

Arise go to Bethel

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Mr Malcolm Macleod

[0 : 00] seeking the Lord's blessing and guidance, let us turn again to the portion of scripture read. The book of Genesis chapter 35 and at verse 1.

Genesis chapter 35 and the first verse. And God said unto 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 we shall seek to consider these words. We shall first of all consider that Jacob had made a vow long before this time and had forgotten it, had forgotten to fulfill it.

So that the first point is a vow forgotten. And secondly, we shall look at the things which engendered this forgetfulness, things which helped him to forget the vow that he had made to God.

And thirdly, Jacob's answer here, Jacob's response. And God's reward to Jacob's response finally in the fourth place.

[2 : 14] A vow forgotten, things which engendered that forgetfulness. Jacob's response, Jacob's response here.

And God's reward of the saints' obedience. Everyone among us is conversant with the history of Jacob.

It has been said that of all the characters in the Old Testament, he is probably the most popular because he is the most like yourself.

In success and failure, just as Peter commands that place in the New Testament, so Jacob in the Old.

There is certainly a lot of romance attaching to this saint and his name. And from childhood, and those who are young among us know, from childhood we have been familiar and they are familiar with the great episode in Jacob's life at Bethel.

[3 : 50] Bethel. What did Bethel signify? Bethel was a great unfolding of the much less grace of God.

We must always remember to put God first in all these situations.

Bethel was remarkable. Bethel has been■■■ Bethel.

Bethel is great. See, next is cups of livre dans les stations. ages of the church, countless multitudes of every age and every situation and every sort have derived deep spiritual comfort from Bethel's illumination.

They have been enabled to see themselves included in this revelation at Bethel.

[5 : 29] They have been enabled of God to relate Bethel to some dark, trying experiences of their own.

And they have been enabled for themselves to make this wondrous conclusion. Surely the Lord was in this place and I knew it not.

God's wonderful loving kindness was revealed at Bethel to a lonely wayward Jacob as he fled from his father's tent and from his brother's wrath.

[7 : 07] Spiritually. And what he thought was the reality was just a dream in terms of the reality.

Their faith was the waywardness with a time of fulfillment and uerves and the glory of Godrin■■■■. And there was heavenly traffic, it was heavenly traffic and earthly traffic that was on that ladder.

Well there's that theological point for you. It's not down and up, but up and down. Up and down that ladder with heaven's God in converse with the fugitive Jacob.

It sealed for him those benefits which he had grabbed. It did not seal his grabbing of the benefits.

But the almighty grace of God sealed for him those benefits which he had grabbed with earthly, selfish, undeseitful hands.

[9 : 44] We must never do that. We must never justify wrong wherever it happens. And we are very apt to do it.

His father. He took advantage of his brother's hunger and his brother's wickedness, friends.

And he took advantage of his brother's spirit, his father and his brother. But the eternal God was here upholding him with his presence. But the eternal God was here upholding him with his presence.

Jacob could not, you could not, I could not, no one could, even the saintliest of the saints.

And his own God revealed to him that night. Revealed to him as his own God that night.

[12 : 22] And during over 20 years of toil and struggle in the service of his cunning uncle Laban, the Lord watched over Jacob and protected him.

For over 20 years. And then the patriarch returned home and settled in Shechem. And 30 years at least have passed or had passed since Jacob's vow.

30 years since he vowed that solemn vow to the Almighty. And we notice that while the Lord had most amply fulfilled his part of the covenant, Jacob forgot the vow which he had made at Bethel.

He had been back at least eight years in the promised land. Without giving any sign of redeeming his promise.

And then the Lord appeared to him. Giving him a reminder of his unfaithfulness. Arise, the Almighty commanded.

[13 : 52] Go up to Bethel and dwell there. And make there an altar unto God. Secondly, let us look at the things which engendered this forgetfulness.

God always fulfills his path. We never rise up to our privileges.

God has been back to our lives. God has been back to our lives. The best thing at the best time is not up to his privilege.

To his promise. God had protected him from Laban.

