

# THE OLD PATHS

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## “Jacob’s Response To God’s Word”

Jarrod Jacobs

**G**enesis 28:1-2 records Isaac sending Jacob to Padanaram to find a wife among his mother’s people. After some traveling, the Bible says Jacob spent the night in a certain place (v. 11). As he slept, he had a dream in which he saw, *“a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it”* (Gen. 28:12). In this dream, God blessed Jacob, promising him the same things He had promised Abraham and Isaac in previous years (Gen. 28:13-15). Please take a moment and notice the responses Jacob had to this prophetic dream.

### He Awoke

Jacob first, *“awoke from his sleep and said, ‘Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.’ And he was afraid and said, ‘How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.’ And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it”* (Gen. 28:16-18).

What does this account teach us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? First, just as Jacob awoke, we need to wake up to the realities around us (v. 16). Jacob realized that God was with him. In like manner, we need to awaken from our spiritual slumber that has us oblivious to the problems around them! (Like Jonah! - Jonah 1:5-6) Too many “religious” people are crying, *“Peace, peace; when there is no peace”* (Jer. 6:14, 8:11), and lulling people into a spiritual slumber! It is high time that all of us understood that sin and error are not to be taken lightly. Let us hear the voice of God through His word, realize the seriousness of sin, and the judgment of God, and wake up while we still can (Rom. 13:11-14)!

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## He Was Afraid

The second response to this dream was that Jacob was afraid (v. 17). He had been in the presence of God Almighty! Let me suggest that it is high time that people became afraid! Too many have an attitude of selfishness and pride, and say that they have no fear of anything. This is dangerous! God says that those who sin willfully in His sight, have nothing to look forward to except, “*a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.*” Why? Because “*it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*” (Heb. 10:26-31)! Those that have refused God’s word need to be afraid; for God’s word will judge them (and everyone) one day (Jn. 12:48).

## He Arose

Finally, Jacob arose early and built an altar and consecrated it (v. 18). The pouring of oil to consecrate an altar was a true sacrifice to God on the part of Jacob. He offered this willingly, knowing Whom he was worshipping!

Similarly, when people hear God’s word today (through the Bible), the honest hearts will have the same reaction. After awakening to the truth, and being afraid to stay in their sins, they will arise and do what God commands (Rom. 12:1-2; Heb. 5:9; Mk. 16:16). Friend, what will *you* do (II Cor. 6:2)? Choose wisely because we have no promise of tomorrow!

## Thorny Ground People

Joel Raulerson

**W**hen reading the parable of “The Sower And The Seed” in Luke 8, I have always looked at the “thorny ground” as the type of people who are only half-heartedly interested in the gospel. However, recently I have come to believe that there might be more of the “thorny ground” people in the church than we realize. The people that make up the thorny ground are not only those who have left the church altogether. The “thorny ground” also infects those among us who are not putting God first in their lives (Matt. 6:33).

The “thorny ground” people are described in Luke 8:14 as those who are choked out by the cares of the world. “*And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way **they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life,** and their fruit does*

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*not mature.*” The ground that the seed fell upon is just as fertile as the good soil (Lk. 8:15). What impedes the growth of the seed on the “thorny ground” are all the thorns, or cares of life, that get in the way of serving God. They do not grow to full maturity as godly Christians, and thus are unable to serve God as they ought. Does this sound like many Christians today?

Some of these cares and riches are lawful. 1 Timothy 5:8 says, “***But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.***” We are required to care for our family and one way we do this by focusing on our career. We work to obtain money to provide not only for our families, but also for the poor, and to be generous as God commanded in 1 Timothy 6:17-19. There, Paul wrote, “*As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be **rich in good works**, to be **generous** and **ready to share**, thus **storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future**, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.*” The danger that comes by seeking such a lifestyle is that folks find themselves not having time to serve God. The pleasures and good deeds that come about because of these riches can be great things! In fact, when exercised for a godly purpose, they can produce good fruit.

However, those same blessings that bear good fruit can also be a thorn in our lives. It is a snare when the desire is no longer to serve God, but instead to become rich (1 Tim. 6:9). Where is our focus when we are attempting to do “good works”? Are we so focused on work and family that we lose the desire to serve God in our community? Are we too busy to get out and evangelize, visit the sick, and host Bible studies? When those opportunities come up, are we taking advantage of them or is our excuse that we are too busy? Matthew 6:33 says, “*But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*” If you are not living your life with this attitude, you are the “thorny ground.”

Are we “thorny ground” people? Sadly, many churches have only a few members doing most of the work. Let that never be said of us. I recognize that life, family, and work have their commitments. We can all have time for wholesome hobbies and activities. However, let us learn to

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escape some of the less important “commitments” we have, and set our priorities straight. Let’s clean the weeds and thorns out of our lives and start producing fruit as God demands (Jn. 15:1-6).



## Spotlight On A Bible Verse: Jude 3

*“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”* Jude’s letter is unique. He had intended to write to Christians about the common salvation. However, it was necessary for him to remind folks to *“earnestly contend for the faith.”* To “contend” means to strive or agonize. Many Christians forget that being a Christian involves contending, or striving for what is right. Shame on us! Jude was stating something that Paul had taught to others (II Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:13-18). Similarly, Peter stated that fleshly lusts *“war against the soul”* (I Pet. 2:11). Let us understand that Satan is not playing with us. Why then are so many Christians playing with him? Let us open our eyes and understand that we must strive or contend with Satan and evil in this life. We are in a fight for our souls and the souls of others. God has called us to be soldiers (II Tim. 2:4). Therefore, let us do as Jude said and *“earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints”!* - Jarrod Jacobs



**“I want the truth, give me book, chapter, and verse!”**

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