

Genesis Ch28v10-22 - Grace Comes Down

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Preacher: Jonny Grant

[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Genesis 28. Sorry, I'm just waiting on some water to arrive. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

So we've been looking at this family, the family of Abraham, his son Isaac and Isaac's son Jacob.

[1 : 47] And this is where we turn to today as we think about Jacob, this ancient family that yet speaks to us today. As God works and deals with them, it's the same God who works in us.

So let's hear God's word, Genesis 28, starting at verse 10. Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran.

When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep.

He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth with its top reaching to heaven. And the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

There above it stood the Lord. And he said, I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac.

[2 : 53] I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south.

All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and 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. When Jacob woke from his sleep, he thought, Surely the Lord is in this place and I was not aware of it.

He was afraid and said, How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God. This is the gate of heaven.

Early the next morning, Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head, set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it.

[4 : 00] He called that place Bethel. Through the city used to be called Luz. 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.

And this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house. And of all that you give me, I will give you a tenth.

Well, let's keep our Bibles open and let's pray. Father God, and by your Spirit will you be our teacher this morning.

That the words that I speak would be words from God. words that you use to change each of us.

That we would stand in awe of how great you are and be amazed at your wonderful grace to people like us.

[5 : 33] teach us. Teach us. Work in us, we pray. Amen. Well, Jacob is not in a good place.

His sinful choices and selfish decisions have begun to catch up with him. You see, with the help of his scheming mother, Jacob had deceived his father and he had robbed his brother of his blessing.

And the effects were devastating and destructive. You can look back to chapter 27, verse 41. Here's how Jacob's brother responded to Jacob's deceiving and lies.

27, verse 41. Esau held a grudge against his brother Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. He said to himself, The days of mourning for my father are near.

Then I will kill my brother Jacob. So in fear of his life, back to chapter 28, verse 10, Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran.

[6 : 50] When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Now we don't know the name of this place where he stopped for a sleep, but I guess we could call it Not in a Good Place.

Verse 11. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. Picture him there all alone.

The only thing that he owns is a stone. To put his head on. Now our stories and struggles may differ, but I think we understand that place.

You may have a friend or someone in your family who's in that kind of place right now. In fact, you might be here this morning and you find yourself in that place.

Maybe it's been your sinful decisions or selfish choices that leave us not in a good place. Or perhaps it's been what others have done.

[8 : 08] Or the circumstances we just find ourselves in and we say this is not a good place. How does God respond to Jacob in such a situation?

How does he respond to us today? What kind of counsel can we offer to our friends and family, to one another when we are not in a good place?

What do we say? Well, in our text this morning, we're going to discover that there is no place we can go. There is no depth that we could possibly descend where God is not there.

Four big things we want to see this morning is God's grace, God's promise, God's presence, and God's assurance.

This is how God responds when we are not in a good place. First, let's be surprised by God's grace.

[9 : 21] God's response is certainly not how we might respond to deceivers and robbers. Look at verse 12. Jacob had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth with its top reaching into the heavens.

What's going on here? Well, as he looked in his dream, there were angels of God and they were ascending and they were descending up and down the steps.

What's going on? What's going to happen to Jacob? Verse 13. There above it stood the Lord.

Or some of our translations might have there beside him stood the Lord. You see, we mightn't bother with a Jacob, but God is desperately concerned for Jacob.

And let's be clear, this is not a stairway or a ladder for Jacob to somehow climb up to God. This is a vision in which God, the Almighty, descends down to Jacob.

[10 : 37] Remember, Jacob has gone to sleep. He hasn't read his Bible that night. He hasn't done his bedtime prayers. There's no calling out to God for help.

It's not Jacob who's lying there looking for God. It's God who is coming down to Jacob. God takes the initiative.

He intervenes and he descends in grace. It's not what we expect. It takes us by surprise because this isn't what is deserved.

And what does God do when he comes down? Well, he speaks a word of grace.

Verse 13, There beside him stood the Lord and he said, I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac.

[11 : 38] Jacob, just as I was God to Abraham your grandfather, just as I was God to your father Isaac, so Jacob, I am your God too.

Silence can be a terrible thing, can't it? I think we've all known this experience where you've done something or you've said something that has offended the other person, maybe a spouse or someone within your family or someone in your work and you know the response you get, you get the silent treatment.

They won't talk to you. They cut off communication, they don't answer your text, they might even block you, they disown you, you know that silent treatment.

Well, that's how we might deal with each other but God doesn't give the silent treatment. He moves towards us, he always does.

You see, there is no place we can be in, there's no depth that we can descend, where God doesn't come and speak a word of grace.

