

## LIFE CHANGING STORIES FROM THE BIBLE

### “MAKING FRESH STARTS”

Last lecture we looked at walking in fellowship with God, and as we do the blood of Jesus continues to cleanse us from all sin. It's like when you are painting something and a drip from your paint brush falls on something you don't want painted that colour. If you immediately brush it off with a rag it's gone just as if it had never happened. But if you say to yourself, "I'll leave it till later, then I'll wipe it off," you will find that the paint has hardened and it is much more difficult to get rid of. So too our heart becomes hardened and though we still believe in him, we are out of fellowship.

We make fresh starts when we realize we are getting nowhere and close fellowship with God appears to have gone. It doesn't mean we are no longer a Christian, it means we are a Christian who has got out of fellowship. Let's look at a bible example.

Abram, who later was called Abraham, was called by God to leave his home and go to a place God had called him to. Genesis 12:1. "The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you." God gave him some wonderful promises if he would do that. Then we read in v 4) "So Abram left, as the Lord had told him." V 6 "Abram travelled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. 7) "The Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him."

All the stories in the bible are there that we might learn from them. Here we have a wonderful story that illustrates what it means to be a Christian in fellowship with God. Abram was called to a land. We are called to a life of fellowship with God. Abram built an altar in that land and offered a sacrifice to God. It is a picture of a Christian living in the will of God offering a sacrifice of devotion on the altar of their heart to the Lord.

V 8) "From there he went on towards the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent." "There he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord." Abram continued in fellowship and devotion. He was in the place of God's perfect will, he was experiencing the sweet will of God, the blessing of God, he was where he was supposed to be.

But then, v10) we read, "Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe." Abram in the land of Canaan was like the Christian being in fellowship. Abram going down to Egypt was like a Christian getting out of fellowship.

Wait a minute, wasn't there a severe famine? Yes but it was a severe famine in the will of God. He could have trusted God to provide for him in the famine. God had already promised to bless him v 2) he could have trusted God and see God provide for him. So instead of trusting God he went down into Egypt. While in Egypt he got himself in trouble with Pharaoh the ruler of Egypt and all told it was not a happy time. But it never is when we get out of fellowship with God.

Finally we read in 13:1. "So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, with his wife and everything he had." V 3,4) From the Negev he went from place to place until he came to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had been earlier and where he had first built an altar. There Abram called on the name of the Lord."

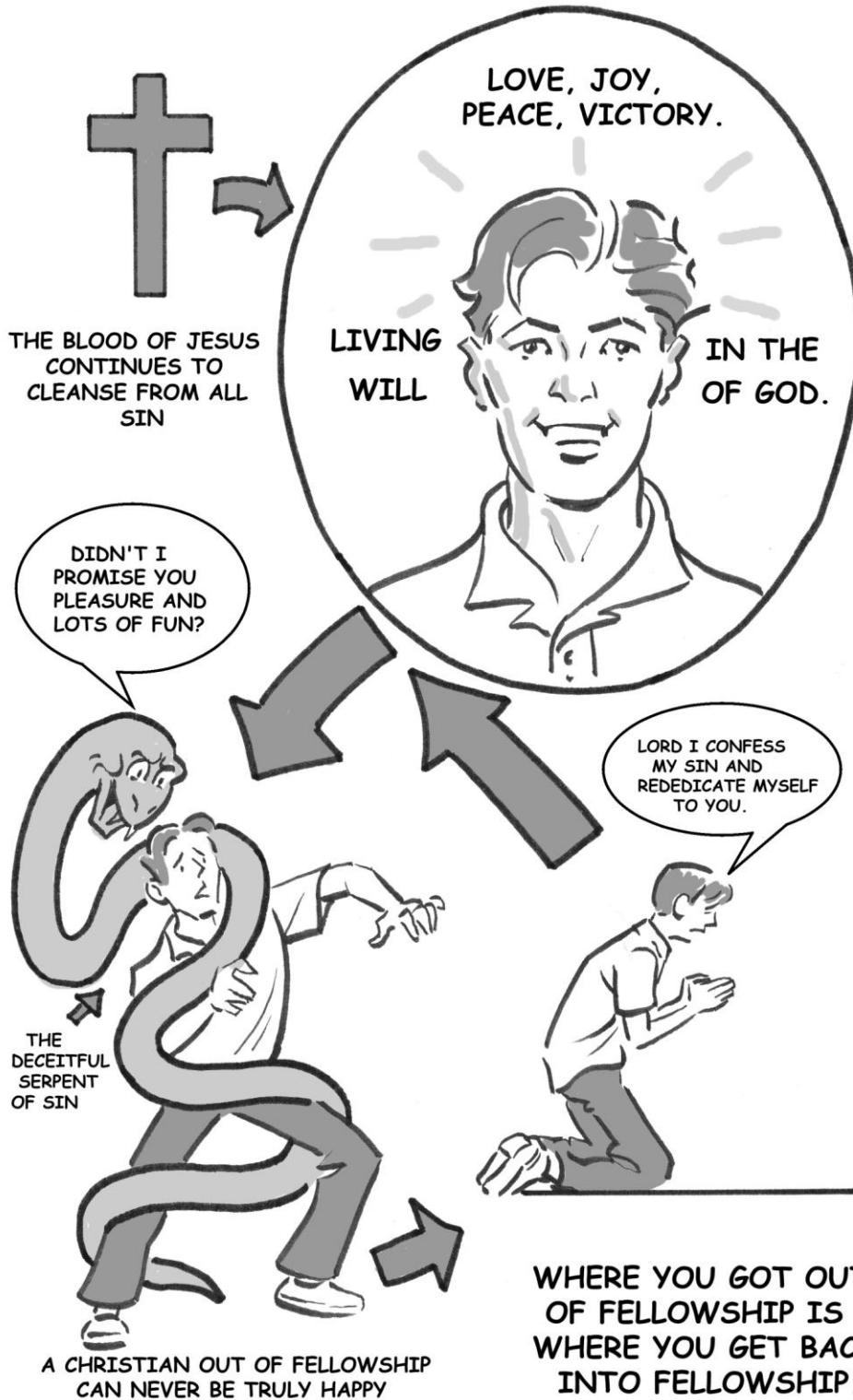
Notice he went from place to place but he still was not happy until he came to the place where he had built an altar. Here his fellowship was restored. Maybe he bowed before that altar and confessed to God his lack of trust, his waywardness, his getting out of fellowship Then rededicating himself to God ,he made a fresh start and there are times when we also need to make a fresh start.

We usually get back into fellowship where we got out of fellowship. Abram went back to the place where he had built an altar. It was from there when the famine came he was tempted to escape down to Egypt, where there was no famine. Instead of trusting God to get him through a difficult time and keep in God's will, he gave into the temptation and got himself out of the will of God and out of fellowship with God.

If you know you are out of fellowship, ask God to bring to your mind what was the first wrong step you took that led you astray. Humble yourself, confess it and ask for forgiveness. Confess any other things you have done to the Lord and rededicate yourself to him. If you do this you will soon find yourself back in fellowship again.

1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

# A CHRISTIAN IN FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD



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