Study of Jacob - Part 8

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[0:00] Seeking the Lord's blessing, we'll turn to the portion of scripture we read, Genesis chapter 35, and verse 1 of the chapter.

And God said to Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there, and make there an altar unto God that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.
And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel. Now, last Sabbath we saw how Jacob fell gradually into a state of spiritual declension when he lived in the place called Shechem.
And he did that because of his prosperity, and largely because of fear of some of his own family.
And in his prosperity, he forgot the vow which he had made at Bethel many years before.
And so he rested, in a sense, on his lease in Shechem, and he forgot to be a pilgrim. He bought a well there, he built a house, and he bought a small piece of land.
[1:35] And over a period of ten years, he gradually declined spiritually. And then the Lord laid his hand upon him by way of chastisement again.

And that happened with the defilement of his daughter, Dinah, which we looked at last week. And the hand of chastisement was also upon him in the way in which his two sons worked vengeance for themselves in the light of that.
And they slew the men of Shechem for the rape of their own sister, Dinah. And in these things, Jacob was conscious that the hand of the Lord had fallen upon him in chastisement.
And he begins to fear, as we saw last week. He said to his sons, after their vengeance, You have troubled me to make me stink among the inhabitants of this land.
And they shall gather themselves together against me and slay me, and I shall be destroyed, I and my house. So you have a picture there of a man who is conscious that the Lord has visited him.
[2:35] He has lost his boldness. He has lost his strength and his courage. And he's become fearful. And he knows that he's under the displeasure of God. And so he turns, no doubt, to seek the Lord's face.

And to ask the Lord to show him the reason for his displeasure. Now when things come to us like that in Providence, it's good for us to do that. It's good for us to search and to examine ourselves as to whether we have somehow offended the Lord in a particular way to cause him to break out against us in this kind of way.
And if it is a chastisement from the Lord, well, he will reveal that. I'll say a little more about that as I go on. But if it is a chastisement upon you from himself, then he will reveal it and he will reveal the cause of it.
So Jacob, no doubt, examines himself at this point. And when he turns to the Lord, God breaks into his experience powerfully with these words, Arise, the words of our text, And go up to Bethel and make there an altar to God, who appeared unto you when you fled from the face of Esau, your brother.
So Jacob immediately gets up and he puts his household in order, he puts his family in order, and they begin to make the journey to Bethel. And when he arrives there, he builds an altar to God, and he worships God there, and he calls him this time the God of Bethel.
[4:07] You remember when he built an altar in Shechem, he called him the God of Israel. But this time he calls him the God of Bethel. And God comes to him in Bethel, and he renews the promises to him.

And he meets him almost face to face, in particular intimacy and in blessedness. Now, it's these things that I want to look at with you a little more closely, and especially the main doctrine, or the main teaching that's brought before us in this passage, which is that of repentance.

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Because the passage is primarily concerned with repentance, what repentance is, and how it works in the life of a believer. And indeed in the life of the unbeliever, who is turning to the Lord for the first time, we'll see how it is the same repentance essentially in both cases.
Now, the first thing to notice about this repentance is that it's a response to the command of God. It's God who comes and who says to Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there.
Now, I want to look first at the expression, go up to Bethel. Now, that carries with it two things. Or that expression, go up to Bethel, is designed to do two things to Jacob himself.
[5:34] In the first place, it is designed to bring home powerfully to Jacob what his sin actually is. And if Jacob is unsure why the Lord has broken out against him in such a way, and why he has visited the family in such a way, then God will tell him clearly now what it is.

Arise, he says, and go up to Bethel, that place where you vowed, and which you promised to visit, once I would free you and bless you, and bless you abundantly.
You have neglected it, and you have delayed it. And you have delayed it because of your sin. Your prosperity kept you back from going to that place and performing a spiritual duty.
So I am reminding you now to go up to Bethel. Now, I said a minute ago that if God is chastising us, he'll tell us why.
Now, that stands to reason. If your own child was misbehaving, and you took your child, and you chastised him, and you just left it at that, and he had no clue whatsoever why you had smitten him in this way, if he was just left there wondering what it was all about, then that would obviously do more harm than good.
[6:50] It would do more harm than good. It's involved in chastisement that the word accompanies the blow, or that the word of teaching, or the word of explanation, accompanies the blow from the hand of God.

