

The Backslider

Gen. 13-14

INTRODUCTION:

I love reading signs.

- Like the one welcoming you to Kettle Falls, Washington, the home of “1255 friendly people and one grouch.”
- Along Oregon’s winding coast, another warns: “Emergency stopping only. Whale watching is not an emergency. Keep driving.”
- One I saw at a BP gas station saying, “You are responsible for spilt oil”.
- I pulled into a service station once. A bold sign proclaimed, “We have Mexican food. We have gas.”
- But my favorite of them all is posted on an Alaska highway: “Choose your rut carefully. You’ll be in it for the next two hundred miles.”

Today we are going to study a man who got into a rut that he never really got out of. His name is Lot.

INTRODUCTION: We began this series on Abraham by saying that God typically teaches truth in one of three ways –

1. Systematically – Thought upon thought, logically explaining truth in theological terms.
2. Parable, Hyperbole
3. Archetype – That is what Abram is, the quintessential example of faith.

ANTITYPE - Well, one thing we haven’t mentioned is that when God gives us an **Archetype**, often close by, he also gives us the **Antitype**. He gives us a good example as well as a bad. For **Abram**, we have Lot; for Jacob, we have Esau; for Issac, we have Ishmael; we have Shrek **and Donkey**.

BOTH RIGHTEOUS - Now, when it comes to Abram and Lot, we see two men that the Bible declares righteous.

- Of Abraham, **Genesis 15:6 (NAS)** ⁶ Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.
- Of Lot, **2 Peter 2:8 (NAS)** ⁸ (for by what he saw and heard *that* righteous man, while living among them, felt *his* righteous soul tormented day after day by *their* lawless deeds). However, if Lot were accused of being a believer there would scarcely enough evidence to convict him.

So how are we to compare and contrast these two men? It is not the contrast between a believer and an unbeliever. Perhaps that comparison could be made with Terah. , Terah settled in Haran and died; for all we know, we know there was no indication that Terah was ever converted. But lot was a believer.

I believe the comparison is that of Abram – the man who lived as a pattern pursuing his God, and that of Lot the man who was a backslidden believer.

One is of a life counted for God, the other was wasted. The passage before us is a **trilogy** that highlights three of the specific differences between man pursuing Christ and the Backslider.

THE RARITY OF BACKSLIDERS - Now let me say I think that the person who lives any length of time in a backslidden condition is a rarity. Billy Sunday said, to speak of a worldly Christian is like speaking of a heavenly devil.

- *God promises to discipline those who fail to pursue Him*
- *God promises to cut down the fruitless tree*

I think that many of those who consider themselves backsliders are simply uncovered.

But you do have the rare example of a Lot. There is one example which proves it is possible, but there is only one which proves that it's rare.

SAVED BY FIRE - Paul warned that there are those who would be saved yet though as by a fire. Their life would consist of wood, hay and stubble. When the fiery eyes of the Lord Jesus Christ are turned upon their life – all they have lived for will burn up. The Foundation of faith in Christ will remain, so they get in to heaven... yet as by fire.

A BACKSLIDER is the least happy of all men – Enough of God in them that they cannot be truly happy in the world, but enough of the world in them that they cannot be happy in the church.

Prov. 13:14 ¹⁴The backslider in heart will have his fill of his own ways... Often God doesn't have to get involved, because ordinary trouble in life will rebuke the backslider.

Abram and Lot, were different in 3 ways...backsliders and those who have a genuine passionate walk with Jesus are different in 3 ways -

1. The **Decisions** they exercise
2. The **Deliverance** they experience
3. The **Deference** they express

Let's walk through each of those differences together.

1. Backsliders Make Decisions Based on Sight Alone

You will remember last week that Abram and his entire family went down into Egypt because of a famine that came upon the land. The Nile river together with advanced irrigation enabled the Egyptians to survive through the frequent droughts that occurred in that region.

Genesis 13:1 (ESV)

¹ So Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the Negeb.

*Earlier in chapter 12:10, the text says that there was **a severe famine**. Abram went down to Egypt, deceived Pharaoh, Pharaoh rebuked Abram, sent him away with great wealth... and now, according to verse 2, the same phrase is used saying his is **Heavy – in livestock, silver, gold**. Literally, it says the famine was “Heavy” then the wealth was “heavy”*

*How do you explain that? He neglects proper moral conduct, and **God blesses him not based on conduct, but on call**. God said, I will bless you, and God didn't qualify that.*

Genesis 13:5–7 (ESV)

⁵ And Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents, ⁶ so that the land could not support both of them dwelling together; for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together, ⁷ and there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites were dwelling in the land.

