THE ROAD BACK TO CANAAN

Gen 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.
11 And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon:
12 Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive.
13 Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.
14 And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair.
15 The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.
16 And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels.
17 And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife.
18 And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife?
19 Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way.
20 And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.

Gen 13:1 And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south.
2 And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.
3 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;
4 Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

Intro: In Genesis 12:10-20, Abram is seen leaving Canaan (The Promised Land) during a time of famine to go to Egypt (a picture of the world). We are told that to get to Egypt from Canaan, Abram had to go "down", 12:10.

IT IS ALWAYS A DOWNWARD PATH

(Ill. When a believer leaves Canaan (The place of victory and blessing) to go to Egypt (The world), it always leads him down. Ill. Jonah - Jonah 1:1-5. Note: Amos described it as a low place as well, Amos 2:10; 3:1.)
A. It Led Him Down From The Land Of Promise - The land of Canaan represented God's Best for Abram. Canaan land was where he was supposed to be! (Note: There is no place more precious than the place God wants you to be! Ill. Joseph - Gen. 50:20.)

B. It Led Him Down From The Land Of Preparation - The famine in Canaan was not a punishment for sin, rather it was a test of faith. (Contrast with Ruth 1) He left God's best and ran away from God's test. Real faith will always be tested. The great test is to submit to the test and trust God instead of running away! (Ill. The Widow of Zarephath - 1 Kings 17) Abram was to choose the uncertainty of Canaan over the abundance of Egypt.

C. It Led Him Down From The Land Of Provision - God had promised to bless Abram in Canaan, Gen. 12:2. Canaan was also the place of God's rest for Abram. Only there could he rest in the arms of providence and trust God to take care of him. (Ill. The best place to be is where the Lord places you, even if it is difficult –

Ill. Moses “There is a place beside me” -Ex 33:21 Elijah – “I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there” 1 Kings 17:4, 9 )

II. V. 11-15 IT IS ALWAYS A DISHONEST PATH

A. Abram Birthed A Lie - It is a sad day when a believer turns away from the truth to embrace a lie. This may be the saddest episode in Abraham's life, and it forever preserved in the word of God. We can learn from his mistake! (Note: We all have those times when we birth a lie in our hearts to try and justify the things we do and allow in our lives. It is a sad day when it happens!)

B. Abram Became The Lie - After he told the lie, he began to live the lie! One lie always leads to another! (Ill. This is clearly seen in David's lies and actions following his adultery with Bathsheba - 2 Sam. 11.) Your lies always affect your life!

C. Abram Believed The Lie - He came to believe the lie he had fabricated more than the truth he had received from God. Verse 12 tells us that Abram was worried about something that could never happen. He could not die because God's promise to him had not been fulfilled, Gen. 12:2-3. (Note: This always sin's way, Gen. 3:1-6 - Eve sinned because she believed the devil's lies more than she believed God. Peter fell because he believed his own lies more than he believed the Lord's word - Mark 14:30-31.)

III. V. 15-17 IT IS ALWAYS A DISASTROUS PATH

A. Because Of The Potential - Abram's sin had the potential to cause others to fall. Pharaoh could have taken Sarai to be his wife! (Note: When a believer goes to Egypt spiritually, it causes others to fall away or stay away. Ill. Ghandi said that the reason he never became a Christian was other Christians!)

B. Because Of The Punishment - Abram's sin brought God's hand of judgment into the situation! (Note: Wouldn't it be a shame to know that our sin caused a believer to stumble or a sinner to be confirmed in his decision for hell? Ill. Matt. 18:6)
C. Because Of The Profits - The Bible tells us that Abram left Egypt with more than when he entered. This is not always the case, Ill. The Prodigal - Luke 15: 11-24, but sometimes the believer will prosper in the far country. However, those things that people think are gain are really often loss! Among the servants Abram acquired while there was an Egyptian girl named Hagar, Gen. 16:1-3. She became a problem for Abraham and Sarah and Abraham's sin with her still has consequences in the world tonight. The lesson here is this, "What we think are the world's best blessings often become life's greatest burdens." (Ill. Matt. 6:19-21)

Here is a summation of what happened to Abram when he went down to Egypt.

The Actions of Abram While In Egypt (Gen 12)

- He lied about Sarai, 12:12, 18
- He encouraged her to commit the same sin, 12:12
- He became self-centered, 12:14
- He created the potential for others to fall into sin, 12:14-15
- He left Egypt worse than he found it, 12:17
- He ruined his testimony in the eyes of the Egyptians, 12:19-20.
- To say the least, Abram's little trip to Egypt was a disaster!

However, I am glad to report to you that no failure need be permanent in the walk of faith! Verse one of our text tells us that Abram "went up out of Egypt." While he had taken a downward path to get into Egypt, he took an upward path to remove himself from that place. It is the steps Abram took to get back to Canaan that interest me this morning. Because it is possible for the wayward saint to return to the place of blessing, but there are certain requirements that must be met by the returning saint. I want to share with you The Road Back To Canaan.

