

# Returning Home - Genesis 35:1-15

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] All right, let's pick up in verse 1 of Genesis 35. 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 fled from the face of thy brother Esau. So Jacob, at the end of this moment where he's just had such a horrible tragedy in his family, God's word comes. God's word comes when Jacob hasn't sought it, Jacob hasn't looked for it, but God's word has come.

And it's the word of grace. 2 Chronicles 30 verse 9 says, For the Lord your God is gracious and merciful and will not turn away his face from you if you return unto him. And so the word of God comes to Jacob and says, Jacob, return. Return to Bethel.

Arise and go up to Bethel and dwell there. Jacob's family has just experienced a great failure, and he's probably like, I don't know what to do next. What is the next step? The next step, after failure, is grace. It's grace. The world tells us the next step after failure is punishment or having it thrown in your face, condemnation. But in the gospel, the next step after failure is always grace. It's always grace. Romans 5 20 says, But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. It doesn't say where sin abounded. Wrath and punishment did much more abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. Romans 5 8 says, But God commends his love or directs his love or points his love towards us. And that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. While we were yet away from him, we didn't initiate it. He initiated it with his grace, his free gift of love. Christ died for us. God's grace comes by God's word, as it did here with Jacob. But it's appropriated to us by faith and obedience.

In Ephesians 2 we read, But God, who is rich in mercy for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ. For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, the initiation of God, the gift of God.

And so God's grace comes to Jacob. And what are the three things it says there for Jacob to do? He says to Jacob, arise, go up, and dwell. There's three things there. The first one is it's intentional.

[ 2 : 3 5 ] Arise. Jacob, you can't do this passively. You can't just sit there. You have to respond to this. There's intentionality. Go up. There's a direction. It wasn't just like, well, just go find God anywhere.

Just start feeling God in the universe. No, there was a direction. Go up. And then there was a certain place to be and dwell there. So we see it was positional. That it wasn't just to kind of, yeah, just kind of go towards God. Just, yeah, go to church. Just believe. But it was to dwell there.

Not just visit, but to dwell. Arise, go up, and dwell. Ephesians 5.14, telling us to arise, says, wherefore, he says, awake thou that sleeps, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. We are to arise. We are to go up. We are to continue to grow in Christ. We're to mature and not stay in the same place we are. Ephesians 4.15, but speaking the truth in love, may grow up unto him in all things, which is the head, even Christ. And then we are to dwell. To be our habitation.

1 John 2.28, And now little children, abide in him, dwell in him. Though when he shall appear, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming. So Jacob is to return, to arise, to go up, and to dwell.

But where is he to return? To God's house. He's to go to God's house. Bethel, where it says there in verse 1, Jacob, arise, go up to Bethel. That just means house of God. When Jacob left the land of promise to go to Haran, to go to Uncle Laban, on the way, he met with God, and he named the place the house of God. He had left there and been away for 20 plus years, kind of doing his own thing. And now it's at the point where the Lord tells him, Jacob, go back to that place where you first met me, back to the house of God. It's not simply good enough to return to God's house, but he says, Jacob, I want you to not just return there, I want you to dwell there. God's house is not for visiting, is it?

[ 4 : 43 ] It's for dwelling in. So he says to Jacob, he says it's time to return. Verse 2. So Jacob then says unto his household and to all that were with him, having received God's word, he says, put away the strange gods that are among you and be clean and change your garments.

So responding to God's word, he says, okay, having chosen to return, having heard the word to return, he now calls the people that are with him to repentance. That's our second section here. He says it's time to repent. Put away the strange gods that are among you. So what does repent mean, right?

