

# Genesis Ch35v1-15 - Grace - Again!

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Date: 25 June 2023

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[ 0 : 00 ] Have a good time. We'll see you at tea and coffee time afterwards. For the rest of us, please turn in your Bibles to Genesis 35, please.

Genesis chapter 35. We've been following the true story, the true account of Abraham and Isaac, which we've completed.

And today we finish up with the account of Jacob. Jacob has been a friend to us over these weeks. It's been encouraging to learn from his life, but ultimately to meet the God that he knew and the God who intervened in his life.

So Genesis 35, we're going to read from verses 1 to 15. Let's hear God's words together.

[ 1 : 25 ] Then God said to Jacob, Go up to Bethel, settle there. Build an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau.

So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you and purify yourselves and change your clothes.

Then come, let us go up to Bethel, where I will build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone.

So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears, and Jacob buried them under the oak at Shechem.

Then they set out, and the terror of God fell on the towns all around them, so that no one pursued them. Jacob and all the people with him came to Luz, that is, Bethel, in the land of Canaan.

[ 2 : 33 ] And there he built an altar, and he called the place El Bethel, because it was there that God revealed himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother.

Now Deborah, Rebecca's nurse, died and was buried under the oak outside Bethel. So it was named Alon Bakuth.

After Jacob returned from Padam Aram, God appeared to him again and blessed him. And God said to him, Your name is Jacob, but you will no longer be called Jacob, your name will be Israel. So he named him Israel. And God said to him, I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and increase in number.

A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will be among your descendants. The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I also give to you, and I will give you this land to your descendants after you.

[ 3 : 44 ] Then God went up from him at that place where he had talked with him. And Jacob set up a stone pillar at that place where God had talked with him.

And he poured out a drink offering on it. He also poured oil on it. And Jacob called the place where God had talked with him. Bethel.

Well, let's keep our Bibles open and we'll pray. Amen. Our Father God, we thank you so much for this true account of the life of Jacob and all that he did, all that's recorded here for us.

For through it we meet the living God, the same God who is speaking to us now through your word. And so it is our prayer that we would encounter you afresh, that we would know you greater and deeper. And most of all, we will come to see the wonder of your grace to people like us, your faithfulness and your goodness.

[ 5 : 17 ] So help us now, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, what do you do with a young lad who smashes his father's car, promises not to do it again, and then goes off and smashes his father's car?

Well, I thought I was a done for. And yet, to my surprise, within a week, I was back driving again in my dad's car. Now, maybe you think of that and you think, well, your dad was pretty careless and reckless to let you back in his car, wasn't he?

Well, for me, from my perspective, it was grace upon grace. You see, God has a habit of not giving up on failures and troublemakers.

And that's certainly been the case with our friend Jacob. We might think it's been reckless and careless of God to hang in with Jacob.

But from Jacob's perspective, it is grace upon grace. You see, that's what grace is.

[ 6 : 36 ] It's receiving from God what we don't deserve again and again and again and again. It's what we might call the cycle of grace.

It just keeps going round and round and round. In our text this morning, there are three big things we want to learn about God's grace towards us.

The first is relentless grace. Relentless grace. Now, if we want to capture this relentless grace, we need to know what Jacob has been up to.

The last time we met Jacob, it was back in chapter 32, where we had encountered Jacob in a wrestle with God and Jacob came away from that blessed.

He was all fired up and ready to do God's will, going back to meet his brother Esau. Everything was going to be good again. Well, it seems Jacob has begun to drift again.

[ 7 : 47 ] Look back with me to chapter 33. Having been promised by God that God would be with him, that he would meet his brother and everything would be okay, God called him to go back to the promised land.

Chapter 33, verse 17. Jacob, however, went to Succoth, which, well, it's not in the promised land. And there, Jacob built a place for himself and he made shelters for his livestock and he called that place Succoth, which means shelters, which means he basically settled down there for a couple of years.

