

Arise Let Us Go Up to Bethel and Dwell There

by Peter Brandon

The sermon emphasizes the importance of experiencing God's presence in our lives, being sensitive to the leading of the Spirit, and being flexible in following the Lord.

Duration: 53:47

Scripture: Genesis 35:1

Topics: "Consecration", "God's Presence"

Description

Peter Brandon emphasizes the call to return to Bethel, where Jacob encountered God, urging believers to consecrate themselves by putting away idols and seeking God's presence. He highlights the importance of being cleansed and prepared to experience the blessings of God, which include awe, peace, joy, and love within the community of faith. Brandon warns against the decline in spiritual fervor and encourages a return to genuine worship and reliance on the Holy Spirit for revival. He illustrates the transformative power of God's presence and the necessity of being sensitive to the Spirit's leading in the church. Ultimately, he calls for a collective movement towards Bethel, where God can manifest His glory and bless His people.

Transcript

It's Genesis 35 and we'll commence reading at verse 1. And God said unto Jacob, Arise, and 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. And they gave unto Jacob all the strange 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 as they journeyed, 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 their 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 Alambacchus. And God appeared unto Jacob again when he came out of Paddan-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 will I give it, and to thy seed after this 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 thereon, and poured oil thereon.

And Jacob called the name of the place where God spoke with him Bethel. And they journeyed from Bethel. And God will bless to us the reading of his word.

I think it's true to say if we observe the state of the assemblers in England that there has been among us a terrible decline in the last 20 years. And to not say anything about this decline would be a state of unfaithfulness to our God. For instance we used to have 125 assemblers in the London area.

And on an average about 120-130 believers in each assembly. Now we only have 25 and many of them are dying. And as I look at Australia I can see the same seeds of decline that we saw in England taking place in Australia.

And not to lift the red flag would be a matter of dishonesty to the law. But I'm not going to speak so much on the other side. I'm going to share with you the remedy for this betterness.

The first remedy is consecration. Once God finds a group of people who are laid upon the altar and genuinely given to him he will bless them. And then secondly it is the desire of God to bring us together as a company of his people so that the presence of God is manifested in our midst.

And therefore just for a little while I want to speak upon that little phrase. Arise and go up to Bethel and dwell there. I wonder if I may repeat that.

Arise and go up to Bethel and dwell there. Now first of all we must look at the characteristics that really mark El Bethel. Secondly we must look at the preparations which El Bethel demands.

And thirdly we must look at the blessings which El Bethel bestows. And I trust that they will make you hungry for the blessing of God. First of all the characteristics of Bethel.

Now there is a difference between Bethel and El Bethel. In Bethel we have the house of God. In El Bethel it simply means the God of the house of God but even more than that.

If you look at the word carefully and trace the study right the way through the old and the new testament it is when the presence of God is being manifested. Now you will agree with me because you will agree with the scriptures that none of us can lose the presence of the Holy Spirit in our own lives. If we could lose the presence of the Holy Spirit we could be lost and that's impossible.

But when it comes to the local church you can lose the presence of the Lord. For instance the assembly of Ephesus had left their first love and the Lord gave them an ultimatum. Repent or else I will come quickly

and remove the lampstand out of his place.

And that means God removes his presence. So can we see the difference? We cannot lose the presence of the Spirit of God individually but we can lose the presence of God publicly. Now my dear friends I want to share with you now what happens when God's presence is manifested.

First of all when his presence is manifested there's always an overwhelming sense of awe. Let me say the word God is among us. Let me repeat that.

God the transcendent God the imminent God is among us. Everyone in the old testament that came into contact with the all-mightiness and the holiness of God fell at his feet in holy awe. Think of that man who was a friend of God Abraham and when he met God for the first time you remember what happened? He turned from all his idols to serve the living and the true God.

The God of glory revealed himself to Abraham. And then when God revealed to Abraham that he was going to have a child he fell before him prostrated. God again when that intimate man Moses saw that bush that burned without being extinguished he went aside to see the great sight and out of that burning bush he heard the voice of God.

Take off thy shoes from off thy feet for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground the awe of God. Again many of you will recall that when God revealed himself to Joshua as the captain of the Lord of hosts he said take off thy shoe from off thy foot. Why? Because of the presence of God he was prostrated before him.

When we come to the New Testament you remember when the Lord Jesus was transfigured the three disciples fell on their face. Such was the glory and the majesty of the King. Again you remember when John the Apostle who at once leaned his head upon his breast in holy intimacy with his Lord there on the isle of Patmos when he saw him in his risen glory as the son of man he fell at his feet as dead.

