

## **“Go Up to Bethel”**

### **By Brother Parrish Lee**

### **Sunday, June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

You may be seated. Just puts me in remembrance, a little bit, of one thing was our men's retreat. You know, we didn't have all the instruments there, but the few that we had filled the place, along with the voices of the Saints. Because, how many know there's no sweeter song than singing the praises to the Lord Jesus Christ? Puts me in remembrance of when we were in Haiti. A few of us have been to Haiti. How many have been to Haiti with the ministry? A couple of people here have. Brother Kirk. And, when it was down there, they didn't care! They didn't care what they had, God was going to get the praise and the glory, anyway. I learned something about praising the Lord God: You don't really need an orchestra, or a choir, with you, when you go out to praise; He ain't looking for all that. He's looking for you to bring your voice, to sing His praises. I'm starting to get a little bit into the message, here. Better, better turn it back down.

I just wanted to welcome Ken Shelton back, after his surgery. Thank God; beautiful time. Good to see you.

And, so the song went, “Victory in Jesus, my Savior, forever,” and, then, “Thank You, Lord,” “Blessed be Your Name,” if the sun is shining down on me, Lord, everything is going great. Blessed be Your name, oh God, and, then, after they sang, “Amazing Love.” Personally, that could have been it for me. We could have sung, “Amazing love, how can it be that You, my King, would die for me?” That would have been, that was it for me. I mean, there's more service, if so be, but, if we would have stopped right there, I was filled, because the love of God is like that! It's amazing, and it's filling! I don't mind saying I'm kind of addicted to the love of God. Ain't never known nothing like—I though I knew a little bit about love, up until you get a touch of love from the Master, and that's when you realize, that's the reason He's the Master. Amen. And, every day, it's you I live for, it's you I live for.

Last month, we had a wonderful month, and that was the month—Women's Month, we called it, and we had all kinds of things. Was it a great month? Amen, amen. Many of the women—all of the women brought forth some praises and some accolades, and something before Almighty God. Wonderful to see the preciousness God puts on the women in His ministry. Wonderful to see.

This month, it is Men's Month, Men's Month. So, the message might be a little bit different. Men's Month. And, our Scripture for the month:

**1 Corinthians 16:13**     *Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.*

“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.” That is our Scripture theme for the month. We will be getting more into that as the month goes, but we have a thought for this month: We would like to go to:

**Genesis 32:9-13**     *And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude. And he lodged there that same night; and took of that which came to his hand a present for Esau his brother;*

If we could just bow our heads for just a moment. Almighty God, we continually are amazed by You. God, there is none like You; none as good, none as warm, none as wonderful, none as compassionate. Lord, we stand in Your presence and we thank You for Your goodness and Your kindness, and Your mercy that You show unto us, over and over and over and over and over and over again. Thank You, Almighty God. We praise You, we lift You, we magnify You, God, we extol You. And, God, we thank You today, and ask that You would do exactly as Your Word said; as we praise Your name, in our song worship, we come before You and lift our hearts and minds in Your worship, and we ask, God, that Your Word would not return unto You void, but accomplish that to which You sent it. God, we are the sheep of Your pasture; we ask that You feed us and nurture us. And this we pray, and claim, in Jesus' Name, and everyone said, amen. Amen.

So, we go to the Book of Genesis, chapter thirty-two, verses nine through thirteen. And, in verse nine, Jacob says, "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee..." Jacob is making a prayer, and an urgent prayer he is making. Oh, we know so much of this story; this is the time that Jacob, he was fleeing from his brother. And Jacob was a man who had received a blessing from God. The circumstances might have—well, actually, the circumstances is what has divided a good portion of the world, even unto today. The Jews and the Muslims, they would say. They would say that Jacob stole a blessing from Esau, and it continues down to today. But, back then, when this had happened, it was a tortuous time. And, in the midst of that time, when Esau, the oldest, who the blessing should have gone to, the mom of Jacob said, "Come on, I'll show you what to do," and Isaac blessed the younger, rather than the older. And, so, Jacob, after receiving the blessing, and Esau being mad, and his mother hearing that, "Esau is coming to kill you. You've got to get out of town; you've got to leave. Esau is that mad." And, so, he left, and this duration of him leaving, wasn't just for a few months. Not even just a couple of years. It was for over twenty years. It was over twenty years, and he found himself, right now, he had gotten blessed; he had wives and children and he had gotten blessed. He had cows and cattle and all the stuff that goes with it. And, here, he sent a little message to his brother after twenty-some-odd years, telling him, "Hey, God's really blessed me." And, he found out the message, before it got there—it wasn't the US Postal Service, it wasn't the pony express, it was a servant to send him that message. And the servant came back to him and said, "Oh, your brother is already on his way here, and, and, he has *four hundred men* with him." So, Jacob, understandably, was in distress. His prayer, his prayer was, "God, You've been God to me. You have been God to me. You have blessed me. You have been good to me. You have kept me, and now it looks like my life is over. Now it looks bad, God." And, you know, there is no prayer that a person can pray until they are facing death; there's no prayer like it. "God, I need You to save me." If you don't believe me, go down to the hospital. Go over to hospice and listen to some of the prayers that are prayed. Let it be that the diagnosis comes back to you, "It ain't looking good," the doctor might say, and then the prayer is, "Oh, God, nobody will do this for me, if You don't." This was the prayer that Jacob prayed.

