

GENESIS 35:1-7, 9-12 HOLY ABANDONMENT

¹ Then God said to Jacob, "Go up to Bethel and settle there, and build an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau." ² So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you, and purify yourselves and change your clothes." ³ Then come, let us go up to Bethel, where I will build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone." ⁴ So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears, and Jacob buried them under the oak at Shechem. ⁵ Then they set out, and the terror of God fell upon the towns all around them so that no one pursued them.

⁶ Jacob and all the people with him came to Luz (that is, Bethel) in the land of Canaan. ⁷ There he built an altar, and he called the place El Bethel, because it was there that God revealed himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother.

⁹ After Jacob returned from Paddan Aram, God appeared to him again and blessed him. ¹⁰ God said to him, "Your name is Jacob, but you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel." ¹¹ So he named him Israel.

¹¹ And God said to him, "I am God Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will come from your body." ¹² The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you."

On Jacob's first visit to Luz (which he renamed Bethel), God vows to be with him and return him to his father's land. In return, Jacob vows that if that happens, "*then the LORD will be my God*" (28:21). Now the Lord instructs Jacob to return to Bethel. Jacob fulfills his vow to God by ridding his household/family of all their foreign gods. Then God reveals himself as God Almighty, the name by which he was known to Abraham and Isaac. And there God renews his covenant specifically with Jacob.

Now Jacob is where God can work through him. Jacob has learned that God is with him always and not just a local deity, confined to a specific sacred spot. In addition, Jacob has shifted his dependence from his own machinations to God's providential care. Furthermore, by ridding himself of his household and foreign idols, he will no longer hedge his bet on God. The Lord will truly be his God.

The full promise of God is realized in our full abandonment to his will. What is it that stands between you and your being all God created you to be? God is eternally patient, but we are finite. God will continue to be with us, but the fullness of the expression of his presence in our lives is dependent upon our whole-hearted abandonment of all other sources of "strength." Why wade through the trials of life like Jacob? Abandon yourself to God today.

Remove, O Lord, anything that stands between me and total dependence upon you. Grow my faith through your Holy Spirit that I might see your almighty hand in my life and know that I am living in your will. May I fulfill the purpose for which you created me. Amen.