And only then will chastisement become profitable. And I should say that perhaps to complement what I said last week about the necessity of chastising, and of physically chastising of children, which the Bible commends.
Along with that, there should be an explanation of why, a clear explanation of why, that the child is able to bear, and able to sustain. Only then will chastisement do its corrective, instructive work.
And if you seek the face of God, God will give you the reason for the chastisement. And when you come and inquire of him, he will reveal to you what it is. And that is why he comes to Jacob in power here, and he says, Arise and go up to Bethel.
It is Jacob because you are in Shechem, and because you have been Shechem for ten years, that I have come, and that I have smitten you in this way. No doubt you thought that one day you would make your way to Bethel.
[8:00] But for the moment, the land at Shechem is good. Your sons are pressing you to stay. There is the opportunity for prosperity. For the first time in twenty years, you can have a piece of land you can call your own, you can have a house you can call your own, and a well you can call your own.

And these worldly considerations come before making the journey to Bethel, which wasn't such a hospitable place to live in. It was just not that. It was not as hospitable as Shechem.
But my friends, has Jacob forgotten his strife, his anguish, and bitterness of soul twenty years before? That's dated from the time he arrived in Shechem.
Twenty years before. Has he forgotten all that? It's quite remarkable how worldly things can keep you back from spiritual duties. And when they do, the Lord will visit you for it.
I wonder what you put before the prayer meeting yourself. I wonder what you put before the house of God. Or if there's a fellowship down the road somewhere. I wonder what you put before that.
[9:04] How many worldly things can creep in? And don't think that the hand of the Lord will stay up without coming down upon us when we put worldly things like that before his own cause and before our own vows.

And so that's why God brings it before him. And when he brings it before him, he feels like the psalmist. He says, Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.
My transgressions I confess. My sin I ever see. Now when God is really dealing with us in a living way, then he brings our sins home to us just like that.
He makes us to feel, really, that we have sinned against him. He makes us to feel it personally, that we have transgressed the holy commandment. And he makes us to feel it in such a way as though

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he and ourselves were alone in the universe.
It is myself dealing with himself. Against thee and thee only have I sinned. And that sin is before my face and before my face continually.
[10:10] Ah, my friends, would that the Lord would bring us to that position where we could see our sins that clearly. But not only does go to Bethel bring his sin before him, it brings something else before him too.

It brings before him Jacob's need to put his household right before God. It is a call, in other words, to rededication or a recommitment to God and holiness.
It is in many respects like a new beginning or a fresh start. Go up to Bethel, Jacob, and dwell there. Dwell in my presence as you have not been dwelling in my presence for these years.
Ah, yes, Jacob has worshipped these years. And yes, at times he would have been conscious fleetingly of the intimate presence of the Lord. But he did not have that real, solid communication from God that he had had before and that he was about to have again.
He just did not have that. That sweetness of closeness and intimacy. It was a strange thing to him. Until he received the call powerfully from the word of God to go back to Bethel and to meet with the Lord himself there again.
[11:29] And that's what the altar symbolizes. Make there an altar to God. What does an altar speak of? Well, it speaks of forgiveness. It speaks of reconciliation. It speaks of meeting God through a sacrifice.

It speaks of a burnt offering, of a consecration, of a yielding of yourself to God. All these things are to be done at the altar. And Jacob is invited by God, as it were, to begin on a new footing.
And you'll notice how he says it. He doesn't merely say, go up to Bethel. He says, arise, go up to Bethel. And the very word as it's given us is designed to give the impression of someone who's been slothfully at ease.
Someone who's been in some kind of spiritual slumber or spiritual stupor. Someone who's been in a state of morbid apathy. Someone who is not moving and who is not industrious in the way that he should be.
He is sitting in the dust and he is a shadow of what he ought to be. He has allowed other things to take the place of the Lord. Rise up, Jacob. Shake yourself out of the dust and press forward to Bethel.
[12:44] And there I will meet with you at the altar. And there I will bless you. It is as though God is saying to Jacob, enough of being ruled by your family instead of ruling your family.