[12 : 52] I am your God too. You see, our society, our culture works on the basis that if you want to get on in life or if you find yourself in a difficult situation, you've got to pull yourself together and lift yourself up because no one else is going to do it for you.

You've got to get on and make your life better. Instead, the message today is to stop and wonder at the grace of God who sees us where we are, who takes the initiative, who intervenes, who descends into our darkest place, who enters into our not in a good place and speaks a word of grace.

I am your God too. So first, let us be surprised by the grace of God.

second, let us be encouraged by God's promise. You see, God's word of grace is filled with great promise.

Here God reminds Jacob of what he is going to do. In fact, this shouldn't be new to us. These are the same promises that God gave to Abraham and to Isaac.

[14 : 28] let's see what they are. Verse 13, there was the promise of land. God said, I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying.

Beginning of verse 14 is the promise of a great nation. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth. You're going to spread out north, south, east, and west. You're going to be a huge nation.

And the rest of verse 14 is the promise of being a blessing to all nations. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you. This is what I'm going to do for you, Jacob.

Well, all that sounds grand and great, doesn't it? But what about the now? You see, Jacob's present experience, lying down with his head on a stone, is a long way off God's great promises.

Instead of having a land, all he's got is a stone. Instead of being a great nation, all he is, is himself. He hasn't even got a wife or children.

[15 : 40] Instead of being a blessing, well, he's been a curse to his own family and he's running for his life. God's great promises, yes, they're great, they're brilliant, but what about me today?

God's promises are important to us. They mightn't be fully and immediately fulfilled, but they will be in God's time.

You see, what Jacob had to understand and what we need to learn and to grasp is that there is a now and a not yet to God's promises.

There's a now and a not yet to God's promises. Look what God says to Jacob in these verses. They're all future, aren't they? He says, I will give you a land.

I will make you into a great nation. I will make you a blessing to the nations. In other words, not all of God's promises are here and now.

[16 : 43] Most are yet to come. Now, from our perspective today, if we are Christians, we have many promises to come.

not least the promise of the new heavens and the new earth, the new creation, the ultimate land, where God's people from all nations will be gathered and will enjoy God's blessing forever and forever, the eternal home where there is no more suffering, no more death, and no more tears.

others. These are God's grand, big promises to people like us, to his children. One day he's telling us that we will be raised with brand new bodies.

One day we are going to enter into our glorious inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. Great promises for us. But what about now?

What about today? What about the place I am in right now? Well, listen to what God says.

[17 : 59] Verse 15. I am with you. I will watch over you wherever you go.

I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you. No longer is it future and I will, but, verse 15, I am.

I am with you when you are not in a good place. And I'm not about to leave you there either.

I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you. You see, there are many promises yet to come.

But as we wait in the now and look forward to the not yet, please hear God's encouraging promise. God's promise, I am with you.

[19 : 08] I am not going to leave you. I will bring you into a new place, a place where you will one day experience the blessings of God forever and forever.

forever. And I will stay with you until you get there. Isn't that the message of Psalm 23 that we all know so well?

Listen, listen to these words. Even though I walked through the darkest valley, that was his not in a good place.

even though I walked through the deepest, darkest valley, I will fear no evil. Why? For you are with me.

Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. Surely your goodness and love will follow me.

[20 : 14] How long? All the days of my life. and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Jacob, I am with you. I will not leave you. You see, sometimes what we need to hear is that word of grace, God's promise of encouragement.

Today, I am enough for you. today, I am sufficient. So, we are encouraged by the promises of God.

Third, surprised, encouraged, let us be astonished by God's presence. promise. You see, the reality of what's going on for Jacob begins to hit home.

Verse 16, when Jacob woke from his sleep, he thought, surely the Lord is in this place and I was not aware of it.

[21 : 32] You see, Jacob not only has God's great promises, Jacob also has the promiser. God himself is present.

The God who made him, the God of the universe, is in this place. Jacob is in the presence of greatness and glory. Verse 17, he was afraid and said, how awesome is this place.

This is none other than the house of God. This is the gate of heaven. God has come down and has made his home with Jacob in that moment, in that place.

This is heaven on earth. But for Jacob, God's presence was only ever going to be a temporary experience.

Jesus. So to remember what had happened, well, what did he do? Verse 18, he took that stone that he used as a pillow and he set it up as a pillar, as a memorial, and he put oil on it, and then verse 19, he called that place Bethel, which means, if you look at the bottom of your Bible, the little note there, it means the house of God.

[22 : 58] God had come down to him. This was an experience he would never forget and he wanted to remember it.

You see, this is the kind of God that we have. God doesn't hide himself from messy, broken people like us. He moves into the mess.

He reaches down to sinners like us. God himself comes to us. In fact, what God did for Jacob, God has done for us in a full and complete way.