It just means to change your direction. You can change your direction in your mind. You can change your direction in your walk, right? You could say, I was heading to the store and I repented and went back home. It's like, oh wow, you had a big crisis in the middle of the road and broke down and said you were sorry. And no, it just means I changed my mind. We just don't use that in our common language. But when we read it in scripture, to repent just means when we repent about Jesus, we change our mind about him. And so we see the first thing here, it is in repentance, is to what? Put away. Put away. Put away the strange gods that are among you, the things that are familiar, to turn from the familiar. Jacob is telling those who are with him, who are what? The men, I mean, all the women and children from Shechem, they don't have any clue what to do. They've never walked with the Lord. Jacob is telling them, hey, it's time now to make a change. Turning from the familiar, putting away the strange gods that are among you, and to be clean. Turning from that which is tolerated. Hey, you've tolerated this state you've been in. It's time to clean it up. You know, as a young man, I was much more apt to tolerate my state of uncleanness. That didn't bother me, despite my sisters telling me, you need a shower. Like, no, I don't. I'm fine.

And eventually, you realize it's not good to tolerate that. It's time to be clean. So turning from the familiar, turning from that which is tolerated, and then to change your garments, turning from that which is comfortable. The thing that they are just comfortable putting on over and over every day, this is what I'm comfortable with. But God's word has come, and God's word has said, return. Well, before we can return to God's house, there's things that need to be put away.

There's things that need to be turned from. In Genesis 31, Jacob is returning from Uncle Laban's. He's coming back home. And in the process, his wife, Rachel, steals the household gods, steals the idols to bring with her. The thing that meant a lot to her family, the thing that was the priority, the thing that they worshiped, she was going to bring that and make that part of her family. And she decides to bring that with her. Has that been part of the family all this time?

[ 7 : 39 ] Through all of these years since they've left, the three, four, five years they've been in Shechem, as the kids have grown, has Rachel continued to hold on to these things? And now Jacob is taking the lonely step, and it is lonely. When God's word comes and tells you, hey, I want you to go this direction, you're the only person in your family and your group of friends and your social circle that's hearing that, and you're going to everybody else and saying, hey, God says let's go this direction.

There's a moment of loneliness and terror as you step out. Is anyone going to follow? Is anyone going to believe this? Is anyone going to receive this? As Jacob goes to Rachel and says, Rachel, they got to go. We've got to get rid of those things. I know you're familiar with them. I know they're comfortable, and I know you've tolerated them, but they've got to go. Isaiah 61:10 says, I will greatly rejoice in the Lord. My soul shall be joyful in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation. He has covered me with the robe of righteousness. As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with jewels. Man, if you want to put that robe on, and I want to put that robe on, you got to get rid of the other one. You got to get rid of the stinky one. It's familiar, it's comfortable, but you got to get rid of it, right? That shirt you put on whenever you're off, and your wife goes, you're wearing that? Well, this is comfortable. It's like, you know, it's my second skin. It's like, yeah. The Lord wants to clothe us with something so much greater, the garment of salvation. And he said, let us arise and go up to Bethel. It's time to return, family. Put away those things and repent, and let us go up to the house of God. And I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.

Jacob says, this is what I'm going to do. As for me and my house, we're going to serve the Lord. I'm going to go, and I'm going to build an altar. And if y'all want to come with me, this is what we've got to do. Step one, return, repent. And here we see now Jacob's response. Jacob's home had been defiled in Shechem, but God's word was promising cleansing and renewal at the house of God, wasn't it? Jacob responds to God's word in obedience. He says, let us go up. God's word says, go up. Jacob says, all right, I'm going to go up. He responded in obedience. Jacob responded to God's word in worship. I'm going to go build an altar. That's an act of worship, of sacrifice. And Jacob responds to God's word in assurance. He says, hey, the God who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went. He said, man, I have assurance. God has been with me in my past. He's going to be with me in my present and my future. And so Jacob responds to God's word with obedience, worship, and assurance. And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand. And Jacob goes, they're coming with me. Thank you, Lord. And they gave all the strange gods that were in their hands and all their earrings which were in their ears. And Jacob hid them, or literally buried them under the oak which was by Shechem. Strange verse. Okay, I can understand you give away, you know, okay, here's our false gods. But now all our earrings, too? What's that about?

Well, their idols and their earrings, they represented loyalty and identification. They represented that, hey, I am identifying myself with this God. I am loyal to this God, this way of life. And Jacob was saying, man, if there's going to be a change of heart, it's going to reflect on the outside. You know, we're going to put that stuff out of the house.

