

Message Three
The God of Bethel

Scripture Reading: Gen. 33:17-20; 35:1, 6-7, 9-12

- I. **Being built up with fellow partakers of the divine life is the highest virtue of one who pursues after Christ according to God's eternal economy—Phil. 3:7-12.**
- II. **In Genesis 35 there is a crucial and radical turn from the individual experience of God to the corporate experience of God—the experience of God as the God of Bethel—Eph. 3:17-21; 4:4-6:**
 - A. In Genesis 35:7 we have a new divine title—*El-bethel*, God of the house of God.
 - B. Before this chapter God was the God of individuals; here He is no longer just the God of individuals but is El-bethel, the God of a corporate body, the God of the house of God.
 - C. Bethel signifies the corporate life, which is the Body of Christ; thus, in calling God the God of Bethel, Jacob advanced from the individual experience to the corporate experience—1 Cor. 12:12:
 1. The altar Jacob built at Shechem was called *El-elohe-Israel*, by the name of God as related to an individual—Gen. 33:17-20.
 2. The altar Jacob built at Bethel was called *El-bethel*, the name of God as related to a corporate body—35:6-7.
 3. The altar at Shechem is an individual altar, but the altar at Bethel is a corporate altar—the altar for the house of God.
 - D. The all-sufficient God is revealed for the building of Bethel; only at Bethel is it possible for us to realize the all-sufficiency of our God—v. 11a:
 1. The purpose of God's revealing Himself as the all-sufficient One is for His building; the all-sufficient God is for God's building.
 2. We cannot experience the all-sufficient God in an individualistic way; in order to experience the all-sufficient God, we must be in Bethel, in the church life.
 3. God's all-sufficiency requires the Body; we need the house, the building, in order to experience this aspect of Him—Phil. 1:19.