He didn't go where God commanded him to go. And then in chapter 34, we find he's in trouble with the locals. Horrifically, his daughter is raped.

But instead of doing something about it, look at chapter 34, verse 5. When Jacob heard that his daughter Dinah had been defiled, his sons were in the fields with his livestock, so what did he do?

[ 9 : 06 ] He did nothing until they came home. What kind of father is that? In fact, if we read on in chapter 34, it seems that he was more interested in keeping his own peace and security and not upsetting the locals any further and didn't want to do anything about it.

There's no running to God and asking for help. There's no prayers. He doesn't get out his Bible. He delays and he dithers.

It seems Jacob is doing his own thing again. All of which brings us to our text in chapter 35 where we meet God's relentless grace.

What does God do with a serial failure like Jacob? Well, look at verse 1 of chapter 35. Then God said to Jacob, Now that should just shock us.

Jacob doesn't get the silent treatment. God doesn't take the huff and refuse to speak. In fact, God takes the initiative again because God always takes the initiative in people's lives and he goes after Jacob.

[ 10 : 30 ] He pursues him. God sees his wandering heart and he goes after him again. He speaks to him.

But perhaps what is more amazing is what God actually says. Look at verse 1. God said to Jacob, Go up to Bethel and settle there and build an altar there to God who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau.

Why is he to go back to Bethel? Well, Bethel has history with Jacob. Go back with me please to chapter 28.

This is about 35 years before. 35 years before. Here Jacob is on the run from his brother Esau. He's stolen his brother's blessing. His brother is out to murder him and kill him. So Jacob flees for his life and he stops for the night.

[ 11 : 39 ] He lays down to sleep and he has a vision of God and God is coming down these great steps to meet with him. God present with a rebellious sinner like Jacob and look what God says to him in verse 15 of chapter 28.

Here's the one who's just stolen his brother's blessing and God says I am with you and I will watch over you wherever you go and I will bring you back to this land.

I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you. This was the place where God confronted Jacob with his amazing grace.

Now go back to chapter 35. This is 35 years later and God comes to Jacob again and God says to Jacob let's go back to Bethel settle settle there build an altar there to God who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau.

Back to Bethel back to where this all started back to the place of grace. You see this is Jacob's life isn't it?

[ 13 : 14 ] This is a summary of what his life has been. It starts with grace and it will finish with grace. God is relentless year after year in chasing and pursuing and calling his wandering and wayward people.

And isn't that what God is exactly doing right now as we listen to his word? God because now as God speaks to us through scripture his message is still the same.

He's bringing us back again time and time again to the beginning where God demonstrates his grace in all its fullness. We've sung about it this morning.

We've already read about it. He brings us back to Christ and his cross and he shows us how Jesus died for our sin our past present and future sins.

He shows us that our walk with God always starts with grace. It continues with grace and it will finish with grace.

[ 14 : 26 ] Now I don't know about you but that's good news for Jacob like me because don't we wander and drift all the time?

Don't our hearts grow cold? Don't we forget God? Don't we fail him in what we should be doing? Well let us listen afresh to God's word today.

Let's go back to Bethel. Let's go back to that place of grace where God first intervened into our life and changed us and has continued with us and will be there in the future.

So first relentless grace. Second there's transforming grace.

Grace is relentless it continues after us but it never leaves us where we are. Grace is not a license just to live as we please and go oh it's okay God will forgive me.

[ 15 : 41 ] No grace changes us and it transforms us. Look at the impact it has on Jacob verse 2. Jacob said to his household and all who are with him get rid of the foreign gods you have and purify yourselves and change your clothes.

In other words this is a fresh start a new beginning because if we're going to be devoted and loyal to this God of grace we need to clear out all of the gods and the idols that we carry with us in our life.

Now we don't have to live back in Jacob times to figure out what a God is. We've all got our own little gods that we carry around with us.