Jacob's small and lonely act is what this seems like. Just like, okay, we're just, we're going to do this. I'm all alone in this. It's kind of lonely. It's just a small act. Lord, we're just going to bury these things and move on, right? But it will turn out to be the seeds of a future harvest, of great fruit in the future. John 12:24 says, truly, truly, I say unto you, Jesus is saying this, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone. But if it die, it brings forth much fruit. This is basic agriculture, right? We plant a seed expecting a crop. We don't plant a seed expecting a seed. That would be a real big waste of time. But you gain more than you sow. You sow a seed, you gain a crop. Truly, truly, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die. You'll go on to say in the next verse, he that loves his life, likening it to this, he that loves his life, who holds onto it like the seed holding that shell, well, he's going to lose it.

[ 12 : 22 ] But he that hates his life, that doesn't mean you hate yourself. It means that comparatively, he who is willing to let go of his life in this world, she'll keep it unto eternal life. Because this world, you can't hold onto it. You're going to lose it. But there's a life we can gain if we're willing to let go of this life. In Joshua 24, Joshua, at the end of his life, has just brought Jacob's descendants, hundreds of years later, into the promised land. They've gone down into Egypt. They've been delivered by Moses. They've been 40 years in the wilderness wandering, and Joshua's brought them in. They've conquered, and it's the end of his life. And he comes to this place and says this, and the people said unto Joshua, the Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey. So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God and took a great stone, and where did he set it up? He set it up under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. By the sanctuary of the

Lord. The Lord's sanctuary was set at that time in Shechem. There's a great oak there, and there he places this stone, this covenant, the fruition, the fruit that has come from Jacob just going, all right, I'm going to obey God's word in my family. I'm going to respond to God's word. I'm going to put aside these things, and I'm going to return to the house of God. Generations later, that is still bearing fruit in Jacob's life. Here we are today on Mother's Day, having a baby dedication, looking at generational fruit. The small steps that you think, it's just laundry again. It's just taking my kids to the next event. It's just correcting them for the thousands, thousands, thousands time, according to the word of God, trying not to get frustrated, trying not to sound like I'm preaching at them, but to be like, kids, this isn't the way to walk, and continuing to point that to them, to Jesus, saying, hey, as we walk by the way, as we lie down, as we rise up, Jesus is at the center of our life, and you think, is that going to bear fruit? And generations later, you don't know the fruit that it will bear. And so Jacob makes this response to God's word, little knowing what the effect will be. In 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. Psalm 46.1 says, God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. God is our refuge. Jacob had made God his refuge, and God said, all right, I got you back.

For us today, God is our refuge. God's grace is our refuge for all those who put their trust in him. Man, the enemy is not going to touch you once you are under God's grace. That is our refuge.

Psalm 18.2, the Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my strength in whom I will trust, my buckler and the strength of my salvation and my high tower. So Jacob, who by all accounts may have had a whole band of raiders and other nations coming upon him, think what he represented.

He represented a bunch of defenseless women and children and a whole lot of spoil ripe for the taking. He's got 12 sons. Only three of them are about fighting age and some servants. What's he going to do? And the Lord says, no, no, no, I got this. And the fear of him came on all the nations.

[ 15 : 52 ] So Jacob, he now comes to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan, that is Bethel. He and all the people that were with him, and he built there an altar. And he called the place El Bethel, or literally the God of the house of God. Bethel meaning house of God, El Bethel meaning the God of the house of God. And he and all the people that were with him. And he built there an altar and called the place El Bethel because there God appeared unto him when he fled from the face of his brother. So Jacob, he returns, he repents, he responds to God's word. God becomes his refuge. And then he comes to this place and he builds this altar. And what's he basing it on? I love this. Because there God appeared unto him when he fled from the face of his brother. Remembrance. Man, he's building this altar in worship to God. And he's saying, I remember that this was the place God appeared to me. Remember he set up a pillar there? The one that he slept on? He slept on the rock and then he set it up and he anoints it with oil. And he calls it the house of God. And he's coming back there and he's seeing that thing.

He's like, man, I built this, I'm going to build this altar and I'm going to worship God out of remembrance for what he has done. But it's also not enough just to be in the house of God, is it?

