

Return to Me

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[0 : 0 0] Let's come. This is the penultimate sermon. We'll finish this next week, and we'll do a new series later on. But we'll finish the life of Jacob. After 35, it gets very bitty. Others, Joseph now takes to the stage, but Jacob is still alive, and we'll finish looking at his life next week. But this is the penultimate sermon on this. You recall Genesis 34, things weren't going well for the family. They had arrived safely, quote, as the Scripture says in Shechem, but things were not safe for them when they were there. Dinah is raped, and the sons going this killing spree. Jacob is living in fear. He now knows you've made me a stench to the people here, and if they gather forces and come and attack me, we're finished. We will be destroyed, me and my household, he says.

So let's read from Genesis 35, verse 1. Then 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.

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 my 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 that were with him came to Luz, that is Bethel, in the land of Canaan. 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, Rebekah's nurse, died, and was buried under the oak outside Bethel. So it was named Alon-Bakuth.

After Jacob returned from Paddan, Aram, God appeared to him again and blessed him. 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 this land to your descendants after you. Then God went up from him at the place where he had talked with him. Jacob set up a stone pillar at the place where God had talked with him, and he poured out a drink offering on it. He also poured oil on it.

Jacob called the place where God had talked with him, Bethel. Then they moved on from Bethel. Sorry, then they moved on from Bethel. While they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth and had great difficulty. And she was having great difficulty in childbirth.

[3 : 31] The midwife said to her, don't despair, for you have another son. As she breathed her last, for she was dying. She called her son Ben-Oni, but his father named him Benjamin. So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath, that is Bethlehem. Over her tomb, Jacob set up a pillar, and to this day that pillar marks Rachel's tomb. Israel moved on again and pitched his tent beyond Migdal-Edar. While Israel was living in that region, Reuben went in and slept with his father's concubine, Bilhah. And Israel heard of it. Jacob had twelve sons, the sons of Leah, Reuben, the firstborn of Jacob, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun, the sons of Rachel, Joseph and Benjamin, the sons of Rachel's servant, Bilhah, Dan and Aunt Naphtali, the sons of Leah's servant, Zilpah, was Gad and Asher. These were the sons of Jacob, who were born to him in Paddan Aram. Jacob came home to his father Isaac in Mamre, near Kiriath Arba, that is Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac had stayed. Isaac lived a hundred and eighty years. Then he breathed his last, and died, and was gathered to his people, old and full of years. And his sons, Esau and Jacob, buried him. We'll end our reading at the end of this significant passage in God's Word, Genesis 35.

Well, it's just never, it's not because I think I'm a great singer and want to back up these guys, it's simply because I don't like the pulpit being empty at any time during worship. I just like somebody to be up the front leading things more than just the singing. So whether you're a good singer or not, it's just good to have the pulpit occupied morning and night when we worship. So that's why I do it, just in case you're wondering that these guys go down there and I'm up here, and it's all about me. That's not the case, it really isn't the case, that somebody's leading us in our worship. That's very important. Let's just ask for God's help as we come to the Scriptures now.

Our loving Heavenly Father, we have just been singing, open the eyes of my heart, Lord, I want to see you. Lord, we really take those words and we make them our prayer. Lord, not just to open the eyes of our mind, but the eyes of our heart, Lord, that we might love what we hear, that we might love you, that we might worship you. We remember that greatest commandment to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, not just to understand you, but to love you.

We pray, Father, that we will know something of that as we consider this passage in the moments that remain to us this evening. So, Father, just speak to us now. We ask, thrill us, Lord, with the salvation that we had, perhaps the first day we were saved. Lord, if we've not rejoiced over the fact that we're saved for a long time. Lord, may it be tonight, we pray. So, Father, bless us, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Earlier this week, I was trying to, I was looking at this passage, and it's very much to do with the faithfulness and the grace of God, and we'll look at those points in a moment or two. But I was looking for an image on the grace of God, and I went on to Google, and usually if you put stuff like that in, you'll find the word grace, and you'll find it fancy or whatever. You might find a cross or a wee somebody doing this, the grace of God. I like this image here. This was an image that, for me, this is the grace of God.

