# Genesis 35:15 (Thomas A. Roach) 167438

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Genesis 35:15

“God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel [house of God].... Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: and let us arise, and go up to Bethel; 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.”

The thought of going into the presence of God exercised Jacob’s conscience. The instructions he gave to his household in view of meeting Jehovah have much instruction for us. “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20). Should we not be, as Jacob was, exercised about how we come into His blessed presence?

The first principle is, “Put away the strange gods that are among you.” Believers can be so occupied with this life its cares and its pleasures that thoughts of God are left out of the mind during the week. But when coming together to meet in His presence, the repairs on the car, the upcoming exam all such things which are right in their place are to be put away that the praise due Him be not hindered.

Next he says, “Be clean,” or, “Cleanse yourselves.” This ought to be a daily exercise rather than a Saturday night affair. Has the flesh been allowed in covetous thoughts, displays of anger or stubbornness? Let all such be confessed and forsaken. Then according to 1 Corinthians 11:28, where we are told to examine ourselves and then eat the Lord’s supper, we may come into His presence with a good conscience.

Then Jacob says, “Change your garments.” He would not think of coming into the presence of the Lord in his work clothes. The women busy with the children and the household needed to change too. Though there is no dress code for coming into the presence of the Lord, ought there not to be a conscience about how we appear before Him? Ought we not to have a higher standard of appearing in His blessed presence than how we would appear for a job interview before the world?

After all this preparation and only then does he say, “And let us arise, and go up to Bethel.” Jacob would not go until all was suitable for the presence of Jehovah. While Jacob was going to an altar to sacrifice, believers have the knowledge of a perfect and accomplished work for the sacrifice for sin at the cross. We go to a table where is placed what reminds us of what took place at the cross. The loaf first speaks of the one body of Christ composed of all believers. When broken it symbolizes the Lord’s body given for us in death. The cup, separate from the loaf, reminds us of His blood shed for us.

At last Jacob says, “God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.” This recalls to our minds the distress of our sins when we were weak and heavy laden. He came to us with salvation and has been with us ever since. “He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5).

“They journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them” (Gen. 35:5). “Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?” (1 Peter 3:13). He gives peace to those who honor Him in these matters of which we have been speaking. Though we come to give Him the praise of which He is so worthy, there are times when we have come away with supreme joy in our own hearts. “Them that honor Me I will honor” (1 Sam. 2:30). “Without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better” (Heb. 7:7).

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