

Sermon Mark S. Aites
DESCENDING INTO EGYPT
(Outline Borrowed)

TEXT: GEN. 12; NUM. 14:4

INTRODUCTION:

1. All of us, at one time or another, reach a low point in our spiritual lives (from the standpoint of faithfulness to God and the need for revival).
2. At the close of Gen. 11, we learn that Abram had left the Ur of the Chaldees to go to Canaan with his father Terah, and in the course of their journey, came to Haran where his father died.
3. As we open Gen. 12, Abram was 75 years old when he received a call from God to leave Haran to go to a land that God would show him (**Gen. 12:1-5**).
 - 1) **Heb. 11:8** *By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.*
 - 2) He learned that from his seed there would be a great nation.
 - 3) And that in his seed, was also the beautiful promise which was fulfilled in Christ: *And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed* (**Gen. 12:3**).
4. As Abram made his promised journey, we learn that he pitched his tent near Bethel, where he built an altar and worshipped God (12:8).
5. Soon a famine was in the land, and he opted to head down into Egypt (**vs 10**).
 - 1) This was the first indication that his faith was wavering.
 - 2) Instead of trusting in God, he made the choice to go to the land of Egypt.
 - 3) Sadly, that choice was actually taking himself and his family into greater danger.
6. Abram continued to decline, resorting then to worldly thinking and schemes.
 - 1) His wife Sarai was a woman of beautiful countenance (**12:11**).
 - 2) So he devised his deception: **12:12-13** *Therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live.*
13 "Please say you are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you.
7. The Egyptians and the princes saw her, and eventually she was taken into Pharaoh's house (**12:14-15**).
8. But Pharaoh's house was plagued with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife (**12:17**).
9. She was returned to Abram, and Pharaoh then rebuked him (**12:18-19**).
10. Abraham probably felt some shame being rebuked by Pharaoh.
11. Sometimes, even Christians find themselves being rebuked by others who are not even Christians.
12. As a follow up to the story, we focus upon **Gen. 13:3-4** *And he went on his journey from the South as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, 4 to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of the Lord.*
13. As much at times as we walk about pressing onward, there are times when we can drift from God, and that to get us back on track, we need to go back.
14. Now I'm sure that that brings about some curiosity. There are certain experiences that we have had, which when reflected upon, may actually help us draw closer to God.

DISCUSSION: FOR EXAMPLE

I. IT MAY BE THAT WE NEED TO GO BACK TO THE TIME OF OUR CONVERSION.

- A. Of all of the experiences that Christians have, the day that we obeyed the Gospel should be a High Point in our life.
 1. In the story in **Acts 8**, where Philip taught the Ethiopian, it is clear that conversion is a high point in a person's life.
 2. The text notes after his baptism, **8:39** *Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.*
- B. Think back for a moment to the day that you obeyed the Gospel.
 1. Think of the joy that filled your heart, and the immense relief that came to mind as you realized that Jesus had washed all of your sins away.
 2. *Happy day, happy day. When Jesus washed, my sins away. He taught me how, to watch and pray, and live rejoicing every day. Happy day, happy day, when Jesus washed, my sins away.*
 3. It is a wonderful reaction to the news that Jesus had made it possible for us to avoid the fires of hell, and to live with Him in Heaven.
 4. Jailer: **Acts 16:33-34** *And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.*
34 *Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.*
- C. Why is it important for us at times to think back to such a wonderful occasion?
 1. Perhaps we have wavered in our faith, or that we proverbially have descended into Egypt.
 2. Abram descended into that place physically, but when he did he also faltered spiritually.
- D. Later in Scripture, during the days of the children of Israel, his descendants, they also faltered spiritually.
 1. Their hearts had turned from God, and they almost physically returned to the land of bondage.
 2. **Num. 14:1** *And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night.*
2 *And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness!*
3 *"Why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?"*
4 *So they said to one another, "Let us select a leader and return to Egypt."*
 3. They wanted to go back because they had it in their minds that Egypt was some kind of paradise.
 - 1) **Num. 11:5** *"We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic.*
 - 2) But this looking back was not realistic; they were not remembering things as they truly happened.
 4. At some point, like righteous Abraham, or even like the children of Israel, we may be tempted to descend into Egypt.

