

JACOB'S PILLARS

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GENESIS 28:10-22; 31:45-54

Without going back to Adam, we remember that Abraham erected altars, Isaac dug wells, and Jacob he set up pillars. Altar signifies the cross, well signifies the Spirit of life, and pillar signifies the testimony of God. Out of Abraham came Isaac, out of Isaac came Jacob. Out of the cross you come into the fulness of the Spirit, and with the fulness of the Spirit you bear the testimony of Jesus.

Pillar in the Scripture always stands for “a testimony, a witness, something that is set up, visible, to be seen.” The first mentioning of pillar in the Bible is in Genesis 19. As Lot’s wife looked back to the city of Sodom, she turned into a pillar of salt. It is a negative testimony, a testimony to those who are the Lord’s and yet linger after the world.

When God took the children of Israel out of Egypt, He led them through the wilderness by the pillar of fire and of the cloud. In other words, if we put it into New Testament terms, it is the Holy Spirit who dwells in us and leads our way through the wilderness according to the testimony of Jesus. After that, we find pillars in the tabernacle which served as support. They signify strength, to support the house of God. And of course in Solomon’s temple, he had two pillars standing before the people not for support but as ornaments, as symbols of strength. One is called *Jachin*, “he will establish.” The other is called *Boaz*, “in Him is strength.” The pillars before the temple of

Solomon stand for strength, for beauty, for testimony—the strength and beauty of God.

In the New Testament, Paul mentioned that the church of God is the base and pillar of truth (see I Timothy 3). The church of God stands in the truth and it testifies to the truth and nothing but the truth. In Galatians, Paul mentions how Peter, James, and John are the three pillars in the church in Jerusalem because they are strength and support to the church there.

In Revelation 3, our Lord promised the overcomers in the church in Philadelphia that they would be rewarded as pillars in the temple of God, and the name of the Lord would be inscribed upon them. They are support; they are testimony to the Lord Jesus. So we may say that pillars in the Scripture represent testimony. It is symbolic of strength and support.

With this in mind let us go back to the life of Jacob. Jacob erected four pillars altogether during his life. You do not just erect a pillar at random. These pillars were erected at certain times out of certain experiences. These pillars actually were testimonies to the experiences of God that Jacob had in his life.

This is very true with us today. We are not only to experience the cross and to be filled with the Holy Spirit, but we are to bear the testimony of Jesus. In other words, the testimony of Jesus, today, is upon us; but how are we going to bear the testimony of Jesus? It has to be something wrought into our lives first. To say it another way, Christ has to be incorporated into us and out of that in-working, that incor-

poration of Christ into our lives, a pillar, a testimony is set up for all to see. So this is not something we can do at any time by our own will. It is something that has to come out of our life as the result of a new experience of Christ, or that experience of Christ being wrought into us, being a part of us. Then, out of us the testimony of Jesus will be seen by those around us.

Jacob had a desire for spiritual things. Because he had such a desire for spiritual things, he robbed his brother of the birthright and also of the blessing of the firstborn. Of course he did all this with carnal means. He had a spiritual aspiration, but he used fleshly means because his religion was traditional not personal. He knew about God; He knew about God’s blessing. And he wanted God’s blessing, the blessing of the firstborn, but he had no personal encounter with God. He did not know God in a personal way. He only knew God through tradition, by hearing from his father. He desired spiritual blessings, spiritual things, but he used carnal methods. As a result, even though he got the birthright and the blessing of the firstborn from his father, as if he had everything in his hand now, but at the very same time, he lost everything. He had to flee for his life. He had to leave his home. He became a fugitive and a wanderer in the wilderness. As he was traveling toward Haran night came, and he found a stone to be his pillow. He laid himself down and went to sleep.

I always feel this is a picture of great tragedy because when you put your head on a pillow, what kind of pillow will you

choose? Of course, we would choose a soft one so we could rest our head upon it and go to sleep. But here Jacob was in extremity. He was in such desperate situation. He could not find anything to lay his head on, so he found a hard stone to be his pillow. Can you sleep by resting your head on a hard stone? Unless you are in a state of exhaustion or fatigue, you will never go to sleep. So it really depicts a picture of extreme distress. He was at the end of himself. He was completely exhausted. He was in a hopeless position. Even with a stone as his pillow he slept, and he dreamed a dream.

