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The Author—Dr. Paul E. Paino

Under the leadership of Dr. Paul E. Paino, Calvary Temple of Fort Wayne, Indiana, has become one of America's outstanding churches, with a weekly attendance of over 10,000. Dr. Paino's forty-year pastoral ministry has assured him the position of being nationally known as a "Church and Sunday School Builder." His practical application of God's Word to every situation has made his ministry relevant in the lives of thousands of people.

Manna For Modern Man, Inc.

P. O. Box 11427 • Fort Wayne, Indiana 46856

A series of messages delivered
by Paul E. Paino at the
Calvary Temple Worship Center



**GO UP
TO
BETHEL**



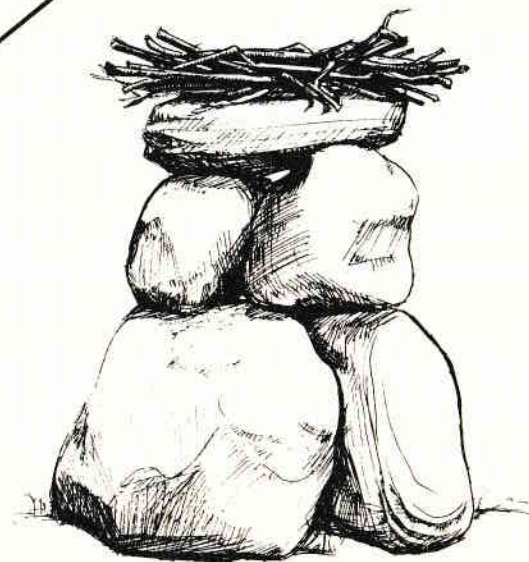
Go Up To Bethel

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Fort Wayne, Indiana 46856



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Dedication

I wish to dedicate this brief work to my wife, Mary, who has constantly encouraged me to share some of the things that the Lord has given to me through these past more than forty years of ministry.

Acknowledgments

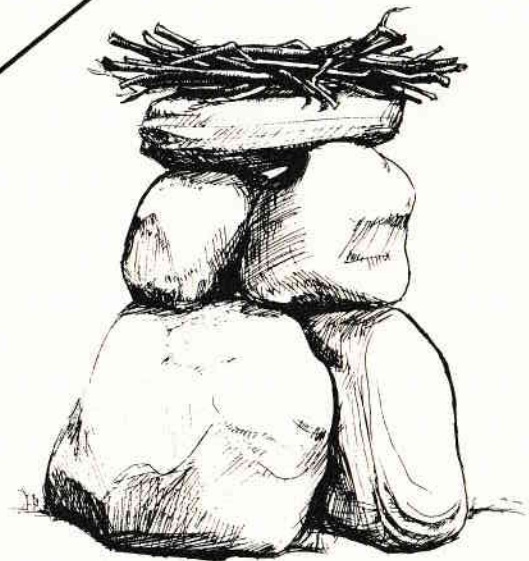
This book would not be possible if it were not for the encouragement of my two sons, Paul Craig and Phillip Carter, with whom I co-pastor. They have constantly urged upon me to prepare a manuscript of some of the material that I have used in ministering at the church.

I am deeply indebted to Ahnee Conner who spent time editing the book, and Phyllis Geary and Esther Shenfeld for typing and preparing the manuscript.

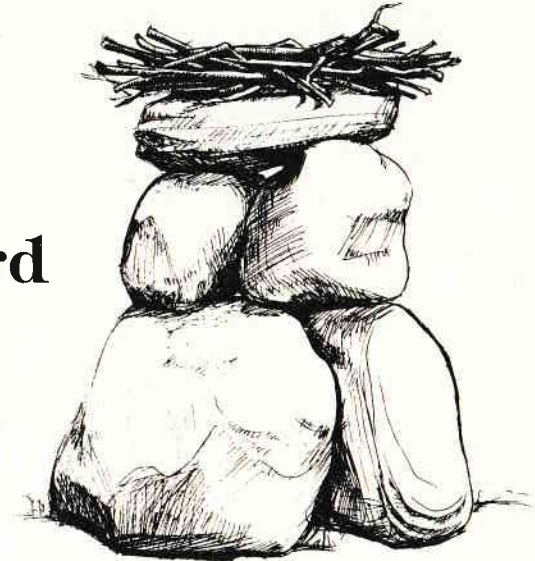
Because God has blessed the church with spiritual maturity, it has been easy to minister the truths of God's Word. I certainly want to acknowledge the spiritual strength I have received as pastor of such a fine congregation.

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Foreword



Several of God's great Old Testament patriarchs were blessed with unforgettable spiritual experiences at Bethel. In Genesis 35:1, the Scriptures tell us "and God said unto Jacob, 'Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there: and make thee an altar unto God'..." and Jacob said unto his household, "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."

Abraham also met God at Bethel. Bethel was one of the most sacred places of all of the land and the word means "House of God."

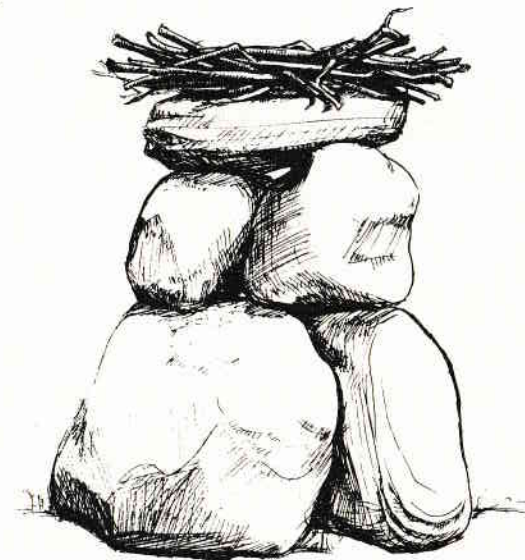
Sooner or later, every Christian will be led of God to their Bethel.

It is my prayer that God will use the following words to deepen your spiritual life, to encourage you in the steps which God directs, and to bring you to an altar where God can reveal Himself in a special way.

We too must, as did Jacob, "...go up to Bethel and build an altar there unto God."

1

Bethel – the Place of an Altar



This study begins with Genesis 35:1-16:

God said unto Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there. And make there an altar unto God, who appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother." Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, "Put away all the foreign 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."

And they gave unto Jacob all the foreign gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem. 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.

So Jacob came 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 called the place El-Bethel, because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother. But Deborah Rebekah's nurse died, and she was buried beneath Bethel under an oak. And the name of it was called Allon-bachuth.

And God appeared unto Jacob again when he came out of Padan-aram, and blessed him. And God said unto him, "Thy name is Jacob; thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name." And He called his name Israel. 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 I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land." And God went up from him in the place where He talked with him.

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 on it and he poured oil thereon. And Jacob called the name of the place where God spoke with him, Bethel. And they journeyed from Bethel, and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath; and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labor.

Let us first consider the text, "God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel." You see, Jacob had been to Bethel

before; it was there that God let a ladder down and Jacob saw angels ascending and descending. In an hour of great distress, God ministered to Jacob, and there at Bethel, Jacob made a covenant with God. God had manifested Himself to Jacob in a very special way, and Jacob made some promises to God. Soon thereafter Jacob departed from Bethel, which means the house of God, or the place where God's presence is manifest.

The second time that Jacob was at Bethel was on his return trip out of Canaan. He came to "the place nigh unto Bethel," and there an angel of the Lord wrestled with him. One of the most fantastic experiences that Jacob ever had took place in the house of God. But instead of staying where the presence of God was manifest, instead of being faithful to the house of God, instead of pitching his tent in Bethel, Jacob again departed. We next find him in a strange place called Shechem, and it was there that, for the third time, God said to Jacob,

"Jacob, what are you doing here? You have slipped away from Me and you have been careless in your spiritual life long enough. You've gone your own way, you've done your own thing. Now, it's time for you to arise, and go back to Bethel." I'm glad that Jacob was neither so out of touch nor so backslidden that he couldn't hear the voice of God saying,

"Arise, get up, go back to the place where I met you the first time, where you made some dedications, some consecrations, some commitments and some promises, before something drew you away."

In verse 1, God said to Jacob,

"Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there, and make there an altar unto God." It's repeated in verse 7, so there'd be no question about it: "And Jacob built there an altar and called the place El-Bethel." Let me suggest that if we're going to go to Bethel, if we're going to respond to the call of God to go back where we once were, if we're going to dwell in the place where God makes His presence manifest,

the first thing we're going to have to do is build an altar.

BUILD AN ALTAR

Now an altar is used for a lot of things in relationship to God. An altar is used as a place to pray. An altar is used as a place to offer a sacrifice. An altar is used as a place to make a commitment. An altar is used as a place to humble oneself. It was never to be made of new stone; it was always to be rough field stone, for God never wanted the hand of flesh at the altar of God. It was David who said,

"O Lord, I will compass thine altar, and I will dwell where thy glory dwells." It's easy for you and me to get so involved in everyday activity that we forget the altar—the place where we can pour our hearts out, the place where we can humble ourselves, the place where we can acknowledge our need of God, the place where we can offer our sacrifices, the place where God can be put first, the place where we can worship, the place where we can pray, the place where the fire burns, the place where we can draw near to God. It's so easy to get involved in other things and neglect the altar. I said to a young lady at camp recently,

"Listen, it is possible for you to be right here on this campground, where the goodness of God is, and where the glory of God is, and where the ministry of God is, and backslide. It's possible for you to sit in the house of God, service after service, and lose out, and not be at Bethel at all." The first thing Jacob had to do when he left Shechem and started back to Bethel was to build an altar.

When he and his household reached the hilltop of Bethel, he stopped everything until he carefully erected an altar to God. There he bowed his heart and called the altar El-Bethel, because, he said, the God of His house is today in His house. And I would like to suggest that if we want God to make His presence felt, all we, as His people, must do is say,

"Lord, I want Your presence to be felt, so I'll build an

altar." When Elijah wanted the fire to come down from God out of heaven, he first built an altar. When Joshua wanted to know that God's presence would be with the Israelites as they marched into the promised land across Jordan, God caused Joshua to erect an altar.

As we study the Old Testament, we see over and over again that the people of God were altar-builders. When Isaac returned to the land of his fathers, he saw that the pagans of that country had destroyed the altars of God, and the Bible says that he rebuilt the altars and dug the wells.

I make a plea today: Let's arise, and let's go back to Bethel. **We need altars more than we need programs;** we need altars more than we need talent; we need altars more than we need promotion. God knows today that we need altars. You may not have talent. You may not have the capacity or strength or ability to do some things, but every one of us has the capacity to build an altar. So if we're going to go back to Bethel, let's build an altar.

PUT AWAY STRANGE GODS

Not only is Bethel the place of the altar, but, according to verse 2, it's also a place of sanctification. This simply means separation from ungodly things. Jacob said to his household, and to all that were with him,

"Put away the foreign gods, the strange gods, that are among you, and be clean and change your clothes." Jacob was saying,

"We're going to Bethel, so let's sanctify ourselves." What would happen if we went through our houses and destroyed all the strange gods? I wonder, what would fill our trash cans if we really sanctified ourselves? Moreover, I wonder what would happen if we would begin to search our hearts, and would lay aside those things that have somehow crept in, and have taken over a prominent place in our lives. If we started to Bethel, we would have to lay aside certain things. You see, there's a price to pay. God is

a jealous God, and He demands that we lay aside those things that have a tendency to crowd Him out.

It's so subtle; a strange god can become a part of our lives almost without our recognizing it. Suddenly something can lay hold of us that demands our time, that consumes our energy, that takes away from us, that demands of us, and when it's all over, it amounts to nothing. I've noticed that, every time God begins to do a work in a man's heart through this Scripture, there is a stripping away of things that distract us from God. The Apostle Paul, alluding to his experience as a runner, says that he will lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset him, so he can run with patience the race that's set before him.

I am amazed at the things that so easily fasten themselves upon us, that are nothing more than weights. They don't keep us from running, but oh, how they keep us from running well! If you and I are going to go to Bethel, we must lay aside the things that are so unnecessary. You say,

"What are they, Brother Paino?" I don't know. But *you* know. No one has to tell me what hinders me; I know. And perhaps what I have to lay aside is different from you. I don't know what strange gods you're holding in your hand or in your heart, but if we'll turn around and face toward Bethel, God will say,

"That's it, right there; put it down."

You see, we still need some old-fashioned sanctified preaching, the kind of preaching that will burn inside of us and make us live differently than we're living. We need the kind of preaching that will make a change in us, so that we don't compare ourselves among ourselves, but say instead,

"God, I don't particularly care what people have to say; what is it that You require of me if I'm to go to Bethel?" And the more I think about Bethel, the more necessary it becomes for me to go there, and the more foolish it becomes for me to stay in Shechem. Why should I live in the

valley of Shechem, when I can walk upon the mountain of Bethel?