It is as though God is saying to him, enough of your parcel of land and of your well and of your house. Enough of these things. Enough of the possessions. Enough of the goats. Enough of the cows. Enough of the herds.
Get up and put your house in order and appear before me in Bethel. And is that not a call to ourselves also? How often will God call us before we do the thing to arise and to shake ourselves? Or how must he smite us before we cut loose from the idols and before we meet with God? Arise, Jacob, and go up to Bethel.
Now there's another one or two things I want to notice in connection with this commandment. First of all, I said that it's of God. It's a command to repent and it comes from God.
[13:49] And viewed in one perspective, that is a marvelous thing itself. It is not as though Jacob, as it were, says to himself, I must repent.

It is God saying to Jacob, repent and come to Bethel. He is calling and he is reviving. And it's easy for us to believe that along with the call and along with the summons, God gives the power to do so. Because God is dealing with his own covenant people. He doesn't just give them an empty word, but he accompanies the word with power. It's as though in saying arise that Jacob arises in the very act.
Jacob is conscious of the strength to do it. But from whom does the strength come? But from the Lord who calls him to do it. Arise, Jacob, the time has come. And it is a sovereign call.
God calls and God energizes. In other words, without that, Jacob would remain in his stupor. And I would remain in my morbid apathy along with him.
[14:55] It is of God's mercies that we are not consumed. Put it this way. How would it be if God said this? Ephraim is joined to idols.

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Leave him alone. He said that about another people. Ephraim is joined to idols. Leave him alone. Leave him alone. What solemn words these are.
He could have said, Jacob is joined to idols. Leave him alone. But he does not leave him alone. By the mercy of God, he cannot leave him alone.
Christ died for him. And God will reach down again and he will take hold of Jacob and he will pull him out of these things. Arise, Jacob, and go up to Bethel.
And that shows us the wonderful grace and mercy of God in doing it. It comes from himself. The call and the power to obey the call comes from himself. Unless God equips you and empowers you, you'll sit under a call to repentance for 50 years.
[16:05] in the hardness of your own heart in your own spiritual slumber will sit in it and will stay in it.

Oh, what cause to cry to God that he might come and give a powerful invitation because, you'll notice, it's not only a command to repent and this is very important.
It is also, well, I can't use the expression, an invitation to repent, but I can put it this way. Along with the command to repent, that is the invitation to come. The invitation to come.
And that is included in the words, make an altar unto God. Because, as I said, that speaks of reconciliation, forgiveness, and mercy.
God is not merely saying, Jacob, do this. But he is saying, do this and I will meet with you. Do this and I will bless you.
[17:10] Do this and we will speak one with another and the blessing of Almighty God shall rest upon you. In other words, no man can truly repent unless he sees the grace of God or God's willingness to receive him or God's willingness to have mercy upon him.

That is necessary. You can turn from something without that, but you can't turn to God without that. You might, out of a sense of your sin and misery, cut yourself off from many sins in your life.
And it is a good thing to do that, to cut yourself off from things that are hampering you. But you will never truly embrace God unless you see clearly that God is embraceable in the Lord Jesus Christ.
And unless you get a saving view of who Christ is and what Christ has done. And that is why along with every call to repentance, you find an invitation, as it were, to come.
An invitation to find mercy and to find forgiveness. Arise, go to Bethel and make an altar there unto your God. In other words, without hope, you can never have repentance.
[18:33] Despair will produce remorse. Hope will produce repentance. If you've got nothing but blackness in front of you, it will only produce remorse.

Like Judas Iscariot, he saw nothing but blackness and he went out into the night. He only saw the night and he went out into the night.
That is remorse. But where you see light shining in the darkness, that is repentance. It is a turning from and a turning to and an embracing of the Lord.
And it's wonderful how the Shorter Catechism brings that before us in answering the question what is repentance? Amongst what it answers there, it says that the sinner out of a sense or an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ doth turn from his sin.
You'll notice how that's put in there. It's not just that he's conscious of his sin and misery, but he has an apprehension. He spiritually or in here apprehends or lays hold upon the fact.
[19:40] That's what apprehend means. It means to lay hold upon the fact that God is merciful in Christ. And it's in that that he turns and he embraces.