- 1) We may be tempted to go back into sin.
 - 2) It is at times like these that looking back at certain events can help us to get back on track.
- D. There are a number of ways that Christians can descend into Egypt:
1. By social drinking and drunkenness.
 2. By engaging in immorality.
 3. By watching filthy movies and TV programs.
 4. By reading and enjoying smut magazines and lit.
 5. By indifference and lukewarmness.
 6. By dishonesty and lying.
 7. Also by forsaking the assembly (**Heb. 10:25**).
- E. If this is occurring in your life, you need to come back to that earlier faithful relationship you had with God.
1. The time of conversion comes to mind because it is a time we are drawing close to God.
 2. It is a time that we are rejoicing in His love; a time that we seek to be faithful to His every word.

II. IT MAY BE THAT IN OUR HOMES WE NEED TO GO BACK TO THE RELATIONSHIP WE HAD WHEN WE FIRST SAID OUR MARRIAGE VOWS.

- A. Think for a moment of the feelings that are shared with a newly married couple.
1. They begin with that love; that interest in each other's welfare.
 2. There is the talk and action that shows kindness, togetherness, and desire for each other.
 3. They want to be together and look forward to that relationship for a long time.
 4. Sometimes we joke about the fact that you can tell a newly married couple by the way they sit in a car.
- B. Consider also the Christian home:
1. In that home you should see a mutual love and respect between husbands and wives. **Eph. 5:21** *submitting to one another in the fear of God.*
 2. Wives: **Eph. 5:22** *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.*
 3. Husbands: **Eph. 4:25** *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.*
 4. And that love and respect must even go to the extent of loving our spouses as ourselves.
Eph. 5:33 *Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*
- C. When that design of God is followed, there generally is going to be happiness.
- D. But homes also can descend into Egypt spiritually.
1. Priorities are not what they should be (**Matt. 6:33**); instead there is no room for God.
 2. Material interests are placed above those which are spiritual.
 3. Husbands and wives find that they have no time for each other.
 4. Instead of a place of refuge, and a place of happiness the home becomes a battleground.
 5. Financial strains and other stresses take the joy right out of the marriage.

6. And divorces and separations have become much too common among the children of God.
 - 1) **Mal 2:16** *"For the Lord God of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one's garment with violence," Says the Lord of hosts. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously."*
 - 2) Granted, divorce is an option (**Matt. 19:9**, fornication), Homes are also descending due to sin, adultery, and fornication, but even so, marriage must be viewed as being as something which is not ended lightly.
- E. What many homes need is to look back at the time of their marriage at the first.
 1. They need to remember the vows and commitment they had for one another.
 2. Revival is needful for that home to survive.

III. THERE IS A NEED FOR SOME TO RETURN TO THE SPIRITUAL ATMOSPHERE AND SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIPS EXPERIENCED IN HOMES AND LIVES.

- A. Some homes are not like they used to be.
 1. As with the problems seen in marriages, there are homes which lack the love that was once there.
 2. The situation can be such that children say to the parent, or parents, that they wish things were like they used to be.
- B. It can even be a concern in feelings once felt toward the church.
 1. Perhaps there was once a feeling of oneness and love (such as the Lord prayed for, **John 17:20-21**).
 2. It may be that the church was talked about in a warm way; and that there was a genuine love for those in the church.
 3. There may have been warm feelings toward the services of the church; Gospel Meetings, or other fellowships.
 4. Even warm feelings were there for other sister congregations.
- C. The question arises: do those feelings and warm relationships still occur today?
 1. It may be that we have descended into Egypt.
 2. It is possible that love for the church is not felt.
 - 1) Jesus loved it enough to die for her.
 - 2) But it might be the case that the world has turned those feelings of warmth and love cold.
 3. It is also possible that there is no binding tie that binds us to fellow Christians.
 - 1) We sing the song: *Blessed be the tie that binds, our hearts in Christian love.*
 - 2) But without that love for one another (**John 13:34-35**), there can be no tie.
 4. There is descent into Egypt when we no longer have concern for sister congregations.
 - 1) There is concern when we don't care to show love or care or concern for Christians outside the local congregation.
- D. It is important that we seek to reflect back when relationships and a spiritual atmosphere was an important part of our life.
 1. Worldliness, indifference, or problems in relationships are indications that we need to reflect back.
 2. If love is absent, and that spiritual atmosphere is not there, then it is contrary to what Christ wished.