When the glory of God is revealed among his people there is always a sense of awe we're in the presence of God. That's the first thing. When God's presence is manifest there's always an awareness of peace.

Now I'm not thinking so much of the legal peace therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God that's essential. We shall never know the God of peace until we know that peace. Nor am I thinking of the fact that the peace of God will guard our minds like sentinels so that there will not be a thing as anxiety reeling in our minds.

But I'm thinking of the God of peace being among us. The word peace in the Hebrew is beautiful. I was looking up the connotations of the word and I was surprised it mainly means binding together.

What our brother was talking about nailing together. You say what does that mean? If you look at the process of sin it always disintegrates. For instance man was body soul and spirit in holy harmony but immediately he sinned his spirit ceased to function and he was spiritually dead.

And instead of being a God centered creature he became a self-centered creature. You see sin disintegrate it separates the soul and the body from the spirit. If you look at the activity of sin in modern society you will see it breaking up families.

Smashing the lives of boys and girls. Changing the sex of men and women so that men are becoming like women and women like men. This ugly thing of disintegration.

But God's peace binds us together. It makes our spirit alive so that the spirit operates through the soul the soul out through the body so that the beauty of Jesus can be seen. That's Christianity.

Christ formed in our personality. Then by the good office of the Holy Spirit and through that wonderful baptism we are joined together in one body so that when one member suffers we all suffer. You see it's this binding together.

You know dear friends there's no peace in the world. The wicked are like the troubled sea. But unsafe people should come among us and sense the awe of God but then the binding peace of God.

Isn't that a lovely claim? Awe and peace. But with the presence of God there's joy. You know I've never fully given one address on the joy of God but I am going to.

You know when you go through the Psalms especially the Psalms of elation and the Psalms of jubilation listen to the words of the Psalmist. Bless the Lord O my soul and all that is within me. Bless his holy name.

See the joy. I was glad when they said let us go up into the house of the Lord. When David brought back the ark in the Levitical way what did he do? He danced with all his might before the Lord.

Now don't misunderstand me. I'm not asking you to dance down the aisles and things like that. We have to be very careful today.

But dear friends there's a sense of the joy of the Lord. Again when the Lord Jesus was born there was almost a multitude of joy. Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace and goodwill to men.

Then you remember the Lord Jesus when he was speaking of the Holy Spirit not only bequeathed his love but he bequeathed his joy into our hearts. When he was going to the cross he was a man of sorrows but when he came from the cross the first word he said was all hail all rejoice. Again in that upper room when they saw the Lord on that resurrection evening then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.

And then when we go through the book of the Acts we find Acts 2 they were praising God having favor with the people and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. And when we come to the Philippian epistle the epistle of joy the person who wrote it was in prison and yet 18 times he uses the word joy. And there seems to be almost a conclusion to his letter when he says rejoice in the Lord again I say rejoice but what kind of joy is it.

It's an intelligent joy it's not superficial it's not inviting a comedian to tell jokes or funny stories. It's knowing your position in Christ seeing your position in the heavenlies and allowing these facts to so lay hold upon your life that you rejoice. And then when we come together collectively and we see the beauty and the loveliness of the Lord Jesus and we see the victory of Calvary we feel the wonderful triumph of his resurrection we see the majesty of his ascension and we rejoice.

Where are all the praises you know brothers and sisters when I was a boy and the assemblies were spiritual and they were seeing souls saved. When we gather to break bread there would be about 150 of us and when people worship you would hear all over the congregation amen glory to God hallelujah but it's all gone.

You know I'm almost reluctant to tell you this story in one assembly north of the border there were about 130 worshipers and the Lord's table was in front of the congregation a beautiful table over the symbols was a large white linen cloth covering it all and a man came in who was a man he was there a half an hour and then quietly walked out and one of the elders followed him and said are you all right yes he said I'm awfully sorry but I didn't know it was a funeral I'd never have come in thought it was a dirge we all looked so miserable where's the joy but can you see the balance it's a joy that's balanced by awe it's an awe that's harmonized by joy and right in the center there is this tranquility of heaven which we have called peace but there's something else with the presence of God

there is a manifestation of love when we talk about love love is not an attribute of God God is light he is the source of all light and God is love and all his attributes are marked by love and therefore when the presence of God is manifested in a local church there should be an invasion of the presence of love that's why there can be no bitterness love that can be felt love that seen beloved what a lovely place Bethel is awe peace joy love God's presence manifested do you know we haven't seen that in the meetings for months have we let's face it I want to share with you God took me completely out of Britain to see a manifestation of the real presence of God but with the presence of God there is this word again El Bethel and that means he is the Lord of his house now what does that mean