This is quite a dynamic, quite a dramatic picture in the dark clouds and this scene in heaven of the righteous wrath of God that really justly hangs over the nation. For God so loved the world, He gave His one and only Son. Whoever believes in Him has eternal life. But if we reject the Son, John 3, 36, the wrath of God remains on us. It's that word remains. It is there if we don't come to the Lord, the Savior. It remains on us. But in the gospel, in the midst of the righteousness of God, there's this light that just shines. The love, the grace, the mercy, everything good is ours. And I hope as you look at that image, as I looked at it, it's a solitary figure, and it might be just you this evening. Things might not be going well for you, and you wish maybe Monday was going to be better than it might expect to be. But the fact that God loves you and the grace of God is yours tonight, that should be enough to thrill you and to remind yourself that God loves you and you're saved by

[8 : 33] His grace. Grace is one of the greatest words in the Bible in the New Testament. Old Testament equivalent is basically God's loving kindness. But we only really appreciate the grace of God when we come to realize that we need it. You need it. You need it every day. Saving grace, sustaining grace.

And it's only when you realize the sin that's ever before you, and you just praise God that His ways are not your ways. We might give up on us, but God never gives up on us. He loves us. He demonstrated His love while we were yet sinners. Christ died for this. And that is basically the lesson that Jacob will learn in chapter 35. He's fearful about the other nations and what they will do to him because of what his sons have done. But in many ways, you should be fearful about what God would do because of what his son has done. But God comes to him and just says to him, go up to Bethel. Settle there. Remember, remember, I was the God who appeared to you. Come back. Come back to where I first met you.

And that's something we have to do as Christians many, many times. So, what have we looked at just now? In these chapters, throughout Genesis, throughout the Bible, is the unfolding plan of God for individuals, for a nation, but ultimately for nations, plural, for all the nations of the world.

And we've looked at the life of Jacob. We've looked at God's dealings with him. Despite his waywardness and his desire to run ahead of God or not to trust God, God has remained with him. And though life is hard, as he will testify to this next week, my lives have been few and they have been difficult. God has been with him wherever he has gone. The God who met him at Bethel promised this.

So, God's been good to him personally, and he knows this. But he also knows that God has a bigger plan, because God has mentioned this many times. Through you, all the peoples of the earth will be blessed.

[10 : 48] Same promise to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And three ordinary, flawed people. They're not perfect.

Sometimes we can put them in a stained glass window, as you would do with the apostles, and they weren't perfect either. Peter, James, John, sons of thunder, denying the Lord. We are all, no matter what saint has gone before us, you can make a stained glass image of them, but they are all flawed. We are all flawed. At best, we are men at best. And this is what you have here. And this is what really leaps out all the way through Jacob's life, is the grace of God, the sovereignty of God, the love of God. And he's been protecting him and so forth. And in this chapter, in many ways, it doesn't say a lot of, it doesn't say any major things new. It's simply a pulling together of everything that has gone before. One commentator, I like the way he calls this chapter, journey's end for Jacob and for Isaac. This is the end of their journey in that Jacob is returning home. His wanderings, in that big sense, have come to an end.

And his journey comes to an end. He arrives back home finally. And Isaac is called home. So I quite liked that heading. Now, last time we left Jacob, he was in Shechem and things weren't going well for him. We are few in number. If these other nations join forces against me and attack me, I and my household will be destroyed. The thing could have hit the buffers. Here is this wee map again.

It's not a great, it's not very clear, but you remember he cut across, stayed at Shechem, and basically in this chapter, he just moves further south. He doesn't get quite down to Beersheba, where he started from. He arrives back at Hebron. Isaac is obviously, it's during the time he's been away, he's moved north to Hebron. And really, that's the end of Jacob's wanderings. In that sense, in this chapter, he comes down to Hebron. And I want us to note three things as we pull some of the main themes together in this, just as we close this section. And then next week, boy, we'll be jumping about chapter here and there. We won't read it all. Most of it you will know, but Jacob will appear at various times, and ultimately going to Egypt, and Joseph is alive.

