

Genesis 35:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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:

Analysis

Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that ar... This passage belongs to the Jacob narratives which demonstrate God's sovereign election overriding human merit and the transformation of a deceiver into Israel, the father of the twelve tribes. The Jacob cycle shows how divine purposes advance through flawed individuals whom God graciously transforms.

Key themes include God's sovereign choice ("the older shall serve the younger"), the consequences of deception and family dysfunction, exile and return patterns, wrestling with God leading to blessing, and covenant renewal across generations. Jacob's character development from manipulative deceiver to mature patriarch demonstrates sanctification's lifelong process.

Theologically significant aspects include:

1. divine election based on grace not merit (Romans 9:10-13)
2. God's faithfulness to covenant promises despite human unfaithfulness
3. discipline as evidence of divine love and means of transformation
4. generational patterns of sin requiring divine intervention to break
5. prayer and wrestling with God as legitimate expressions of faith.

Jacob's limp after wrestling God symbolizes how divine encounters leave permanent marks, transforming our approach to life and dependence on God rather than our own cunning.

Historical Context

The patriarchal narratives (Genesis 12-50) reflect the cultural, social, and legal customs of the ancient Near East during the Middle Bronze Age (2000-1500 BCE). Archaeological discoveries including the Mari tablets, Nuzi tablets, and Egyptian records confirm many details: nomadic pastoralism, covenant-making ceremonies, marriage customs, property laws, and international travel patterns described in Genesis.

The cultural practices reflected include: treaty/covenant forms (Genesis 15), bride-price customs (Genesis 24, 29), inheritance laws favoring firstborn sons (Genesis 25, 27), adoption practices (Genesis 15, 30), levirate-type arrangements (Genesis 38), and Egyptian administrative systems (Genesis 41, 47). These parallels confirm Genesis's historical reliability while showing how God worked within ancient cultural frameworks to accomplish His purposes.

For later Israelites, these narratives established their identity as Abraham's descendants, explained their claim to Canaan, justified their possession of Joseph's bones (Exodus 13:19), and provided models of faith despite imperfection. The patriarchs' failures and God's faithfulness encouraged Israel that covenant relationship depended on God's grace rather than human merit. The movement from Mesopotamia to Canaan to Egypt set the stage for the Exodus and conquest narratives.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does this verse contribute to the biblical doctrine of creation, fall, or redemption?
2. How can we apply the principles from this passage to contemporary challenges in family, work, or church?
3. How does understanding Christ as the ultimate fulfillment illuminate this passage's meaning?

Interlinear Text

עַמּוֹ וְאֶשְׁר כָּל אֶל בֵּית וְאֶל יְעַקֹּב וְאֶל אָמָר	said	Then Jacob	H413	unto his household	H413	H3605	H834	H5973
H559		H3290		H1004				
בָּסָר בְּנֵר אֱלֹהִים אֱתָה רֹאשׁ								
and to all that were with him Put away			H853	gods	the strange	H834		
H5493				H430	H5236			
שְׁמַלְתִּיכֶם בְּתַכְכֵם וְהַטְבָּר יְפֵל וְיִפְשֵׁל								
that are among you and be clean and change your garments								
H8432		H2891		H2498		H8071		

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 19:10 (Parallel theme): And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes,

Exodus 19:14 (Parallel theme): And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes.

James 4:8 (References God): Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

Hebrews 10:22 (Parallel theme): Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

2 Corinthians 7:1 (References God): Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Genesis 18:19 (Parallel theme): For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

Deuteronomy 32:16 (References God): They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger.

Ezekiel 18:31 (Parallel theme): Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

Ezekiel 36:25 (Parallel theme): Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

Joshua 24:15 (References God): And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.