And that is what strengthens Jacob to move. That's what strengthens him to go to Bethel. That God will meet him in Bethel and that God will bless him in Bethel. And I want you to understand the same thing regarding the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.
On the cross Christ will meet you. God will meet you at that cross. It is not a matter of yourself in your own energy just trying to reform and trying to cast the evil spirit out of your life.
When that is done if Christ is not laid hold of seven spirits more wicked than the one you cast out will come in and will inhabit you. Matthew 12. But if you out of a sense of God meeting you in Christ turn from your sins you will find that God empowers that turning and he will drive you as it were all the way to love Christ to lay hold upon Christ to cleave to the Savior and to follow him.
And that is what empowers Jacob to move. Oh my friend how good it would be if even one soul in here tonight would be empowered to move and to move spiritually to rise up out of Shechem and to go to Bethel to leave the city of destruction and make your way to the celestial city to leave

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darkness and to embrace light.
[21:07] You ask for mercy and you'll find mercy. You take up the cross and God will bless you. You come to Christ and confess that you have sinned that you have come short of his of his law that you have transgressed his holy commandment.

Cast yourself down before him and ask for his mercy and forgiveness and you will find that. Say to him if you want that I have no strength to travel the Christian way except you give it me.
He will embrace you and he will give you that strength. Notice again when the Catechism deals with repentance it says this that the sinner repenting must have a full purpose or he must be endeavouring after new obedience.
Now that must be in your heart. You must in your heart walk like him to think like him to be conformed to his image a full purpose and an endeavour after a new obedience.
You must have that. And by God's grace you will have it. You will have it. Commit yourself and trust yourself to him and you will have it.
[22:21] Arise and go to Bethel and Jacob gets up and he goes to Bethel. Now I want to look with you again at the repentance itself.

Notice in verse 2 how Jacob responds immediately. God has called with power and immediately you find the result. And Jacob says to his household and to all that were with him put away the strange gods that are among you and be clean and change your garments and let us arise and go up to Bethel and I will make there an altar unto God who answered me in the day of my distress and who was with me in the way which I went.
Now what you have here is repentance working itself out in the life of Jacob. As soon as God comes to him calling him powerfully Jacob is seized with the glory and the holiness and the majesty of God.
First sign when God comes it's always the first sign. When God comes into a soul a congregation a church or a nation that nation congregation of soul is seized with a vision of the holiness of God of his righteousness of his purity and you are constrained to say who shall ascend into the hill of God who can have fellowship with the almighty who can stand in the presence of the one who is of pure ary than to behold iniquity.
When God comes his holiness is seen and you become vile you become vile your sins are seen by you clearly before your face just as God broke into the life of David in a remarkable way after his own sin and God when God visited him David could only see the purity of God and his own ugliness before him my sin he says I ever see and that is why when a person is spoken to by God he immediately reforms his life this is the way repentance works the spiritual vision and energy comes into the soul and it immediately transforms the life and the sinner says who shall ascend into the hill of God that man whose hands are clean and whose heart is pure and he immediately begins to wash his hands to put out of his life and to put out of his house all what offends the Lord Jesus
[25:06] Christ all that is opposed to the holiness of God the sinner declares warfare on that that is the first and immediate effect of God visiting any person or group of persons and that is the way that Jacob responds here for example see the way in which he commands his house verse 2 put away the strange gods that are among you and be clean and change your garments now is this the same Jacob we saw in the previous chapter he can't even speak to Shechem and Hamor without his sons dictating the whole proceedings Jacob has lost his place he's lost his strength he's lost his authority he's lost his power he's almost in a sense not to such a great degree but he's almost like Samson short it is his sons who do the business it is his sons who tell what should be done with the men of Shechem that they should all be circumcised it is the sons who take vengeance for themselves and all Jacob can see at the end of the chapter is that he has been made to stink among the inhabitants of the land but when God comes in power and shows him his holiness and calls him in mercy and grace

Jacob assumes command of the household again he becomes a man of strength a man of strength as though his hair has grown and he has saw the face of the Lord in his anguish and there is a new vigour and a new purpose about the man as though Jacob knows now what he is about now he is in authority and now he is in control and when a man is like that when a man's repenting before God and when a man's aware of God's holiness and when he is taken with that vision that man becomes strong that man becomes a strong man and he becomes a man of whom people are aware that the grace of God is in him and the power of God is at work in him and you will notice the effect on Jacob's household they listen immediately to what he says immediately they respond they gave