I. V. 1-2 IT INVOLVES REMOVING

A. He Removed His Person From Egypt - Abram separated himself from Egypt. He placed distance between himself and that place. (Note: Separation is a requirement for those who wish to walk in God's blessing and power, Heb 12:1 let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, (Note: considering the anger of Pharaoh, it was pure grace that Abram was allowed to leave Egypt at all, 12:18-20! So it is with the wayward saint. If God gave us what we deserved, He would slay us in our sins. He does chasten, Heb. 12:6-12. But, thank God, He always deals with us in love and grace.)

B. He Removed His Possessions From Egypt - He did not allow anything he owned to be left at the disposal of that evil system. He took his resources with him when he returned to the place of blessing. (Note: Too many Christians like to talk about living for the Lord, but they spend more of their resources on worldly pleasures than they commit to the control of the Lord and
His work. I would just remind you that the Lord blesses in direct proportion to our giving, Mal. 3:8-10; Luke 6:38.)

C. **He Removed His Potential From Egypt** - He took Sarai with him when he left Egypt. She held within her the key to the promises of God. He knew God wanted to grow this family in Canaan and not in Egypt. Canaan was the place where God had promised to meet with them and to bless them. (**Note**: The Lord wants more than our persons and our resources, He also wants our entire futures placed at His disposal, Rom. 12:1-2.)

II. V. 3-4 **IT INVOLVES RETURNING**

A. **To The Place Of God's Worship** - He left Egypt and made his way back to Bethel, "The House Of God", and the "place of the altar", v. 4. When Abram was in Egypt, there were no altars, there was no praying, and there was no word from the Lord. (**Note**: The child of God will never be fulfilled until he or she returns to a place where God can be encountered.)

B. **To The Place Of God's Working** - Abram returned to the place where God had previously worked in his life. The Lord will always be found in the place where we left Him. (**Note**: Many of the Lord's people need to return to their altars and to the place where they walked away from God. He is waiting to meet you and bless you again!)

C. **To The Place Of God's Will** - Abram returned to the place where God sent him. Canaan represented the perfect will of God for Abram. (**Note**: The place where God can bless you the most is the place where God places you! He'll give you a lot of rope, but in the end, if you want His blessings on your life, you must be in that place near Him. III. Moses - Ex. 33:21)

III. V. 3-4 **IT INVOLVES REVIVING**

A. **He Revived His Devotion To God** - Abram came back to the place to the altar. There seems to be a renewal of the desire to be in God's presence. He came back to the altar! (**Note**: There is something fundamentally wrong when a believer possesses a lack of a desire to worship the Lord. This is true both privately or publically. God would have us be in a state of mind where His worship is a priority in our lives, John 4:23-24; Heb. 10:25.) (**Note**: We have forgotten what the altar is for in the church! It is a place of sacrifice; of seeking the Lord; of repentance; of surrender; of thanksgiving; of forgiveness, both given and received; of supplication; of praise and worship! May the Lord help us to remember the way there and how to use the altar for His glory!)

B. **He Revived His Dependence On God** - Abram "Called on the name of the LORD..." Abram is now through with Egypt and he does what he should have done in the first place, Gen. 12:10, he relies on the Lord. (**Note**: Instead of looking here and there for the help we need, the Lord would have us walk in total dependence upon Him. He desires our faith and will honor genuine faith by His provisions, Matt. 6:25-34.)
C. **He Revived His Dedication To God** - Whatever happened in the heart of Abram that caused him to walk away in the first place has been dealt with. The phrases "at the beginning" and "at the first" suggest that Abram has experienced a renewal of his "first love". (Note: What happened in this man's life is what needs to take place in the lives of many of God's children this morning! So many have allowed the flames love to becomes mere embers. We need a revival! We need to fall in love with Jesus all over again! Ill. Rev. 2:1-7) (Note: Days spent out of fellowship with God are "wood, hay, and stubble". They are wasted and can never be redeemed!)

**Conc:** I wonder how many would have to admit that they are more "down" than "up" in their walk with the Lord? When we are in that down place spiritually, the Lord cannot bless and use us like He desires to. We need to take the same steps that Abram took and come back up again. I don't know where you are spiritually this morning, but I know that if you need to come before the Lord to seek His forgiveness, to love Him, to thank Him, to pray for a lost loved one, or for any reason at all, He will gladly meet you here if you will come. May we determine in our hearts that Egypt is no place for us to dwell and that we are going back to Canaan, whatever the cost!

**The Altar Between Bethel And Ai**

3 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;
4 Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

I found it interesting here that the scripture says that Abraham went back to an altar he had built between the city of Bethel and Ai.

Bethel – “The House Of God”
Ai – “Ruin & Destruction”

Could it be that Abraham built that altar between the house of God and ruin and destruction because it would always be there to remind him of what happens when you leave the place God has for your life, it will always lead to ruin and destruction.

Guess what! You too can build an altar today! Build an altar of commitment! Like Abraham put something between you and destruction.