GOD ANSWERS PRAYER

Let's look at verse 3:

"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." Not only is Bethel a place of an altar, not only is Bethel a place of sanctifying power, but **Bethel is also the place where God answers prayer.** Perhaps one reason many of our prayers are not answered is that we're not praying them at Bethel. You see, God required Jacob to go to Bethel. Don't you think that God could have heard him in Shechem? Yes, but God said,

"I won't pay any attention to you in Shechem; you've got to go to Bethel." And I've seen in my own spiritual life that, when I could in some way pitch my tent at Bethel, God answered my prayers. There is a place that God demands we go, if we're to have prayer answered. There is a place to which you and I must come; there is an effort that we must make. We need not only to build an altar, not only to sanctify ourselves, but also to recognize that there is a place where we can go—that special closet of prayer, so that we know when we pray, the answer will be forthcoming. I don't know if you have ever been there, but there is a place called Bethel, where God answers prayer. Jacob said,

"I'm tired of living down here. I'm tired of doing things by my own strength. I'm tired of calling upon and depending upon others; I need to find the place where God answers my prayer."

Have you ever prayed when you knew God wasn't going to hear you? Have you ever been in a place where you knew the heavens were brass? It seemed God had sealed up the glory world and the communication system was broken down. Oh, how frustrating! David found himself in that place in the Fifty-first Psalm, in which he cried out and said,

“O God, take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.” Help me to be, O God, where You can help, and hear me when I pray. Wouldn’t you like to live at Bethel, where every time you opened your mouth you heard a clear communication to God? It’s a place where God answers prayer.

GOD’S PRESENCE IS FELT

Before I leave verse 3, I think we ought to underscore the last phrase: not only “will I make there an altar unto God who answered prayer in the day of my distress,” but “was with me in the way which I went.” It was at Bethel that God made His presence so real that Jacob knew that God was with him. He didn’t have to check with anyone; he didn’t have to get anyone else’s opinion; he knew as a result of living in Bethel that God was with him.

Have you ever experienced a period of time in your life when you’ve not been aware of the presence of God? There is nothing more miserable in all the world than not to feel God’s presence. I know what it is to walk over a period of time and wish that somehow God would make His presence felt. Job had that experience when he said,

“I looked before me and I couldn’t detect His presence, and I sought for Him in back of me, and He wasn’t there, and I looked to the left and to the right, and I couldn’t feel God.” Thank God Job maintained his faith.

But here was Jacob, who had wandered away from Bethel, and had become so involved in making a living and in building a kingdom for himself that, one day in Shechem, he woke up and thought,

“Oh, if only I could feel God’s presence again.” And he heard the voice of God saying,

“Jacob, if you really want to feel My presence, go back to Bethel where I first made My presence felt; I’m still there.” I want you to know that God hasn’t left you if you don’t feel His presence; you and I have left Him, and if we’ll turn around and go back to Bethel, where we left Him, we’ll find Him there waiting to reveal Himself to us.

Bethel. The house of God, the place where God makes His presence known. It’s a place where we build an altar. It’s a place where we sanctify ourselves. It’s a place where God answers prayer. And it’s a place where His presence is made very real.

GOD DEMANDS HOLINESS

Let us continue with verse 4: “And they gave unto Jacob all the foreign gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears, and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem.” I wondered why the Scriptures put such an emphasis on the fact that they brought earrings, and gave them to Jacob before they’d go to Bethel. Is God saying to all you ladies with earrings, that you’re supposed to take them off? I doubt it. I was surprised to find out that it wasn’t only the women who wore earrings; men also wore them. The earrings had an interesting significance, in that they indicated a person’s identification with the worship system of the gods of that age. It was a way of saying,

“I wear this to identify myself with the religions of this world.” That’s what the Canaanites had done. Therefore, Jacob told his household,

I’m going to go to Bethel, but you’re not going to go to Bethel with me, unless you are willing to stop identifying with the things of the world system; I’m going to demand that you walk in holiness and separation if you’re going to go to Bethel.” I believe with all my heart that, if we’re to pitch our tents in Bethel, God demands that we stop identifying with some of the things that we’re identifying with. God said to Jacob who said to the people,

“Today we may rejoice. There will be no question of whose side we’re on when we start to Bethel. Everyone will know that there’s been a change. Everyone will know that we’re different. Everyone will know which side we’re on. There will be no doubt about it.” Oh, God, give us men and women today who will reach up and remove the

spiritual earrings and cast them aside and say,

“God, I want the whole world to know that I’m on Your side.”

Nowhere in this Book has God ever suggested that we seek the approval and the applause of men. Nowhere in this Book is it indicated that we should be so well-liked by the world system that people will put their arms around us and call us jolly good fellows. Oh, no, the very opposite. This Book declares that, if we identify with God, we’ll be pilgrims and strangers in the land, and men and women will look and say,

“Who is that crowd?” Wouldn’t it be wonderful for us to say,

“We are the crowd who lives at Bethel, and we don’t have the earrings in our ears.” It’s a place of God’s holiness.

THERE IS POWER WHEN GOD IS WITH US

Here’s the last verse: “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.” Imagine, for a moment, this holiness band, walking out of Shechem, walking down right into the midst of the enemy where the enemy would have utterly defeated them. They didn’t have a ghost of a chance. But they were on their way to Bethel, and as they marched through the land, God marched ahead of them. Every time they walked past a city or a village, God put a holy fear in that city, until the Bible says that terror struck them. Jacob and his sons walked right on by. They didn’t have a sword or a spear; they didn’t have an army to protect them. They didn’t fight any battles; they didn’t depend on anybody’s flesh. They said,

“We are on our way to Bethel and God is our God, and we commit our ways to Him. We’re not going to worry about it; we’re not going to be frustrated; we’re not going to be driven by fear. The God whom we serve is able to deliver us.” They marched through the land of the enemy on

their way to Bethel, and God protected every step they made, until they pitched their tents in Bethel.

We are in this world but we’re not of it, and I don’t care what the world system has to say, or what their threats and accusations are. If we’ll start toward Bethel, the God that is among us will strike terror in the hearts of the enemy and let His people march through. No weapon formed against us can prosper. If God be for us, who may be against us?

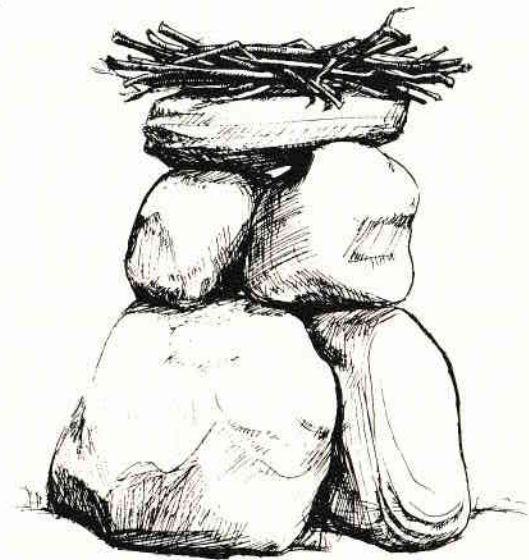
Let us arise and go to Bethel, the place of an altar, the place of sanctification, the place where God answers prayer, the place of the sweet divine presence of an Almighty God, the place of true holiness, and the place of divine protection.

Let’s pray.

Lord, there are some that have listened to me share today, that one time lived at Bethel. They loved the altar. It was easy for them to sanctify themselves, and when they prayed, You heard. They rejoiced in Your presence, but somehow they got involved, got busy, and ended up down in Shechem. Let us hear Your voice today say, “Arise, go back to Bethel.” Help us to rebuild the altar. Help us, Lord, to walk in the glory and the sweetness of Your presence. Help us to be willing, Lord, to lay aside the strange gods that are in our hand, and to take the earrings out of our ears, and to walk through the land on our way to Bethel. Amen.

2

Bethel – the Place of Sanctification



Genesis 35:1

God said to Jacob in verse 1,

“Arise and go up to Bethel.” Jacob had been to Bethel twice before this chapter. Both times, God had manifested and revealed Himself to Jacob in a most precious way. Circumstances and situations and pressures had caused Jacob to leave Bethel, the house of God, and when God spoke to him, he was in a strange place called Shechem. The third time, God said to Jacob,

“I want you to return to Bethel. Return to the place where you made a consecration. Return to the place where I revealed Myself to you. Return to the place where I made a promise to you. Return to the place where you committed your life to Me. Return to the place where you made some vows.” It was at Bethel that Jacob said,

“I will give You a tenth of all that I receive.” It was at Bethel that God had changed Jacob’s name. It was at Bethel that God revealed His ministering spirits, as angels traversed a ladder from earth to heaven. But Jacob had departed from Bethel, and now God is saying:

Arise and go to Bethel. Then Jacob said unto his household and to all that were with him, put away foreign gods that are among you and be clean, and change your garments; 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, and they gave unto Jacob all the foreign gods which were in their hand and all their earrings which were in their ears, and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem. And they journeyed, and the terror of God was upon the cities which were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.

So Jacob came 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 called the place El-Bethel, or the house of God, because there God appeared unto him when he fled from the face of his brother.

But Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died and she was buried beneath Bethel under an oak, and the name of it was called Allon-bachuth. And God appeared unto Jacob again when he

came out of Padan-aram, and blessed him.

Perhaps one time you pitched your tent at Bethel, and there God did a work of grace for you; there you made commitments, there you made promises, and there God was very real to you. But now the days have gone by, and other things have pressed in on your life. And if you would suddenly come to attention before God, you would have to confess that you’ve wandered away from Bethel. The Holy Spirit may be saying to you,

“Arise, go back to Bethel.”

These are the things I shared last week: **Bethel is the place of an altar.** The very first thing Jacob said was,

“I’m going to Bethel and build an altar there.” The altar signified many things. It was a place where sacrifice was offered; a place where Jacob could draw near to God; a place where commitments could be made; a place where praise could be given. It was a place of worship; a place where Jacob could enter into conflict against spiritual forces; a place where the fire would burn. Bethel was the place of the altar, and I believe today that God is calling us to go back to the altar.

One of the very deep concerns I have is that God would lay a spirit of prayer on our church. I know that there are praying people in this building, and I honor your faith and your prayer. But I know that we are not really a praying church, and that gives me deep concern. Oh, some of us say prayers, but we’re not really entering into the spirit of prayer. I am concerned because we have a prayer room that oftentimes is empty; service after service we come and no one is there praying. There was a time when we could come into the church on Thursday night and people gathered around the altar without anybody saying anything. But now we’re careless. I think that we need to be sensitive, and arise and go back to Bethel, and build an altar. Let’s start a house of prayer. We say it, but do we really believe it? “It’s not by might nor by power, but it’s by My Spirit, saith God.”

I've been challenged again as I read the testimony of Pastor Cho in Korea, where they have now broken ground for a church that will seat thirty-three thousand people. They also have a camp called the Prayer Mountain, where as many as eight hundred people at one time gather together. There is no program, nothing going on; they go to the mountain of prayer to do one thing: to pray. When that many people are praying, something is bound to happen.

Let's go back to Bethel. Deacons, let's go to Bethel. God knows we don't want men in places of official position that are not spiritual leaders, and God has ordained that you be that. Elders, let's not go in the room and visit. Let's make it a room of prayer. Choir, let's do more than sing; let's pray. Let's go back to Bethel.

Bethel is not only the place of the altar, but Bethel is also a place of sanctification. God said—and Jacob passed the word on to his house,

"Let's get rid of all the foreign gods, all of the things that we are worshipping rather than Jehovah. Let's bury them; let's separate ourselves from them; let's sanctify God in our midst."

I mentioned last week that Bethel was the place of answered prayer. "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." Oh, God, help us to move into a position in which we do more than pray, so that when we come away from the altar of prayer, we know that we have the answer. I believe there is a difference between our just going through the platitudes of prayer and our getting up and saying,

"I know God answered my prayer." I know that difference because I've experienced it in my own life. There have been times when I prayed and I was just praying; that's all. But there have also been times when I have prayed and I knew God answered my prayer. I believe that God wants to move us into that position in Bethel, where,

when we finish praying, we can walk away knowing that our prayer has been answered, not because we've been "religious," but because we've had contact with God.

Bethel was a place of holiness. Jacob said,

"Take the earrings out of your ears," and I explained that those earrings were not just something they wore as a part of their costume to make them look nice. God wasn't zeroing in on the ladies that wear earrings today. Those earrings connected them with the worship of the gods of that day, identifying them with the gods of Canaan. Jacob was saying,

"Let us put aside everything that identifies us with the religions of the world, and with the course of this age, and let's put God on the throne." Thank God there was a company of people who said,

"Amen," when Jacob said,

"Let's go to Bethel."

Not only is Bethel a place of the altar, a place of sanctification, a place of answered prayer and a place of holiness; it is a place of God's holy presence, for Jacob said,

"God was with me in the way in which I went." Jacob knew at Bethel that God was there. When he left Bethel, he testified that it was the house in which God lived. In the Fifty-first Psalm, David cried out to God, saying,

O God, take not the presence of thy Holy Spirit from me." I have said many times over the pulpit in Calvary Temple these years that I've been pastoring, and I say again this morning—knowing full well what I'm saying—I would rather die physically than not have the presence of God. Living a life without the awareness of God's presence would have to be hell in action. What a delight it is to sit down in the car and feel God's presence! What a thrill it is to go to work and feel God's presence! What a delight it is to come into the house of God and feel God's presence! My friend, that's Bethel. I pray that we'll arise and go to Bethel.