Jacob comes to Bethel, builds an altar, and he calls it now El Bethel. It's not enough to be in the house of God, but to also know the God of the house. It doesn't do us any good to just come and take up space among God's people unless we are one of his people.

When God appeared to Jacob, he was alone and empty. He's saying, I remember when I was fleeing from the face of my brother, I had nothing. I made a rock my pillow. I was alone and I was empty and now I'm coming back and I'm returning with overflowing and blessing. I'm coming back full. And there he worships God. Deuteronomy chapter 8, the children of Israel are being warned about when they come into the promised land and they receive their blessing. So Joshua, that's when they have received the blessing. This is back up before they're in the land. The Lord warns them and says, when you've eaten and aren't full, then you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which he has given you.

That's good. We should bless God for the blessings he's given us. We don't need to feel guilty about them. But beware that you forget not the Lord your God and that you say in your heart, my power and the might of my hand has gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for it is he that's given the power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which you swear unto thy fathers as it is this day. So God's blessing is for a purpose. It's because he wants to establish his covenant. The blessing we enjoy from God in our lives is not just so that we can go out and live wonderful lives, but it's to display God's goodness and God's glory. And then what do you think of when you think of remembrance? Jacob, remember, Jacob's our man of the covenant. Abraham, father of faith, Isaac, son of promise, Jacob, the man of the covenant, the man of the covenant, saying in remembrance, this do in remembrance. Luke 22, 19, and Jesus took bread and he gave thanks and he break it and he gave unto them saying, this is my body which is broken for you, this do in remembrance of me.

[ 19 : 20 ] That's what we do every time we come to communion, right? Man, we celebrate, we remember, we can look back and go, when I was alone and running, God's grace came. And now look where I'm at. I don't want to use where I'm at now as an excuse to say, oh, I can just kick back, everything's good. I instead want to use it as an excuse or motivation to worship God. And verse 8 tells us something interesting that we wouldn't know otherwise. It's tucked in here. It says, but Deborah, but Deborah, Rebecca's nurse died, and she was buried beneath Bethel under an oak. And the name of it was called Alon-Bachuth, or literally the Oak of Weeping. So Deborah, who's that? Or if you remember when Abraham sends the unnamed servant to Paddan Aram, at the time Laban was a younger man and his sister Rebecca was living there. And the unnamed servant goes and he finds Rebecca and he brings her back home to Isaac. Well, it says that her father gives her Deborah to be her nurse, the one that was her nurse. So this older woman, and she's still alive. And it seems like when Jacob comes back into the land, into the promised land, she goes to live with him. And now we're being told that she's passed away, that she's died.

It's interesting because where's Jacob's mother? He'll never meet her again. When Jacob runs from home after tricking Esau, he doesn't meet Rebecca again. He'll come home in the next chapter or later on in this chapter next week. He'll meet Isaac. He'll meet his father, but he won't meet Rebecca again.

Jacob's mother was no longer in the picture, but God knew exactly how to make up for the lack in Jacob's life. Jacob didn't have a mom there, but he comes back into the house of God. He comes back into the place God wants him. And God says, I can make that difference up. I can bring that blessing.

Only God can replace the irreplaceable. Say, well, who can replace a mom? I mean, it's Mother's Day, dude, and you're talking about replacing moms. Who can replace a mom? Nobody can replace my mom. You're right. Nobody can replace the irreplaceable except God. Psalm 27:10, when my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up. David doesn't say if my father and mother forsake me as he writes this Psalm. He says, man, those times where I feel like, and look, I don't want to forsake my kids. None of them are here today either. Got one home not feeling good, and I don't want to forsake my kids. But there's going to be moments where because I'm not God, and because of my own failings, I can't meet their expectations. And it'll seem to them like, man, I've been forsaken. And in those moments, God can step in, and he says, hey, I'll take you up.

I got this. I can cover that. But Deborah, what does she represent to Jacob? Well, she was the last link to his mother, right? This was the last link, and now she's gone, right? And so God then appears to Jacob in this moment, and he appears to him in a moment of grief and loss, right? But also letting go of the past. As Jacob's returning to Bethel, he had to put away the past, and then there's things in his life where God's like, this is going to hurt, but it's time to let this go and to move on.

