

=EVENTS FROM GENESIS=

Lesson 16

Jacob's Backsliding

AIM: to teach my pupils the dangers of backsliding and to prevent it in their lives.

POINT OF CONTACT: Jacob's backsliding begins when he leaves Beth-el and ends when he gets back to Beth-el. A good idea to get the attention of the pupils would be to draw the following things on the chalkboard: (1) A few stones built up to look something like an altar, (2) a tent, and (3) a church building. Ask the pupils what these things have in common. The answer is that each of these has at one time or another been a house of God. Explain that the first place that man met God was at an altar such as Jacob's at Beth-el. The second place was a tabernacle. The third place was the temple in the Old Testament. You might even draw the fourth place along with the others—the form of a man, showing that the New Testament “temple” is the body of the believer.

INTRODUCTION: In an effort to avoid backsliding on the behalf of our students, let us notice Jacob's backsliding under three headings: the running, the results and the return.

I. THE RUNNING.

1. The backsliding was caused by trouble with his brother. Notice Genesis 25:27-34. So many people backslide because of strife with another person. This was one of the reasons Jacob backslid.
2. Jacob left the Word of God. In Genesis 28:10 the word “Beer-sheba” means the “promises of God.” Jacob left these promises and went away from the Word of God.
3. Jacob left the house of God. He left Beth-el. “Beth-el” means the “house of God.” This was the place where Jacob met God. See Genesis 28:19. When a person begins to leave his church attendance out, he is on his way to serious backsliding. (Stress the importance here of being faithful Sunday morning, Sunday night and Wednesday night.)
4. Jacob left the perfect will of God. See Genesis 29:1. To be sure, God promised to bless him on his trip, and he was in the acceptable will of God while he was away. However, the perfect will of God was Beer-sheba. Genesis 26:3 shows us that the place of blessing was back at home. He could have done and been so much more had he stayed in the perfect will of God for his life.
5. Jacob continually felt the call of God. Notice this in Genesis 31:11-13. God kept calling through His angel and through Beth-el for Jacob to come back to his original position and state.
6. Jacob's mother favored him over his brother, Esau. Maternal partiality at home also had a part in Jacob's backsliding. Rebekah was obviously partial to Jacob. This led to his downfall.

II. THE RESULTS OF JACOB'S BACKSLIDING.

1. Jacob received his just desserts by being tricked. See Genesis 29:25, 27, and 29. He had tricked Esau out of his birthright and tricked his father out of the blessing rightly reserved for Esau. It is certainly significant that Jacob received the result of this and was tricked himself. He worked seven years for Rachel. He thought he would get her, but found he got Leah instead. In other words, he worked seven years for the wrong woman.
2. Jacob's backsliding ruined his children. Look at Genesis 34:13. This is so sad. The only way a child can be in the will of God is for his parents to take him there. The backsliding of mother and father inevitably will affect the children. This certainly was true in Jacob's case.
3. Jacob's sons became murderers. See Genesis 34:7 and 26. Not only were his children backslidden, but his sons went deep into sin, even further than their father had gone.
4. Jacob's home was not Christian. Notice in Genesis 35:1 and 2 that they had idols in their home. Little did Jacob intend to do this when he made his vows to God and left Beth-el. Backsliding keeps us going down and down and down until we find ourselves doing things we never intended to do.
5. Jacob wasted many years. Backsliding inevitably brings wasted years to a person's life. At least seven of Jacob's years were wasted, and no doubt many more. So often when a person comes back to God in middle age, he says, “If only I had not wasted all of these years!”
6. Jacob had a bad name. Notice in Genesis 31:1 that Jacob lost his testimony and influence and got a bad name.

III. HIS RETURN.

1. Jacob returned to God. See Genesis 35:7. When he left Beth-el, it was called just that—Beth-el, which means “the house of God.” Later he called it “El-beth-el,” which means “the God of the house of God.” In other words, it became a relationship with God now as well as God’s house. He came back to God.
2. Jacob came back to the church. In Genesis 35:15 Jacob came back to the place where he had been—Beth-el, the house of God. When a person rightly relates himself with God, he rightly relates himself with the house of God.
3. Jacob came back to his brother. There is not a more touching story in all the Bible than Jacob’s reconciliation with Esau as found in Genesis 33:1-10. This, as you recall, was the purpose of his leaving originally. Now he is reconciled. No one can completely get right with God until he gets right with his brother. I John 4:20, “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” I John 3:14a, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren....” When Jacob got right with Esau, then he also got right with God.