Notice in verse 5, "And they journeyed." Now you see,

God's blessed me with a fantastic imagination. I can see this patriarch, a two-fisted old boy, limping along, wanting to serve God but somehow pulled away. Yet God saw something in Jacob's heart, and when Jacob felt the challenge and heard the voice of God, he wasn't so dense that he didn't respond. When he heard the voice of God saying,

"It's time to return to Bethel," Jacob stood up and said,

"We're going to go back." He stood before the company of people and said,

"Put away your false gods, take off your earrings, and let's get ready; I'm going to go to Bethel and build an altar," and the whole company of people got ready. And then somebody back in the crowd (there was always one around) said,

"Jacob, do you know that, between here and Bethel, the land is infested with enemies? Before you get to Bethel, we'll all be killed." I can see Jacob set his jaw and say,

"God said to us, 'Go to Bethel,' and to Bethel we go." Now get the crowd: here they are, Brother Jacob was limping because he had wrestled with God earlier, and here he is, going down the road, and I can see the crowd behind, some of them whispering, saying,

"We're coming up and there's a village over there, and they are waiting for us and they're going to cut us down." But as Jacob and the crowd passed by the village, not a ripple, not a stir, not a voice, not a soldier, not one opposition. You know why? Because the God of Bethel had stricken terror into the hearts of the enemies of Jacob and they couldn't lift a hand. They were so weak they couldn't touch a sword, so weak they didn't dare put their finger on the man of God with the company that was going to Bethel.

I want you to know, my precious friend, that the devil may be out there making all of his catcalls, and telling you all of the reasons why you should not go to Bethel. But the God that's the God of Bethel has promised to protect

us, and fight our battles for us, and confuse and confound the powers of the devil. All He wants us to do is say,

"God, I'm on my way to Bethel." You say,

"Were there enemies there?" Oh, yes, but God confounded them. As you and I make an effort to draw close to God, and to live in the place where God's presence is, there will be all kinds of enemies. I've watched it, as the Lord has brought us thus far. I can stand here for the next thirty minutes and tell you experience after experience of how the enemy looked as though he were arrayed to cut us down, as we've come this far by faith, but I have seen God put His great hand up and say to the enemy,

"You'll come this far and you'll not come any farther." Listen, I don't know in what way the enemy is trying to bring fear to your heart, but if you'll set your heart on going to Bethel, God will put terror in the hearts of your enemies. **There is protection at Bethel.**

What else is at Bethel? Verse 6 says, "So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan, that is Bethel, he and all the people that were with him." Because Jacob went to Bethel, the whole household went with him. When Jacob backslid, he took the whole house with him. But when he started toward God, he influenced others toward God.

It's important that each of us go to Bethel, and as we go, we're going to take somebody along. Oh, that's the reason I want this church to go to Bethel. Do you know what? If I could get this church to go to Bethel, we'd take Fort Wayne to Bethel with us. We'd take the Tri-State area to Bethel with us. We'd take churches that are looking in this direction to see what's happening, to Bethel with us. We'd take the satellite churches to Bethel with us. We'd take the missions program to Bethel with us. You'll take your family to Bethel with you. Let's arise and go up to Bethel. You say,

"But Brother Paino, it's not important that I go." You can stay in Shechem, and because of your influence there will be a crowd that will stay there with you.

Oh, I cry from the depth of my heart, let's arise, and let's go up to Bethel. Let's not be satisfied in the valley and in the plain country of Shechem; let's not sit under an oak, when we can sit under the glory. We influence others when we go to Shechem. If everybody were faithful to Bethel, this church would not have enough room to seat the people.

And there are some of you—and don't think me unkind, but I've got to preach and then answer to God for it—there are some of you that have plans to do things that aren't worthwhile, and you'll stay away tonight from the house of God, with all kinds of little excuses, but, let me tell you something, you won't do it without taking somebody with you.

And one of these days, some of you parents will say, "I raised my children in the house of God." Oh, yes, when it was convenient. And one of these days you'll wonder why they drift off and do something else, and say, "It's not really important." They learned it not from the church; they learned it from you on Sunday night. They learned it from you on Thursday night. They learned it from you on prayer meeting night, because there were other things more important than your going to church. You say,

"Oh, I can't do all of this," but we can take a stand until our whole family knows that Bethel is the most important thing that ever happened to us. Let's arise, and go up to Bethel.

A man stood in our prayer meeting last night and, with tears on his face and a broken spirit, talked about how God spoke to him. He and his family drove over a hundred miles to get to church because they said,

"Oh, Brother Paino, it means so much just to be able to come into a church where God's presence is." I don't know about you, but I want to pitch my tent at Bethel.

It's not only a place of influence, but look at verse 7, "And he built there an altar, and called the place El-Bethel,

because there God appeared to him." I can hear some smart aleck want to argue about how you can see God, and there are some theologically oriented persons that want to fuss with you about whether or not natural man can see God and live. But I'll tell you something; I've been to Bethel enough as a man to know that, when you're there, God has a way of revealing Himself to you, until there's no question about whether or not you can see Him. The man that wants to argue and say you can't see God is the man that's never been to Bethel. **It's at Bethel that God gives you eyes to see what your natural eyes can never see.** John, on the Isle of Patmos, went to Bethel, and, suddenly seeing God, fell at His feet like a dead man. John was never again the same. Paul, riding a donkey to Damascus with letters in his pocket, breathing out threats against the Christians, was knocked to the roadway in the dust and, through eyes that were blinded because of the brightness above that of the noonday sun, God gave him the capacity to see the Lord of Hosts. Isaiah, in the year that King Uzziah died, was in the house of the Lord and suddenly God let him see that there was a Mighty One "high and lifted up and His train filled the temple," and, there at Bethel, Isaiah was allowed to see God.

Let me now take you into the courtroom of one of the greatest world powers that has ever existed. Rome controlled the whole world with an iron heel, and one of the satellite kings of the Roman Empire had come in and set up a majestic throne room. The Apostle Paul, chained to a Roman soldier, was taken out of his cell and brought in before the king. The king, with all of the power of the Roman government behind him, said,

"Sir, I'm a busy man. I understand that you've appealed to Rome. I want to know about you. I want to listen, because I don't want to take the time of the tribunal in Rome for some silly religious thing."

Just for a moment, I'd like you to catch a glimpse of this little man, standing now before the power of Rome.

Look at the glory and the pomp of that palace, so majestic to behold. Standing there was a man chained to a Roman guard who very probably stood six or six and a half feet tall, and tradition and history tell us that the Apostle Paul was about five and a half feet tall. He was hump-shouldered, he was baldheaded, and historians tell us that on top of that little baldhead was a knot. His eyes were squinty, history tells us, because he had an Eastern disease that caused his eyes to water. Probably he was referring to it in the Book of Galatians, when he apologized for writing with such big letters, because he didn't have anybody to dictate the letter to. It is said that he talked out of the side of his mouth with a raspy voice. Can you picture him, squinty-eyed and hump-shouldered, standing before King Agrippa, who said,

"What have you got to say?" Listen to this man of God say,

"Oh, most noble Agrippa, and Festus, I feel honored that I can come and stand in your presence to bear witness about what I have seen. I'd like to tell you that I held one of the highest positions that could be held in the Jewish government. I sat on the Sanhedrin with the religious power of the day. I was a Pharisee of Pharisees. No one could condemn me in the Jews' religion, and, Sir, I even had authority to issue warrants for the arrest of those who were attempting to instigate what I thought would be a revolution against the Roman government.

"And there I was, on my way to arrest them, when suddenly a light shone above the brightness of the noonday sun, and I fell to the ground, along with those who were riding with me. Sir, while I was in that light, God gave me a vision. Not only did I see Jesus that was crucified, not only did I see myself as a religionist that was miserably lost, not only did I see a world that needed to hear that God so loved the world that He gave His Son that people could be saved, but, King Agrippa, I want you to know that God took me into the presence of the glory of God,

and I saw things that are not lawful for me to talk about. I saw the King, not of Rome, but the King of Kings seated on a throne, and, Agrippa, since that vision, I want you to know that I have not been disobedient to what I saw."

Paul hesitated a moment, and then looked up, and he saw King Agrippa shaking. He waited as that mighty man of power looked from his throne and said,

"Sir, almost you persuade me to be a Christian." The Apostle Paul said,

"Oh, Sir, I wish that you could be as I am except for these bonds." You say,

"Brother Paino, why have you told us that story?" I've told you that story simply because God took Saul of Tarsus, moved him up into Bethel, and let him see a vision of the glory of God, and he was transformed from a religionist into a powerhouse for God. No wonder Jacob said,

"Let's go up to Bethel." I am so sick of silly visions, of crazy things "God told me." I am so sick of men that say,

"The Lord said this and the Lord said that, and the Lord did this and the Lord did that." Listen, you show me the man or woman that's seen the Lord Jesus Christ, in Bethel, and I'll show you the man or woman with a fire burning inside of them to accomplish what God wants to be accomplished.

God, take us up to Bethel. It's where God's presence can be seen. One glimpse of the presence of God makes all of the bright lights of this earth look like darkness. Do you care if I say that again? One glimpse or experience of the glory of God at Bethel makes all the bright lights of this world look like darkness. Let's go to Bethel.

Let's pray.

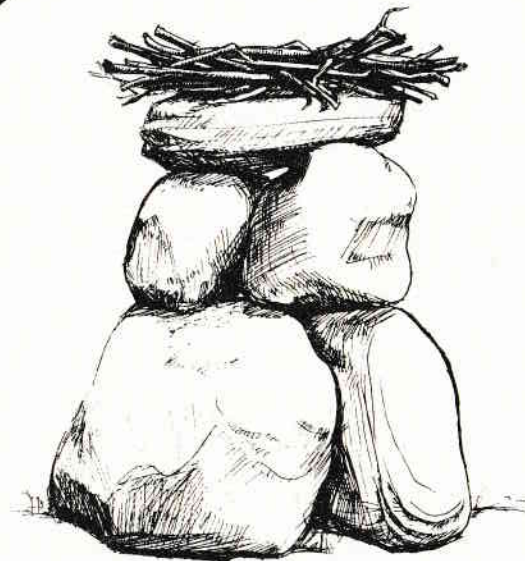
Lord, I'm sharing with Your people the message You burned into my heart. I want to say to You publicly, that I've determined to go to Bethel. Away with the sickness that makes us weak in our profession. Away with the hypocrisy that makes us void of power. Away with religion

that lulls us to sleep. Away with half-hearted dedication that doesn't demand anything out of us. Away with our earrings that identify us with the gods of this world. Away with the false gods which have ears that hear not, and eyes that see not.

O God, help us to go to Bethel. If there's someone in the room today that one time walked around the altars at Bethel, but has wandered into the valley of Shechem, help him to load up and go back to Your house. I ask it, Lord, as earnestly as I know to pray. Amen.

3

Bethel - the Place of Divine Presence



Beginning with verse 7, let me share two or three things with you for these brief moments before me. "Jacob built there an altar and called the name of the place El-Bethel because there God appeared unto him." Listen carefully to me this morning: **Bethel is the place where we can see God.** I can almost hear someone say,

"Oh, don't be silly, Preacher; there's nobody here that can see God." But let me tell you something. If you once go to Bethel, you'll see God, for God has given to men and women who are at Bethel a spiritual capacity, and an ability to really see God, not with natural eyes, but certainly with spiritual eyes. Oh, yes. When you get to Bethel, God gives you a capacity to see Him.

I have a feeling that too many of us have our eyes on other things. I have a sneaking suspicion that you and I spend too much time gazing at other weak ones around us, and we're guilty of comparing ourselves among ourselves, and saying,

"Well, they're doing it and I'm as good as they are," or "They're no better than I am." So we compare ourselves among ourselves, and destroy ourselves. But when we get to Bethel, there is such glory from the King that it's impossible to see anybody else. I suggest this morning that we need to go up to Bethel, and that we need to have our eyes look upon the Holy One; we need to see Him, and you can rest assured that one glimpse of Him will make all of the changes that ever need to be made in our lives.

No man has ever seen God and been the same. Moses was in the presence of God for forty days, and there was such glory on his very countenance that they had to veil his face because man could not stand to look upon him. Changed? Oh, yes! When Peter talked about being in the presence of God, he spoke of being changed from glory to glory by simply being exposed to the presence of God. I'm here to say today, on the authority of this Holy Book, that God still takes the scales from men's eyes, and still gives us the capacity to see what natural eyes can't see, and

to hear what natural ears can't hear, and to feel what mortal man can't feel in the natural, because He's given us a spiritual capacity. We can move up to Bethel, and God will let us see Him. Oh, God, touch our eyes with holy eye-salve so we can really see.