when the Lord is present he must be sovereign Lord of the whole company now can you see it's so vital that each believer in that particular assembly where God is present must be sensitive to the leading of the spirit and we shall never be sensitive to the leading of the spirit until we are filled with the spirit and we shall only be filled with the spirit when we have consecrated ourselves to the Lord and therefore when he is Lord as our brother was saying there are a variety of gifts but it's the same spirit what does that mean in each local church and in the church universal it is the work of God to give the gifts of the risen Lord and they are men an apostle is a man a prophet is a man a teacher and an evangelist men and a pastor is a man but the gifts of the spirit are not men the

gifts of the spirit is something that's supernatural in a man such a faith and the first century gift of tongues it's the spirit of God within him giving a gift and then there are the gifts of God which infer or include the gifts of the spirit the gifts of the risen Lord and the gifts of leadership and other gifts too which I mentioned but you see it's the Trinity that gives these gifts and then there are the vertices of gifts but the same spirit there are differences of administration what does that mean services when a man who is an evangelist is functioning that's one service but the Lord is controlling him when a teacher is functioning in the local church that's another service and when a pastor is functioning in the local church that's another service but all the services are

controlled by the spirit of God but there's something deeper than that there is no such thing as routes there are old paths but not old routes beloved we must learn in these days to keep right at the feet of the Lord Jesus so that he will guide all our evangelistic activity you know somewhere along the line if I may share this with you we have got into a route and we know it and the Lord wants to move us out of this route so that we become flexible I used to go and speak to Mr.

W.W.

Faraday when he was 96 and may I say this although he was blind his mind was as sharp as a needle and he came into fellowship in 1864 and he says in those days we never used to have 6.30 gospel meeting he said we would come together and pray and God would direct us to hire a town hall and we would hire that

for six weeks and sometimes God would direct us to hire theatre they didn't have cinema thing those days and we would hire that for six weeks and he says we were criticized all over Christendom because we were using ordinary places to preach a spiritual message but he says the Lord delivered us from all that nonsense and so you can see they were supple they were flexible to the leading of the spirit but we have lost that we must be very careful not to keep on turning an old traditional

handle we must get low at the feet of the Lord and ask the Lord to direct all our activity so that he is Lord among us and then he will bless us then with the presence of the Lord there is power now what does this mean when God is among his people there is not only a sense of his presence there is not only his total presidency so that he's controlling all the activity but there is this undoubted sense of the power of God do you remember when the Holy Spirit came he came in the form or as a sound of a rushing mighty wind it's the only time in scripture you get that expression a rushing mighty wind and if you go through the book of the acts especially the first 16 chapters you will find that wind blowing take for instance chapter 2 Peter preaches and 3,000 souls are swept in take for

instance Acts 3 the lame man is healed and then 5,000 men say take for instance Acts 4 when they had prayed the place was shed take for instance Acts chapter 7 when Stephen preached they were cut to the heart but it was still the rushing mighty wind take for instance Acts 8 when Philip went down to Samaria the whole city believed take for instance Acts 9 the last person on earth you would ever imagine to become a Christian was Saul of Tarsus and yet he sees a lot and hears the voice and is saved immediately and then take for instance Acts 10 when Peter preached in the household of Cornelius the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word the rushing mighty wind I mustn't go through history because we haven't got time but do you know brethren and sisters I remember as a boy being in

prayer meetings and I was just a boy and being in gospel meetings where you sense the mighty power of God but it's all gone do you know I can go back to my own ministry for the first 25 years and some nights the presence of God was so manifested in the building that no one could leave the awe of God fell on the place and I would come and just take my presence in the front seat and prayer would break out and you would hear a man crying out God please be merciful to me you may hear a lady cry out Lord save me it was God moving in power but that's gone why the spirit's being graved and that's why we are dwindling dwindling now God said to this man arise and go up to Bethel and dwell there and immediately God said that to him he turned around to his household and said right put away the

strange gods that are among you wash yourselves thoroughly and change your garments we're going up to Bethel now my dear friends I wish I could go into the details of idolatry and when you read of people in the old testament destroying their idols you must remember this they were destroying the fabric of their lives we just imagine that they had one of these terrafims and they kept it perhaps wrapped up and sometimes they would look at it but those terrafims became a part of their lives let me explain if they were going to do anything they would take the terrafim and ask for guidance sometimes a wife when she was going to cook something would ask for help and in every little thing they consulted the terrafim Jacob of course was completely released from all these terrafims but of course

