

## February 4-Genesis 35

Genesis records many things about Jacob. In the character of Jacob, we see more of ourselves than many of us would like to admit. Jacob is extremely stubborn and he is dishonest at times just to name a few, but God uses him despite these faults. Jacob, in fact, was blessed substantially by God. He is given much material wealth, many sons (a big deal in their culture), and he is protected by God.

Today, we read about one of the instances in which God protects Jacob. In the beginning of chapter 35, Jacob is instructed by God to arise and go to Bethel. As Jacob prepares to move his family from where he currently resides to Bethel, he does something very important, namely he calls his family members to “purify themselves” (v. 2) before they follow God’s direction on their journey. The text says that part of this purification is that they put away all of their other gods (little “g”). We know from earlier in the book of Genesis that his wife Rachel had stolen some of her father’s gods and we see in verse 4 of the text that the family still had gods in their possession so we assume that there was still some worship of false gods in Jacob’s home.

Jacob understood that in order for his trip to be blessed, his family must be fully devoted to the Lord. There was no room for competing deities in the household of Jacob, and there is no room for competing “gods” in our lives today. Truly following Christ requires us to devote ourselves fully to His commandments of which the greatest is to love God with all of our heart, soul and strength (Matthew 22:38). The Bible is clear that we are to be a holy nation and a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9). If we expect God to move mightily on our behalf we must be sure that we are totally faithful to His plan.

After Jacob’s family purifies themselves, they begin to obey God just as He commanded. God’s instructions required Jacob’s family navigate land full of potential enemies. There was very real danger however verse 5 shares with us that God looked after His people, “a terror from God fell upon the cities that were around them, so that they did not pursue the sons of Jacob”(v. 5). Jacob and his household were faithful to do what God commanded, and God blessed and protected them in ways that only He could.

It is important to note that God’s promises to us today do not include a life of tranquility or freedom from struggle. In fact, Christ promised us that this world brings trouble (John 16:33). However, in the very same verse He encourages His followers by informing them that they are to take heart because He has overcome the world! This life will bring with it calamity and trial, but the faithful believer has nothing to fear because our hope and trust is in the one who has already overcome. The key for us today is not to avoid all suffering; instead it is to avoid suffering that comes about as a product of our own sin and disobedience. Brother and sister, purify yourselves today! Walk in a manner that is worthy of your calling (Ephesians 4:1) in so doing you will free yourself from any concern and you can rest in knowing that even when the storm seems to be approaching our great God is there to intervene on your behalf.

There is nothing more precious or worthwhile than following Christ with all you have. There is no life endeavor that is more important or more profitable than doing what God has instructed you to do. Follow Him! Purify yourselves from all of these other distractions and little gods, you won’t be disappointed!