Last Sunday, we recalled Paul standing before King Agrippa, testifying before the great king of that part of the Roman Empire, saying,

"I have not been disobedient to my vision. I have never been detoured nor sidetracked from what I saw on the road to Damascus." I will never stand before a King Agrippa; I will never stand before one of the potentates of the land; I will never be ushered in to see a president nor a king nor a prince nor a princess nor a queen. But one day, just as surely as this preacher's behind this sacred desk, I will be privileged to be ushered into the presence of the King of Kings, to see Him in His glory. I will stand before Him in all of His majesty, and you can't imagine the thrill that will come to my heart when I stand, not before King Agrippa, but before the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords! I'll say,

"Oh Lord, back there in 1982, I moved up to Bethel, and I caught a vision of Your glory, and, King, from that time on, I've not been disobedient to my heavenly vision."

I suggest this morning that we pack up, and bury the gods of this world, and move out from the shade trees of Shechem and into the glory of God at Bethel. **It's a place of revelation; a place where spiritual eyes suddenly see God.** If, for one minute, you look into the glory of God, you are **blind when you look to the world.** Did you hear that? I want you to hear it, because people who are so involved in the things of the world have not seen the glory of the presence of God. That's the reason I don't spend a lot of time preaching against things, preaching a negative gospel, because God taught me a long time ago that it's my business to somehow preach men and women into presence of God. Once our eyes behold His glory, we can

never again be satisfied looking at the darkness that the world offers.

There are bright lights up here in church that beam down not only light but heat. It's perhaps twenty degrees hotter behind the platform than it is out there. And if I'm not careful, sometimes I glance up into those lights, and for the next couple of minutes, I have to preach blind. I can't see one person, just a few specks out there, but my eyes are blind; I can't see anybody in the back of the church. Over and over again, I've been reminded that if we'll catch one glimpse of the glory of God, the things of this world will have no way of capturing our attention.

¶ Bethel. Let's move up to Bethel. God said, "Arise, go to Bethel."

Here's the second thing I want to share. "But Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died and she was buried beneath Bethel under an oak, and the name of it was called "Allonbachuth." What does that mean? "The place of weeping." Oh, I love to talk about the glory of God. I love to talk about Bethel, where He defeats our enemies. I love to talk about Bethel, where the angels ascend and descend. I love to talk about Bethel, where we can build an altar; but let me suggest that Bethel means something else.

Bethel is the place of brokenness; it's the place of weeping; it's the place of sorrow; it's the place of hurt. It's the place of deep feeling; it's the place of tremendous surrender; it's the place of death. Just as surely as we move up to Bethel, God will put pressure on us, so that, in the midst of the glory, there will be tears. It seems to me, when I read through the Scriptures, that glory and tears go together. Every place in the Scripture that I see glory, I also see tears. The Master Himself wept with strong crying and with tears. Every time I read about the Apostle Paul and think of his journey to Bethel, I hear him talk about the tears that he shed, and the burden that he bore, and the pressure that was on him. It caused him to be broken before God.

I don't want to stand here and falsely preach to you that moving up to Bethel is going to be a bed of roses, because when you get to Bethel, you may find out that it is the place of weeping. But I hear the words of David when he cried out to God in his majestic prayer in the Fifty-first Psalm,

"A broken spirit and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Perhaps if we faced toward Bethel, and started out, it would be necessary for God to take our lives and let something happen that would cause us to weep, that would cause us to cry, that would cause us to be broken. It's in that pliable time, that time of weakness, that time of desperation, that God has a way of doing a work inside us. I suggest today that, if we're going to Bethel, we have to be ready to cry. You say,

"I don't like that." That'll cause some of us to turn and say,

"Not me; I'm not going to Bethel." But I want you to know that weeping may endure for a time, but joy cometh in the morning. And there isn't a tear that will fall at Bethel, but what God bottles it up in the glory world. And in the degree that we know hurt and suffering, in that same proportion are we capable of knowing the glory of God.

¶ "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." Though I am called upon in Bethel to lay to rest a loved one, though there is hurt and brokenness that comes, I know full well that at Bethel God will do His good work in my heart. Let's arise, and let's go to Bethel.

If we have to wipe the tears from a face, and somebody says,

"What's the trouble?" you can say,

"Oh, I've been to Bethel, and God broke my spirit, and God dealt with my heart. I can no longer be hard and resistant, but now I'm pliable." Let's go to Bethel.

Look again at verse 9, "God appeared unto Jacob again,

when he came out of Padan-aram, and blessed him, and God said, 'Thy name is Jacob; thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel.'" What does it mean? Did God just give him a new name? No, more than that, because the name in the Old Testament always described the character of the person. Jacob meant "deceiver, cheater, conniver, supplanter, the dishonest one." That was his very character, but at Bethel it changed.

A young man in his teens came into my office with his father, and we had a chance to talk. I said,

"Young man, I'm glad you came in. I'm glad your dad's with you. I'm not here to preach to you. I'm here simply to be your friend, and I want you to know that you're in the most critical years of your life. From the time you broke over the threshold as a teenager, until you reach 21 or 22, you'll be going through a period of time that's like concrete setting up." I use that as an illustration. There's a time when you can still work it, and you can still change it; you can trowel it and work with it, but there comes a time—and every contractor in this room knows that there comes that time—when, all of a sudden it suddenly passes over, and you know when you look at it, you're finished; it's set. The only way you can change it is to take equipment and tear it out, and start all over again.

But I want to say this to every young man and young woman in my audience; you go through that period of time, and I'm not a wise enough psychologist or psychiatrist to know, but I've experienced enough just from practical everyday living to know that, during those critical years from thirteen through seventeen or so, you are setting patterns in your life that are going to set up like concrete. Most alcoholics become so in the teen age. Most liars are liars in the teen age. Most thieves are made thieves in the teen age, and it's set; it's a part of your character.

Oh, what a terrible thing it would be for me to stand up and preach, and know that there's nothing that can be

done about it; but I want to tell you something. God spoke to Jacob, who had a foul, miserable character, and said,

"Jacob, move up to Bethel," and when Jacob got to Bethel, God so wrought a work on that set concrete that he was absolutely a new creation when the Master Builder finished with him. Instead of his concrete being as a cheater, God changed him from a cheater to Israel, Prince with God. You say,

"Can God change a man?" God can change a man from the top of his head to the soles of his feet. He can make an honest man out of a thief; he can make a truthful man out of a liar. He can make a good man out of a bad man. He can make a holy man out of an unholy man. He can change a man because, at Bethel, God is in the name-changing business.

You sociologists, don't come to me with the wisdom that you're supposed to have gotten in college. I'll choke you to death with the Word of God that says He can take a man out of the dregs of sin and make a new creature of him. Oh, I love the Word, because it's so powerful that nobody can stand up against it. You say,

"Oh, it's in their family tree." Brother, I have news for you. God can take a plum tree and make a peach tree out of it. And there's no sociologist in the world that can do that. All the sociologist can do is tell you that it's a plum tree; then he's plum done. But God said,

"I'll take that tree and make a new tree." God said,

"I'll take Jacob and make Israel out of him." You say,

"How do you know that can happen?" I know because I've experienced it. I know because there are five hundred people in this audience who can jump to their feet right now and say,

"Brother Paino, I was, but I am. I was blind but I see. I was bound, but I'm free. I was this but now I'm that." Where does it happen? At Bethel.

Has something been fastened on your life? And you have

tried to get it free? It's been a habit. Has there been a spirit? Has there been something that carried over from family background and cultural upbringing? You say,

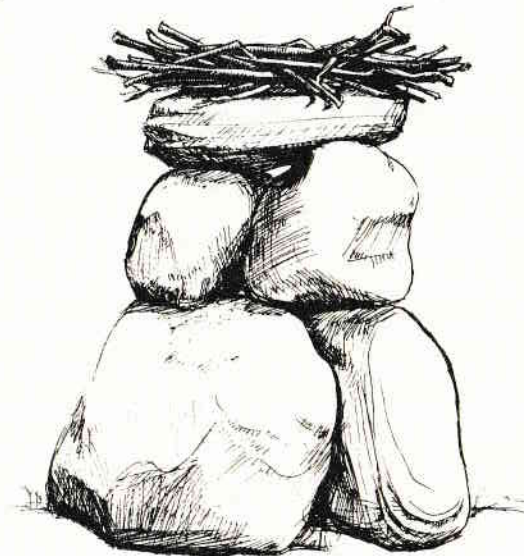
"I can't do anything about it." Let me tell you where to go. Go to Bethel. The name-changing God is still sitting there under the oak tree, waiting for you to pass by, and when you pass by, He'll touch you. You can walk away from Bethel a new creature in Christ. For whom the Son sets free is free.

Let's pray.

Lord, we hear Your voice, "Arise, go up to Bethel." Lord, we're tired of the valley. We want to live in Bethel. Lord, we really do. We know the glory of Bethel. We know the spiritual ministry of Bethel. We know the altar of Bethel. We know the sanctification of Bethel. We know Your presence at Bethel. We know Your deliverance at Bethel. I ask You to help us to arise, and go to Bethel.

4

Bethel - the Place of Blessing



This is the fourth Sunday that I have preached from the text found in the first verse, "God said unto Jacob, arise, go up to Bethel." I've been reading this chapter a great deal, and God has been using it to speak to my heart. So I read it again, and read the background, and it's no wonder that God said to Jacob,

"Get up out of Shechem and go to Bethel."

I began to look at some of the things that had happened to Jacob because he no longer dwelt at Bethel, which is the house of God. He had a daughter who became involved with the Canaanites, and was raped by the Canaanites; this made two of his sons angry, so they went to the Canaanites to avenge their sister, and killed them.

In Shechem, Jacob's daughter was misused. In Shechem, his sons took things into their own hands, and became murderers. In Shechem, Jacob's two wives became involved with the gods of the Canaanites, when they stole the images from their father in Canaan, and carried them with them. And after all this had happened, God said,

"Jacob, it's about time you came back to Me, so arise and go up to Bethel."

You know that if you live in Shechem, things aren't going to go well. If you live in Shechem, Satan's going to strip you of everything you have. It may look good for a season, but when the devil gets finished with his crowd, your daughters are raped, your sons are destroyed, your wives are involved in false gods, and all because the head of the house did not live at Bethel.

So God said to Jacob,

"Arise and go up to Bethel." Those of you who have been following with me in this message will remember that I shared with you a few Sundays ago that **Bethel was the place of an altar**, for here Jacob built an altar. We then talked about Bethel being a place of sanctification, of setting apart, of separation, of laying aside the things that were keeping Jacob from being what God would have him be.

Bethel is also a place of answered prayer; it's a place where we can come and live; where we know that when we pray, we'll get an answer. There's nothing more beautiful than to live at Bethel, and to know that God's not only going to hear your prayer, but He's going to answer it.

And then **Bethel was a place of divine presence**. There is nothing more marvelous than to be able to live in a place where you can feel and be aware of and be conscious of the presence of God. Thank God for it. It was David who said, as a result of his sin,

"Lord, take not thy Holy Spirit from me." He said,

"I couldn't stand not to know Your presence."

And then we went on to share that **Bethel was a place of holiness**, where God demanded that His people be different. We can't go where everybody else goes and we can't do what everybody else does, and we can't be what everybody else is.

We went on to suggest that **Bethel was a place of protection**, because when we dwell where God's house is, and where God's presence is, and where God's altar is, no enemy has an opportunity against us. What security there is at Bethel! I want to repeat something that I emphasized. Every so often there is someone who will raise a voice trying to emphasize the apparently almighty power of the devil and his forces. But let me remind you that at Bethel, Satan is tied in a knot. There is protection and deliverance at Bethel.

And then **Bethel is a place of influence**, because when Jacob went to Bethel, he looked over his shoulder and the whole household—wives, children, servants, and those that were a part of his company, every man, woman, boy and girl—said,

"We're going with you." Because Jacob went, the whole family went. Oh, that God would speak to more Jacobs in the house today, and that they would say,

"Let's arise and go to Bethel." And as surely as you do, Sir, when you look back over your shoulder, you'll be

thrilled to see that you've influenced others to go to Bethel. Some who refused to go to Bethel are very probably keeping a lot of people in Shechem that God would much rather be blessing in Bethel, the place of influence.

Last week we told you that it was a place of revelation, a place of spiritual insight, a place of vision, because it was there that Jacob saw God. The scales fell from his eyes, and with spiritual eyes, he saw God. God still wants to reveal Himself to us. I know that natural eyes can't see God, but I also know that spiritual eyes can. And if you'll come to Bethel, God will let the scales fall from your eyes. You will see things that natural man does not see, and you will hear things that natural ears cannot hear, and you will experience things that the man of the world knows nothing about. Let's arise and, with Jacob, let's go to Bethel.