We don't have time to go through the whole of Joseph's story, but we're focusing on Jacob and how God is working in his life. But I want to pull this together. I want to look at three things very quickly this evening as he returns home. We are reminded in this chapter, first of all, of a God that is gracious. Three things about our God are seen. God is central in this passage. It's no longer Jacob and his family and what's happening to him. Chapter 34 was very much about him and his family. Chapter 35 is about God. It's about the God who's been with him wherever he has gone. It's great that it finishes in this way, the narrative to do with Jacob. And you're reminded that he's a gracious God. That should not be lost from us. The transition between 34 to 35 reveals to us that he is a gracious God. I said last week, or a few weeks ago, after everything that Jacob and his sons have done and so forth, you would be forgiven for thinking the cause is lost. If he explained that God's plan of salvation, he would choose this person, choose that person, bless them, do this, that, and the other, and this is what they're like. You would be forgiven, or the person would be forgiven if they said, so what did God do now? Did he give up on them? Did he go with somebody else? The simple truth is this. It doesn't matter who God chooses. We would all fail. We've all got feet of clay, and the patriarchs are no different. Jacob's family, the formation of the twelve tribes, the nation of Israel is no different. And the very fact that God still says, I am still your God, return to me. And this is what's happening here. The cause is not lost. The covenant still stands. The promises still stand through him, through the nation, through them. Other nations will be blessed, and so forth. And in many ways, as I said last time, this is not just grace. This is shocking grace. How can God do this? How can God forgive the worst of sins? And yet, this is God's great plan of salvation. And only grace, only shocking grace can do this. And at the end of chapter 34, Jacob is basically paralyzed by the prospect of the

[15 : 59] Canaanites coming to wreak havoc on him because of what his children have done. But God said, then God said, doesn't say, out of my sight, I want nothing to do with you. Go to Bethel. Settle there.

Build an altar to me. Draw close to me again. But he tells them to purify themselves. And we'll look at this a bit more in a minute. But he's told to go back to Bethel, the place where God met him before, who'd promised to protect him, to bring him back to his father's house in peace. And Jacob had made a vow that if God would do this, he would be his God. If God would be with him and protect him and provide, he would do this. And now he's fulfilling this vow. God is giving him the chance to return and to worship God and to build an altar back where he first met him, the beginning of his journey.

I don't know where you were saved. I don't know if you can put a location in it. I can put a location in it. I'd love to be able to put a wee spot. Every time I look at the running track in the Kelvin Hall, I wonder where it was I was saved. Because I was saved in the Kelvin Hall before it was a running track.

And I remember in Hill Street Church in Ballymena, there was a pew that Ian Paisley was saved in, in that church. And he subsequently asked for the pew. So he cut the pew and he gets the whole pew.

I wonder if I can get a bit of the running track. That was where I was saved. You'll just need to jump over that. It's great to, if you did have a time and a location, I was in my bedroom, I was in this particular house, in this street, in this room, or you were in a church, you were in a meeting.

[17 : 50] I'm not saying if it was here, you'd take a chair on the way out. But maybe it's great to be able to do it. Where you first met the Lord, and I'm talking about met Him in salvation, where you, the Holy Spirit, the light of the gospel came upon you, the stories suddenly made sense, Jesus became real, He became your Savior, your countenance changed, you knew the joy of the Lord.

To have that as your testimony. But if it's not your testimony, that's fine. Maybe you've grown up and you knew the Lord, and maybe a 15-year-old, you suddenly decided, yeah, you made a profession earlier when you were six or seven, and then it became real. Maybe it was at university or whatever.

But you know a time, perhaps, when the Lord saved you, and the journey for you began with God, when the God of your fathers, or whatever, became real. For Jacob, it was Bethel. Bethel was where God appeared to him. I am the God of your father and your grandfather. I will be with you. The promises I gave them, I will now give to you. And in this passage, we are so familiar with this, but as I said, if you were wondering, you never knew what happened after 34, you would rightfully think, well, has God given up on him? Is all the promises nothing? Not so. God is gracious, and it's the only way you can do this. For us, we often have to return to God for cleansing, and for getting back in the race. George Verwer used to always talk about, he leaked, but he knew where the refills were, the Holy Spirit, and it was a great way of speaking.

If you ever know anything of George Verwer's life, he was such an encouragement to me as a young man. He would struggle with all sorts, and it was amazing the things that he would confess to. And I was thinking, really, George? But God used that man powerfully, mightily, for the salvation of probably thousands and missionaries on the mission field. He was one of these guys who could just pick himself up, get back in the race. And that is basically what's happening here. The cause should be lost at the end of 34, but it's not, because God is gracious.

For us, it's always at the cross. Sometimes I counsel people, when they, does God really love me? The only place you can take them back to is the cross again. You can't make them feel good about them in and of themselves. Well, you're really a good person. That is not enough. That is never the way.