A God is something or someone that we must have to get us through life. And we look to these gods for our peace and our happiness our hopes and our dreams and we think that if I could just have this new job or a successful family or a secure pension then I'm going to be happy if I could have better health or more friends or greater freedom then I will be satisfied.

Now these things are not bad things many of them are good things to pursue but can't they become distractions? They begin to consume our thinking and drive our decisions.

[ 17 : 21 ] they become replacements for the one true and only God. So how do we get rid of the gods that we carry around with us and build our lives on?

How do we purify ourselves from these gods? Well we set our focus on the one true God of grace. Look at verse three. Jacob says to all his family come let us go up to Bethel where I will build an altar to God who answered me in the day of distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone.

Now why would you ever turn away from a god like this? You see the gods of our making let us down all of the time. But the true God verse three well he answers me in all of my distress.

He hears me. He is concerned for me. He knows what I'm going through in my life. He sees it all and he provides all that I need as I go through life.

[ 18 : 45 ] And this same true God is the God who is with me wherever I go. He never leaves me, never abandon me. There is nowhere I can go, not even the depths of my greatest sin.

There is nowhere where I can go where he is not. You see in all his wanderings Jacob could look back and see a God who has been faithful and loyal and dependable.

He's been there at every twist and turn, every disaster and every disobedience. Here is a God who doesn't give up despite the sin and the mess that we have caused.

So for Jacob and his family to get rid of the gods, well it meant living a daily life of repentance. We see that in verse 4.

They gave Jacob all the foreign gods that they had in the rings and the ears collections that they had gathered and Jacob buried them under the oak at Shechem.

[ 19 : 57 ] He put them to death. Now don't we have gods ourselves that we need to bury? Distractions and desires in our own lives that we need to put to death.

What are they? Well you know what they are. They are the things that we go to in our minds all the time even now as we're thinking they consume us and they keep us from looking to God.

But how do we put them to death? How do we bury these gods? Well we don't do it by making promises to ourselves and to God to say well I'm going to do better this time.

I'm going to make a better job of my life. No what we do is we fill our minds with the greatness and glory of God. We set our hearts on him.

We gaze at his beauty and his goodness. Verse three God who answers us in our distress and who is with us wherever we go.

[ 21 : 09 ] This is the God we fill our minds with. This is the vision that is set before us. You see as we focus as we meditate and reflect on God instead of being distracted by these little gods we're beginning to be attracted by his amazing grace.

We're drawn to him more and more. You see all that we ever need is found in this God of grace. We don't need to look elsewhere because that's what grace is. It's receiving from God what we don't deserve again and again and again and so we gather together as we are today to remind ourselves to fill our vision with the greatness and glory of God so that we are attracted to his beauty and not distracted by our helpless gods.

So there's relentless grace there's transforming grace and then there's promised grace.

So in obedience to God verse 6 Jacob and all the people with him came to Bethel in the land of Canaan just as God had said all those years ago he comes back to the beginning verse 9 after Jacob returned from Padam Aram that is as he came back to Bethel God appeared to him again and blessed him now isn't that wonderful the writer wants us to take note end of verse 9 God appeared to him again and blessed him because this is the God who just does not give up he is relentless in pursuit of his people there are a hundred reasons why

[ 23 : 26 ] God should not show up again but he does God comes again to Jacob to remind him of his promised grace verse 10 he says no longer will you be called Jacob but you will be called Israel this is you're a new person you're changed I'm giving you a new name verse 11 and God said to him I am God almighty I am the all powerful God I'm the one who's created all things I own all things I rule all things I am sovereign over everything and over everyone I am God almighty be fruitful and increase in number and a nation and a community of nations will come from you how big and how great and awesome is that he's just a small family but he's going to have nations and out of those nations will come more and more verse 12 and the land