Then we talked about the place of weeping, because under the oak at Bethel, Rebekah's nurse was buried; it was called the Oak of Weeping. **At Bethel there will be a broken spirit**; there'll be no arrogance, not in Bethel. There will be no self-sufficiency, not at Bethel. There will be no haughtiness and pride, not at Bethel; for **Bethel is a place of weeping**. You don't want to go to Bethel unless you are willing to feel a bit of hurt. You don't dare make the journey to Bethel unless you're willing to attend a funeral. You don't dare go to Bethel if it's only your own desire that you're anxious about. For at Bethel God will demand that you go to a burying, that you go to a funeral, that something or someone that's attached itself to your life will be placed before God in an act of sorrow and death.

You remember that God said to Abraham,

"Go to Mount Moriah and offer your son." You remember that God said to His Son,

"Go to Gethsemane and submit Your will," and "give Your life, for unless a grain of wheat fall in the ground and die, it will not spring forth to life." Bethel is not only a place of rejoicing and dancing and shouting, but Bethel is also a place of tears.

And then, thank God, verse 9 tells us that Bethel is a place of blessing. "God appeared unto Jacob again when he came out of Padan-aram and blessed him." Oh, have you ever had the privilege of having God bless you? Have you ever felt His blessing? God is still in the blessing business. The only reason some folks aren't blessed is because they're not where the blessing is. The blessing is at Bethel. The blessing is in the house of God. Bethel is the place where we build the altar, where we worship. And here, at this place of weeping and tears, at this place of revelation, at this place of dedication, at this place of holiness, God blessed Jacob.

I know what it is to be blessed in this world: blessed with friends, blessed with material things, blessed with health, blessed with strength. Oh, how grateful I am to God for these things, and what rich rewards they are in this present evil world; but let me be quick to tell you that there is no blessing like the blessing that God's Spirit can give to a man or woman if we move up to Bethel! It makes what the world has to offer seem insignificant. It makes the bright lights of the world grow dim. It makes what the world has to offer to drink taste like muddy water. The blessing, oh, the blessing!

Don't let people tell you that all there is at Bethel is an altar and all there is at Bethel is tears, and all there is at Bethel is sacrifice; don't you believe it. I want you to know today that, **at Bethel, there is also blessing**. You can swim in blessing; you can walk in blessing; you can shout in blessing; you can live in blessing, until people will look at you and wonder what's the matter with you; there'll be a funny grin on your face. Hallelujah! You say,

"That's just emotion." Don't you believe it. For when God blesses us, there is an explosion of spirit; there is a satisfaction of soul; there is a deliverance in our hearts; there is something inside that's indescribable.

At Bethel, God blessed Jacob. Today I urge you to come along, and let's together go to Bethel, as Jacob did.

We can simply move into that place of blessing where people around will say,

"I wonder what it is that makes those people different." What a thrill it would be to simply turn to them and say,

"Oh, I moved from Shechem to Bethel, and that's what made the difference. Some folks are living at the wrong address. Let's move up to Bethel, the place of blessing.

Here's the last thing I talked about last week: Bethel is the place of character-change. God said to Jacob,

"Thy name is Jacob. You are Brother Cheater, you are Brother Hypocrite, you are Brother Deceiver; you are Brother Crook, but since you've changed your address, I think I ought to change your name." Glory to God! Oh, listen, when you are willing to change addresses, God is ready to change your character and your nature. When you say,

"I've lived in Egypt long enough; I've lived in this place long enough; I've wallowed around in the pig pen long enough; I'm going to Father's house; I'm going to move up"; Brother, when you move up, God says,

"If you're going to move up to where I am, I've got to make some changes in you so you can stand the atmosphere." It's a little hard to live in Father's house and smell like a pig pen. It's a little hard to keep eating husks, when you could be eating beef steak. You say,

"Really?" Oh, yes. The prodigal son was living in a beer joint. You say,

"How do you know?" Oh, it's simple. He was eating the husks from the corn that was fed to the pigs, and if that's not a beer joint, I don't know what it is. You say,

"Where did he move?" Oh, he moved to Bethel. You say,

"How do you know he got beef steak?" Because the father said,

"You go out and kill the fatted calf, and you bring it in and you let him have tenderloin beef." Glory to God! Why should you eat in a pig pen when you can have beef

to eat? And if you'll change your location and if you'll change your address, God will change your character, and He'll say,

"Your name is not going to be Jacob any more. From here on out it's going to be Israel." That means "Prince with God." Listen, why should you be a deceiver and a cheater when you can be God's prince? You say,

"Preacher, who are you?" Israel. Prince with God. You say,

"I don't think you're so hot." You're not the one that changed my name! Glory to God! You say,

"Are you really a prince?" Oh, yes, I have royal blood flowing through my veins. Kingdom, royal priesthood, a kingdom of priests. Joint heir with Christ. Lifted up into heavenly places. Made a new creature in Christ Jesus. That doesn't happen, Brother, in Shechem; that happens in Bethel.

✓ In verses 11 and 12, "God said to 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 I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land."

Bethel is all that I've told you and more, because Bethel is the place where God makes promises to His people. God said,

"I made a promise to Abraham and to Isaac and Jacob, and if you'll come to Bethel, I promise I will keep My Word; but you've got to be in the place where I've told you to be, if you want Me to keep My Word with you." This is what God was saying, and saints, listen carefully to this preacher. God was saying,

"My promise hasn't changed; my Word isn't altered. I can't do what I said because you're not where you're supposed to be. If you'll go where you're supposed to be, I will do what I said." Now listen carefully. I want you to know today that God's Word hasn't changed one jot, not

one tittle. You say,

“Can I depend on the Word of God and the promises of God?” I want you to know that God’s Word is so positive and so sure that Jesus said,

“Though heaven and earth pass away, My Word shall not ever be altered, not one bit of it.” You say,

“Brother Paino, there are promises that I’ve never been able to lay hold of.” I’ll tell you why: God doesn’t keep His Word in Shechem; **God keeps His promise in Bethel**. If we’ll move to Bethel, we’ll find out that God is still a promise-keeping God. The only times I’ve ever found myself in a place where I couldn’t claim the promises were times when I was no longer living in the presence of Bethel. I’d moved away from the spot where God could keep His Word.

I once had a brother say to me,

“Brother Paino, I want you to come and pray for me,” so I went over to his house. He said,

“When you come, bring oil,” so I brought a bottle of oil along. I never will forget it; I think that brother is in church today. I walked into his house, and he said,

“Brother Paino, the reason I want you to pray for me is because God’s obligated to heal me,” and I grinned and I said,

“That’s great; that’s faith.” He said,

“That’s right. Do you know what? God promised me that if I bring the tithes to Him, be faithful with the tithe and the offering, that He’d bless me and He’d open up the windows of heaven, and He’d rebuke the devourer. And Brother Paino, I want you to know that ever since I’ve been coming to church, I’ve never missed one time in my tithe and my offering. I’m up to date. Now you anoint me, because God’s obligated to heal me.”

Do you know the reason he’s in church this morning? He had moved to the place where God could keep His Word with him. That’s all in the world God was saying to Jacob; He was saying,

“Jacob, you move out of Shechem, get to Bethel, and at Bethel, I will see that all that was promised to Abraham and Isaac and was promised to you right here at Bethel—I haven’t changed My Word, not one little bit—everything I promised, I’m still going to do.” The devil sits around on the side and says,

“Ha, God doesn’t answer prayer.” He doesn’t answer prayer in Shechem; you have to move to Bethel.

About six weeks ago, I said in my heart,

“God, here’s a preacher that, by Your grace, is going to Bethel.” I’ve seen God do more things in the last two weeks than I’ve seen in the last year. Because His Word changed? Oh, no. Because His plan changed? Oh, no. Because God moved? Oh, no. I did. Hallelujah! I left Shechem and moved into Bethel, and God said,

“Now, I’m going to keep My Word with you.”

Look at verse 14: “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 on it, and he poured oil thereon.” Today I don’t dare get to his pouring oil on anything; I’ll talk about that next Sunday. All I want to talk about now, before I dismiss you, is this: ~~if~~ ^{after} Jacob got to Bethel, and he not only built an altar, he not only heard the promise of God who said, “Now you’re at the place where I can keep My Word with you,” but Jacob got so excited, he started running around on Bethel and grabbing stones and piling them up, one on top of the other. There wasn’t anything beautiful about it, just rocks piled up. He kept piling them up until he had a pillar, a column. You say,

“What was it? Anything so beautiful that people would drive from Shechem to Bethel to see Jacob’s pillar?” No, just a pile of rocks. But when people went by and looked at that pile of rocks, and asked,

“What in the world is that?” somebody would say,

“That’s a testimony; that’s a witness.” What’s it a testimony of? Let me take you back for a moment. Do you remember when God brought the children of Israel to the

muddy Jordan? God said to Joshua and the priests,

“You carry not only the ark of the covenant, you carry stones down into the bottom of Jordan, and before you leave Jordan, you pile up stones in the Jordan, so that they’ll stick up out of the water; then you cross up out of Jordan, get over on the other side, and you build a memorial over there and you pile stone up.” Then he said,

“If someone should walk by Jordan and say, ‘What’s that pile of stone doing out there?’ you can say, ‘That pile of stone is there because that’s where God delivered me out of Egypt; and I crossed through Jordan, and I want it to be a testimony that the God I serve is a delivering God.’” They were accustomed to piling up testimonies. They didn’t keep quiet; they didn’t say,

“Oh, I don’t think we ought to get excited about it.” When God did something for Jacob at Bethel, Jacob began to gather up stones and build a pillar. You say,

“What’s a pillar for?” It’s so that when people would say,

“Jacob, what’s happened to you?” Jacob would say,

“That pile of stone is there to testify that once I was in Shechem, but I moved to Bethel. It’s a testimony of what God’s done for me.” Do you know why a lot of folks can’t testify? It’s because they’re still in Shechem.

A precious woman spoke to me yesterday; a sweet woman that I know loves God and is reaching out for Him. She said,

“Brother Paino, there’s an area in my life that’s not surrendered and dedicated to God, and God’s dealing with me about it. But oh, it’s so hard; I don’t know if I can do it but I know I have to. I now sit in church and it’s hard for me to worship. It’s difficult for me to talk to someone else about the goodness of God and about all that He’s done, because I’m bound.” I said,

“Let me tell you something. The fact that God’s dealing with you is a sign that you’re a spiritual person. I’m glad that He’s troubling your spirit. You move on up to Bethel,

and the moment you get to Bethel, I’ll tell you what’ll happen. You’ll be able to pile stones up and your testimony will be clear, until every time anybody looks, you’ll be able to say, ‘I moved to Bethel.’”

Let me close my message this morning by saying, Saints: listen to this preacher. God has called upon us to do a work that is not mediocre. I’m not belittling works that are not strong and big, for each one has his own calling; each one has his own responsibility; each one has his own place. But God has called upon us as a people to move up to Bethel, and to erect a testimony that people can’t ignore. They’ll have to look and say,

“What is that?” And we’ll be able to say,

“That is the result of a group of people moving out of Shechem and moving up to Bethel,” and God will get the glory because of our testimony. You say,

“Brother Paino, why do you want to build a building? Why not be satisfied that you’ve got twenty-five, twenty-six, twenty-seven hundred people? Why should you be so concerned about chapels and bus ministries and Christian Training Center? Why do you want to build a memorial out here?” I’ll tell you why. I want us, as a church, to so move to Bethel in these last days that we can pile stones, one on top of the other, and when people drive by the highway, or drive into the city, or move into this community, or come past it, they’ll say,

“What in the world is that?” And someone will have to say,

“That is the result of a congregation of people moving out of Shechem and moving up into Bethel, and they’ve piled that rock up there as a witness that God’s still answering prayer, that God still honors with fire, that God still blesses, that God still pours out His Spirit.” Oh, let’s move up to Bethel.

I made a promise to a friend twenty-two years ago that I’d retire from pastoring, and travel around holding seminars when I was fifty-five, and I’m fifty-five, and I’m not

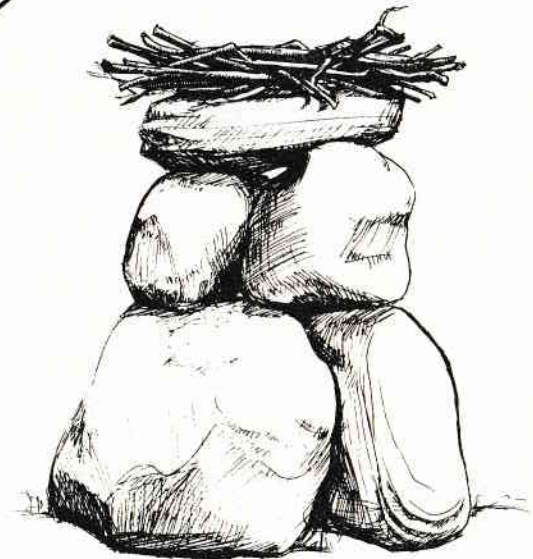
about to go around holding kindergarten seminars. Bless your heart, I'm going to pile rock up. I'm going to pile it up so high that anybody traveling within a country mile of us will say,

"What's that pile of rock doing?" Someone will say,

"Oh, you know what that preacher did? He got so emotional, he challenged a whole crowd of people to move out of Shechem up to Bethel, and that whole bunch of folks moved to Bethel with him, and that's what the pile of rock's all about." Let's arise, and let's go to Bethel, and I have news for you: once Jacob got the rock piled up, brother, God began to do some other things. Let's arise, and go to Bethel.