God had protected him from Esau. This was made evident when the angels met Jacob on his way back.

[14 : 58] He called the name of the place. He called the name of the place. Mehanin. Mehanin. Mehanin. Which means two camps.

Which two camps? One his own little one. And what camp? Which was the other camp? What was the other camp he was referring to?

The camp of the hosts of the Almighty. And the protection from Esau was made still more evident in the amazing contest at Peniel.

An unknown assailant grappled with Jacob. And what was the first thing he did?

This is what he always does. His one brother's assailant when he grapples with us. He takes our own strength from us.

[16 : 20] It was a wrestling bow. And in wrestling there is a certain pivot.

In natural wrestling. There is a certain part of the wrestler's body which must be intact.

And on which he very much depends. And the angel touched him there. And took from him that natural strength. No one can wrestle naturally.

When that part is out of joy. And the unknown assailant filled him with spiritual strength to wrestle with himself and to prevail.

Where do you think Jacob got the strength from? Spiritual strength. Where was he drawing the strength from? From his assailant.

[17 : 26] There was spiritual strength. Flowing from the unknown wrestler to Jacob.

In order that Jacob could wrestle and prevail. Let me go. The unknown assailant said.

Feeding him with his own strength. To wrestle with himself and to prevail. This is real prayer.

This is real prayer. This is real supplication before God. We see Jacob being baptized into a new name.

Israel. But. Sad to say. In spite of Bethel.

[18 : 25] And Mahanin. And Peniel. And all the other helps. Which Jacob had received from his God. He was not now.

What he should have been spiritually. He should have hastened to perform this vow. To his own spiritual advantage.

He was losing. And you and I are always losing. When we fail to fulfill our spiritual vows to the Lord.

Many things were combining. To make him forget his allegiance to God. Worldly prosperity.

Seems to have blighted his spirituality. Those who are spiritual. Have to learn.

[19 : 29] To do with. As well as to do without. There are two sides. We have to learn to do with.

As well as to do without. Paul learned this. Paul learned this in wondrous fashion.

I know how to abound. And to suffer want. I know how to abound. How did Paul learn this.

Because he was Christ orientated. I can do all things. Through Christ. Through Christ. Who strengtheneth me.

And another sad thing. That at the heart of Jacob's life. In the midst of all these great romances.

[20 : 33] That there was idolatry. That there was idolatry. Attaching. To some members of his family.

Especially to her who was dearest to him. And he was the only one who was.

An absolutely fulfilling. Now. And both adulteries. This is true why he became a gymnastarle. He made a to the spiritual detriment of this great family, and above all to the dulling of the spiritual affections of her great husband.

Jacob was a very great man spiritually then, and this must have dulled his spiritual affection.

And we notice before this chapter is ended, that God took Rachel from Jacob.

[22 : 02] He buried his true love in Bethlehem. And in a sense, he never got over the loss of his beloved.

But we can be sure of this, that God instructed the great saint deeply through her removal.

And besides this, his daughter's misadventure, and his son's undisciplined and turbulent behavior, must also have brought shame and sorrow to his heart.

Jacob must have known, he must have known, that he could not go back to Bethel without putting to rights what was wrong in his own family.

And he failed to comply. He was back for at least eight years in the land of promise, and he failed to observe his promise.

[23 : 21] And now the Almighty comes to him again, with his marvelous grace, speaking words which were calculated to touch the springs of memory and to rekindle the flame of gratitude and to quicken into obedience these slumbering hearts.

What about ourselves? What about us? We have every need to go back to Bethel, to renew spiritual vows, to fulfill neglected promises, to mourn for the spiritual declension of ourselves and of our people.

God's people need constantly to go up to Bethel, to the house of God. That is true of the saints.

And what about the unconverted? What about yourself and all the promises you made in the day of your trouble?

Have you observed them? How easy it is for all of us to forget God? Oh, the marvel of his gracious long-suffering toward us.