I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you and I will give this land to your descendants after you God will these are God's extravagant promises that God will have a people living in God's place who will enjoy God's presence so that they can be a blessing to those around them these promises are not new these are the promises we've already seen that God gave to Jacob's father Isaac and to his grandfather Abraham in fact these promises aren't new to Jacob either he's heard them all before so why does God take the trouble to go and repeat them all over again well go back with me please to chapter 28 chapter 28 remember we've already read from here this morning reminding us that well we can see it in chapter 28 verse 14 that the descendants will be like the dust of the earth they're going to be a great big nation

God says I'm going to bring you back to the land I'm going to be present with you I'm not going to leave you here 35 years ago Jacob first heard these promises from God and in response Jacob makes a promise to God look at verse 20 then Jacob made a vow saying if God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's household then the Lord will be my God I'm going to be for you God I'm going to be with you you're going to bring me back again I promise God I promise well for the next 35 years after that promise Jacob would spend his time breaking that promise and making new promises and breaking those promises round and round it went for 35 years let's go back to chapter 35 so why does

God repeat these same promises again to Jacob at Bethel well to show Jacob that if the promises ever depended on Jacob then it's doomed to failure it's just not going to happen in other words God is coming to Jacob afresh to say I am the promise making promise keeping God what I say is what I do you fail I'm faithful it depends on me Jacob it all depends on me it's all promised grace because that's what grace is it's receiving from God what we don't deserve again and again and again the question is how long could this cycle of grace go on for how long is God going to persevere with the family through whom he gave his promises well

God did persevere didn't he and God did bring about that person that someone who was deserving of his promise someone who was faithful and in Jesus we meet that person the God man who comes who lives the faithful and dependable life for us who fulfills the promises so that the promises would always flow to us in grace you see God had made a promise that he would have a people and they would live in his place and they would enjoy God's presence and they would be a blessing to those around him God says I will do it and here we are what how many thousands of years later from this time of Jacob isn't this what Karageline Baptist Church is God's people in [29:19] God's place in this community enjoying God's presence and blessing those around us within this community with the good news of God's grace how did it ever happen look at us we're messes we're failures but how God has been faithful to his promise not just 35 years but centuries if it depended on us we are doomed to failure it's all promised grace now you might think this is a very careless and reckless kind of God but for those who believe it's grace upon grace and we need to remember that look at verse 14

Jacob set up a stone pillar at the place where God talked with him verse 15 and Jacob called that place where God had talked with him Bethel have you ever set up a pillar do you have memories of God's grace are there points in your time of life that you remember distinctly God intervening God speaking to you through your word coming to you afresh and you remember yes that pillar of grace God has been good I had that experience not too long ago I was invited back to Waterford to where I grew up there was a pastor being installed to the church there a new pastor and I was invited along with lots of others and the service wasn't held in the church but in a school the school I used to go to when I was younger and there I sat in this room with lots of other people it was the same classroom I'm just getting upset now and there I was and the best I ever did was to say to God you leave me alone and I'll leave you alone 35 years later God's grace has been with me every step of the way your life is a pillar of grace God has been good to you he's been good to me we've all got our memories of what

God has done but don't we gather together like this isn't that the reason why we gather round the Lord's table when we meet together because that's where it all starts we come back to grace we gaze on the beauty of the one true God who answers us in our distress who's with us wherever we go and together we rest on his blessings to us you might think this God is careless and reckless but for Jacob's like you and I it's grace upon grace amen let's pray father god thank you thank you for your work in our life thank you for your amazing grace that doesn't give up but continues to pursue us father in response and by your holy spirit's help would you enable us to put to death to bury the gods the idols that we carry that offer us nothing that are in the end are helpless and hopeless but help us that we might trust and rest in the

God who hears us and the God who is with us you have been so faithful you are faithful to this church and we look forward to the future resting in your promised grace to come thank you God in Jesus name amen we're going to sing together in response and I hope that this is a song you can sing maybe it's a song you sing truly for the first time as you come face to face and encounter God's grace sacrifice■■■■■■■■■■ j j years he he