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Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand and all the earrings which were in their ears perhaps a few months previously they wouldn't have listened but when the power of God is in there then they listen oh what strength there is when God is working in us all
I'm going to see that with you actually a little while later on throughout the sermon we'll see how Jacob's life is empowered at this particular point but notice how he takes command of his own household and not only does he take command of it he cleans it he turns and he says put away the strange gods that are among you be clean and change your garments be clean and be changed now I think the change of garments here has probably a twofold function first of all they're going up into the presence of God now you'll notice whenever people appeared in the presence of God at certain times in regular worship they would appear in a proper way and in a proper manner they would prepare for it they would prepare in their hearts and the change of garments was not just the fact that they would perhaps wear certain clothing when they were in the public assembly but it also symbolized very often symbolizes the fact that they were putting on the new man and taking off the old man in other words the change of garments speaks of taking off remember how
Paul speaks to the Ephesians he says put off the old man and the vocabulary there reminds us of taking off one set of clothing and putting on another take off the old man he says and put on the new man which is fashioned according to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ and this change of garments is like that there is a relentless purge as Jacob examines his own life and the life of his household and he puts out of it what is offensive to God and he puts into his life and into his family what pleases the Lord before he goes up and meets with him before he even presents himself at Bethel to worship God he will put his house in order he'll put his life in order and we should always remember that ourselves whenever we gather the sacred hour of worship is on the Lord's day God still has a day which he has set aside for the public worship and for the public assembly when God's appointed preachers will proclaim his own revealed word to the assembled visible church of God when he has promised to be present in that assembly in a particular way at the stated hour on the Lord's day in the Lord's house and that is a time to prepare to appear properly to give it reverence and to give it respect and not to seek somehow to cheapen the thing and there are many ways in which we can cheapen it but honour it honour it honour the presence of God in our midst in the outward man as well as in the inward man some people think that it doesn't really matter for example what you wear to the house of God well of course it matters what you wear to the house of God these things are all important to the Lord we all know that there is a difference between what you would call casual clothing and clothes that is more formal nobody goes to a wedding or anything like that dressed in a t-shirt and jeans nobody does that why well because it's not an occasion for it it is a formal occasion the same is true with the stated assemblies of God's house it's not the same as having worship in your house this is when the whole church convenes to assemble into the presence of
God then wear appropriate clothing don't wear casual clothing because it's not a casual thing you say to me God is my father I say to you God is also your king and God is also the king of all the earth and when he gathers this church he gathers it as a king as well as a father and we should make sure that we honor him in the outward and in the inward man by giving him what is good and what is right and they prepare for this meeting but it's remarkable what Jacob says he says put away the strange gods that are among you now you'll notice that these are not just inward gods they are outward things because Jacob takes them and he buries them in verse 4 under the oak tree in Shechem Now it may seem strange that there are false gods in the presence of Jacob's house Now let's go back a little bit to find out what they are and where they came from Rachel took them
[32:18] She's Jacob's wife She took them from the house of Laban her father Now Laban used them they were small images Images of what we're not sure images of maybe natural things or gods or goddesses deities things that were worshipped and Laban used to consult these things or he used to use them in his worship and even when he was half converted and he was never no more than half converted if you understand my expression he was never a man of God Laban but he did adopt Jehovah in some form as his God or as one of his gods and even when he worshipped Jehovah he would use these images Now Rachel took these images and I think I referred before to the fact that they functioned as title deeds to the property and Rachel felt that Laban had swindled Jacob for so many years that he deserved that property himself and she took away the title deeds

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Now these teraphim these small idols are still in the house of Jacob ten years later for some reason Jacob hasn't dealt with them he hasn't either returned them or put them out of the house or done anything with them until God comes to him powerfully and tells him to repent and then he commands the household and he gathers these gods and he puts them out of the house Now the question is who was using the things and I think from the way it's written it appears that some people were using them now there were many servants in Jacob's household and I'm sure many of them were not fully converted to the true God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ maybe they still used those idols in the general household of Jacob or maybe if they worshipped God perhaps they used these idols still to represent

