

Introduction

It is possible for you to be spiritually alive but asleep. Several times in the New Testament believers are enjoined not to fall asleep or are exhorted to awaken from their sleep:

{ Romans 13:11 And *do* this, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation *is* nearer than when we *first* believed.

{ Ephesians 5:8 For you were once darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as children of light

Ephesians 5:14 Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light."

. { 1 Thessalonians 5:6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others *do*, but let us watch and be sober.

A person who is spiritually alive but asleep needs to be awakened. We call that awakening revival.

Believers need revival, not unbelievers. Revival is empowering, not evangelism. You can only revive someone that has already got spiritual life...but their spiritual life has become selfish, sluggish, and perhaps even sinful.

Jacob had spiritual life but he had become selfish, sluggish, and sinful.

^ He was Selfish:

At the end of Chapter Thirty-three you read,

Genesis 33:17 And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, built himself a house, and made booths for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.

Genesis 33:18 Then Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which *is* in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan Aram; and he pitched his tent before the city.

Genesis 33:19 And he bought the parcel of land, where he had pitched his tent, from the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for one hundred pieces of money.

Genesis 33:20 Then he erected an altar there and called it El Elohe Israel.

The emphasis is on *his* house, *his* livestock, *his* land - culminating on the building of *his* altar, "El Elohe Israel" - named after *himself*!

%o Jacob was Sluggish:

In Chapter Twenty-nine God had revealed Himself to Jacob at Bethel, and Jacob promised to return and build an altar there. After twenty years in Padan Aram, God revealed Himself to Jacob again, telling him in Chapter Thirty-one that He was "the God of Bethel," and reminding Jacob of his vow to return there. Jacob, though, settled down in Shechem and grew sluggish in his return to Bethel.

^ Jacob was Sinful:

In the opening verses of our text this morning, in Chapter Thirty-five, you read of the many idols present in Jacob's family and among his servants. These idols and the idolatrous practices associated with them were known to Jacob, but he had done nothing about the situation. Idolatry is always sin.

Jacob needed revival - and that is what he experienced by returning to Bethel!

Have you grown selfish, sluggish, or perhaps even sinful? If you have, and you are a Christian, then you are spiritually alive but asleep. You need revival! Perhaps you are not asleep today; that's good. How can you continue in revival? And what are the signs that indicate you are falling asleep? This is what our text is about...

#1 The Signs That You Are
Wakening To Personal Revival
(v1-4)

#2 The Signs That You Are
Walking In Personal Revival
(v5-15)

#3 The Signs That You Are
Withdrawing From Personal Revival
(v16-22)

#1 The Signs That You Are
Wakening To Personal Revival
(v1-4)

Jacob's life was in shambles. His daughter, Dinah, had been sexually violated by Shechem, and in retaliation her brothers Simeon and Levi had deceived then murdered all the men of Shechem. These circumstances aroused Jacob from years of spiritual slumber. You see three signs of a wakening to personal revival.

f The first sign you are wakening to revival is: You Receive.
Genesis 35:1 Then God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother."

Jacob had received God's Word to return to Bethel while still at Padan Aram. He had started out, then gotten sidetracked in Shechem by his own decisions and desires. Now he was receiving God's Word again: "Arise, go up to Bethel." The picture is one of someone asleep who is awakened only to doze off again. God was rousing Him a second time.

You and I can be like that. We receive God's Word and make a good start in the Christian life, only to get sidetracked in some Shechem because

of our own decisions and desires. We need to receive the Word again - before some disasterous circumstance jolts us out of our spiritual slumber.

f The second sign that you are wakening to revival is: You Repent.

Genesis 35:2 And Jacob said to his household and to all who *were* with him, "Put away the foreign gods that *are* among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments.

Genesis 35:4 So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods which *were* in their hands, and the earrings which *were* in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree which *was* by Shechem.