his wife sat upon them or one did when Laban came and it was still in the house and probably he knew that some of his servants were still worshipping these Syrian terrafims then he turned to them and said something that's very hard put away the strange gods that are among you all the gods of the old testament and roughly there are 24 can be divided into two there are the gods of Astaroth and there are the gods of Balaam the gods of Astaroth was the female god the goddess the god of fertility and it was a god that they

looked at that created sensual desires the god of Balaam was the god of the sun and sometimes the god of the moon sometimes the god of some of the stars but these were mainly ethical gods they did not create awful cases of immorality and if you look at that very carefully

the Christian has to be very careful about gods for instance if we look at that first commandment and see its complete translation we should read it like this thou shalt love the lord thy god with all thy heart with all thy soul with all thy mind with all thy strength and thy neighbor as thyself that means god first in everything now in the scripture we find that the lord Jesus says something that's very paradoxical to us he says that if a man hate not his wife his mother his father his children and his brethren and come after me he cannot be his disciples now that is worrying we know from the scripture that we are told husbands love your wives even as Christ loved the church how can a man on one hand love his wife and hate his wife well the Hebrew word for hate means second and the

Hebrew word for love means first and this is what the lord was saying unless I'm first you cannot really follow me you know there comes a time in our experience when we have to lay our wife our children our loved ones the business on the altar and he becomes first the idea of hate simply means that thing is put second and that's one of the problems why we're not functioning correctly the lord is not essentially first there are still idols what about the sensual thing anything that causes sensual reactions in the mind must be destroyed the husband and wife relationship is a very beautiful thing so that when two people are brought together in the will of god and there is in their home a family altar that relationship should increase and mature in love there is no such thing as falling out

of love with your partner you should still want to hold hands when you've been married over 50 or 60 years that's a testimony but we know today that satan is attacking every christian home and he's doing it with asterisk dear friends anything in your home that causes you to look at pornographic literature deal with it so that you might have a pure life a pure relationship and then you'll be happy very happy put away the strange gods that are among you secondly be clean now what does that mean in a new testament sense there are three kinds of washing in the new testament i'm only going to speak on two there is the washing that comes to us through the blood of christ not in the blood sometimes we sing there is a fountain filled with blood drawn from emmanuel's veins that is symbolic

language when god forgives us of our sins he does it through the death of the lord jesus meaning through his blood and when god forgives us he forgives us once and for all and that forgiveness never has to be repeated it's once and for all but we do need the washing of the water by the word we do need that washing quite frankly that brings us into intimate friendship with the lord now i wonder if i can do this by demonstration a doctor wilson would you help me would you give me your hand just for the sake of the young people now that's relationship try and get away he can't the moment a person is safe he is cleansed from sin and he is related to the lord and there's no power on earth that can break that give me your little finger but friendship is much more sensitive now pull hard is

broken now relationship is never broken thank you is never broken by our sin but friendship is broken now it's that cleansing that we need and dear friends is this ever a time as groups of people we need to get low before the lord and ask the lord to cleanse us it's today there are all kinds of things that have coming among us that has grieved and quenched the spirit and therefore before there can be a real movement of the spirit there must be a time of cleansing now could i share this with the lord's people i have never seen a movement of the spirit until there has been a time of brokenness among the people of god now can i share something with you that is really hurting me would you pray about it i have been to australia six

times and i've never yet seen one assembly broken i've never

seen one assembly staying behind after a meeting and praying through the night broken dealing with sin and giving themselves to the lord and that's why we have never seen real touches of revival wouldn't it be lovely if it started in sydney a time when god cleansed his people and then they had to put on new raiment in other words they had to put off their working clothes and they had to put on their new clothes and they had to go up to battle now in the old testament in the new testament it is very clear that god is not too particular about the clothes that we wear but he is particular about the fact that we put off concerning our former conversation the old man with his deceitful lust we put off that old filthy garment once and for all and that we put on christ that means we are in

christ we see ourselves in christ and as it were we put on that white garment and we put it on forever so that when we come the righteousnesses of christ are seen in us now can you see what would happen if god had a group of people number one who dealt with their idols who were washed and cleansed to shun out the very righteousness of the lord they're ready for the blessing and when the wives heard that and the servants you know it moved me this morning when i read this i could see them all going to their tents and i could see them getting out these awful images that they had hid and i could see them all coming to jacob and his surprise that there were so many and then he digs a big hole and where does he dig it at the oak by shechem and the best place to bury an idol is at the foot of