5

Bethel - the Place of God's Direction



Verse 1 declares: "God said unto Jacob, 'Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there and make there an altar unto God, who appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.'" Then in verse 14, we read: "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 on it, and he poured oil thereon and Jacob called the name of the place where God spoke with him Bethel."

I've been challenging you to go to Bethel, which means "the house of God." I have shared with you that Jacob had been to Bethel before, and had carelessly drifted away. As a result of his drifting away, his daughter was raped, his two sons became murderers, and each of his two wives became involved in idolatry. He was known as a cheater, a conniver, a supplanter, and a deceiver. He had lost his testimony. He was not the man God wanted him to be, and while he was at a place called Shechem, God spoke to him for the third time, saying,

"Jacob, I want you to get up; you've lived here long enough, and I want you to go back to Bethel."

Now in these past weeks, I have shared with you some of the things that transpired at the place called Bethel. We spoke of Bethel being the place of an altar, the place of answered prayer, the place of God's presence, the place of separation and holiness, the place of protection, the place of influence, and the place of divine revelation. We talked about Bethel being a place of weeping, tears, and sorrow, but also being a place of blessing. We shared that Bethel was the place of character-change, because at Bethel God said,

"Jacob, I'm not going to call you Jacob any longer. I'm going to call you Israel. Change your name." Bethel is also the place of great promise and prosperity. God wants His people to be a blessed, prosperous people.

We talked about Bethel being the place of testimony, because there Jacob piled up stones and raised up a pillar as an indicator that this was the place in which God dealt

with Jacob. Jacob wanted the surrounding country and the world system to know that he was one of God's chosen. He left a memorial that would testify to generations: "This is the place where God and Jacob met together."

I closed last Sunday by sharing that God wants us to go to Bethel so that we, too, have a testimony so obvious to people that there will be no question about what it represents. It will proclaim that here is a person in whom and with whom God has done a work. I'd like to ask you today, do you have that kind of testimony, not in church, but out there where the world can see the pile of stone? What do people say? Do they know that you've had an encounter with God? Have you really been to Bethel? Has there been enough change that people will ask, "What in the world has taken place?" Or has your testimony been lost because you are parked under an oak tree down in the valley of Shechem?

I urge you again today: Let us arise and go to Bethel. And let us inform our Tri-State community that we are a people in whom the goodness of God is evident. Let us arise and go to Bethel, the place of testimony.

In verse 13, let us note carefully, "God went up from him in the place where He talked with him." Bethel is not only the place of testimony, but, listen carefully, Bethel is also the place where God talks to His people. Some folks say,

"Do you really believe God can talk?" Positively, absolutely, He talks. The problem is not in the speaking; the problem is in the hearing. And the reason that we're not hearing is because we're not at Bethel. Throughout the Scriptures, every time men went to Bethel, God spoke to them. You and I can move this morning into that place in which God speaks to us.

This past week, as many of us experience in our daily living, I found myself in a difficult time, with a very, very hard decision to make, and I thought,

"O Lord, what is Your good pleasure? Which way do

You want me to turn?" And in that hour of total wonderment, in that hour of complete frustration as I drove down the highway, that sweet, marvelous, magnificent, tender voice of God was so clear, that I knew God had spoken. And when I was able to pick up the telephone and contact someone with whom I felt God wanted me to speak, God verified through the other person that He had indeed spoken. What had seemed to be a rough place was smoothed out, and for one reason only: God spoke.

If you're having trouble hearing the voice of God, it may be because you're living in the wrong place. God wants you to move up out of Shechem and into Bethel, where you can have ears to hear what the Spirit has to say to you. There's a philosophy in the world today that's just as off-base as it can be; it's the philosophy that we must commit ourselves to one another so that we can learn from one another what God would have us do. Some people say,

"You can't manage your own life; you should subject yourself to someone who can run your life for you." Where is that in this Book? Does God speak to only a few of His children, and tell them to be responsible for everybody else? Don't you believe it. If you're smart enough to watch *Hee-Haw* on television, you're smart enough to hear God, if you'll go where God can talk to you. Don't let anyone sell you the bill of goods that God has first-class Christians and second-class Christians, and that He only speaks to the first-class, and the first-class has to tell the second-class what to do. About the time the world system puts up first-class and second-class, God moves down to the third-class and puts the first-class under the table.

Bethel, the place where God talks. Oh, you can't go far in this Book until you find testimony after testimony of individuals that moved into that place where God could speak to them. Let me name just a few. John, on the Isle of Patmos, heard the voice of God. Paul, on the road to Damascus, heard the voice of God. Peter, in a prison house, heard the voice of God. The three Hebrew chil-

dren in the burning furnace heard the voice of God. Moses, on the mountaintop, heard the voice of God; and Joshua, as he stands on the Jordan River, heard the voice of God. God has always spoken to people that would move to Bethel, and God is still speaking to people that move to Bethel today. Bethel, a place of communion.

Let us look at verse 14: "Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone and he poured a drink offering on it." The drink offering is an Old Testament symbol which typified how Jesus Christ poured Himself out in total brokenness and complete submission. At Gethsemane, Jesus had come to the point that He was poured forth as the drink offering when He said,

"Father, if it be possible that this cup pass from me, please take the cup away. Nevertheless, not my will be done, but Thine. And if the cup is Your will, I shall drink the cup." That's brokenness. There is no more self-will; the resistance is over; the battle's finished; that's it. That's complete subjection, total submission, absolute surrender, until there's not an ounce of resistance.

Let me tell you something about Bethel. Just as surely as we move up to Bethel, we'll move up to that place of total brokenness. Bethel demands it, if we're to remain there. Sooner or later, as in the life of every Christian, God will bring you to the place where you have to make a choice between something you don't want to accept at all, and God's will. You may say,

"I can't be a part of that; I don't want to submit to that," and yet God's message rings very clear: "Give yourself over to what God's Word says."

Eighty percent of the time, my office is filled with men and women who, in their personal lives, have come to a crisis, in which one or the other of the mates has allowed division to separate them until they think seriously of divorce; of breaking up their home. Suddenly one of them says,

"I know that it's not really God's perfect will for me,

but I can't stand it any more, and I'm not going to live like this any more." At this point, it's either what God says or what they want. I wish I could tell you that every one of them walked out and said,

"Lord, regardless of what the cup is, Your will be done." That's where the victory is. I've watched more than one person walk up to Bethel, see what the price is, and say,

"No, thanks." They walk out of Bethel and live in the dust of Shechem, because they did not want to be as a drink offering poured out. We're living in a world system that says,

"I have rights. I'm going to exercise my authority." We have it in management; we have it in labor; we have it in our homes; we even have little tow-headed kids in school coming up saying to their teacher,

"I've got rights." Let me tell you something, Christians: Christians are dead people, crucified with Christ, and dead people have no rights. We're in the world, but we're not of it. At Bethel we come to the place where we so totally submit our desire to Him that we can say,

"Father, nonetheless, not my will be done but Thine."

It's one thing to preach it; it's another thing to do it. But let me tell you: at Bethel, the drink offering has to be poured out. I've experienced it first in my own life. Years ago, God brought me to that place, and I resisted. "Lord, not that; this is the way it's best." God said,

"All right, go ahead, hard-head," and for a little while I got along and said,

"See, Lord, this is really what I wanted." The Lord let me go along a little bit, but eventually He said,

"You haven't learned the lesson of Bethel." He brought me back a second time, and the second time was worse than the first time. God seemed to say,

"You didn't learn it then; you'll learn it now." Oh, I wish I were a good learner, because so many times in my life God has brought me to that place in which He said,

"Now, either you do My will or I'll have no part of you." **Brokenness came, but out of that brokenness came victory.** The devil was whispering in one ear,

"You'll never have peace; you'll never have fulfillment; you'll never have joy." But I'm glad to report today that the devil's a deceiver and a liar. God's ways are the best ways, and if you've come to the place in which God's will is crystal-clear, please heed His voice.

I don't know why I feel so impelled to say this today, but listen: It's never God's will that you have a divorce. It's never God's will that you have a divorce. *It's never God's will that you have a divorce!* It's God's will that you submit yourself to Him, and say,

"Lord, whatever it takes, You work out Your will." God can take the tricks and the treachery of the devil and reverse them, and put joy in your heart and peace in your home. But it will only happen at Bethel. There were many mountains Jacob could have climbed, but there is only one Bethel.

✓ Verse 14: "He poured a drink offering on it and he poured oil thereon." In nearly every Old Testament reference, oil represents a magnificent symbol of the Holy Spirit. In the thirtieth chapter of Genesis, Moses was given a holy anointing oil, made according to the art of the apothecary, and God instructed Moses,

"Don't put that oil on anyone except those who are in the ministry of God." The oil was to be used for anointing, and they would anoint their head and anoint their thumb, and anoint their big toe. When God prepared to call a priest or a king, He had Samuel take a horn of oil. Do you know how much oil was in a horn? About three gallons. Think of that. When they anointed, they meant business! Can you imagine coming up to have one of the elders or deacons anoint you, and they take a big three-gallon crock and say,

"I'm going to anoint you"?

When the prophet finished anointing the king, and they

walked away from the place of anointing, every place they went, they left a puddle of oil. Three gallons of oil were poured down over their heads, down over their shoulders, down over their bodies; they took a shower in oil. And oh, listen! It was here, finally, that oil was poured on the testimony; after the altar, after the weeping, after the blessing, after the drink offering, after all of this; now, down at the end, the oil.

Too many of us want the oil first. We want the oil without the altar; we want the oil without the holiness. We want the oil without hearing from God. We want the oil just so we can slosh around in the oil, and some of us that have been Pentecostal and charismatic have had so much oil that our spiritual motor is floundering.

I drove down to Florida this past week, and I did something that I know better than to do. I let a fellow check the car and he said,

“You need a quart of oil.” I said,

“Well, if it needs it, put it in.” So he put in a quart of oil. I drove about three hundred fifty miles and had a fellow check it again and he said,

“Mister, your oil is low; you need at least a quart.” So he put another quart in. Before long I looked out the back of the car and I could see blue smoke, and I thought,

“I’ve never had any problems with the car.” I checked around the finally dipped with the dip-stick and pulled it out, and found oil clear up to the handle. They were just selling me oil!

In the same way, many of us have been oil-conscious before we’ve reached Bethel. Many of us have wanted to get the engine filled up with oil before we’ve built any altars, before we’ve walked in any holiness, before we’ve been poured out as a drink offering, and before we’ve done any weeping. Ah, but listen. Once we have taken the right sequence of steps; once we have built the altar, once we’ve been poured out, once we’ve been willing to say, “Lord, work out Your good pleasure,” then the oil comes.

comes right down near the end, and the oil is there, thanks be to God, to remind us of the joy of the Lord.

I want to emphasize, in closing, that the oil was there as a reminder to Jacob that, instead of living down there in the dirt of Shechem, he could enjoy the blessings of the oil of Bethel. How often the devil has tried to tell us that it’s all happening at Shechem; that’s where everything is blessed; that’s where it’s all delightful; that’s where the joy and the privilege are. Oil, here, is not only the symbol of the Holy Spirit, but it’s also the symbol of the joy and the fulfillment that can come because of the Holy Spirit. Once we move up to Bethel, thanks be to God, there is joy and satisfaction and fulfillment and completeness. It makes the things of the world look like tinsel.

I’ve never been one to preach against anything, because I learned a long time ago that most of us are going to do what we want to do. What we need to do is to preach that we have something better. We don’t have to proselytize, but just preach and minister and have an atmosphere better than any place else, and the sheep will come jumping over the fence to get here. It doesn’t do any good for one restaurant to knock another one. The best thing the restaurant can do is to put out the best food they have, and that will empty the ones that are not doing a good job.

In the same way, the best thing we can do is to let men and women know that they don’t have to give up a thing. You don’t have to give up a thing; bless your heart, we’ve got something so great to give to you and to offer to you in the joy and the fulfillment of the Lord, that it’ll be easy for you to turn loose what you’ve been holding on to.

I close with this. I don’t like to use my son as an illustration, and I don’t do it very often, but I shall this morning. (And I’ll hear about it this afternoon.) But when he was a child, he was so much like his mother. When he wanted something, he wanted it, and he didn’t want a substitute. He wanted that, and once he got it, you couldn’t talk him out of it or take it away from him. If you were

able to force it away from him, then he would kick an unholy fit. Finally, we decided the way to get what he has was to offer him something better than what he was holding onto. We'd say,

"Look, here, it's better than that," and I tell you, his dad didn't raise any dumb kids. He could tell the difference, that this was better than what he had.

