

Going Back to the Altar

by John Hames

Returning to the altar is necessary to regain faith and confidence in God, get quiet before God, and inspect one's consecration.

Scripture: Genesis 31:30, Genesis 34:30, Genesis 35:1, Proverbs 14:14, James 4:8

Topics: "Spiritual Renewal", "Faith Restoration"

Description

John Hames preaches on the importance of returning to our spiritual 'Bethel' when we find ourselves straying away from God's path. Using Jacob's experience as an example, he highlights the dangers of becoming distracted by worldly pursuits, compromising with sin, neglecting spiritual disciplines, and losing faith in God. Hames emphasizes the need to reexamine our consecration, realign with God's will, and reignite our passion for Him through prayer and seeking His presence.

Transcript

"And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel" (Gen. 35:1).

Since we are dwelling in the enemy's land and are not beyond the possibility of falling from grace, it may be well, right here, to hurriedly relate the experience of Jacob and how he first began to lose out in his soul. For it may be that the convert will some time in life pass through a similar circumstance.

We are quite sure, however, that Jacob's experience will somewhat put the convert on his guard and thus help him to withstand the wily foe.

"Bethel" was the place where Jacob first met God and saw the vision of angels and the ladder. In modern language we would call this Jacob's conversion. Many years after this occurrence God found it necessary to send him back to the starting-point, viz., back to the altar or mourner's bench.

Let us briefly notice a few things which might have made it necessary for God to send him back to the altar:

1. He had become so engaged with his herds, flocks, camels, asses, wives and children that he was losing relish and time for communion with God. It is true he was still professing, however, God saw that he was becoming tame and spiritually dry.

2. In moving so frequently from one country to another and from one nation to another and also coming in touch with so many kinds of false religion he was losing the spirit of exactness, carefulness and technicality in making deals, sales, bargains, promises, agreements and contracts. No doubt there were several little things creeping into his life which at one time he did not feel clear to admit.

(A) His keen eye, quick discernment and spiritual vision were becoming dim. He was forming too great an alliance with the uncircumcised nations about him. He was not so quick to detect sin and compromise as he had been in former years.

(B) He was losing that peculiarity and society which made him different from all other people. He was mixing, dealing and conversing so frequently and freely with carnal-minded people that he was becoming common and losing the savoring affect and holy reserve that once characterized his whole life.

(C) He was so busily engaged and living in such a constant whirl that it was difficult to hear the Spirit's still small voice or feel His check and gentle reproof.

3. On being in such an incessant chase for gain, he had somewhat neglected to keep the proper watch over the spiritual welfare of his family, therefore, he had allowed them to accumulate a variety of idols and heathen gods (Gen. 31:30).

4. He had also gotten slack in keeping strict watch over the children and had allowed them to compromise with the uncircumcised nations around.

It also appears that old Sister Leah had "let down," for she sent her oldest daughter Dinah out sight-seeing. We are unable to say whether it was to a county fair, church social, card or birthday party. However, her visit was not a successful one, for it gave rise to a tidal wave of shame and disgrace as wide as the world and as long as time. (Gen. 34:2)

5. The next thing which seemed to make it necessary for Jacob to go back to the altar was the fact that he was losing faith and confidence in the God of his fathers, shrinking reproach and cowering beneath the fear of man that bringeth a snare. "And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house" (Gen. 34:30).

This is the same old little faith devil who tempts God's people nowadays to join a lodge with sick benefits, and cling to the secret, oath-bound labor unions.

7. Still another fact that made it necessary for Jacob to "go up to Bethel" was that he might get quiet before God and carefully inspect his consecration and see if his all was still upon the altar.

Secondly, to take a careful retrospect over the road of former light and early-day convictions. Thirdly, to pray through and get fired up again.

Reader, if you will promptly obey the Holy Spirit and carefully walk in all the light which has shone upon your pathway you will never find it necessary to pack up and move back to Bethel.

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