Jacob had been aware of these idols and of the idolatrous practices associated with them. But in his spiritual slumber he had chosen to ignore and overlook them. Now, wakening to revival, he knew he must deal with the sin in his life.

Repentance from sin is a sure sign that you are wakening to revival! Habits and practices that are not pleasing to God, which have been ignored and overlooked for years, suddenly are seen for what they really are: Sin. The imagery in verse four reminds you that your righteousness is like a garment, given to you by Jesus Christ. That garment can become spotted by sin. You "change" your garment by confession of sin, which brings cleansing from sin.

f The third sign that you are wakening to revival is: You Remember.

Genesis 35:3 "Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone."

Jacob remembered the experience at Bethel, when he had first known the presence and power of God. He longed for that presence and power again.

Can you remember a sweeter fellowship with Jesus Christ than you have today? Then you are wakening to revival.

Wakening to revival is often hindered by failing to recognize the need for revival. Take Jacob as an example. He could have pointed to prosperity as evidence he was spiritually alive; he could have pointed to God's protection as evidence that he was spiritually alive; he could have pointed to his altar as evidence that he was spiritually alive.

He *was* alive...But he was not awake! He needed wakening; he needed revival.

Revival waits because we so often fail to recognize the need for it in our own lives, or in the life of our Church. Prosperity, protection, even regular attendance at worship, do not guarantee that you are awake. All of those can be true of those who are spiritually asleep.

Don't wait until you are in a shambles at Shechem!

#2 The Signs That You Are
Walking In Personal Revival

(v5-15)

Jacob wakened to personal revival. This time, rather than fall back asleep, he got up and began to walk in revival. There are five signs of walking in personal revival.

f The first sign that you are walking in revival is: You Return.
Genesis 35:5 And they journeyed...

Jacob actually set out for Bethel. There was great danger in doing so: The people of the land he would have to pass through were waiting to retaliate against he and his family for the shameful deeds at Shechem. Despite the perceived danger, he pressed forward in his walk.

Many time personal revival is hindered right at this point. You waken to the need, even repent from sin...But there is a perceived danger in returning to a place of spiritual life. Perhaps you think you have blown your witness and will be thought of as a hypocrite...Perhaps you think you might lose your job...Perhaps you think you will lose your friends or family...

Jacob didn't allow the perceived dangers to hinder him. God honored his obedience, as you read in the remainder of verse five,

...and the terror of God was upon the cities that *were* all around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob.

You may lose friends, family, even employment; none of that should hinder you from walking in revival.

f The second sign that you are walking in revival is: Reverence.
Genesis 35:6 So Jacob came to Luz (that *is*, Bethel), which *is* in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who *were* with him.
Genesis 35:7 And he built an altar there and called the place El Bethel, because there God appeared to him when he fled from the face of his brother.

Jacob had built an altar at Shechem. He called it El Elohe Israel - The God of Israel. He named the altar after himself, recognizing God but not fully reverencing Him. This second altar he called El Bethel - The God of the House of God. He had come to a proper reverence of God.

If you are to walk in revival you must become sensitive to subtle forms of spiritual pride....

f The third sign that you are walking in revival is: You Remain.
Genesis 35:8 Now Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried below Bethel under the terebinth tree. So the name of it was called Allon Bachuth [Terebinth of Weeping].

Upon his return to Canaan Jacob had learned that his mother, Rebekah, had died sometime during his twenty year absence. Jacob apparently took Deborah in to his own family - to care for the aged nurse until her own death. Now two most important people in his life were dead - and right at the time that he was walking in obedience, walking in revival.

Did it discourage him? No - he remained where he was, weeping but still walking with God by faith in His promises.

Afflictions, adversities, trials, and tribulations can have the affect of hindering you as you seek to walk in revival. Don't let them! Bethel, I am told, was on high ground; stay on the high ground of heaven when dealing with life's circumstances.

f The fourth sign that you are walking in revival is: You Reflect.
Genesis 35:9 Then God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Padan Aram, and blessed him.