God now that's a remarkable thing because it's amazing how often that finds its way into the Christian church making graven images or making representations of God in wood or in stone or in precious metals making representations of God himself that is what the golden calf was and that's one of the things that people forget the golden calf was not a foreign God it was Jehovah it was an attempt to worship Jehovah by means of an image the kind of image that they had seen in Egypt they represented the power of God as a calf giving life and giving sustenance I'm sure today that would seem a pretty good idea to some people to make the power or the reproductive or the life giving power of God into the shape of a calf or into the shape of something else who knows what but all these things are anathema to the Lord he has expressly forbidden any attempt to reduce himself into an image now

Jacob for some reason has tolerated the presence of these things in the household he doesn't use them himself Rachel doesn't use them but I'm sure he's just content to leave it somehow at that here they are they can lie there or what have you even if somebody is using them or making some use of them well I'll just let it be perhaps he just forgets about it and leaves it there you can do that you can have things in your life which give you problems at one point and then you just seem to somehow forget about them or think that they're not there but when God comes in power these things come before you things that you had buried in your consciousness which God once buried out of sight and they resurrect and they appear and Jacob has to get rid of them now the earrings appear to be connected with that because you'll notice that along with the strange gods they gave them the earrings which were in their ears now earrings began in

Sumer in the most ancient civilization known to man and I'm going to say a bit about Sumer in a moment but it seems that they were probably part of this idolatry or that they were somehow connected apparently they were worn originally to keep evil spirits out but that was the function of the earrings in Sumer and they were connected to these teraphim or to the idols and in the giving of the idols they gave the earrings which possibly had an image of some kind carved on them as well and so the earrings were cast in along with the idols now they originated as I said in Sumer now what brings us to something else where did these idols come from well they came from Laban south where did Laban get them well he took them from Ur of the Chaldees where Abraham came from in the first place now Ur of the

[37:24] Chaldees is in itself an interesting place it's one of the oldest again it is the oldest civilization known to man there in Sumer you have the cities of Babylon you have the cities of Ur you have the great plain of Shinar where Nimrod in Genesis 10 became a mighty king on the earth and he organized the building of the tower of Babel now I'd like in a way to pause and look at that but I'm not going to but it would appear that the tower of Babel was the center of all kinds of false and false religious worship that these towers in Babylon were largely connected with the worship of the stars and the worship of fallen foreign gods and this great tower of Babel was organized by Nimrod and what was it well it was humanism at its peak let us build a tower and let it reach unto heaven let its top as it were go right up not into God's heaven but let it just become so big let it become the focal point of our civilization let it become the rallying point of the great kingdom that we have built now you remember after the flood

God had commanded the people to disperse and to form distinct nations but Nimrod gathered people around himself and he built this tower as the great center of humanistic civilization and ever since Babylon or since that time Babylon represents man's enthronement of himself man's attempt to be God you remember the vision that Nebuchadnezzar saw of this great statue part of it a head of gold and its chest and arms were silver and the belly was bronze and the legs were bronze and the feet were clay and that represented it was in the shape of a man that represented man's kingdom upon the earth it's always opposed to God's kingdom upon the earth you have the two

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kingdoms man establishing his own law his own way of living and it's diametrically opposed to God's kingdom established upon the earth and the one wars against the other and Nebuchadnezzar saw this huge vision of a man and it looked all imposing until the little stone came out of the mountain and it rolled down the mountain and it smashed the statue and it blew away and the stone grew until it became an all consuming mountain that is the picture of God's kingdom finally extinguishing the humanistic kingdom of man and that began in earnest in Nimrod's day in Sumer and its heart was in Ur of the Chaldees that's where the Teraphim came from and they made all their way into Jacob's family and into the land of Canaan do you see the teaching there the polytheism the humanism the pantheism the worship of sexual immorality all these things are forever trying to get into the church of the Lord Jesus Christ the worship of images the worship of mother and child which you have in
Nimrod's own day all these things coming into the church continually trying to break down the law of God now when I say that it's continually trying if you go forward to Joshua chapter 24 you'll notice a remarkable thing now this is many many years afterwards Joshua chapter 24 and verse 1 now look at how the scripture gives you clues all the time as to what's going on in verse 1 Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem now we're in the same place this is where Jacob was and this is where Joshua was gathering the tribes many years afterwards and you'll notice what Joshua calls them to do in verse 14 he's calling the tribes to do this now he's about to die himself and he counsels the people verse 14 fear the
Lord and serve him in sincerity and in truth he doesn't just say one he says the two in sincerity and in truth and put away the gods which your fathers now look he's still telling them after they came out of Egypt put away the gods which your father served on the other side of the flood now that's a reference to Abraham before he was called out of earth the little teraphim the gods of Nimrod which your father served on the other side of the flood and in Egypt in other words even this burying of them by Jacob under the tree didn't get rid of these things they somehow or other found their way back into the very family of Jacob itself and served the Lord and he says if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord you choose this day whom you will serve whether the gods which your father served on the other side of the flood or the gods of the Amorites but as for me and my house we will serve the
[42:51] Lord and notice verse 23 now therefore put away the strange gods which are among you and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel that tells us that we have to continually put idols out of our heart we have to continually put idols out of the church and in one form or another the gods of Sumer will come in hero worship how many worship heroes covetousness wealth sexual immorality you know they had their little gods and goddesses to present these things like the last one I just mentioned there they had their gods their goddesses was it Venus amongst the Sumerians it was Ashteroth or Astarte which represented these things little statues to show what they really worshipped and what they worshipped was themselves and their own fleshly inclinations and all the time the devil wants to bring us down to that no he never does it openly he just says here this is just a little thing and it's alright just give it a little place and it's alright and then he'll move on a little bit more and he says well you've got this so now get that and that is how the images stayed in and you know how they came into the

