

The Necessity of Repentance in a Believer's Life
Genesis 35:1-13

We will look at a man in the Scripture this morning that could have benefitted from a "Spiritual GPS system." His name is Jacob. He is a fascinating character to read about in the Book of Genesis. He is also a very important character, because God changed his name to Israel, and from his 12 sons we get the 12 tribes of Israel, and of course the Messiah came from one of those tribes, the tribe of Judah.

What we learn from our text this morning is the importance of repentance in Jacob's life. Repentance in Jacob's life opened the door once again to his relationship with God. If we want to experience the joy of the Lord in our lives, repentance must be a part of our walk with God (CIT-Central Idea of the Text).

The Christian life begins with repentance and faith in Christ. But just as the Christian life begins there, it continues there as well. Repentance and faith are ongoing aspects of the Christian walk. I want you to see today that one of the reasons men and women today are not experiencing the freshness of God working in their lives is because there is an absence of repentance.

1. REPENTANCE IS _____

A. BECAUSE OF SIN AND NEGLECT

B. BECAUSE OF GOD'S HOLINESS

2. REPENTANCE INVOLVES _____ V.V. 1-4

Theologian Wayne Grudem says this of repentance: "Repentance is a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ." He says, "Of course, genuine repentance will result in a changed life." He goes on to say, "A worldly sort of grief may involve great sorrow for one's actions and probably also fear of punishment but no genuine renouncing of sin or commitment to forsake it in one's life." Finally, he also says, "It is important to realize that faith and repentance are not confined to the beginning of the Christian life. They are rather attitudes of heart that continue throughout our lives as Christians."

That is what Jacob had to do. He had to repent. He could not stay where he was and the way he was.

3. REPENTANCE BRINGS _____

V.V. 5-13

Notice that God reminds him again, *“Your name is no longer Jacob, but Israel.”* Back in *Chapter 32*, when he wrestled with the angel of the Lord, God changed his name. Remember what Jacob was asked in *Chapter 32*? *“What is your name?”* Did God not know his name? Of course God knew His name. God knows everything. But what Jacob had to do was say, “My name is Jacob.” What he was confessing was, “I am Jacob, I am the heel-grabber. I am the trickster. That’s who I am.” When he owned up to that, God said, “Okay, here is what I am going to do, I am going to give you a new name.” The “new man” was to be symbolized by a “new name.”

Notice also that Bethel becomes El-Bethel. First, it was “Bethel, the house of God.” Now, Jacob has come to know God more intimately through the journeys of his life. And so it’s not simply Bethel, but “El-Bethel. The God of the house of God.” You see the difference? From house of God, to the God of the house of God. In other words, it’s not just the place itself Jacob focuses upon, but it’s the God of the place that has now captured his affections.

God appeared to Jacob again. God has been silent. For 30 years, Jacob has been making a living. He has been busy about life. God has been silent. Now, repentance becomes a part of Jacob’s life, and God speaks again. Furthermore, God renewed His covenant with Jacob. The covenant God made with Abraham and Isaac is now the covenant that God is making with Jacob. You see, repentance brings renewal. Jacob is now in the place where God can use him.

I wonder today who would be honest with God and say, “Lord, I need to repent; I need to make some very definite changes, and come back to You?” The heavens seem to be silent, and God doesn’t seem to be using you. Maybe some things have slipped in with the spiritual neglect that you are not proud of. I invite you this morning to practice repentance. Turn around. Come back to Christ. If you will take definite action, you will see a difference. Your spiritual life will be renewed.

Perhaps just like Jacob, in this process of renewal, there are people that you need to get right with. Jacob had to get right with his brother. Do you have any people that you need to get right with?

Perhaps today there are some idols you need to lay aside?

Could this be the prayer that expresses what you need? “Lord, help me to return to You in repentance and faith. Help me to lay aside any sin, any neglect, and fully and completely yield to You in everything. Help me to repair fractured relationships. Help me to live as someone with a new name, the name of being a Christian. Help me to get back to that place where You can use me. In Jesus’ Name I pray, Amen.”