[ 22 : 35 ] Loss is simply an opportunity for God to do something new. You know, I've done a number of funerals, not for anybody in this church, but I've done a bunch of funerals. I've been blessed to do that. It's an interesting way to present the gospel.

And death is never supposed to be the end, right? Death is but a doorway. It's meant to just usher us into resurrected life. But there's so many people, when they approach that moment and they lose a loved one, I always tell them there's two wrong ways to approach this. You can hold on and never let go, or you can pretend nothing happened. You can't do either one, right? You have to grieve.

You have to go through that process. You have to also let go, because God wants to do something new. And God is able to, because he is the only one that can replace the irreplaceable.

And God appeared unto Jacob in verse 9, when he came out of Paddan Aram and blessed him. So Jacob's returned in repentance and in response. He's made God his refuge. He's built this altar of remembrance, and now God appears unto him, and he blesses him. And he said unto him, your name is Jacob.

But your name shall not be called anymore Jacob, but Israel shall be your name. And he called his name Israel. You're like, wait, didn't we just go through that in Genesis 32? Does God have short-term memory loss? This doesn't really fit. In Genesis 32, after Jacob had wrestled all night with this man, come to find out it was God incarnate, he says unto him, God says unto Jacob, what is your name?

[ 24 : 15 ] And he said, Jacob, I'm just a supplanter. After all these years, I'm still just Jacob. 90-some years old, wrestling with God, still Jacob. And he said, your name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel. For as a prince thou is power with God and with men, and has prevailed. And that's what Israel means, prince of God. And so God renames Jacob and says, hey, your name will be Israel.

So what's going on? Why is he reiterating this? You see, Jacob truly had been made new, but that did not mean he would not need to be continually remade new. Have you been made new in Christ? I have. But I need to be continually renewed again and again. In John 3, 5, Jesus says, truly, truly, I say unto you, except a man be born again, born of the water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Unless you've been made new, you can't. Okay, how many of you have been born? How many had a mother? Right? You didn't? Oh, well. Everybody had a mother, right? We've all been born. That's the only way we're in this life. You cannot get into it any other way, right? Well, there's another life that we need to get into, that we must be born into.

It's the life of the spirit. We are not gonna, this life will end, as we've said. And there's a life to come, and the only way to enter into it is to be made new. Then Ephesians, Paul writes and says, now that you've been remade new, be renewed again and again and again. Ephesians 4, 23 and 24 says, be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. That's that idea of taking off the unclean cloak, putting on the clean one. That we are to be renewed. Those of us who have been made new, praise God, there's renewal.

I need to be renewed. Man, there's some days where it's like, I'm, it's just over. You're ready to quit. And then I need to remind myself, man, I'm not the one who has to keep this thing going.

I don't have to keep my walk going. I don't have to keep my relationship going, my ministry going. It's the Lord's. And God's now about to give Jacob a promise, but only those with a new name, first he reiterates to Jacob and says, you've been made new, be renewed. Remember who you are, Jacob, because I'm going to give you a promise, a blessing, and a covenant. But only once you have a new name and are walking in that, can you receive this promise, blessing, and covenant.

[ 26 : 47 ] And God gives that to him in verse 11 and says, and God said unto him, I am God almighty. Be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins, and the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac to thee will I give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land. Who's that talking of today that's still in the land again? We're about to celebrate that this Tuesday, I think it is, May 4th, 1948, or no, May 14th, 1948. Can a nation be born in a day?

Can these dry bones live as God reestablishes the nation of Israel? No other people group have been out of the land, their own land, for more than 200 years and have existed as a people group. There's no Hittites today, right? There's no Canaanites today. You're not going to find them. They don't exist, except the nation of Israel, which God has preserved. Why? Because God's blessing is not a probability. Oh, I hope it happens. It'll probably happen, right? God's blessing is a promise. God blessed Jacob, and that was his promise to him. And he says that all promises, what? They originate with God.