Turn with me, please, to John's Gospel. John's Gospel, chapter one. verse one.

Here the apostle John captures for us what God has done. We're going to pick it up in verse one.

[24 : 18] John chapter one, verse one. In the beginning, beginning. This is before time began. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

And what did the Word do? Well, look down at verse 14. The Word became flesh, became like one of us, and made his dwelling among us.

we have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

God moved into the world through the person of Jesus. He moved into our place. He set up home in the neighbourhood, as it were.

He did this so that we might know and experience God intimately and personally. You see, Jesus tells us why he came into the world.

[25 : 26] Go to the end of chapter 1, verse 51. Here Jesus is speaking with one of the first followers and look to what he says, listen to what he says.

He's speaking about his death to come. Chapter 1, verse 51, he added, very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on, what are they going, on the Son of Man, on Jesus.

You see, there's no steps or stairs here because Jesus is the stairway to God. through his death on the cross, Jesus will open up the way into God's presence.

Jesus comes to take our sin and judgment so that people like us can know God intimately and personally. In fact, it is God who makes his home with us.

Listen to what Jesus says to those who follow him. It comes later in John 14 verse 23. Jesus says, my father will love them.

[26 : 48] He's talking to followers of Jesus. My father will love them and we will come to them and make our home with them. God takes up residence in our life eternally so whatever place we are in, he is with us in that place.

God himself is there. You see, if we are trusting in Jesus, we are continually in the presence of greatness and glory and grace.

We can't get away from it. No matter how dark or how deep the place we are in, God is present. His greatness and glory and grace is among us.

Now, doesn't God's presence astonish you? Don't you, like Jacob, want to cry out in worship, how awesome is this place?

You see, sometimes we need to stop. We need to sit. Or better still, we need to get on our knees, whether that's in the quietness of our own homes, and just bow down in thankfulness and praise to say, God is with me.

[28 : 15] God is with me. So, third, let us be astonished by the presence of God in us and with us. fourth, we're changed by God's assurance.

You see, when we, let's go back to Genesis 28, you see, when we encounter God's grace for ourselves, when we experience God's presence, it doesn't leave us where we are.

He takes us out of that place and He changes us in that place. God comes close to Jacob, doesn't He?

Not to condemn him, but ultimately to change him. Look at verse 20. Jacob makes a vow, he has a promise of commitment, but notice that this is all motivated, his promise and his vow is motivated by the assurances that God gives to Jacob.

[29 : 26] It's almost a summary of everything that God has already done. Verse 20, Jacob makes a vow saying, if God or since 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, then, because of what God has done, because of this assurance, then the Lord will be my God.

This isn't an attempt to earn God's favour. Jacob has already received God's favour. This is Jacob's response to the grace and promise and presence of God.

God, because you are God to me, then you will be my God. What else could Jacob say? What else can we say to a God who has intervened in our life?

That's the impact that grace has on us. When it grabs a hold of us, it moves us to humbly say, you will be my God.

you are mine. Now, these aren't just empty promises and words from Jacob.

[30 : 58] Jacob's commitment is demonstrated in his life. Look at the end of verse 22. He says, all that you give me, I will give you a tenth.

So, all that he receives from God, he will give back. Now, I don't think we need to take from this that we must give a tenth of everything that we have.

As we read through scripture, it becomes very clear that God teaches generosity, which could be more than, it could be less than a tenth. What it means is that we give out of the blessings God has given us.

The point is, grace changed a deceiver into a giver. God's assurances to Jacob led to Jacob's commitment.

You see, when we take time to open up our Bibles, when we take time to rehearse God's assurances to us, as we reflect on God's generosity and his kindness to us, we repent of our selfish choices, and we turn and trust in the one who makes us selfless and sacrificial, we are changed into generous givers of our time and resources and our gifts to those around us because God has been good to us.

[32 : 29] God's assurances change us. So what does God do with a Jacob who is in a dark, deep place?

what does God do when we are in not a good place? Well, he intervenes by his grace.

He speaks to us his promise. He amazes us with his presence and he gives us his assurance.

He changes people like us so that we might go to others who are not in a good place today or this week.

Someone in your family, someone in your neighbourhood, someone you work with, they're not in a good place and we go and remind them of a great and glorious God.

[33 : 46] Let's pray. Father God, we are amazed, we're surprised, we're astonished that you would come close to us, that you would enter into the darkness and you would rescue us and save us and promise to be with us throughout our journey of life, whatever may come, reassuring us that you will provide for us in our journey until we see you face to face.

You will not let us down. Your grace is enough. Your presence is sufficient. Your promises are good.

How awesome, how awesome are you. Thank you, God. Amen.

Amen. Lord, we sing we sing not just because