

SOME NECESSARY CHANGES

Gen. 35:2

Intro: Last year I read my Bible through in the NASB. This year I am reading the old KJV -- and am enjoying it very much.

I ran across these two verses (Gen. 35:1, 2) in the KJV and was struck by their relationship to verse 5 -- as I sought to bring out last Sunday night. Here, it seemed to me as I read, was the key to blessing.

A person really needs to read from Gen. 12 up to Gen. 35 to get the full impact of these verses -- or at least from Gen. 28. Then he would see what the three things mean which we had last Sunday night:

- 1) Go back to Bethel.
- 2) Dwell there.
- 3) Build an altar.

After preparing last Sunday night's message I read the notes in the NSRB which I use to preach from. There you find, too, that the authors have seen in this "the first revival recorded in the Bible" (p. 50).

(Note also: the notes on perfection in the NSRB on Phil. 3 in the passage we have this morning.)

It is always encouraging to note that others have seen the same thing in a passage of Scripture that you see.

This past Friday night Mrs. Custis and I had a good time of questions and answers with the Ambassador Class at the Scothorns' home. One of the questions asked there applies to our passage tonight. It had to do with whether or not the judgments which were predicted for Judah because of her sin and ungodliness could apply to us. I said that they could. But then the second part of the question was, "What can we do to avoid such a judgment?" There is only one thing. It may not enable our nation to escape more judgment from God, but it can bring the blessing of God in the midst of the judgment. It is this: We must . . .

- 1) Go back to Bethel,
 - 2) Dwell there,
 - 3) Build an altar,
- and then as we want to see tonight,
- 4) Put away our gods,
 - 5) Be clean, and
 - 6) Change our garments.

If we individually would take these six things seriously, our lives would be filled with blessing we have never known before.

If we as the people of Central Bible Church would do these things as God instructed Jacob, we would see blessing as a Church in a way never before experienced.

Note that there is a sense in which we do not have 6 things, but only 3! V. 1 is God speaking to Jacob. V. 2 is Jacob speaking to his family. But what he says in v. 2 is evidently what he understood the words in v. 1 to mean -- or at least, to include! The Spirit of God has graciously given all of it to us so that we would not fail to understand the meaning.

I hope that I and you (poor English, but it has to be in this order) are already living at Bethel with our altar in service! Bethel and the altar should mean more and more to us each day we live. There is nothing about it that remains the same if we are consistent in our faith and fellowship.

Tonight let us look at v. 2. Here are SOME NECESSARY CHANGES.

I. CHANGE #1: "Put away the foreign gods that are among you."

These meant idols. What Rachel did is an example. Her own husband did not even know that she had them. She dies in this chapter. It is encouraging to think that she gave up her idols before she died.

Now . . . you and I do not have a literal altar, nor is it likely that we have an idol. Is there any way in which this could apply to us.

YES!

An idol is anything in my life that is more important to me than the Lord, or anything that comes between me and the Lord.

Cf. 1 John 5:21,

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen."

Note also what Paul says in 2 Cor. 6:16,

"And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said (in Ezek. 37:26, 27), I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

In 1 Cor. 10:14, 15 we have these words from Paul,

"Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say."

What do these passages mean? How do they apply to us?

There are many ways in which it can apply to things that come between us and the Lord, but let us follow just one line of thought tonight taken from Col. 3:5,

"Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil desire, and covetousness (which is idolatry)."

Do you remember how Achan explained his sin to Joshua -- the sin which led to the defeat of the Israelites at Ai? Cf. Joshua 7:21,

"When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it."

The result was a humiliating defeat for the whole nation.

We haven't gotten to this verse in Hebrews yet, but we will get there. But notice Heb. 13:5, 6,

"Let your manner of life be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Deut. 31:6). "So that we may boldly say (from Psa. 118:6), The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

Obviously "things" were threatening the place in their lives that "the Lord" should have had and wanted to have.

Money and the things that money will buy can be strangling our lives spiritually tonight. The opposite of covetousness is contentment. How wonderful it would be if spiritually we lived where Paul lived:

" . . . I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, in this to be content" (Phil. 4:11b).

Money is necessary, but money can easily become **an idol**. One last verse before we go on:

"For the love of money is the root of all evil, which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Tim. 6:10).

This is our biggest danger in America, and it breeds a multitude of other sins!

II. CHANGE #2: "Be clean."

Idolatry makes us dirty -- as does sin of any kind. If God is to bless us, we not only have to put our idolatry away, but we have to be cleansed from the effects it has had on us.

Note what Paul says in 2 Cor. 7:1, following the passage we referred to earlier:

"Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

Paul wrote to Timothy (2 Tim. 2:21), speaking of sins,
 "If a man, therefore, purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work."

James says,

"Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded" (Jas. 4:8b).

How are we cleansed? And how do we stay clean? We need to do three things:

- 1) Stop sinning. Separate ourselves from all that is displeasing to God.
- 2) Confess and forsake our sin. Cf. 1 John 1:9; Prove. 28:13.
- 3) Hide the Word of God in our hearts -- through meditation and obedience. Cf. Psa. 119:11; 1:1, 2.

But all of this is not enough. There is another change that must be made. So far we have been correcting the wrong; now we need to put something in its place.

III. CHANGE #3: "Change your garments."

Sin becomes a problem in our lives when we wear the wrong things.

The greatest passage I know of in the NT on this subject is that which Paul gives us in Rom. 13:12-14:

"The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in reveling and drunkenness, not in immorality and wantonness, not in strife and envying. BUT PUT YE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND MAKE NOT PROVISION FOR THE FLESH, TO FULFILL ITS LUSTS."

If you want more on this subject, read Eph. 4:17-32 and Col. 3:5-14 -- "put off" and "put on."

Concl: What will the results be? Threefold:

- 1) You can be sure that you are pleasing God. This always must come first.
- 2) You will experience the greatest joy in your own life. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (Jn. 13:17).
- 3) An impact will be made on the world. Cf. Gen. 35:5.