

Genesis: From Creation to New Creation

Genesis 35:1-36:43

"Jacob Becomes Israel"— July 23, 2023



Introduction

Genesis 35 marks the end of Jacob's story. His life has been filled with ups and downs - faith and fear. We must remember that God's power is not limited. Jacob's story reveals the glory of God and how He uses dysfunctional people to bring about His glorious plan.

Philippians 1:6 reminds us that God will complete the work He started in us. We can be confident in that. It is good news for us especially when we sin, drift, or become cold in our faith. What if completing His good work in us involves being uncomfortable, going through a trial, or facing the impossible? It doesn't **feel** good, but there is a difference between what we feel and what is real.

The first readers of Genesis struggled with their feelings about the hard journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. How could they get back on track after wandering in the wilderness for 40 years? How can we get back on track when we go through difficult times, questioning God, drifting, or feeling cold?

Sermon Outline

1. God's correction leads to our repentance. Chapter 35:1-8
2. God's comfort leads to our reassurance. Chapter 35:9-15
3. God's completing leads to our reliance. Chapter 35:16-29 through 36:1-43

Read & Discuss

1. Read Chapter 35:1-8

Jacob has been a schemer. He had to leave Bethel, but God promised to bring him back. Before heading back to Bethel, he stopped in Shechem. His partial obedience was really disobedience. And it led to brutal consequences, leaving Jacob's family in a mess. But God wasn't done with Jacob.

This word from God to Jacob is a new beginning, a loving correction, and a challenge. God's call to leave Shechem was one that led Jacob out of "security." He had to trust. God's word often challenges what we feel. When has obedience to God been challenging and uncomfortable for you? What happened when you obeyed? God's correcting words may be painful for a moment, but they are life and peace to those who listen to them.

Jacob responded in repentance. His first step was to put away the foreign gods. God had been faithful to Jacob to guide and protect. The foreign gods were powerless. Yahweh was their God, but his family still had a few gods tucked away "just in case." It's easy to sit in judgment, but this is a good warning for us. We come to church, profess our faith, but we are often still like Jacob's family, hiding our gods, looking for security. We hold on to them with a closed fist, not wanting to let go. What are the false gods that you have that are keeping you from trusting God completely? It is God's kindness that leads us to repentance.

Jacob also told them to change their garments. It wasn't just a matter of putting away false gods; they had to have new affections. It's not enough to put away sin; we must have a new affection for God. God must create this within us as we read His word and gather in worship with His people. How have your affections for God grown over the course of your spiritual walk? Will you pray that God will give you a great affection for Him?

We read in verse one "God said," then in verse two "Jacob said." This is how you also should lead your family. See what God says in His word then impart that to your family. What if you haven't done that well? Jacob can be an encouragement to you. What if you don't know where to start? Take an opportunity to talk with an older Christian and learn from their examples. Is there someone you can meet with who will help you grow in your faith and learn to lead your family well?

2. Read Chapter 39:9-15

As you read these verses there may be a sense of “de ja vu.” Moses intentionally reminds the reader about all the promises that God had made to Jacob. Repeating these promises was an encouragement to Him. God hadn't changed. He is faithful. We, too, can forget the promises of God and need regular reminders. This is what we do on Sunday morning. We read, sing, pray, hear, and see God's word each week as a reminder. God is not “hit or miss” when keeping His promises. He keeps His promises 100% of the time.

God changed Jacob's name in chapter 32, but Jacob didn't change. It was as if Jacob had forgotten who God is. The reminder here was an encouragement to Jacob and also to us. He knew God's promises to him, but he didn't **use** that truth? Do you see yourself in Jacob here? Do you know **and** use God's truth? Satan is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. ([1 Peter 5:8](#)) We must know God's truth and use it. What are some ways you have used God's truth in times when you are challenged to trust God? We must also be like the Psalmist and hope continually. ([Psalm 71:14](#)) How do we have a hope that is continuous? Continual hope relies on continually coming to God throughout the day. Meditate on God's word. When God confirms His word to us, His comfort leads to our reassurance.

3. Read Chapter 35:16 through 36:1-43

While chapter 35 soars with the comfort of God's word, it also has an ache of grief. There are three funerals. Grief often comes to the people of God in waves that may seem overwhelming. ([Psalm 42:7](#)) While it was a time of sadness and grief, it was also a time of transition. Isaac died, and Jacob was left to lead the family. The family was still a mess, but here, Moses gives us the names of Jacob's twelve sons which reflected the twelve tribes of Israel. The family was complete, and God would use these twelve tribes to build the nation of Israel.

In the first eleven chapters of Genesis, we see a lot of things happen in a short time. Then, in chapter twelve, things slow down with the spotlight on Abraham and his descendants. What do we do with Chapter 36 and the genealogy of Esau? He married outside of the faith and moved out of the Promised Land into Edom. There, he built an empire. Moses repeated the phrase, “Esau is Edom,” putting the spotlight on Esau's swift rise to power and wealth. Almost immediately his sons became the chiefs and kings of Edom. This is in contrast to what we see in chapter 37:1 - Jacob still didn't have the land.

“Secular greatness grows more rapidly than spiritual greatness.” What is your reaction to that statement? How do you feel when you see the wicked prosper? Can you relate to the Psalmist in [Psalm 37](#) and [73](#)? Remember, God is faithful to His people.

When we read about Rachel's death, we can be sure that this would have been devastating to Jacob. She realized she was dying, so she named her son Ben-oni meaning “son of my sorrow.” It reflected her hopelessness and despair. Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, changed the child's name to Benjamin - “son of my right hand.” Here we see Jacob leaning into the providence of God. He wasn't denying the pain, but even in this, God is good and would use it for good. Jacob was trusting in God.

How have you leaned into God's providence in your trying times? How can we be sure that God's good work in us is good news? The best answer we have is Jesus. ([Romans 8:32-34](#)) Jesus left the right hand of God to become the Son of sorrow for sinners like us. Do you see God's heart in this? Do you see God's desire in this? It is His desire to bless us. When our sin got in the way, God sent Jesus. Have you put your faith in Christ alone? He will be faithful to His word to forgive and reconcile you to the Father. If you are a Christian, come to God continually, even when it is hard. God is good. His work in us is good news.

Prayer of Response

1) After hearing God's Word, what sin do I need to *confess*? From what do I need to *repent*?

2) How should my life be lived this week based on what I have heard? What should I *understand*, *believe*, *desire*, or *do*?

Spend time praying together in response to God's word asking for His help and greater faith to follow Him in the week to come. If you missed the sermon on Sunday or would like to listen again, visit our website at fbcum.org

Next week's sermon text: we turn to Genesis 37:1-36 “The Fruit of Demonic Wisdom”