Now there is no indication that Abram and Lot were at odds, but their households were. Two things were present that tend to cause conflict –

1. **Proximity** – The Bible would later say, “How pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in unity” Might I also add... how rare it is. That is why **Proverbs 6:16–19** Out of the seven things the Lord hates, number 7 ...And one who spreads strife among brothers. You see, unity is difficult as it is.
2. **Prosperity** – You would think that material blessings would serve to make people more content and happy, yet this is never the case. Often **money serves as a magnifying glass** – magnifying what is already there. If there is anger, money magnifies anger. If there is jealousy, money magnifies jealousy.

Abram, the elder of the two, initiates a plan. Genesis 13:8–9 (ESV)

⁸ Then Abram said to Lot, “Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are kinsmen. ⁹ Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right, or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left.”

What is the solution? Distance. Amos asked the question, “How can two walk together, less they be agreed?” There are times when the best thing to do is go your separate ways.

As Parents, how often have we threatened our children, If you can't play nice, I will have to separate you.

What a **FAITH FILLED** Idea this was, Abram trusted the Sovereignty of God over Lot's choice – But look at Lot's decision...

Genesis 13:10–11 (ESV)

¹⁰ And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered everywhere like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, in the direction of Zoar. (This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) ¹¹ So Lot chose for himself all the Jordan Valley, and Lot journeyed east. Thus they separated from each other.

LOT – walked by sight, not by faith - Now the decision to move toward the Jordan in and of itself was not **wicked** so much as it was a Godless decision.

No prayer, not seeking the will of God. Simply, deciding based on what his eyes saw. **Was this not the error of Eve?** The fruit was appealing to the eye and good for food.

Genesis 13:12–13 (ESV)

¹² Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom. ¹³ Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord.

Lot would suffer greatly because of his dealings with these sinful people. Let this serve as a warning to us that the command **not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers** is primarily a command concerning marriage, but the principal carries over into every human relationship.

Beware of getting into partnerships, associations, clubs, with sinful people.

- I warn our college students, beware that the joining of a sorority or fraternity is not casting your tents toward Sodom. You say oh but Pastor, don't you know that belonging to this or that organization will help my future job prospects. All I'm saying is that you are using the reason of Lot.
- When you are invited to join with a partner in a business opportunity ask yourself, "does my potential partner have similar values? Moral obligations?"

The backslider worries about none of these issues... they make decisions at face value, very calculating but not very prayerful...

2. Backsliders are in Perpetual Need of Deliverance

Chapter 14 chronicles the first organized battle of recorded history.

The land was sprinkled with a variety of city-states, each with its own King and loosely organized army. The kings of this day were more thugs than royalty, more akin to mob bosses than aristocracy. One is mentioned in verse one, called Chedo-laomer, King of Elam.

Chedo-laomer wielded much control over the region and required the surrounding king to pay him taxes and join him in battle. Well, eventually they were fed up and decided to

rebel. One of the kings that joined the rebellion was Bera, King of Sodom, the city in which Lot was growing in popularity and influence.

Genesis 14:10–12 (ESV)

¹⁰ Now the Valley of Siddim was full of bitumen pits, and as the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into them, and the rest fled to the hill country. ¹¹ So the enemy took all the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. ¹² They also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, who was dwelling in Sodom, and his possessions, and went their way.

That's the experience of the backslider.

Dr. Rogers said, *"Sin will take you further than you want to go. Sin will teach you more than you want to know. Sin will cost you more than you want to pay. Sin will keep you longer than you want to stay."*

The old black preacher would say, *Don't let the devil ride for he will certainly want to drive.*

He will not relent until you are tied up in the bonds of iniquity marching off into slavery and he will be laughing all the way as he enjoys the child of King Jesus as his own personal slave.

Oh but God never, no never forsakes his own...

Genesis 14:13–14 (ESV)

¹³ Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, who was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and of Aner. These were allies of Abram. ¹⁴ When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, 318 of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.

Get that Abram an old man in his 70's whipping up on this army that had defeated 5 kings – driving them 100 miles. Can you believe that? That's the kind of senior adult I want to be. 70 opening up a can on these young punks.

Genesis 14:15–16 (ESV)

¹⁵ And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus. ¹⁶ Then he brought back all the possessions, and also brought back his kinsman Lot with his possessions, and the women and the people.