Likewise, the best way in the world to get people out of Shechem is to tell them that, up at Bethel, the oil is better. Hallelujah! That'll make you drop Shechem fast! Jacob turned to the crowd and he said,

"Brothers and sisters, members of the family, I'm going to Bethel, where the oil is," and he looked back over his shoulder, and the whole crowd said,

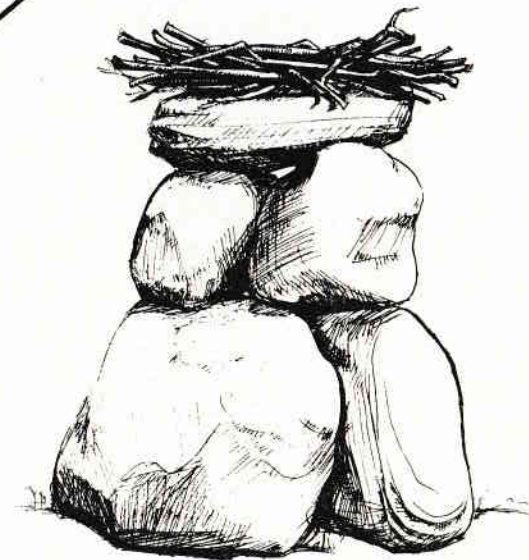
"We're going to Bethel with you."

Church, let's go to Bethel. Let's arise and let's go to Bethel. That's where the oil is. It's oil that Saudi Arabia can't shut off. It's oil, and the price is not going up. It's oil, and thank God, it's not rationed. It's oil, and we don't have to worry about someone cutting the line. There is plenty of oil at Bethel. Let's pray.

Lord, some of us have lived in Shechem long enough. Move us up to Bethel. Lord, there are some here who don't need anyone to tell them what Your will is. But they need today to make the dedication to do it, regardless of how they feel, regardless of how much the devil's going to tell them they'd be so much better off. God, bring us to Bethel. Then Lord, I ask You, to let the oil flow, in Jesus' name. Amen.

6

Bethel — the Place of Consecration



Genesis 35:1: "God said to Jacob, Arise, go to Bethel." Now let's turn over to verse 13,

God went up from him in the place where He talked with him. 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 on it, and he poured oil thereon. So Jacob called the name of the place where God spoke with him, Bethel. Then they journeyed from Bethel, and when there was but a little way to come from Ephrath, Rachel, Jacob's wife, travailed and she had hard labor. And it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said unto her, "Fear not, thou shalt have this son also." And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for Rachel died) that she called his name, the son's name, Ben-oni, but his father called him Benjamin. So Rachel died and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem.

For the first time in your Bible, the little city of Bethlehem is mentioned. I've been preaching now for several weeks, "Arise, and go to Bethel." I have shared with you that Jacob had been to Bethel on two other occasions, but Jacob had departed from God's house. As a result of his carelessness in his spiritual relationship with God, his daughter was raped, and his two sons became murderers; his wives became involved in witchcraft and in idolatry; and he lost the awareness of the presence of God. He had a name and a character that he was a supplanter, a cheater, a conniver. He who had the call of God on his life had been careless; he was in a spiritually backslidden condition. He was now living under an oak in the valley in the place called Shechem, and God spoke to him and said,

"Jacob, I want you to arise; you've been here long enough, and I want you to come back to Bethel."

And it seems to me this morning that I can still hear the voice of God saying to those of us that are here,

"Don't depart from Bethel." Perhaps you have been careless about your spiritual life; you haven't been living in the glory and presence of the house of God. I want to challenge you to join with us, and let's arise, and let's go to

Bethel.

I have told you that Bethel is the place of an altar. I've told you that Bethel is the place of holiness. I've told you that Bethel is the place of character-change, and certainly we heard that last Sunday night, when Lulu Roman gave her testimony, how God would take a woman, move her into Bethel, and change her life. Wasn't that a thrilling testimony? We thank God that when we go to Bethel, God makes a change there.

Now I want to discuss the last three things that I believe God would have me share with you today, at Bethel. **I spoke about Bethel being a place of weeping, a place of brokenness, and a place of death.** It was there that Jacob and his wife came into contact with sorrow. I wish I could assure you that at Bethel the sun would always shine, and that things would be easy, but God will ordain that when we arrive at Bethel, every one of us will be faced with death. Listen to what Jesus said: "Unless a grain of wheat fall in the ground and die, it cannot produce fruit." He was giving a challenge to His disciples, that we who hold our lives lose them; and we who lose our lives, who come to the cross, who reckon ourselves dead with Christ, we who know what death is to our own ways and our own wills, we come to spiritual life. At Bethel, every one of us must face death. Jesus Himself, our perfect Example, was willing to die. He didn't have to die. There was no power sufficient to take His life. He gave it. Similarly, God will not take us; He wants us to give our lives to Him.

As we near the end of this beautiful story, we find that Jacob set up a pillar there at Bethel. We talked about this pillar being his testimony, and when people saw that pile of stone raised up as a memorial, it was a reminder that Jacob was at Bethel. I hope, this morning, that you've piled up your stone, and you have your memorial, and you have the testimony that when people know anything about you they will say, "There goes a man, there's a woman, that lives at Bethel. They are people of the house of God."

I don't know about you, but I'm not embarrassed to be identified with that crowd. Are you? I've been to Bethel and God has touched me, and I hope that you've been to Bethel, and God has touched you. I'm rather pleased that I live at Bethel, and I'm glad that you're living at Bethel with me.

"He poured on the pillar a drink offering." The Book of Leviticus mentions seven offerings connected with Old Testament worship in the tabernacle and the temple, and each one of those offerings represents some part of the ministry fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. The offering mentioned here is referred to again in the Book of Numbers. It's called the drink offering, although, strangely enough, no one ever drank it. It was an offering of water, which represented life, sustenance, power, and strength, that was poured out before God. It was a sacrificial offering.

You will remember in the Old Testament, when David was in exile, he said to some of his mighty men,

"Oh, that I might have a drink of the waters of Bethlehem's well." His enemies were camped around Bethlehem's well, but when three of the men overheard David sigh,

"I'd like to have a drink out of that well," they said,

"Our master, our leader, would like to have a drink out of that well, so what do you say? Let's go get him a drink." Now I love those men: here they are, and there stands the well, protected on all sides by the enemies of David. Three men say,

"David wants a drink. Boys, let's get him one." There's something about that, and when I get to glory, I'm going to hunt those three fellows up!

That night they waited; can you see them? I have a fantastic imagination. You talk about television, Brother; it's nothing to what the Book is! Just imagine these three men slipping down the valley, hiding behind bushes and trees, climbing over stone walls, walking carefully, stealthily, past one guard, past soldiers asleep, slipping carefully

around the equipment of war, trying to get to Bethlehem's well. They are successful because one of them slips off and causes a diversion, and while the soldiers run to find out what the problem is over here in the valley, two of the boys drop a bucket down into the well. They reel it up and they pour it into a vessel; then they run in the midst of the night and wait until morning. When David gets up, these three fellows say,

"David, we heard you say yesterday you'd like to have a drink out of Bethlehem's well, and we'd like you to know that last night we didn't have much to do, so we slipped over there and we got you a drink." Then David, that mighty man of God with a great heart, because the Bible says David was a man after God's own heart, took that vessel and he said,

"This vessel represents your life. You gave your life that I could have a drink. You exposed yourself to danger; it cost you everything. One little mistake, one little error, and someone would have driven a sword through you. You did this because you loved me" and just imagine those big old grinning guys standing there, saying,

"That's right, Dave. Go ahead, you have a drink." David said,

"God forbid that I should drink of an offering that cost you your life," and he stood before God and poured it out as a drink offering to God.

"I'm not worthy of this; You're worthy of it."

Throughout the Scriptures are found references to the occasions on which an offering of water was poured out as a drink offering. These Old Testament references are pre-figures of Christ, who is the Drink Offering. His life was poured out, that the Father might be satisfied. His life was poured out. That's the reason He talked so freely about water, a poured-out life. Jacob understood the spiritual significance of the drink offering, when he stood at the pillar and poured out water that represented his own life and said,

“From now on, at Bethel, I’ll pour my life out. I’ll give it so that He can be satisfied.” Can you imagine the thrill that came to David when he poured out that water, and can you imagine the thrill of the three mighty men that fought their way through the enemy and made their way to Bethlehem’s well to bring the water; it was poured out as a love expression, and can you imagine the thrill that came to those men when it was offered to God?

Now our Heavenly Father bends low out of the glory world, while Jacob stands with that vessel, which represents his own life, and says,

√ “In the past, I lived that I might increase my flock. All my life, I cheated and connived that I might become a wealthy man, and today I have everything that a man could want.” With all of his herds and all of his flocks and all of his camels, with all of his goats and all of his family and all of his wealth, he stood empty before God. When he went back to Bethel, he said,

“God, here’s my life; no longer am I going to hold on to it; I’ll pour it out,” and he poured it out at Bethel.

√ I want to ask you—are you willing to come to Bethel and pour out a drink offering? Are you willing? Let me assure you, it’s impossible to go to Bethel without having God challenge us to lay down our lives in a drink offering to Him. Our tendency is to give God the left over, the cast-away; we want to have everything our way and then let God take second place. You give some people a responsibility and they’ll do it when they get around to it. And the God of glory looks down and says,

“That’s not a drink offering. That is a convenience offering. That offering cost you nothing; that offering has no real value.”

I looked at precious men and women in the bus ministry this morning at 7:30, and I began to challenge them regarding stewardship. I said,

“Look, you’re a steward of the bus; you have a designated area in which you run your bus. Very probably no

one else will run a bus in that area. Very likely, no one else will touch people in that area except you.” Are you going to give God what’s left over and make little weak excuses? Or, are you going to pour your life out and say,

“Lord, I pour my life out to you.”

I don’t ever want to stand before God, and be compared with a worldly business person somewhere, and have them say,

“Look, I worked harder and with more dedication to the thing that I was doing in my earthly life than you did to the things of God.” I suggest today that God is looking for people who will come to Bethel and pour out a drink offering, saying,

“Lord, this cost me my life, and I pour it out to You.” Not the left-overs. Not the sideline. Give the main thing, the thing that costs. Jacob knew full well what he was doing when he poured out the drink offering. You say,

“Brother Paino, how can you challenge us to do that?” All I know is that I stand this morning in the shadow of the cross, and listen to Jesus Christ as He pours Himself out as the eternal drink offering. No man took His life from Him. Don’t you ever believe it. The power of God would have paralyzed the Roman soldiers who even attempted to drive a nail into His hands. God’s mighty power could have been so forceful that a man would have gone insane lifting a sword to thrust it into His side. He could have called ten thousand angels; they stood at His beckoning. He is the Master of ministering spirits. None could take His life. That’s the reason that, when it was time for Him to pour Himself out, He looked up and said,

“It is finished,” and turned to the Father and said,

“Into Thy hands I commend my Spirit,” and He poured out the drink offering.

I want you to know today that we can “play church”; we can go through the calisthenics of religion. But God knows whether or not we’ve been to Bethel. We can go through the mechanics, but God knows whether or not

we've been to Bethel. And I suggest that, down in our own hearts, we know when we're playing religion and going through our little religious forms while still holding onto our lives. But hear the words of the Master when He says,

"Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it's worthless." Bethel, Bethel. Let's arise and go to Bethel. Let's pour out the drink offering.

I'm so pleased that the Holy Spirit makes no mistake in the order of things, because there is no oil, Brethren, until the drink offering. We want it the other way around. We want God to pour out the oil of blessing on us just to give us spiritual thrills; some charismatics have gone through that. I'm not criticizing charismatics; I've been in the Pentecostal movement since childhood; I was raised in it. My father received the Pentecostal experience before I was born. He was a Catholic boy whom God filled with the Holy Spirit back in 1918 in an army barracks. The charismatic movement is not new; it's something God has let me experience since I was a baby. I can remember what some of us called the Pentecostal Revival; the outpouring of the Spirit came, and with it came people who poured out their lives. As a result of a poured-out spiritual experience, churches were built all over the world.

You may be surprised to know that the most powerful church in Brazil today is the Pentecostal church. This morning in Brazil, eighteen-, twenty-, twenty-two thousand people will be gathered together in stadiums to attend worship services. The most powerful church in Korea today is the Spirit-filled Pentecostal church. Do you know how those churches were established? Before the oil came, a handful of men said, "Here's my life; I pour it out." They went to the jungle and they went to the back country; they went to the heathen and they went out into the highways and the byways; they built churches and they sent missionaries. They sacrificed and they gave, and when they poured their lives out, God poured out the oil.

But we have people today who want the oil without the

drink offering. They want the blessing but they don't want the dedication. Some of our charismatic friends are so anxious to get to a convention and speak in tongues and wave their hands, while a world all around them is going to hell. They seem not to care whether they send a missionary or build a church or establish a work. Listen to this preacher, God wants the drink offering before the oil. God wants to pour out the oil.