God met him at the most unlikely place, under the most unlikely situation, at the most unlikely time. Jacob did not expect to meet God at that time under that kind of circumstances, but God met him there in a dream. He dreamed of a ladder joining earth with heaven and the angels of God ascending and descending—that is communication. God was standing at the top of the ladder and Jacob was lying at the bottom of the ladder, and God spoke to him. God blessed him and promised to give him the land that He had promised to his father Abraham and to his father Isaac. God promised that he would bless it, and his seed would be as the sand of the seashore. And God said, “I will protect you. I will be with you and I will bring you back to this land.”

When Jacob awoke, he was frightened. He said, “God is here and I did not know it. This is dreadful.” Why did he say it was dreadful? He was not prepared to meet God. He was not ready to

see God. He said, “This is the house of God, the gate of heaven.” He took the stone that served as his pillow and set it up vertically as a pillar and poured oil on it. Then he vowed a vow: “If God will keep me safe, give me clothes to wear, food to eat, and lead me back to my father’s house, then I will make God my God and this stone, this pillar shall be the house of God, and I will give one tenth of all that I have to Him.” We call this pillar the pillar of awakening, spiritual awakening.

THE PILLAR OF SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Jacob’s religion was traditional. He aspired for spiritual things, but he did not know God. All he knew was human ways, and because of that he was severely disciplined by God. God had to use drastic means to wake him up out of his complacency, out of his traditional religion, to have a personal encounter with God. That makes all the difference!

The gate of heaven means “revelation.” When the gate of heaven is open, then revelation is given. Through the revelation from above, Jacob saw God. He heard God. He had a personal experience of God. The gate of heaven is also the house of God because revelation always leads us to God’s house. Why does God reveal His Son in you? It is to build you with other believers into His house. So the gate of heaven is also the house of God. And the house of God is the gate of heaven because in the house of God, heaven is opened to you. In other words, in the house of God

you are to receive revelation from above that you may know Him who is in heaven more and more. As you know Him more and more, that house is built higher and higher, more and more complete. So these two things cannot be separated. It is the house of God as well as the gate of heaven. That is the beginning of spiritual awakening.

At that time Jacob understood very little. God promised him a great deal, but all he saw was a very little. God promised to give the land to him, promised to make his seed as the sand of the seashore, promised to lead him back to his house to inherit the land. But all Jacob asked of God was clothing, shelter, safety, to come back, and he even bargained with God. God promised him without any conditions. God said, “I will do this for you, I will do that for you.” But Jacob could not understand anything that is of free grace because that was not in his dictionary. He could not think of free grace, so he started to bargain with God and said, “Now God, if you will just give me this little, then I will make You my God and I will make this pillar Your house. And I will give You one tenth; I will tithe.”

It shows that Jacob knew very little. Yes, he had a beginning. This pillar of awakening was a beginning, the beginning of a spiritual life. He poured oil on it. When oil is poured on anything it means that it is being sanctified; it is being set apart for God. At least that experience of Jacob’s had set apart something for God in his life. It was not much at that time, but there was something that had begun. So this is the first pillar, the pillar of awakening.

I do believe that we all need to set up this pillar. If all we know about God is what we have heard from our fathers, we may be very religious or very zealous for spiritual things, or we may seem to have spiritual things in our grasp and do many spiritual works, but if it is only traditional, one day you will lose them all because they are not really yours. But God knows your heart. If you really have a heart for God and for spiritual things, God will meet you when you do not expect it. He will meet you in a way you do not expect, and He will awaken you into real spiritual knowledge of Himself. In the beginning you may know just a little bit because that is all you can take in, even though He promised you a great deal. And in the beginning probably that bargaining spirit is still within you and you do not really understand what grace is, what gift is. Yet there is a beginning in your life, and that beginning is set up as a pillar. At least there is some testimony to the Lord Jesus in your life.

PILLAR OF SEPARATION

Jacob went to Padan-Aram to his uncle Laban's house and there he served Laban for twenty years, the first fourteen years for his two wives and the last six years for the flock and herds. Those twenty years were a tremendous history because they were very difficult years for Jacob. During those twenty years, Jacob seemed to forget to return to the Promised Land. Jacob seemed to forget all about God. He was trying very hard to build up his own house. He had many children and he had lots of flocks, herds, and servants.