Look there in verse 11. God said unto him, I am God Almighty, therefore, and then he gives him a promise. All blessings originate with God. And those blessings, man, I don't have to sit around and hope.

Boy, I hope so. Boy, I hope God works in my life. Boy, I hope this salvation works out. Now, all God's promises, or all God's blessings, I'm sorry, are promises.

In Joshua 24, again, as Joshua continues to speak to the people at the end of his life, he says this unto them, he said unto all the people, thus says the Lord God of Israel, your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time. In other words, on the other side of the Jordan, your fathers dwelt on the other side, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor. And they served other gods. And I took your father, Abraham, from the other side of the flood, and I led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and I gave him Isaac.

[ 28 : 55 ] And I gave unto Isaac who? Jacob and Esau. And unto Esau gave I Mount Seir. We saw that, that's south below Israel, the land of Israel. To possess it, God gave it to him. But to Jacob and his children, they went down into Egypt. So God sends them into Egypt. They don't receive their promise right away.

And I have given you a land now, the descendants of Jacob. I have given you a land which you did not labor for, and cities which you built not, and you dwell in them. Of the vineyards and olive yards which you planted, do you eat? Which you planted not, do you eat? God's blessing isn't going to fail.

Here for Israel, generations later, God brought him into the land. He said, I've done what I've said. I would do. God's blessing is not failing today for Israel. I can look at Israel and say that God has kept his people and continues to. And that encourages me that when I look in the word and I say, and God will keep me and keep his people. If he can keep those who are continuing to reject him as his people, his chosen nation out among this world, then truly he can keep his people, the church, that he's chosen out of this world. First Peter chapter one says, blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant, abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. That's what God has done for us. He's given us new life, new birth to an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. The promise God has given us, it's reserved in heaven for us. It's incorruptible, undefiled and fades not away. You can't corrupt that. My failures, my weaknesses and my shortcomings, thank the Lord, do not affect his promise. God finishes speaking with Jacob and in verse 13 it says, and God went up from him in the place where he talked with him. So Jacob has now experienced God's word. He's experienced God's presence and then he gets to experience God's exaltation, doesn't he? God went up from him where the place in where he talked.

Makes me think of in Acts chapter one, after the resurrection, and Jesus has been like 40 days with various groups of the apostles and those that believe, and then he leads them out of Bethany and out to the Mount of Olives, and he speaks to them, and then it says, as he was speaking, he was lifted up and taken up into heaven. And they stood there, the disciples looking up into the clouds, steadfastly looking to heaven. And as they stood there, two men in white apparel stood by them and said, men and brethren, why do you look up into heaven? This same Jesus who is taken from you shall return in the same way. What do they mean? Guys, don't be looking into heaven like, where did Jesus go? Instead, be looking for Jesus to return. Jesus is coming again, guys. There's work to do. Jacob experienced God's presence in his word, and then his exaltation. And we too, as we've experienced God's presence in his word, we experience the exaltation of God in our lives, and we have the same hope that he will return.

And Jacob set up a pillar, verse 14, in the place where he talked with him. So Jacob had already set up a pillar here one time. The second pillar he ever set up, if you remember, was with Laban. When Laban and the boys came to whoop him and God protected him, he sets up a pillar there. And here's this third pillar. And this one is in the same place as the first one there in Bethel. And he set up a pillar in the place where God had talked with him, even a pillar of stone. And he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon. Abraham had four altars. Isaac had four wells. Jacob, this is his third. He's going to have one more. He'll have four pillars. And Joseph, when we get to Joseph, he'll have four garments. So it's just very, it's awesome to see how God just puts these patterns and things through the word. Jacob's first pillar was confidence in the flesh. That's when he met God the first time, running from home, and God makes him a promise. And Jacob kind of turns around and says, all right, God, great promise. I'll make you a deal. If you keep your promise, I'll give you some of my stuff. And

[ 33 : 06 ] Jacob's still trying in his own strength to have this relationship with God. This, the second pillar, when he meets with Laban, is his pillar of confidence in God. At that point, he's like, I have nothing to defend myself with. And he throws himself on the Lord's mercy. And this pillar, pillar number three, is a new beginning as Jacob sets up another pillar. The first pillar, if you remember, when he is running from Esau, he anoints it with oil, right? He anoints the pillar with oil and consecrates it. And he says, man, this is God's house. This is Bethel. The second pillar with Laban, he doesn't anoint that one, but in the presence of that pillar, of that stone, he breaks bread and eats with his brethren. With this pillar, what's the thing he added to that? And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone, and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon. So you have the oil like before, but he's added something.



