions and fellowshiping with them, helps us to maintain a spiritually sustained, straight, and stable life. If you

hang with the wrong crowd you will eventually hang yourself! May God deliver you from wicked and unreasonable men (2 Thess. 3:2) who are pulling you down.

The Bible teaches we should partner and fellowship with godly companions.

Psalm 119:63

“I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.”

If we forget and forsake our godly companions and begin to form alliances or friendships with ungodly companions, as Lot did (Gen. 12:13), we will find ourselves and family compromising and becoming increasingly worldly and defeated (1 Cor. 15:33). Don't think it can't happen to you! It can happen and it will happen to you and your family if you let down the guard.

1 Corinthians 10:12

“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

Lot found out what happened when he softened his spiritual stance and let down his guard. Lot lost his family, fame, and fortune, when he forgot about his godly companionship with Abram, and replaced it with the ungodly companionships of Sodom and the surrounding cities.

In this second text we have discovered how a Christian can backslide and begin to live carnally and carelessly in his life. The *forsaken counsel* (Gen. 13:5-9), the *foolish choices* (Genesis 13:10-11), and the *forgotten companions* (Gen. 13:12-13) will always bring a Christian to the place of defeat and despair. How often have we forsaken the counsel that was needed, which resulted in making foolish choices, ultimately causing us to forget the godly companions that were trying to help us? We act like fools so many times and live in a fool's paradise!

If you find yourself drifting today and backslidden in your Christian life, then you need to come out of Egypt and back to Bethel. You must leave the tents of Lot for the land of blessing once again. May you have the earnest desire to be delivered from the lowlands of worldly living and return to the

highlands of Bethel once again. There is no reason to remain in your backslidden state of misery and woe. Some of you need to get out of Jordan and back into the Promised Land. You need to go back to Bethel and rebuild your fellowship with God and renew your commitment to Him once again (Gen. 13:3). You need to confess your sin (1 John 1:9), reestablish your worship of God once again, and return to the Lord's fellowship and the place of blessing. You need to return to the spiritual place and practice that you once had with the Lord.

James 4:8

“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.”

A songwriter wrote down some words that explained his return from a backslidden state. Maybe you can make them your own words today.

“I have returned to the God of my childhood,
To the same simple faith as a child I once knew;
Like the prodigal son
I have longed for my loved ones,
For the comforts of home and the God I outgrew.”

Robert Robinson had been saved out of a tempestuous life of sin through George Whitefield's ministry in England. Shortly after that, at the age of twenty-three, Robinson wrote the hymn “Come, Thou Fount.”

“Come, Thou Fount of ev'ry blessing,
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.”

Sadly, Robinson wandered far from those streams and, like the Prodigal Son, journeyed into the distant country of carnality. One day he was traveling by stagecoach and sitting beside a young woman engrossed in her book. She ran across a verse she thought was beautiful and asked him what he thought of it.

“Prone to wander -- Lord, I feel it --
Prone to leave the God I love.”

Bursting into tears, Robinson said, "Madam, I am the poor unhappy man who wrote that hymn many years ago, and I would give a thousand worlds, if I had them, to enjoy the feelings I had then."

Perhaps you are like this man. You have wondered far from God and you know that you need to return to the joy and blessing you once had with the Lord. You don't have to be like the frog that is overcome by the boiling water. There is a way out. Obey God! Friend, are you ready to return to the Lord? Are you ready to repent of your sin (Rev. 2:5), get right with God, and come home? Are you ready to step into the promised land of blessing once again? Stop forsaking the wise counsel of those who care about you. Stop making the foolish choices that will haunt you and wreck your spiritual life. Finally, don't forget the companionship of those who have taught you, stood with you, and helped you in life.

2 Timothy 3:14

“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them.”