He built up his own house with difficulties, and he forgot about God's house. He forgot about returning to his own native land. So God used circumstances to force him to return. After twenty years, Jacob fled because his father-in-law was not happy with him. He thought Jacob had robbed him of all his property, so Jacob had to flee for his life again.

When Laban chased him and found him in Gilead, Jacob said, "During those twenty years that I was with you, you required everything from my hand. Whenever there was any loss in the herd or in the flock you required it from me. In the day time I was consumed by heat, in the night by frost, and sleep escaped me. You changed my wages ten times. If it had not been for God you would have taken away my wives, my children, my flocks, and left me all alone." That was Jacob's twenty years in Padan-Aram. Why? God wanted Jacob to know himself.

You do not know yourself. You cannot see yourself unless you hold a mirror before you. Do you know how your face looks if you have never looked into a mirror? But if you hold a mirror before you then it reflects you, and you come to know yourself. Jacob did not know himself. There was no way for him to know himself. We love ourselves too much to really know ourselves. So God sent him to Padan-Aram to hold a mirror before him. Laban was Jacob's mirror because these two men were very, very similar. Jacob was a person who maneuvered and plotted, and so was Laban. Jacob met his match in Laban.

Jacob began to know himself and see himself in Laban. Jacob began to have his flesh, his self dealt with by Laban. The very thing that was in him was in Laban, and the very thing that was in Laban was in him. So these men just dealt with each other and helped each other see himself in the true light. For twenty years, God put Jacob before Laban and let Jacob see himself. Now these were painful years.

If you begin to see yourself it is a very painful experience. If you are ignorant of yourself, you may have a good time. But when you begin to see what you really are in the sight of God, when you really begin to see the ugliness, the sinfulness, the frailty of your flesh, you will hate yourself, you will abhor yourself, and it will put you into dust and ashes. That was Jacob's experience through that twenty years. God was doing a separating work. God wanted to separate Jacob from Jacob, or to say, separate Jacob from Laban.

When Jacob fled and Laban chased him, they came to Galeed and they had a kind of controversy, but God intervened and because of His intervention, Jacob was not being hurt. Finally, Jacob set up a stone and made it a pillar. He asked all the brethren to pile stones on it to make a heap of stones. And this place is called *Galeed*, "heap of stones, a witness." Laban said, "This pillar, this pile of stones is a witness between us that I will not cause harm to you, and you will not cause harm to me. From now on we are separated." This pillar is called the *pillar of separation* because there Jacob and Laban were separated forever. They would not to see each other from

then on. They would not cross over this pillar from one side to the other. They were completely separated.

For twenty years they were tied together; they were as one. Jacob saw himself in Laban but now the time had come for them to be permanently separated. To put it in New Testament terms, it is a dividing of the spirit and the soul.

After we are awakened spiritually, it does not mean it is the end of our spiritual experience. That is the only the beginning, and then the Lord will lead us on. The next important phase of our experience is that of separation, not only being separated from the world but the dividing of soul and spirit. This experience is a very painful experience; it takes a long time. You need a mirror to reflect you, otherwise you will never know yourself. That is the reason that often, during that period, God will put you with somebody else, and with that one you begin to see yourself. You begin to be dealt with in these places. This is the way we begin to see the ugliness of our flesh and the need for the dividing of the spirit from the soul. There you find Jacob is to be delivered from Jacob and that Jacob is Laban. We need to be delivered from our soul-life and to have our spirit freed from the bondage, from the persecution, from the oppression of the soul.

It is always like that. That which is of the flesh always persecutes that which is of the spirit. And the spirit will be under persecution until it gets stronger and stronger and one day it gets free from the tyranny of the flesh. So this experience of the pillar of

separation represents the dividing of the soul and the spirit. At the same time, that place is also called *Mitzpah* which means "watchtower." In other words, Laban said, "God is watching. We do not see each other, but God is watching that you do not ill treat my daughters. God will take care of that." Under divine watch, even that which comes out of the soul will be perfected. First, there is the dividing of the spirit and the soul, and then all the functions of the soul will be purified under the watchful eye of God.

The second pillar is the pillar of separation. Do we have this pillar? You cannot just erect a pillar at any time. It needs something that has been done in your life. Has this thing been done in your life? Do you begin to see yourself? Do you begin to abhor yourself? Do you begin to cry out for God to deliver you from yourself? Is your spirit crying out to be delivered from the tyranny of the soul? If you are crying out, you find gradually (hopefully not twenty years), you will be free from the bondage of your soul. You will be separated. There will be a separation of the spirit and the soul and that will be the second testimony, the second pillar that will be erected in your life.