It's a drink offering, which would be wine. So Jacob, Israel, prince of God, setting up a rock, our man of the covenant. He pours oil on it, representing anointing, the anointing of the Holy Spirit. He breaks bread there. This is my body broken for you. And now upon this rock is poured out the wine. As Jesus gives a new wine of the new covenant. The wine also represents joy. As Jacob looks forward to a new beginning in his future, he says, hey, I see anointing, and man, I see joy that God has given me. And this pillar for Jacob is a pillar of rededication, right? Because he had the first pillar that he poured the oil on, and now he puts a second one there, and he rededicates himself to the Lord. Matthew 26, at the end of the last supper, and as they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it, and he break it, and he gave it to the disciples and said, take, eat, this is my body.

He took the cup and gave thanks and gave it to them, saying, drink you all of it, for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remissions of sins. And here is, we see Jacob's pillars, his rock. He says, Christ is our rock. He was anointed, and he gave his body to be broken.

Then we, in the presence of that pillar, in the presence of that rock, in remembrance, in Bethel, we partake as well. 2 Corinthians 5, verse 17, it tells us, if any man be in Christ, he's a new creature.

Old things are passed away. Behold, all things are become new, right? Yeah, well, we talked about that, being new. But in Christ, not only are we all things new, but all things become new, right? That's all things. I usually peg that to, well, at the moment I got saved, at my conversion, when I put my trust in Christ. But it says that all things are become new. So everything I experience is an all thing.

[ 36 : 13 ] Man, when I bring Christ into that, there's renewal there. There's newness in everything I walk in. So if I fail, I think, Lord, I failed. How can you make me new again? He's like, well, in me all things become new. Even this becomes new, Lord? Yes, even that becomes new, as he makes all things new.

Jacob has turned his face to the future, but only because he had first turned his face to the house of God, right? He's able to make this pillar of rededication, to say, I'm looking forward with anointing. I'm looking forward with joy. I'm looking forward in the presence of my Savior. I'm going to move forward. But first, I had to return to the house of God, right? First, he had to repent, return. He had to respond to God. And in renewal and rededication, he now moves forward.

God's house is not determined by a place, but a person. For Jacob, it was to return to this place, this location, because God had a greater work for him there. It wasn't so much that it was the only place God was, but what God wanted Jacob and the other nations to know was that this land of promise, this was where he put his name, this was where he put his presence. There was a reason for Jacob being in that land and God appearing to him there and calling the place Bethel. For you and I, we don't look to a place to determine God's presence. It's not like, well, now that we're here, God's here.

But when we leave, he's not. But if we come back Wednesday night, you get to meet God again. And then if you come back Sunday, you meet God again. And then when we move to a new place, I hope God's there. That's not how it works, right? It's not determined by a place, but by a person.

John 14, 23, Jesus answered and said unto him, if a man love me, he'll keep my words, and my father will love him, and we will come unto him. And do what? We will make our abode with him.

[ 38 : 09 ] Where God dwells is not a place, but a person. And yes, the house of God isn't about the location, it's about God himself, but it's also about you and I. God's house is us. We are the place that God wants to dwell. That is the house. That is the place God wants to meet us in, as our own lives.

And for Jacob, who at one point, after Shechem was sitting there going, now what? What now? Okay, I haven't been in God's house. I need to return there. All right, but look what I've done.

Look what I've done with my life. Look at the mess my family's in. Look at the other people who are depending upon me and the mess I've made of their life. Now what? Now what? Well, we said it already, right? The next step after failure is grace. Grace. But God commends his love toward us, and that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more than being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. God's grace is not about staying in the past. It's about returning to a place where we meet with God so we can move forward.

