

The Transformation

Genesis 28:10-22

4/20/08

Intro

As we continue our study through Genesis, we find Jacob now on the run. Jacob, the “heal-snatcher,” has made a royal mess of things by conniving and trickery and in cahoots with his mother Rebekah; he steals the blessing of his older brother Esau and as a result, Esau is now ready to kill him!

Actually it was Rebekah who decided it would be best for Jacob to leave so she came up with a cover story; Jacob needed a wife, which he did, and that if Jacob married one of the Canaanite women her life would not be worth living (using a strong dose of emotional manipulation).

Isaac agrees and sends Jacob off with his blessing and instructions to go to Rebekah’s brother, Laban. Those who have studied this story before and know a bit about the crafty, manipulative Laban, see a bit of poetic justice coming to Jacob.

So Jacob heads off to Paddan-aram to seek a wife and to run for his life, but on the way he has an encounter with God.

There are so many personal applications in this story and so we have the opportunity to learn not just from Jacob’s mistakes, but also from his relationship to God.

I. Running Doesn’t Work

- Jacob is on the run from Esau, but in reality, it’s God he’s been running from for a long time.
- Abraham was called the friend of God, Isaac was instructed by God, but Jacob has never known God, and the results are clearly seen in his life.

A. We must come to the end of ourselves

- Jacob's cunning was finally catching up to him.
- The consequences of what was in his heart were chasing him, and he was on the run.
- He had to leave the mother he loved, he deceived his father and his brother wants to kill him. In other words, conflict was all around him and he *didn't have the character to resolve anything*, instead he just kept making it worse.
- **Jacob could not have felt good about himself when he was receiving the blessing from Isaac.**

John 16:7-9, "but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;"

- God allows us to come to the end of ourselves.

Illus – Many people are very tempted by the thought of starting over. Everything is so messed up that it would be best to throw in the towel and start over. The problem I have found with this approach is that, "wherever I go, there I am." We take ourselves with us when we leave and so we take the real problem along with us.

App – verse 11 says that he came to a "certain place." It was not just another place; it was where Jacob was going to come to the end of himself. It was the *perfect* place.

- Just because times are bad doesn't mean God isn't doing anything. If God allows us to come to

the end of ourselves, then God is doing something very important.

B. You can't outrun God

- You can be sure that God had been working on Jacob's heart, but Jacob was not listening.

Illus – Jacob had been hitting 'ignore' on his cell phone for a long time. Cell phones were a great invention to help us stay in touch with our kids and then someone had to come along and invent the 'ignore' button.

- God tries to get our attention as well because He has a much better plan for our lives, if we would just stop running from God.

Illus – One of the best illustrations of this is Jonah. Asked to go to Nineveh, he goes the opposite way toward Tarshish in what is Spain today. The ship then comes to a terrible storm – time to meet God!

We think we're running away from God, but God is there waiting for us!

Jonah 2:3-4, "All Your breakers and billows passed over me. So I said, 'I have been expelled from Your sight. Nevertheless I will look again toward Your holy temple.'"

- Soon he is giving thanks to God!

Illus – Saul – kicking against the goads; God had to knock him off his horse.

Acts 9:11, And the Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of

Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying,”

II. We Need an Encounter with God

- Jacob comes to a certain place and lays down to sleep, but God is there ready to reveal Himself to Jacob.
- This is what we need. We need to come to the end of ourselves and have a “come to Jesus” meeting!
- A. His kindness leads us to repentance
 - God shows Jacob a ladder between the earth and heaven with angels ascending and descending.
 - He then gives Jacob the blessing He gave to Abraham and to Isaac. Through the seed of Jacob, “All the families of the earth will be blessed.” And, “I will be with you...”
 - Notice he didn’t lecture, condemn, or rebuke...

Romans 2:4, Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

App – God knows that we must change the desire of our heart. Change comes when we desire what God wants for us. We have to be willingly come.

- The problem for some, however, is that they would rather feel bad. It’s a form of self inflicted punishment...

Illus – In the old days people used to sit in a little round tub to take a bath. The problem is that they would sit there in their own dirty water. It’s a picture of wallowing in self pity.

- There is something somewhat comforting in self pity, is there not?

Illus – Remember breaking up with a girl friend and wallowing in the “feelings?” We would take a long drive, put in the 8 track of Gemini and start singing, “Feelings, nothing more than feelings... tear drops, rolling down on my face.”

B. God has a wonderful plan for your heart

- There is a famous gospel tract called the Four Spiritual Laws and one of those was stated as, “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.”
- The problem as I saw it was that people were looking for God’s plan for their lives more than they wanted a personal relationship with God.
- The transformation of God in us is centered on what God is doing in bringing us to a personal relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ.
- God has a wonderful plan for our heart, to transform us by His Word.

Romans 12:2, And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,

Philippians 1:6, being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; NKJV

- Jacob awoke and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.”
- There was spiritual activity all around Jacob and he didn’t know it.
- There is also spiritual activity all around us.

App- Jesus is the connection between heaven and earth and His Spirit is filling our hearts and moving in the church even now.

Illus – In John 1, Jesus is calling Nathanael...

John 1:43-51 You will see greater things than these.

C. Respond with sincere worship

- Jacob’s response is powerful to see. He rises early, filled with awe of God, and sets up an altar to worship God. He then calls that place Bethel, or ‘house of God.’
- Worship is the right response of the heart to what God has done for us. We were made for worship because in worship we give a response to God for all He has done for us.
- There were then three parts in Jacob’s responding in worship.
- First, he set up an altar – here’s my heart.

- Second, he looked to God to be with him and help him along the way – here’s my life.
- Finally, he committed a tithe of all that he had – here’s my worship in trusting you with all that I have.

App – when we receive tithes and offerings we make a point of reminding people that this is part of our worship in trusting God with all we have.

- We need a personal relationship with God as well and that is possible because of Jesus Christ, the only way to heaven – and our response should be personal as well.

Psalm 86:3-12 To You I lift up my soul