PILLAR OF TRANSFORMATION

After Galeed Jacob moved on. As he moved on, he sent messengers to his brother Esau telling him that he was coming. Then the messengers came back and told him that Esau was coming with four hundred men. Why should he come with four hundred men? Jacob was afraid.

So Jacob tried again to plan and plot. He sent gift after gift to his brother to try to appease him, soften the anger of his brother against him, but he still did not feel safe about it. So he divided his own family into two groups, and he said if Esau should attack one group, the other group could flee. That night he sent the whole family across the stream of Jabbok. He alone remained on the other side because he could not cross the stream. Even after all these things he did not have the sense of security. Then a man came and wrestled with him and he with that man. They wrestled through the night. And that man could not overcome him, could not prevail against him until the day began to dawn and the man touched Jacob's thigh and Jacob was crippled. Then Jacob held on to that man and said, "Bless me." And the man said, "Your name is Jacob but you shall be called Israel, a prince with God." And from that hour Jacob was crippled.

Jacob went to meet his brother, but he found his brother was very favorable to him. His brother forgot all the past, and just loved him and said, "Let's go together."

But Jacob played his tricks again and said, "You go ahead because my children are young and all the flocks and herds are tender. If we try to rush them they will die. You go ahead and I will come and join you in Seir."

And Esau, who was a very straight forward person, said, "All right, but I will leave some men to help you."

Jacob said, "You do not need to leave any men. You just go ahead and I will join you later."

After his brother left, he

moved to Succoth and built a house, intending to stay there. He was not going to join his brother; he was going to stay in Succoth, in Shechem. That is where he wanted to stay, but the hand of the Lord was heavy upon him. A very shameful thing happened to the house of Jacob. His daughter Dinah was disgraced and as a result, his two sons killed all the men of that city. Jacob was really put in great distress because the enemy was all around him. He told his sons that what they did would mean the end of them because all the people around would hear about it and would come and destroy them. But at his extremity God appeared to him and said, "Jacob, go back to Bethel. That is where you should go." Jacob remembered what he had promised God, but he knew it was a serious thing. So he told his family to take out all the gods they had with them, all the images. Think of that! Take out all the images because we have to be purified to meet God. And he buried all these images there and moved on to Bethel.

When he moved on, Rebecca's nurse, who was with Jacob, passed away. The last link with his mother was gone. Jacob loved his mother very much. He was attached to his mother. In other words, Jacob's character was like his mother and the last link was gone. He came to Bethel and built an altar and called the altar *the God of Bethel, the house of God*. God appeared to him and gave him a promise: "I will bless you. Kings shall come out of you. Your seed shall be as the sand of the seashore. The land shall be yours. You shall not be called Jacob anymore. From now on you

shall be called *Israel*." And God called him Israel.

After God left him, he took up a stone and set it up as a pillar, poured a drink offering—wine and oil on it—and called that place *Beth-el* the second time. This is the third pillar. What should we call this third pillar? We call this third pillar the *pillar of transformation*.

The dividing of the spirit and the soul is a negative thing. In other words, the spirit is so imprisoned by the soul that it has to be set free, and to set the spirit free is the dividing of the spirit and the soul. This experience actually is a preparation. It is a negative process. It is a freeing process, but you need a positive experience, a positive process, and the positive one is transformation.

What is transformation? Transformation in the Scripture happens in the soul when all the faculties of the soul are being purified. Instead of being used by the self-life, the soul begins to be characterized, to be governed by the spirit-life in the spirit which is the Holy Spirit. Then your soul goes through a transformation. Your mind begins to be renewed, to have the mind of Christ; your emotions begin to be purified, to have the love of God, and your will begins to be changed, to will the will of God. Your soul is being transformed. After the spirit is free from the soul, then the life of the spirit begins to penetrate the soul and transform it so that all the faculties of your soul come under new management—the management of the Holy Spirit. Thus you are being transformed and being conformed to the image of Christ. In other words, from

Adam's image you are transformed into Christ's image. That is transformation. Now remember transformation is done in the soul.