3. If one has doubts he only needs to read the book of 1 John.

IV. THE RELIGIOUS WORLD IN GENERAL HAS DESCENDED INTO EGYPT RELIGIOUSLY.

- A. Jesus presented His church and His way for mankind in the Scriptures.
 1. He made it clear that He was the way to Heaven:
John 14:6 *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*
 2. He informed us in Scripture of His plans to build His church (**Matt. 16:18**).
 3. Through His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, before His death, He prayed: **John 17:20-21** *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; 21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*
 4. Through His apostle He taught: **1 Cor. 1:10** *Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*
 5. The Lord provided an understanding of when the early church began (**Acts 2**); and even through apostolic instruction now how to worship God in a way that is pleasing in His sight.
- B. Jesus even presented His plan of salvation; that we don't have to wonder in doubt, what it is that I need to do to be saved?
 1. That question was already asked and answered.
 2. **Acts 2:37** *Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?*
 3. **Acts 16:30** *And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*
 4. It is not as though that question is not answered; nor is it so vague that it cannot be understood.
 - 1) **John 3:3-5; Heb. 11:6; Acts 17:30-31, Acts 8:37; 22:16.**
 - 2) Many other passages make this plan crystal clear.
- C. But regretfully, the religious world in general has descended into Egypt.
 1. They have gotten away from the teaching on the church.
 - 1) Instead, they have taken Scripture and altered the meaning of key passages, in an effort to justify division, and the doctrines of men.
 - 2) We already noted that Jesus prayed for unity; not unity in diversity; but as Paul stressed, unity *in the same mind, and in the same judgment.*
 - 3) And likewise, He condemned the doctrines of men. **Matt. 15:9** *But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*
 2. Also, the religious world has gotten away from the teaching on the plan of salvation.
 - 1) They have people now saved totally by grace; without obedience of any kind.
 - 2) They have people being saved by just praying and receiving Jesus into the heart.
 - 3) Radio programs and TV programs are airing the idea that all one has to do is believe; based upon the jailer in **Acts 16**.
 3. When the jailer asked what to do to be saved, he was told: *Believe on the Lord*

Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house (16:31).

- 1) Following that he was taught the word of the Lord (**vs 32**); baptized in **vs 33**, and was declared a believer in **vs 34**.
 - 2) It plainly shows that belief alone is not enough.
- D. In a case like these, with the various problems on the church, and religious doctrines, there is a need to look back.
1. There is a need to look back at the early church, and the pattern for the church in Scripture.
 2. There is the need to see that sincerity is not enough to get us to Heaven (**Prov. 14:12** *There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*)

V. APPLICATION.

- A. We are living in very trying times (as if I really need to say that).
1. To endure what we face in this life, we need to have a greater commitment; certainly to the Lord, to the church, to the work, to the home, etc.
 2. Looking back, when our commitments were perhaps stronger, can help.
- B. Abraham, if you will, came full circle.
1. In **Gen. 12:7** he had been to Bethel.
 2. He then went through a series of poor judgments, and a wavering in his faith.
 3. But according to **Gen. 13:3-4**, he made the choice to go back to Bethel.
- C. Sometimes we don't fully understand all that causes a person who has known God, to waver in their faith and turn from Him.
1. There certainly can be a variety of circumstances and influences so that it is hard to fully comprehend what happened.
 2. And sometimes when that occurs, there is such a problem that they turn from God, even to the point of falling away from the faith.
 3. It is at times like these that there is a real need to look back at the commitment that they once had for God.
 4. If we see someone in that condition, we need to help them.
Gal. 6:1 *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*
 5. **James 5:19-20** *Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; 20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.*
- D. It may well be that you actually find yourself in this position, and that you need to strengthen your commitment to God.

CONCLUSION:

1. It is hard to own up to the fact that you are not the Christian that you once were.
 - 1) That instead of growing in the Christian graces, and living faithfully to the Lord, you have gone the other way.
 - 2) If that applies to you, think hard about your relationship with God.
2. What is it that has affected your zeal and enthusiasm for God, that you recall when you were first converted?

3. What has affected your marriage, or your home, or your relationships with other people?
4. One of the songs in our song books says, "God is calling the prodigal home."
 - 1) The song is based upon the parable of the prodigal son (**Luke 15:11-32**).
 - 2) That son had a lot going for him; and opted to seek out his inheritance, which we spent in riotous or wasteful living (**15:13**).
 - 3) He came upon rough times: NKJV **16-19** *"And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.
17 'But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!
18 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you,
19 "and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants." "*
 - 4) The prodigal son looked back and remembered where he once had been, and what he had lost through his poor decisions.
5. Perhaps, like Abraham, you need to return to Bethel -- to return to that commitment you once shared with Christ.
 - 1) To leave behind the lure of the world, and come out of that proverbial Egypt of sin.
 - 2) Seek out your relationship with God anew.