

Msn Moses Lee SNU - Bible School Testimony

Jacob Returns to Bethel

Genesis 33:12-35:28

Key Verse 35:3

"Then come, let us go up to Bethel, where I will build an altar to God who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone."

Dear heavenly Father, thank you Lord for watching over your servant Jacob. Lord, you protected him and blessed him. May I acknowledge God's hand in my life and serve him with my whole heart.

Part I - Summary of Passage

In this passage, Jacob is returning from his uncle's house in Paddan Aram. He has encountered God and crossed the Jabbok river without fear. Now he confronts his brother and the LORD is merciful. Esau has forgotten his wrath against Jacob. But Jacob still does not trust or either want to mix in with Esau's people so instead of going with Esau to Seir, he tricks him and instead goes northward to Shechem. Jacob was supposed to return to Bethel and honor God, but Jacob became afraid and went north instead. There he settled near a prosperous city and built his own town called Succoth. He wanted to settle in that land and enjoy his life. Jacob wanted to stop fighting with people and just live. But his compromise lead to his daughter being abused and his Son's misusing the covenant of God to trick the Shechemites and then later kill them when they were recovering from circumcision surgery. Levi and Simeon killed everyone and took all the loot. Jacob was forced to leave the area because of this, but this was God's providence to remind him that Succoth was not where he was supposed to be. Jacob was afraid of being attacked by other Canaanites, but the LORD put the fear of God into all the people and they let Jacob go. Jacob finally went to Bethel and realized what God had done for him. So to recognize this Jacob purified himself and built an altar to God. An alter to show his dedication and heart was only for serving God. In verse 35:3b he says, "... who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone." When Jacob returned to Bethel, Jacob was fulfilling his vow, taking his promise to God seriously. God was pleased and blessed him again, by reiterating the covenant promise to him and to change his name to Israel. Also God talked with Jacob and became his God. Jacob finally accepted God's sovereignty over his life and gave his life to God.

Part II - Personal Application

In this passage I learned about Jacob's heart this time. Before I had studied the passage I had never looked in depth at Jacob, just seeing it as a story with a forgone conclusion. Now though I see that Jacob really struggled with the word of God. When he was returning from Paddan Aram, he was initially afraid of his brother. But God came to him and wrestled with him and reassured him. Even after meeting his brother though he did not trust God fully and went to Succoth instead of Bethel. Where else would be safer if your afraid of your brother? Some town or the House of God? Here Jacob didn't have

enough faith to keep his vow to God. Looking back on my life, I see how I have made many decisions before God. I decided to read the Bible more. I have decided to watch my words. I have decided to love all people unconditionally. But in all of these things I have failed because my relationship with God was only been surface level. Lord, there has not been any power in me and any words of God because my relationship with God was based on my own strength. So many times I ended up doing what I want to do. I have been studying the Bible for 5 years now and I have not produced any fruit. I have often wondered why? I see now that is because like Jacob, I am still my own man and still following my own feelings and desires. Often I find myself with a dilemma to study to sleep, and I always end up sleeping. This shows my heart just like Jacob. I am still reminded of last years Bible School, where I made some critical mistakes not involving people because I didn't want to involve them. This also showed my heart and my lack of faith in God, to see beyond the surface situation. When Jacob decided not to go where God had wanted him and where he had vowed to go, he went to Shechem. But Shechem brought him and others nothing but trouble. I learned here that compromise of God's word brings trouble for others and in this case big trouble. Clearly compromise of your vow to God leads only to trouble, because you are out of God's will. Here God helped Jacob along by allowing him to realize through this trouble that this is not where he was supposed to be. God was watching him all the way. The process of becoming a God centered man is not an overnight process, it is a steady process. And this process is helped along only by God. God wants us to live a holy pilgrimage. My life hasn't really been a Holy Pilgrimage. God has been watching and directing my life the entire time, but yet I have been struggling with men and serving myself. God granted me a stable home in the DuPage country area to grow up in. He granted me a great school at COD to grow up in the shadow of. He granted me a good job at IIT, nearby to support the ministry. He granted me many other things, but instead I did not see these for what they were. My life has had trouble and problems with other people because I wasn't living a Holy Pilgrimage like Jacob. Jacob realized that he had lived a selfish life and through his initial change at Shechem, he decided to return to Bethel. But this time, he set his priorities. He called everyone together in 35:3 and told them, get your things together, purify yourselves, we are going up to Bethel to build and Alter and worship the LORD. Here Jacob now has a clear vision of what he is supposed to be doing and what his life priority should be. Now that his heart is set like this, God can work in him. Before this summer, my life was not set, although I had Biblical knowledge, I was still living for myself. But through seeing the work of God through the World Mission Report and the U of I summer conference, I began to see how I was still serving myself. Even into the new school year I was taking care of my needs first and still running into trouble, like the old Jacob. But when I let go of my petty selfish desires and decided to serve God first, I could go to the campus and invite students to Bible Study. Although none have come yet, I have a list of phone numbers and have made many contacts and initial invitations. Jacob's return to Bethel was his fulfillment of his vow, and also his realization that God was his shepherd and had been guiding his life the whole way. I pray I may return to my calling as a campus shepherd for COD students and invite many needy COD students to Bible Study. I pray I may see that God is too leading my life and sanctifying me. Jacob's alter building was an expression of his faith and commitment to God. In my life regular and consistent one to one Bible study with students is my alter building. LORD, please help me to see you as

the God who helps me keep my promises and that I may not struggle with man, but give my focus over to God.

Part III - Decision Based on the Passage

Based on this passage, I learned that Jacob had to let everything go and give up his past life and ways. He literally needed to become Israel a man who has struggled with God. I learned here that I need to also give up everything I have. All my own ideas, all my comforts, all my bad habits of blurting out random things. Lord, I need to focus my mind and decide what my life is for. Is my life for serving God and becoming a follower of God, or is life for serving myself and to struggle endlessly. Jacob was crushed through his training and began to follow God. I have been crushed, but my heart still struggles to follow God at 80%. I need to call on God and do what he wants me through teaching the Bible 1 to 1 as a campus shepherd. I have not struggled as hard as I should have over the last 5 years. I need to give up my pride and serve God to the point of shedding blood, by giving up my Jacob like life. Lord, forgive me for my transgressions and wasted time struggling by myself. LORD, help me to see my life from your point of view as a campus shepherd, who has God watching over me the whole time. LORD, help my selfish desires to be crushed by you and raise me as a man of God.

One Decision of Faith: To leave my old life and become like Jacob who gave his struggles to God.

One Word: Struggle until my heart is dedicated to God.