After the pillar of separation, Jacob had a series of events in his life and during that period, the hand of the Lord was brought very heavy on him because God was transforming him. At Peniel he came face to face with God. He wrestled with God; he would not let Him go, but God finally prevailed over him. He had to let go because he was crippled but he hung on to God. He was blessed, and God changed his name to Israel. But even after that experience, a lot of Jacob was still there. Even though God had changed his name to Israel, yet Jacob was still there. It was still Jacob planning and plotting. But the hand of God was very heavy upon him. In other words, God would not let him go. Under God's disciplinary hand, God would transform him completely until he was really Israel. That is why such a terrible thing happened to his family because God was determined to transform Jacob into Israel. Thank God for that.

How are we transformed? In II Corinthians 3, it says, "As our heart is turned toward the Lord, the veil is taken away. Then we behold the glory of the Lord with unveiled face—face to face." You have to be brought face to face with God in order to be transformed. If you do not see the beauty of the Lord, if you do not see the glory of the Lord, you will not be transformed. You will be contented with what you are. You will think that what you are is good enough. Maybe naturally

you are very gentle, you are very kind, you are very moral, you are good, but unless you are brought face to face with God and see the glory of the Lord, His beauty, you will be quite content with yourself. You will think you do not need to be transformed; your form is pretty good. But when you are brought face to face with God and you see the glory of the Lord as II Corinthians 3 says, "... you will be transformed according to his image from glory to glory as by the Lord the Spirit."

How we need to be face to face with God! Face to face with Laban will enable you to see yourself. Face to face with God will enable you to be transformed to the very image of Christ.

PILLAR OF RESURRECTION POWER

After Jacob returned to Bethel and God called his name *Israel*, from then on he is Israel, a new person in Christ. But this was not the end and they began to move on. As they moved on, Rachel, his wife, suffered severe labor in the birth of a child. She was dying, and before she expired, a son was born. So the midwife said, "You have a son." But Rachel was in such pain, she called her son *Benoni*, which means "son of my affliction," and she died. But Jacob, Israel changed the name from Benoni to *Benjamin* which means "son of my right hand." There Jacob set up a pillar at Rachel's grave. That was the last pillar that Jacob set up.

What should we call that pillar? It may surprise you. We can call this pillar the pillar of resurrection power. There was death, but out of death came life, out of affliction came "son of my right hand, authority." And *Ephrath* means "fruitfulness." *Bethlehem* means "house of prayer." We are familiar with Ephratah because Christ was born in Bethlehem. So this pillar speaks of life out of death, the power of His resurrection, being conformed to His death that we may arrive at the out-resurrection from among the dead. If we want to put it into New Testament terms, in II Corinthians 4, Paul said, "I bear in my body the dying of Jesus that the life of Jesus may be manifested in my body. Not only that but death works in me that life may work in you." Out of this kind of experience comes bread, comes fruit, comes ministry. Spiritual ministry comes out of death and resurrection.

The death is not because of sin; the death is because of giving birth to life. Through the travail of our Lord Jesus the church is formed; through the travail of Paul, the churches in Galatia were formed; through the travail of God's people throughout the ages, a spiritual ministry goes on for the building of the house of God. How can we impart Christ to other people unless we know what travail is? Unless we know what death is, unless we are willing to give up our rights, unless we are willing to give up

ourselves, unless we are willing to be spent, unless we are willing to sacrifice as it were, pour out ourselves as a drink offering life will not be imparted to other people. There will not be bread, there will not be fruit, there will not be spiritual authority.

So we may call this last pillar *the pillar of resurrection power*. Here you find in the life of Jacob four pillars—the pillar of awakening, the pillar of separation, the pillar of transformation, and the pillar of resurrection power. Putting these together you have the testimony. Today of course, the testimony is entrusted to the church. As members of the church, we are supposed to bear this testimony of Jesus in the world. But this testimony of Jesus is not an outward thing; it is not a form; it is not just some doctrines and teachings, being orthodox, scriptural, accurate. All these are important, but the testimony of Jesus is something more. The testimony of Jesus has to be Jesus being wrought into our very being and then seen by all. That is the testimony of Jesus. We need to be spiritually awakened. We need to have our spirit divided from the soul. We need to have our souls transformed. We need to pour out our life, the dying of Jesus in us that the life of Jesus may work in others. And when these things begin to happen in our lives, we know we have the testimony of Jesus. May the Lord help us.