So, there's three parts—well, there's three parts of this message, but there's three points in this first part.

## **Part 1 Jacob's Journey**

### **Point 1 Desperate, Urgent Prayer**

Desperate, and urgent prayer. Desperate, why? Because he was facing death. He knew that, if God didn't intervene, it wasn't going to be a police troop that was going to come along to protect him. It

wasn't going to be another army out there somewhere that was just going to miraculously appear and save him from the heat and the hate of his brother Esau. He knew that wasn't going to happen. "God, You alone, have to do this for me."

## **Point 2: Fighting For God's Blessing, No Matter How Long It Takes**

In the midst, in the midst of Jacob praying and asking, and he had to actually divide his family up, because he felt like, "If Esau catches me, he's going to kill everything, everything. So, I might as well split them up in two. At least half of my family might survive. At least half of them."

**Genesis 32:24-26** *And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.*

The more famous part—one of the more famous parts of Jacob's testimony, it says he wrestled with a man until the breaking of the day. Depending on what source you look for, and depending on application that you need in your life, some say, "Well, it was an angel he wrestled with." Some say, "It was the Lord he wrestled with," and some say, "Don't you know? It was actually him wrestling with himself." For the purposes of this message today, the point we need to know is that he wrestled until the breaking of the day. He wrestled *all night long*. He never gave up; even when it looked like he was losing the fight. The person he was wrestling with said, "Let me go." And I'm sure, there ain't no—everybody who's ever prayed goes through this. Everybody who's ever prayed faces when to quit. Everybody who has sought for something has been challenged to stop and let go. Everybody who comes before the Lord gets either convicted, or you get weary, or something that the devil just tries to stop you. And Jacob gives us the example, "I will not let go until I get my blessing." And this is part two: Fighting for God's blessing, no matter how long it takes. It's not about, "Oh, God, I prayed months and weeks or years ago, and I'm expecting You to do it any time now. And, in the meantime, I'll sit on the couch and watch my favorite TV shows. Or, I'll take a couple of quick naps. I know You're going to get around to it, sometime." No! You hold on to that faith, and you hold on to the fight to get what God has for you. You hold on.

And, point number three, which, actually, is the title of the message:

## **Point 3: Go up to Bethel**

**Genesis 35:1-3** *And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: And let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.*

I have to be honest: When I first was thinking about Men's Month, it was going to be a great time, and I figured, "You know what? I kind of know what we're going to talk about. I really got this thing burning on me; we're going to talk about Joseph," and I could see how marvelous it was going to be! Joseph, what a man of integrity. And, Joseph, man, God gave him a dream when he was young; God gave him a vision. He never let it go. And Joseph had such integrity that even his own brothers couldn't stand him. That's something we can all relate to. And that's going to be a wonderful message, a