the cross at the foot of calvary and he buried all the idols there are you prepared for that david went one step better when the philistines left behind their idols he burned them so that they could never be dug up again get rid of them and then you could see them all nicely washed you could see them with their new garments and then we read this oh what a journey they journeyed to Bethel do you know i would like to make a song of that the journey to Bethel instead of journeying away from Bethel now they're journeying toward Bethel and what happens as they're going toward Bethel the terror of god fell upon the cities what does speak of in a new testament language the conviction of the holy spirit begins you see dear friends the holy spirit was never given to the world he was given to the

church and the church is the habitation of the spirit and each local church should be the dwelling place of the spirit and when the holy spirit is ungrieved unquenched in that local church he will move out of the believers out of the local church and you will see people in the area convicted do you know what that means it's possible to go to a local church say in 1986 a knock on the doors and there's no movement at all it's possible to go back 10 years later and the church has had deep dealings with god a time of cleansing and you'll go around some of the houses and you'll find some people interested what's happened the spirit of god is moving convicting of sin but he does it through god's people and then you will see as you are preaching the cross and uplifting the lord jesus you will

see people beginning to break down and weep why the spirit's moving among the people of god we'd love to see that wouldn't we and then i want you to note not only the convictions but the blessing of god came he came to el beto he built his altar and then god appears to him as he leaves padanaram the place where he met his uncle laban and god then says your name shall no longer be jacob but israel already god had changed his name but now he was living it out one thing being a christian another thing living christ-like and now this man was beginning to be a real prince with god and then god not only blessed him but god said be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth in acts chapter 9 when they were edified they multiply now in certain assemblies in london if you went to a particular

family service you would find in some places the place packed to capacity and then you might see a comedian out there telling jokes and then you might see someone all dressed up as charlie chaplin then you might see some girls coming in giving you drama and dance but then you will try and listen for the gospel and you'll hardly find it packed packed to the door but packed by giving and then you say where's the prayer meeting we don't have one when do you have your worship the breaking of bread oh that's tonight but you won't find many there it's growth but carnagra now you go to another place where they have had deep dealings with god and you're there in the breaking of bread and there are 17 to 18 brethren one after another worshipping the lord you go to the gospel meeting it might be

after the worship meeting it doesn't matter whether it's 11 o'clock or 8 o'clock in the evening that doesn't matter but you'll see the place full of people and there's the power of god what's happened they've been cleansed they've been purged and god's presence is being manifested there's growth but it's edifying growth i've only been in revival once once in scotland and then once in south africa and i shall never forget the first time i went to a prayer meeting in a place called bonta hevel and there were 10 brethren in the room and they all prayed along this line thank you lord for leading us to this hall thank you you're going to fill it thank you for all the souls that are going to be saved tonight i hadn't heard prayer like that for years i questioned whether they were wise to hire

such a large building in a muslim area but they had this strong conviction and i went out into the main hall and there must have been 750 people there and dennis theocarp one of the elders nudged me and said you know mr brandon they're nearly all unsaved i said i can smell it tobacco and alcohol and they say that muslims don't drink well that night i got up to preach and halfway through i stopped and bowed my head and worship i've never done that in a gospel meeting before the place was filled with the glory of the lord i went at the back and shook hands with 950 men were staying before i even started to preach and when we came back into the congregation they were leaving souls to christ all over the building my wife and i we went back to our home where we were staying with a man called

cedric gibbs and we felt like a couple of old backsliders here were people that knew god far more than we knew him on wednesday night i preached and i've never seen anything like this i preached on the cross and i saw waves and waves of the spirit of god passing over that congregation convicting people of sin enlightening them and souls were being saved in the meeting it was merely too holy to observe and we finished that mission and we had three months of blessing like that and i wanted to find the sacred and old mr davids told me this it all started in athlon assembly and he was a dealer in stinkwood and god was having deep dealings with him i can't go into the details of this he was one of the elders and he took me to his caravan and he showed me a seat that was well worn an old

caravan and this is what he said brother peter that's where i had my jab off that's where the lord broke me and his fellow elders that were just three men said to him god's been having dealings with you brother tell us what it is and he told them and those elders had a week on their faces before the lord and the lord cleansed them and purged them and showed them all the details of evangelism that he wanted in that area and showed them the kind of work that he wanted as elders so that what our first speaker was sharing with us became a reality how to care for the converts and then the flock could see that god was having deep dealings with their elders and they asked to come in and they had a fortnight before the lord now i'm going to use the language of mr davids he said it wasn't a

cartload of rubbish it was a train load of rubbish that the lord took away from us and from that moment 14 assemblies went out from ather and god moved in power these are my last words if there is one place

where god's presence can be manifested even in the midst of sydney you will see god blessing and the word is this arise let us go up to Bethel and to Jehovah amen

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