In Genesis, chapter 30, God told Moses to make oil, saying,

"You go down to the corner drugstore." Now, he didn't say it exactly like that. He said,

"Go to the apothecary, and when you get to the druggist, tell the druggist (who is also a chemist) to make oil. I'm going to give you the formula to make oil after the art of the apothecary, and you put these ingredients in it," and He tells him carefully, exactly how to make that oil. Then God says,

"I'm going to tell you something. That's holy anointing oil. Don't you dare put it on anything except what I tell you, because if you put it on something that I tell you not to put it on, you're going to desecrate it." Now let me tell you what the holy anointing oil was for. God said,

"I want you to sanctify the priests, and divide them up into twenty-four courses. The priest will serve one two-week period out of the priestly year of forty-eight weeks, so there'll be twenty-four orders, or courses, of priests. When the time comes for the first course of priests to serve, bring them into the tabernacle. The first thing you are to do is to sanctify them by washing them at the laver." That meant to physically wash them. Then He said,

"After they are sanctified, offer a sacrifice for any sin they've committed. Next, I want you to take the holy anointing oil. Put it on their ear, or their thumb, and on their big toe, and don't let them serve Me until they've been anointed." The priests had to go through the sanctifying, pouring-out process first; then they were anointed

to serve.

Jesus talked about the anointing when He stood in the synagogue and said,

“The Spirit of God is upon Me, for He hath anointed Me to serve.” He moved into a ministry of serving God, and let this old-fashioned preacher tell you today that God didn’t anoint you to bless you and make you jump and wave your arms; we are anointed, every one of us, so that we will get busy for God, and reach a world that’s lost, and build churches, and send missionaries, and teach classes, and do a work that’ll put the devil to flight. That’s what it’s for. I am tired of these people who get so “holy” that they’re not worth a nickel to the program of God. You’ll have all of heaven to shout in; you only have a lifetime to work in. Let’s build; let’s work. Oh, pour out the drink offering, and pour oil on it.

From that moment, Jacob was a new man. A nation was built, but it wasn’t called the nation of Jacob; it was called Israel, because God had changed his name. From that moment, God began to do a work because He had found a man who went to Bethel. Oh, Saints, let’s not get sidetracked; let’s ask God for the anointing so we can sing in the choir, so we can usher and not get upset; so we can be deacons and not be perturbed; so we can be elders and can minister in our homes without little flimsy excuses, “Well, my home’s not good enough and I’m afraid.” Oh, God help us. Let us ask for the anointing; let us ask God to pour out the oil. Let us send missionaries; let us build a chapel; let us establish satellite churches. Let us not sit down; let us not rest. Let us ask for the anointing, and let us rise up and do something for God. God will anoint us to do it. Let’s go to Bethel.

God said to Jacob,

“I want you now to go from Bethel to Bethlehem.” What does that mean? I’m going to tell you about it next Sunday morning, when, after the anointing, Jacob moved out of Bethel and went to Bethlehem. It wasn’t by acci-

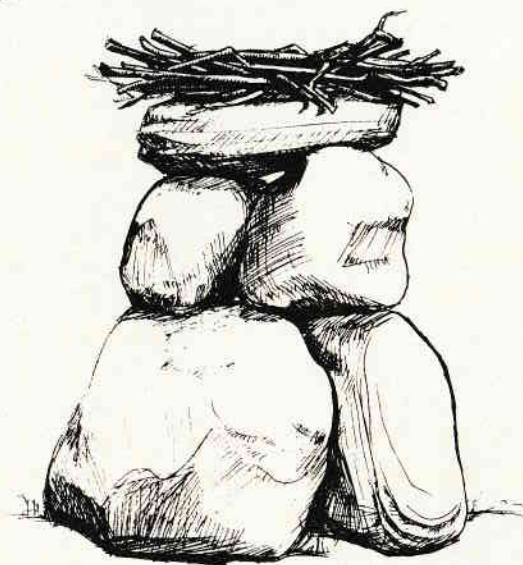
dent that Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem. It was a fulfillment of what happened to Jacob when he went from Bethel to Bethlehem.

Let’s pray. Lord, I want to give you a drink offering to-day. Here’s my life, I want You to have it. Whatever You want to do with it, whatever You can do with it, I want to give it to You today. Forgive me for using so much of it for my own good pleasure. Help me to be willing to pour it out, as a drink offering unto Thee. Amen.

7

Bethel — the Place of Victory

6 pages



Genesis, chapter 35 and verse 15.

Jacob called the name of the place where God spoke with him, Bethel. Then they journeyed from Bethel, and when there was but a little way to come to Ephrath, Rachel travailed, and she had hard labor. It came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said unto her, "Fear not, thou shalt have this son also." And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died,) that she called his name Ben-Oni, but his father called him Benjamin. So Rachel died and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem."

This is the first time that the little city Bethlehem is mentioned in the Bible.

There are four words I'd like you to underline. The first word is Bethel. For six weeks now, I've talked to you about some things that must take place when we dwell in Bethel, for Bethel is the house of God. In order to be what God wants us to be, to really and truly enter into the house of God, and to know the God of Bethel, we have to go through some of the experiences that we've talked about. The building of an altar, the changing of a name, the change of nature, the brokenness, the weeping; we have to go through all of these experiences. Bethel is the place of communion, the place of the divine presence, and the place of sanctification.

I've had many people, especially in the last three or four weeks say,

"Brother Paino, I have moved up to Bethel." It's significant that one of the last things that Jacob experienced was the brokenness that came when he poured out a drink offering at Bethel. Finally, the oil, which is the symbol of the Holy Spirit, was poured out, for after brokenness and hurt comes healing. There's nothing more beautiful than the Holy Spirit ministering the oil of healing to us.

Now another word stands out, and it's significant, I think, that all these words begin with the letter "B." The next word is Ben-Oni. You see, Rachel was expecting, and

when it was time for Israel, or Jacob, to move out of Bethel and move on to greater things in God, there was great travail. I must pause here for just a moment, and suggest to this church that, without painful travail, there will be no children born. There must be the going through death, there must be the excruciating pain, and there must be the travail in death, before there's any birth. God knew this, and many children have come to salvation because the Captain of our salvation travailed in death. Every woman that has ever borne a child knows what is involved before a child is produced. There must be travail.

It is said concerning the children of Israel that when they were encompassed about by the armies of Sennacherib, the mothers came to the birth and could not give birth because they didn't have strength. The armies of Sennacherib had kept food and water from coming into Jerusalem so that, history tells us, they were eating their own offspring. There were no dogs and cats around; they'd eaten everything that was available, and here were expectant mothers, in the hour of travail and giving birth, who did not have strength, and both mother and child died because there wasn't strength to bring forth.

I want to suggest that the only way there will be reproduction, the only way there will be producing of life, and the only way we will have spiritual children, is for someone not only to go to Bethel, but for someone to travail. It is significant that, when Rachel travailed, and went through the valley of death and laid her life down for a son, prior to her passing away she suggested that his name be called Ben-Oni. Ben-Oni means "child of sorrow." I think it's significant that the emphasis should be placed on her sorrow. Many people go through the valley, and all they want to talk about is their hurt and their death and their sorrow. It's always so negative that when the son is produced, his name is Ben-Oni. Have you ever been around people that have gone through travail, and the son they produced was Ben-Oni? A lot of folks have produced Ben-

Onis. They have gone through travail; they've gone through death; they've gone through hurt; they've gone through problems. Brother, the son they produced bears the name of it. Oh, their theme song is, "Nobody knows the troubles I've seen." The emphasis is, "You don't know what I've gone through," and this was the cry of Rachel:

"Call his name Ben-Oni; he's the son of sorrow, the son of pain, the son of hurt, the son of disappointment, the son of trouble, the son of difficulty." She went to her grave with that testimony, "Let his name be Ben-Oni."

Then Jacob came in and said,

"No, no. That's not going to be his name. I am not going to live the rest of my life being reminded of sorrow and trouble and disappointment, and hurt and pain and difficulty and problems, and discouragement and depression and mistreatment and misuse; I refuse to let that boy carry the testimony of Ben-Oni." Someone says,

"Jacob, Israel, what are you going to call him? What shall his name be?" Can you see the broad smile on Jacob when he said,

"Not Ben-Oni, Benjamin; Benjamin." Oh, my. What a difference! Can you imagine walking around the rest of your life with the name Ben-Oni, when it could have been Benjamin? You say,

"Preacher, what does Benjamin mean?" Oh, listen, **Benjamin means "Victorious one."** Not son of sorrow, not son of defeat, not son of discouragement, not son of mistreatment, not son of difficulty, not son of oppression, not son of discouragement, no, no, not that; that's not going to be the testimony. After I've been to Bethel, I'm not going to leave Bethel and go out and say after the travail, after the burden, after the birth of a son, that all I've produced is Ben-Oni.

Many years ago, when God ordained that this preacher should walk through a valley, God made real to me that I could either have a son called Ben-Oni or I could have a son called Benjamin. So Jacob said,

"Call his name Benjamin," and from that day on, every time Benjamin walked down the road, if someone said, "Who's that?" they said, "Victory." Son of victory, the victorious one, the mighty one. Did he go through death? Oh, yes. Did he go through difficulty? Oh, yes. Did he go through darkness? Oh, yes. Who is he? Ben-Oni? Oh, no, Benjamin.

Have you gone through difficulty? Have you gone through problems? Have you gone through difficulty that you can't explain? Let me ask you. What have you called your son? Have you called him Ben-Oni, or have you called him Benjamin? Isn't it significant that God sent His Son to the very same Bethlehem and said, "You call Him the Victorious One, and though He walked through the valley of the shadow of death, thanks be to God, He came forth from among the dead with the keys of death and hell in His hand, saying,

"I am the Victorious One, not Ben-Oni, but the Son of Benjamin."

Bethel, beautiful house of God. *Ben-Oni*, son of sorrow. *Benjamin*, victorious one. There's one more word. *Bethlehem*. **Do you know what Bethlehem means? House of bread.** When we go through Bethel, when we travail and a son that's victorious is produced, then we possess the house of bread. You remember what Jesus did in His ministry, in the sixth chapter of the Book of John, after He said,

"Bring me what you have." He took a few loaves and a bit of fish, and blessed them and gave them to six thousand people. Then He stood after He'd fed the multitude and He said,

"Ladies and gentlemen, I want you to know that I am of the son of Benjamin; I was born in Bethlehem, and now I am the Bread. If you want life, real life, you've got to eat of the bread." Not Ben-Oni, oh no. Benjamin, in Bethlehem. You can walk out of here today and take hold of your son Ben-Oni, and nobody will eat any

bread from you. All they will get from you is sorrow. All they will get from you is hurt. All they will get from you is discouragement. All they will get from you is difficulty. All they will get from you are problems. All they will get from you is self-sympathy. All they will get from you is your difficulty. All they will get from you is discouragement; that's all you have to offer. But some of you are going to reach over and take Benjamin by the hand, and when hungry people come up, you can break off a great big hunk of bread and say,

"There, eat that; here's some more bread for you; and here's some more bread for you, because I'm living in Bethlehem and my son's name is Benjamin, not Ben-Oni."

Now when you go to Bethel, you're going to have a son. Every one that goes to Bethel ends up pregnant. Men and women—talk about equal rights, now we have them—men and women, when you go to Bethel, you end up pregnant. Between Bethel and Bethlehem you'll travail, and a son will be produced, and the son's name will either be "Child of sorrow" or "Victorious one." How many want to be living in the house of bread? The world doesn't need our problems, the world doesn't need our hurt, and the world doesn't need our discouragement; the world doesn't need our difficulty, the world doesn't need our depression; the world doesn't need all those things that press in to destroy us. No, no. The world needs bread.

Jesus told the story about a traveling man that came, knocked on the door and said,

"Look, I've been traveling and I need bread," because bread is a symbol of that which sustains life, "I need something to keep me going; I need something to sustain me. I need something that'll strengthen me. Do you have any bread?" The world has come to the church so often and said,

"Do you have any bread?" The church has had a lot of other things to offer to them. We've had our social ideas and our political overtones to give to them. We have had

opinions and we've had all kinds of organizational factors to throw down their throat. The world doesn't need it. The church is not a social club, Brother. The church should be called Bethlehem, where men and women that are hungry and need sustenance can come and we can say,

"Look, here's bread; if you'll eat, you'll never hunger again. Here's water; if you'll drink, you'll never thirst again." Away with Ben-Oni. Let's call his name Benjamin. Let's pray.

Lord, we've talked about going to Bethel. We've talked about building an altar. We've talked about changing our character; we've talked about communion with You. We've talked about the work and responsibility that are upon us. We've shared all of these things and we've said Amen to them, and now at Bethel, we shall produce a son, and either his name will be called Ben-Oni or Benjamin. Grant, Lord, that out of this church will go many Benjamins, that their testimony will be, "I'm victorious and I have bread to give. Come to me, and I'll give you bread. I'll not give you poison; I'll not give you discouragement. I'll give you bread." Thank God, once we've received the bread, we'll be satisfied.