wonderful message. And, also, Joseph, his brothers put him in the pit, and he went from the pit to the prison. All because he had a dream from God. All because God had something He was going to bless him with. And that whole process, that whole process of the dream, and the vision and then finding himself in the pit, and finding himself in the prison, was all part of the process of his promotion, as he found himself promoted to the second of the land. Man, that's going to be such a beautiful thing." I thought, "Wow, Lord," and the Lord just said, "Go back to the beginning." And I went backwards. If it's possible to read backwards, I would read the chapter before, then the chapter before, then the chapter before that, and God kept taking me back. And this is where He took me back to. Chapter thirty-five and verse one, where he says, "And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother." And, in going back, you begin to see—I began to see, the message, men—this is men's month—the message is, Bethel was a place, Bethel was a place where he had made an altar, where he was terrified, so he prayed, as he was trying to see his life saved, and God is saying—He didn't say, "Go back to Bethel," because He didn't want him going backwards; it's not a backwards faith. He said, "Go up to Bethel," because God wants us to continually come up in Him. He wants a *new* thing that we're doing in Him. He wants us to continue to come up to Him, that He might bless us accordingly. So, He says, "Arise, and go up, and remember what I did for you." Now, when God told him this, if we could see why He says Bethel, the second stipulation that Jacob knew—he knew right off of the bat, it says it in verse number two, "If I'm going to Bethel, God spoke to me, God's calling me to go back, I've got to clean my house up. I've got to get rid of this strange things in my house." Now, we know that he had gotten blessed, because he had gotten delivered, but, there's something about the process that happens when we get delivered: So often, we pain, and we scream and cry, and desire earnestly, "God, bless me, bless me, bless me, Lord," and, then, right after the blessing, "Ah, that was close. Oh, I'm glad that's over with. Now I can go back to whatever it was I was doing." And it just so happens, just so happens, that, not only did Jacob leave Bethel, but all his family left Bethel, too, all his family. And, when God told him, "Arise, and come up to Bethel, remembering what I did for you. Let's get this relationship back on track," he knew he had to clean his house. "I've got to get rid of these strange gods in this house." And, why Bethel?

## Part 2: Why Bethel?

**Genesis 31:13** *I am the God of Bethel, [I am the God of Bethel] where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred.*

Return unto the land of God's people. "Get out of what you done got into, because I am, I am the God of Bethel." He is the God of where we come and give our heart and our soul, and our mind and our strength. He is the God of, "I will never fail." And, He didn't tell him to go and dig up the old altar, He said, "Go there and make a new altar." You don't have to go and say, "I used to do it like that. I used to get blessed, way back when," because, He is the God of all that that was before, and all that is now, and all that is to come. God wants to continually bring new blessings in our life. Make new altars, and, the truth is, Jacob had made other altars. But, Bethel was the place where he cried out. Bethel is the place where he established the relationship. Bethel is the place where he knew there was a deliverance from God. Bethel is the place where his walk was changed. Bethel is the place where everything changed. Bethel is the place where he said, "No, I won't let go." "Arise, and go there."

**Revelation 21:3-5** *And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them,*

*and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.*

"I make all things new." One of the mistakes that we, as Christians can make—all flesh would do this—is we seek to have the same exact blessing. We go back to that period of time. We're supposed to remember the blessing, but move on from there. And, people, they make memorials and monuments, and there's supposed to be a state of remembrance, not a state of return, to make you go back and stay there. And, in God, in God, He wants us to, yes, "I make all things new." He wants us to remember how He delivered us. And, I don't know about everybody here, but I've been delivered from a lot of stuff. I've been delivered! I've been delivered from flying all across the road when I was in a car accident. I've been delivered from drowning when I was in Korea. I've been delivered from tortuous things on my job. I've been delivered from not having enough money until payday. I've been delivered when I was hungry. I've been delivered when people were angry with me without a cause and I didn't know how it was going to get fixed. I've been delivered from things that were in my family, and, "God, God, please pour out a healing!" And I've been delivered, and delivered, and delivered, and delivered. He is that God who makes all things—hallelujah!—new. "I am the God, I am the God. Behold, I make all things new. And He said unto me, 'Write: for these things are true and faithful.'"

Now, when, when God spoke to Jacob, and I get to this passage of Scripture, He tells him to go to Bethel, and that's just to remember the place where God is all you've got! Go back to the place where God is enough for you. God is enough; His ways are enough. His love is enough. I don't have to go outside of God; whatever I need, He will supply. He says, "Go there. Remember how I was enough for you, what I did for you." Now, in the Bible, Bethel is an actual place. It's an actual place, but, we don't have to go over to the Middle East or Jerusalem, looking for Bethel, and saying, "Okay, this is the place that I need to go to. This mountain, and I need to pray here." No, no, no, no, no, no, no. In fact, the woman at the well gives the example when she tells the Lord Jesus, "Well, our fathers prayed here at this mountain, and they say that Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship," and He said, "I tell you that neither in this place, nor at Jerusalem will men worship, but, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship Me, worship the Father in spirit and in truth everywhere they go." (John 4:19-23) Every place we go, we make a Bethel; every place we go.