[25 : 11] Thirdly, we have Jacob's answer here. Jacob's response. In the Gaelic, this is the word used of Abraham, did God's call that he answered.

English says he obeyed, but the Gaelic says he answered. The answer, which is obedience. The divine call awakened Jacob out of his spiritual lethargy.

God's words to Jacob were accompanied by illuminating and quickening power. his soul was awed with a consciousness of guilt and unworthiness.

And what did he do? He forsook every unsafe unspiritual refuge and ordered his family to do the same.

He forsook every refuge that was not spiritual and he ordered his family to do the same. Rachel had to surrender her idols and all the others had to surrender what pertained to their idolatry as well.

[27 : 06] The corruption affecting the family had to be cleansed. and Jacob buried these idols out of sight.

The outer cleansing and the change of Raymond was the visible symbol of a change of heart.

Bethel was a holy place. Bethel was a place of all. And if you and I are in any way spiritually minded what effect does the holy place the place where God abides have on us?

Surely if we are in any way spiritually minded it must fill us with reverence for him and with self-loathing in terms of ourselves.

That was how the prophet experienced it. Before the almightiness of God's presence he trembled amidst his own defilement woes me for I am undone because I am a man of unclean lips and dwell amidst a people of unclean lips for mine eyes have seen the king the lord of hosts.

[29 : 06] Bethel was a holy place God was in that place and Jacob had failed to acknowledge it down the years and especially in these last eight years he could not fulfill the vow during the years he was in Paddan Adam but he ought to have fulfilled it immediately he came back the call to Bethel then was a call to fresh consecration and to renewed repentance and there is no way of going back to God but by the paths of repentance and renunciation for that we would realize this fact there are no shortcuts on the spiritual way no shortcuts we all have to go through certain situations

I always counsel the reading of the pilgrim's progress for young Christians and for middle-aged Christians and for old Christians and it should be read at least once a year you will see the preciousness there of spiritual experiences as they are set before us by a spiritual man no shortcuts we have to forsake ourselves we have to deny ourselves we have to go back with the garb of humility with bowed heads and with broken hearts and with real tears a great preacher has said to come back to

Bethel means the restoration of the neglected altar and the fulfillment of the forgotten vow and there upon the renewal of the lost vision the renewal of the faded strength and the interrupted fellowship we must give God his place at the very center of our lives he won't take anything else it wouldn't be right for him to take anything else he is jealous because he can afford to be jealous our jealousy so often stems for our own spirituality we can be jealous spiritually too as the apostle was jealous for the peoples to whom he ministered jealous with our godly jealousy but

God must be first in every situation in every fellowship if he's not at the center of our fellowship there is no fellowship if he's not at the center of our fellowship there is all the danger of idolatry and misuse and the fruits of that will be terrible we must crown Christ as our king of kings and as our lord of lords and forth in our word God's reward of Jacob's obedience obedience we notice how God protected him on the way have you noticed how you are protected when you are in the way of obedience unseemly fears they man

God protects all who are in the way of obedience with his own marvelous protection the terror of the lord was upon these hostile cities past which they journeyed and none dared to hurt them and this sets before us that the lord is a shield to all who trust in him and who obey him no matter what they have to encounter for his sake a great female saint said her her own experience was filled with natural language as well as spiritual language

[35 : 00] I have ceased to ask easy things for those whom I love I ask for them the faith to undertake and to endure difficult things seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all other things shall be added unto you and this shall never never be proved otherwise and besides in the path of obedience fresh revelations of God's incomparable grace are always to be found we find this here

Jacob proved it for himself at Bethel God appeared to Jacob again and God renewed the promises given thirty years before we want to hear God renewing his promises to you well be in the way of obedience and you will surely hear that and Jacob called the name of the place El Bethel what does that mean the God of the house of God the God of the house of God see the emphasis he was getting his priorities right his spiritual outlook was broadened his faith was more triumphant and his hope more and more fixed within the way that one rose encore are you experiencing the kind of joyful sound that results from your anchor being fixed within the veil

Rachel died in Bethlehem but Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem