

(Genesis) Genesis 28:16-22

by J. Vernon McGee

Jacob's encounter with God at Bethel reveals the nature of God's relationship with us, and the importance of serving Him out of love, rather than obligation.

Duration: 5:13

Scripture: Genesis 28:16

Topics: "Genesis", "Grace and Mercy", "God's Presence"

Description

J. Vernon McGee discusses Jacob's encounter with God at Bethel, emphasizing that Jacob initially believed he could run away from God, only to realize that God was present wherever he went. McGee highlights the dread Jacob felt in the presence of God, which reflects the reality of a sinner's confrontation with holiness. He critiques Jacob's attempt to bargain with God, illustrating that God's grace is not transactional and that true worship stems from love rather than obligation. Ultimately, McGee encourages believers to recognize God's mercy and to serve Him out of love, not as a business deal.

Transcript

Jacob's got a long ways to go, so let me read verse 16. And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

Now, this is a passage of Scripture that I use many times, and have used many times, in dedicating new churches. I have dedicated, I think that in the past 20 years, I have dedicated, I think, 25 new churches. And I've used this, I suppose, more than any other passage of Scripture.

I have another one in Acts that I use a great deal. But how dreadful is this place! And I think I shock some people, especially when you've got a congregation that have come in to dedicate the lovely new facilities they have today. And here I get up, and I look around, and I say, How dreadful is this place! And then I proceed, during the rest of the time, to try to win them back, to become friends of me, by telling them that the place is only dreadful to a fellow like Jacob, running away from his family, a trickster, a sinner, actually running away from God.

And this is the thing he discovered. He says, The Lord's in this place, and I didn't know it. When Jacob ran away from home, he had a limited view of God.

He thought when he ran away from home, he was running away from God also. He thought he left God back down at his home. And he found out that he hadn't.

The Lord's in this place, and God says, I'm going to be with you. And because of that, how dreadful, oh, is this place! And the only thing that can make a house of God dreadful is the fact that you're a sinner trying to run away from God. And every house of God, every church ought to be a dreadful place to any sinner running away from God, because that's where he ought to be able to meet God and come face to face with God through the ladder that's been let down from heaven, even Christ.

And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and he took the stone that he'd put for his pillars and set it up for a pillar and poured oil upon the top of it, and he called the name of that place Bethel. But the name of that city was called Luz at the first. And Jacob vowed a vow.

Now, listen to Jacob. You know, he's got a lot to learn, and this is an evidence of it. Listen to him.

If God will be with me and will keep me in the way that I'll go and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God. What's he doing? He wants to trade with God. He says, now, Lord, if you'll do this for me, and God's already told him He's going to do it for him.

God has already said, every one of these things, God says, I'm going to keep you, and I'm going to bring you back to this land, and I'm going to give you this land, and I'm going to give you offspring. Now, Jacob turns around and says, if you'll do this. He wants to trade with God.

And he says, if you'll do it, then I'll serve you. God doesn't do business with us that way, and He didn't do business with Jacob that way. If He had, Jacob would never have made it back to that land.

God brought him out of the land. God brought him back into that land by His grace and mercy. And when finally Jacob did come back to Bethel, and he came back a wiser man.

And you know what he came back to do? To worship and praise God for His mercy. God had been merciful to him. You don't trade with God.

A great many people, even today, said, now I'll serve the Lord, if He'll do. You won't do anything of the kind, friends. He doesn't do business that way.

He'll extend mercy to you. He'll be gracious to you. But He doesn't ask anything in return.

But He does say this, that if you love Him, that you'll really want to serve Him. And that will be the bondage of love, the same kind of love a mother has for the little child, and she becomes its slave. That's the way that He wants you, and that's the way He wants me.

And so old Jacob, he puts up, And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house. And of all that thou wilt give me, I'll surely give the tenth unto thee. Isn't he a traitor to God? And a great many of us are trying to do business with God.

He's not doing business, friends. He wants to become your Father through faith in Christ, and you don't have to do business with Him.

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