### **Part 3: Five Points at Bethel**

**Point #1:** Just because God has blessed you, and anointed you, called you, and spoken to you, that does mean that you don't have to be faithful.

Just because He's poured out His Spirit on you, doesn't alleviate our obligation from following His Word. Somewhere along the line, deception had been laid on Jacob, and he felt like that was enough for back then, and things began to creep in. So, when God called him again, there was a whole cleaning up that had to happen.

**Point #2:** We have to make our heart right.

**2 Chronicles 16:9** *For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein [the Bible says:] thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars.*

Make your heart right. What other gods were there, must have been around, in the household? What other gods must they have been? It could have been any of them. It could have been Ashteroth, the sex god—yeah, there were gods of sex back then. It could have been Baal. Gods of pleasure. It could have been gods of the harvest. It could have been Nebo. It could have been Molech, could have been Chemosh, so many other gods because they've got plenty of gods around, and it's no different than what is going on in the world today. All you have to do is look at a magazine—you don't even have to look at TV; you can listen to the radio and catch that. You can look at what's going on down the streets, and, Lord knows, all you have to do is look at our schools or go to the mall. Lord, have mercy! How many gods do you want to pick out. There is a smorgasbord of them going on. So, point number two, to make our heart right. Because, out of all those gods that there are, God lets us know that He is not going to be one of the many. No man can serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). He even told Moses, "Thou shalt have no other god before Me." (Exodus 20:3)

**Point #3:** That if God has brought you to it, God will bring you through it.

*Philippians 1:6* Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

If God has started it, in you, God will finish it, in you. It is about being faithful and letting God have His work. Watch the plan of God go. He is a present God when everything is A-okay; He is also a present God when things have gone topsy-turvy. He is a present God when you don't know what's going on, and He is a present God even when we sleep. He is a present help in time of need (Psalms 46:1).

**Point #4:** Learn to encourage yourself.

Learn to encourage yourself. At Bethel, at Bethel, he knew it was about a turning, and he knew he wasn't going to have to go it alone, it was about his whole house. I kind of wondered why he buried them. Because the Bible goes on, and it talks about he buried them (Genesis 35:4). Why didn't he just burn them, or something else? But, he did make sure that they were out of sight; he did make sure that they were gone and you couldn't see them, and he was about getting up and getting to where God told him to get, not wasting any time. Learn to encourage yourself. Whenever we have anything, whether it's a fellowship time or worship time, or even a prayer time, people can pray for you, and I've been in the presence of some great prayer meetings, when people might pray for you, but that isn't the end; that, always, is the beginning. It is the beginning of us take that, and learn to work that into praying for ourselves. Worshiping—if the only time we worship is when we gather together, let's face it, we have cheated ourselves.

**Point #5:** Is to know that if God is in it there is no limit.

For every excuse we might have, for every reason, for every thing that the devil will throw out and say, "You can't, you won't, it's not going to happen," for every single one of those, all we have to do is to take it around, and turn it back to Jesus. If God is in it, there is no limit. And, then, we take a limit of ourselves to a limitless God, and watch what God will do. And, I've got to say this—I'm not over time, yet. I have to say this: It doesn't matter what it is; it doesn't matter if it's pride, and I'll tell you, I've been a person who has struggled with pride. The Bible says these three: The pride of life. That's one of the big things that's in the world. Yes, and I have to go to God, and God is a faithful God to keep me in check. That, if it's lust, and, yes, I've had a struggle with lust, and I know that's one thing that people

don't want to admit to, but, unless we go to God, it will take over. We've had struggles with all types of things. Addictions, and, yes, we've had struggles with addictions. Yes, unless we take it to God, the devil will run ram-shock all over us. Every vain thing, if we don't take it to God, if we don't say, "Lord, God, I bring this to You." Why else is the battle so hot? God desires to show Himself strong, not in whose flesh is perfect before Him, but whose heart is perfect toward Him. We're supposed to get tempted! We're supposed to face things that we don't know what's going to happen. We're supposed to see things, and, like, "I'm struggling." It's supposed to happen. It's supposed to be that, Christians, God's people, confront things that are enormous in life, so that He can show Himself strong, on behalf of His people. That's how He does it. That's how He does it.

And our last Scripture:

***Romans 8:31*** *What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*

In closing, as we go from Genesis to Revelation, we see that God told Jacob to go up to Bethel, and, in Revelation, told us, "Behold I make all things new." Amen. Amen. Give the Lord a praise.