If we don't meet with God, if we're never made new, we can never move forward. And many times, even as Christians, as believers, we get in a place where we can't move forward because we won't let God renew something in our life. Maybe it's something that we say, that's irreplaceable.

I can't replace that. And God says, I know you can't. I know. But unless you're willing to let that go, I can't renew it. And I can't bring you forward in joy. I can't bring you forward in anointing unless you let that go. Now we don't let that go and never remember it. We don't let that go and say, okay, let it go because God wants to renew it. He wants to renew it so that we can then reconsecrate ourselves to God. So today, I think the question we ask ourself is, looking at these things, repent, return, response, refuge, remembrance, renewal, rededication.

[ 40 : 29 ] To return, we must arise, go up, and dwell. So how will we respond to God's grace? Will you turn to God in repentance? Will you make God your refuge, remembering all that he's done on your behalf? Will you dedicate yourself to the one who makes all things new? And will you then live a life of renewal? We looked at this scripture earlier in John 3, verse 5. Jesus answered, Truly, truly, truly, I say unto you, except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. You must be born again. You must be born into this life to experience this life. And you must be born into the next life to experience the next life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. And that, again, is not a probability. That is a promise.

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. We've all been born. Are we willing to be born again? This life is eventually going to end, and we're going to have to face that. And just as we celebrate birth into this life, man, we celebrate birth into the next life. And if any man be in Christ, he's a new creation. Death, the sting of death, has been taken away. And that then just becomes a birth into the new life, right? But only for those who've been made new. For you were his sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the shepherd and guardian of your souls. It's time to return home, just like Jacob. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. What an amazing testimony.

That God's bountiful grace, God treasures us just as much as he treasures every little boy and girl that comes into this world. And he has covered us and covered our sins in his blood. So I'm going to pray.

And, man, I just encourage you to pray along with me. If you've never been made new, be made new. If you've never been born of the Spirit, born again, if death to you is like the end, man, receive new life so that death becomes but a doorway into resurrected life.

And if you've been holding on to whatever God is trying to convince you is better left with him, be made new again. Let renewal work into that area of your life. And let God replace the irreplaceable.

[ 43 : 18 ] Lord, as we close and as we pray, Lord, Lord, if there's any that do not know you, they have not been made new, they don't have the assurance that they have been birthed into everlasting life, that they have a life that will not end, that stretches beyond this one more, then I pray that today would be the day that they would say, yes, I will return.

The God who created me. So I've never left him. So how can I return? He's your creator and he's willing to be your father. If only you would turn to him, to return back to the one who created you, back to the one who gave his life for you, to turn and to allow God to be made your refuge, repenting, letting go of those things that are defiling, letting go of your own ideas about who Jesus is and recognizing that God so loved the world that he paid the price in the blood of his son so that you and I could be made new.

And Lord, I pray for those that look at their lives right now, Lord, and just are not seeing the newness, Lord, where you promised that all things have become new, that they're looking at something that's old, something that's repeating, something that's just holding on their life and they're saying, I don't see anything of newness of life there.

Lord, I pray that they would take these steps like Jacob, Lord. They'd respond to your word. They'd believe it and they would act upon it. And in faith and in worship, they would move forward with you, rededicating, Lord, their hearts and lives to you, turning over to you, Lord, that you're replaceable and looking to you to make new and alive and fresh something in their life that has only represented the old, the pain, the failing.

We worship you this morning. We thank you for the moms. We thank you for the life, Lord, that they give, Lord, not just in birth, but that they have poured into the lives of their children, Lord. And we are all a testimony of that.

[ 45 : 20 ] Thank you, Lord, for the picture, Lord, that we have a love that is so great that, Jesus, you would go to the cross that we could be made new and born into the kingdom of heaven.

We love you, Lord, and thank you. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Well, if you need prayer, I'd love to pray with you or find someone you trust to pray with.

And if you don't know what I'm talking about, you haven't experienced newness of life, man, come talk to me. If you just need someone to take a moment to pray with you as you step into a renewed life, letting go of something, then let's just pray and let God do that.

But happy Mother's Day. God bless. God bless.