LISTEN you are going to be on one of two sides of the Christian you will either be in constant need of deliverance or you will be assisting in the deliverance of others.

- Spiritually – Do you need to be delivered from the stronghold of sin in your life?
- Financially – Are you able to give to others or do you need others to constantly give to you?
- Physically – Has sin and rebellion taken it's toll on you physically?

- Emotionally -

ILLUSTRATION: I thank God that Jesus Christ is the great deliverer. We can pray, lead us not into temptation BUT deliver us from evil.

- **King David** at one time served God as a Deliverer – Delivering Israel from the Mighty Giant Goliath – but then he backslid.... And **Nathan** had to deliver him from the stronghold of lust of sin.
- **Jonah** was meant to deliver that great city of Nineveh but he backslid...but a **great fish** had to deliver him from the stronghold of hate.
- **Simon Peter** preached to others, but then he backslide and the great deliver Jesus said, “After you have returned, strengthen your brethren”.

Backsliders make decisions on sight alone, as a result, they are in constant need of deliverance...

3. Backsliders Defer to the Carnal

Genesis 14:17–18 (ESV)

¹⁷ After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King’s Valley).

¹⁸ And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.)

Two Kings approach Abram at a distance.

- Elam King of Sodom
- Melchizedek King of Salam, that is Jeru-Salem.

We have already seen how highly Lot thought of Sodom’s King now let’s see the response of the man of God.

Melchizedek approaches first and speaks - Genesis 14:19–20 (ESV)

¹⁹ And he blessed him and said, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; ²⁰ and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!” And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

Much can be said about Melchizedek, but it will be sufficient for us to say that he was one of the strange anomalies of scripture where God has preserved a remnant of believing worshippers despite all appearances. In a day where it seemed all was lost except for Abraham... there dwelt a man like Enoch who walked with God. We know nothing of his beginning, we know nothing of his end. Yet God ordained him as a Priest and a King.

This was the one pointed to by the Apostles when questions arose about the Priesthood of Jesus who was not of the tribe of Levi, nor a descendant of Aaron, but he was a Priest like Melchizedek appointed by God by virtue of and endless life.

Abram recognizing the unique role and office of Melchizedek offers a tenth to this King of Salem.

- *About that time, the high and mighty King of Sodom arrives...*

²¹ The king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself." ²² Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have sworn to the Lord God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, ²³ that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, for fear you would say, 'I have made Abram rich.'

NOW GET THIS - Do you know where typically the first place you see evidence of backsliding? The check book.

Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"

Lot had voted with his checkbook. He cast his tents toward Sodom, but Abram gave his tithe to Melchizedek.

ILLUSTRATION: I'll never forget a phone call I received over 10 years ago. My friend Teddy Turentine was the pastor of Friendship Baptist Church in Grand Bay, AL. He called me early on a Saturday morning and asked what I would do in a particular scenario. This was back when Don Seigleman was Governor in Alabama and he was leading the charge to legalize gambling in the state of Alabama. Those of you who lived here at that time remember how intense the battle was. My friend Teddy Turentine served in the Mobile Bay region the area that would be ground zero for casinos if the vote was lost. Well he worked hard as did most Pastor's throughout the state to oppose the expansion of gambling.

But then one day he opened the paper to see a story about the winner of the Florida Lottery. It was a member of his Church. Now, when Teddy knew that the chances were strong that this lady would attempt to give a portion of her winnings to the Church. The Church needed the money, they were growing, in need of new buildings.

Teddy calls up and says what should I do? I told him that only he could make that decision, but then I referred him to this passage and said Teddy – you know if you take that money the whole state will say, "The King of Sodom made Abram rich". Well, Teddy told his ushers to watch for the check and bring it to him if it came through. About three weeks later, sure enough a very large check from this lady came through the offering plate. Teddy took the check to her and told her that he hoped she understood but he couldn't accept the check. She was offended and left the Church.

That next year through a series of events Teddy was able to acquire land in Guatemala and establish a mission through which 1000's of lives have been changed and souls have been saved. The Church filled up three times over and hundreds are meeting Jesus in Grand Bay, AL.

LISTEN, that wouldn't have happened if Teddy was backslidden on God. I wonder how many stories we will never hear because some of you are backslidden.

Nothing is sadder than a backslidden Dad, nothing is more miserable than a backslidden teenager, nothing is more depressing than a backslidden mother. Nothing is more discouraging than a backslidden senior adult. Why don't you come down to this altar and tell God you don't want to die in Sodom, but you want to follow Him like Abram?