Christian church in the early centuries of the church and in many parts they've never been put out the very worship of images put out idols and it's the Lord not telling yourselves to do that very thing to get idols out of our own lives now finally and very briefly you'll notice that God blesses this repentance now this is a remarkable thing notice how this is put here back in Genesis 35 in verse 4 we're told that they gave to Jacob all the strange gods and all their earrings and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem verse 5 and they journeyed and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob no there's a marvelous truth brought out here here you have Jacob and his sons traveling through Canaan and nobody will put a hand on them in spite of the fact that most of the communities now hate them they won't put a hand on them before the repentance
Jacob is saying you made me to stink he says and the people will gather against me and I will be destroyed but after the repentance he walks strongly like that and no one puts a finger on him what is the teaching well the teaching in there is just this when we are weak and when we let down the cause we live in fear and we live in trembling but when we turn to the Lord and take a step in faith then it is those from the outside who live in the fear and in the trembling because when the church

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is repentant and when your soul is repentant you become terrible as an army with banners and when the presence of God is in you and it's living in you the world knows it and when he has forsaken you the world knows that as well the world knows that as well and Jacob well knew when to be afraid and he well knew when to be strong and he just walks like that in the way that they walk through the Red Sea and everybody just stands back because the power and might of the Lord God is upon him oh my friend are you afraid of the world outside or is the world outside more afraid of you would it not be a good thing if the power of God was so clear in our lives that the terror of God would be upon the cities and they would not pursue after the sons of Jacob that's the change repentance made in this man and in his life and the last thing is this that when he went to Bethel God appeared to him there and he appeared to him with special promises and he renewed the covenant with him ah how many feelings Jacob had when he stood in that place when he saw the stone that he had erected there thirty years before how he must have wept when he remembered leaving the household of his parents when he had nothing at all but God helped him with a vision God gave him strength and God gave him grace sometimes you feel like that you know you go to a place or to a situation and you remember how God dealt with you there before and you're overcome by it and there God suddenly appears to him and he reveals himself to him and Jacob has fellowship with him and this is the kind of fellowship that Jacob hasn't had for some time he has it now the gods are out and in comes Jehovah and he builds an altar and what does he call it the God of Bethel remember last week I said that in Shechem he built an altar and he called it the God of Israel and I sometimes wonder if he was glorying in what had happened to himself rather than in the one who made it happen you are a prince with God and with men he doesn't call this altar the God of Israel at all he calls it the God of Bethel the God who helped me in my weakness the God who sustained me this is a strong man this is a man filled with the spirit of God he can only glory in his own weakness and in the power of God the God of Bethel who helped me and had mercy upon him may we all know him and know him better may he bless his word let us pray oh lord give us grace to lay hold upon the gospel to recognize that there is plenteous redemption to all who fear thee oh help us to turn towards thee to see that

[49:08] Christ is more willing to forgive than we are to ask ourselves give us grace to turn for Christ's sake amen amen

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