Genesis 35:10 And God said to him, "Your name *is* Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name." So He called his name Israel.

Genesis 35:11 Also God said to him: "I *am* God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body.

Genesis 35:12 "The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land."

Genesis 35:13 Then God went up from him in the place where He talked with him.

This was mostly a restatement of things Jacob already knew, yet it filled his heart with wonder, awe, and hope.

Much of what you encounter in God's Word is a restatement of things you already know. If you are walking in revival, the things you already know will fill your heart with wonder, awe, and hope.

f The fifth sign that you are walking in revival is: Your Rededication.

Genesis 35:14 So Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He talked with him, a pillar of stone; and he poured a drink offering on it, and he poured oil on it.

Genesis 35:15 And Jacob called the name of the place where God spoke with him, Bethel.

The drink offering represents a total surrender of yourself in worship, and a total commitment of yourself in service. It is what we would call a rededication.

Do you wish to be poured-out in worship of and in service for Jesus Christ? Such a heart of rededication is a sign you are where you ought to be in your walk with Him.

Jacob wakened to personal revival...He was walking in personal revival...But, sadly, he withdrew from personal revival.

#3 The Signs That You Are
Withdrawing From Personal Revival
(v16-22)

The remaining verses of Chapter Thirty-five are introduced by the phrase, "Then they journeyed from Bethel..." Bethel is mentioned six times in verses one through fifteen. In the dismal events of the next several verses Bethel is only mentioned once, and then only to tell you that it was being left. Jacob was withdrawing from Bethel - he was withdrawing from spiritual revival and returning to spiritual slumber. There are two signs you are withdrawing from revival.

f The first sign that you are withdrawing from revival is: Selfishness.

Genesis 35:16 Then they journeyed from Bethel. And when there was but a little distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel labored *in childbirth*, and she had hard labor.

Genesis 35:17 Now it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said to her, "Do not fear; you will have this son also."

Genesis 35:18 And so it was, as her soul was departing (for she died), that she called his name Ben-Oni; but his father called him Benjamin.

Genesis 35:19 So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that *is*, Bethlehem).

Genesis 35:20 And Jacob set a pillar on her grave, which *is* the pillar of Rachel's grave to this day.

Ben-Oni means "The son of my sorrow." Benjamin means "The son of my right hand." To his credit Jacob renames his adversity to reflect hope in the promises of God.

We must be careful in our comments at this point. We cannot be certain of the reason or reasons for this trip from Bethel to Ephrath. We can note two things with some confidence:

- 1) The context tells us that Jacob should have remained at Bethel;
- 2) The circumstances of Rachel's pregnancy tell us that Jacob should have remained at Bethel.

Whatever the actual reasons, it can be argued that Jacob should have remained at Bethel. I am suggesting that his reasons may have been selfish:

- 1) There was no word from God to leave Bethel; this was a self made decision;
- 2) There was no thought for Rachel, a selfish decision.

When self is making decisions, and when you are acting selfishly, you are withdrawing from revival.

f The second sign that you are withdrawing from revival is: Sluggishness.

Genesis 35:21 Then Israel journeyed and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder.

Genesis 35:22 And it happened, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine; and Israel [Jacob] heard *about it*..

All we are told about Jacob's response to this shameful and sinful act is that he heard about it. He took no action to punish and correct his son.

When you overlook or ignore sin, taking no action against it, you have become spiritually sluggish...

Conclusion

El Bethel, we said, means "God of the House of God."

Today you are the house of God! The Apostle Paul wrote,

{ 1 Corinthians 3:16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?

{ 1 Corinthians 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

{ Ephesians 2:22 ... you...are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Individually, your body is the temple or house of God the Holy Spirit.
Corporately, as a Church, we are the temple or house of God the Holy Spirit.

How can you tell if you need revival? Ask yourself, as God's house, this question: Can I without hesitation or reservation truly say that Jesus is "God of the House of God?"