[20 : 33] You say, you are a sinner. You will always be a sinner. You will always fall. You will always stumble. But how were you accepted at the very beginning? By grace. All you have done is become aware of the sin that's always been there. Return to the cross, and that is where we receive forgiveness. Because at the cross, God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him, in Christ, we might become the righteousness of God. Romans 3, now, apart from the all, the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the law and the prophets testify. The righteousness is given through faith in Christ Jesus to all who believe. There's no difference between Jew and Gentile. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and we are justified freely by his grace. Freely. Free grace. Justified free grace. And in that great verse in 1 Thessalonians 5, 9, for God did not appoint us to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. Rejoice. If you rejoice in nothing, rejoice in that this evening, that you are not appointed to suffer wrath. There are people that are appointed to suffer wrath. It's not you. You're appointed for salvation. Wow, what a thing.

What a truth. You're not appointed. John's not going to suffer wrath. He's going to be saved. He is saved. And God doesn't, therefore, look lightly upon sin. He left it unpunished over the centuries, but in Christ, he punishes sin. And our sin has been dealt with. It's not just a warm, fuzzy love. It's a real, practical love. And Jacob has been commanded—it's the first time a patriarch in this passage, or in any time before—has been commanded to build an altar. Go and build an altar. Worship me. The other, usually God does something, and they voluntarily build an altar. But this is the first time. And it's a great test of faith for Jacob and obedience. Today, we don't have to build an altar. We come to the cross. We approach God's throne of grace with confidence. That is our altar. We come.

We don't have to build it. We don't have to do something. Watch me, Lord, on Monday, Tuesday. I'll try and earn my salvation. We simply come with confidence to the throne of grace. And it was here that Jacob made a vow, and now he returns, and he fulfills that vow. You know that old song, O Jesus, I have promised to serve thee to the end. I wonder if you remember, maybe not sang that the night you were saved, but that is the promise you made when you became a Christian. Not to return to Bethel of God. I will return to Bethel or Blantyre, wherever that might be for you. I don't know.

But we make that promise. O Jesus, I have promised to serve thee to the end. So, tonight, this is an opportunity for us to—maybe if we're just drifting and going through the motions—to want to serve him afresh, to really give our life to him. O let me feel thee near me, the world is ever near. I see the sights that dazzle, the tempting sounds I hear. My foes are ever near me, around me, and within.

But Jesus, draw thou nearer, and shield my soul from sin. And that should be the desire of our heart, to want to return back to a God who welcomes us, a God of grace. So, this is the first thing we see right away. It screams out, God is gracious. The cause is not lost. His love is still towards Jacob and towards his people. Secondly, he's also a holy God. He doesn't just tell him to return. He tells him how to return. He has to purify himself. So, verse 2, Jacob says to his household and to all who are with him, get rid of the foreign gods who you have with you. Purify yourself and change your clothes.

[24 : 52] The laws haven't been given. Sinai, at this point, do this, do that, and the priests haven't been established yet. This is simply what they have to do. They have to purify themselves. If they are to come to God and worship, they must come in the right way. And they have to change their outer garments, probably a kind of poncho type thing. And change of clothes represents a purified way of life.

Perhaps this is part of the spoil, the gods that they plundered in Shechem. They have to get rid of these things, things that displease God and return back to him. And they comply. They do this, verse 4, right away they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears.

And there wasn't a priest to give them to, so they bury them under the oak at Shechem. These gold-plated, probably, foreign idols, maybe part of the spoil that they took. And God says, get rid of these things, you must come, because I am a holy God. So, here we see that Jacob steps out in obedience. And it's a big step of faith, because he steps out. He's waiting on these people, attacking him. The very fact that we are told in verse 5, the terror of God falls on all the towns round about so that no one pursued him. God tells us here, the reason why he wasn't attacked and him and his household were destroyed is because I was with you. I asked you to go, I told you to go, commanded you to go there, commanded you to build an altar, and I made sure that the path was clear for you to do this. And that's exactly what Jacob does. He goes to Luz, which is Bethel, in the land of Canaan, verse 7. He builds an altar, and he calls the place El Bethel. Later on, he'll set up a pillar in chapter, in verse 14, as well. But as it says for you and I, it is the cross. We don't build an altar, but we have an altar. We have Christ, and he is the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through him. We come always through Jesus.

And then in verse 8, you have this side note about Deborah, Rebecca, Jacob's mom. Remember her? Jacob's mom, Deborah, her nurse. She's died, and we're told she's buried under the oak outside Bethel. And it's the first of three deaths that are mentioned in this chapter. It's the only time Rebecca's nurse is really named, and it seems strange that she is named, that she's died, but there's no record of Rebecca ever dying. It's a strange thing. And she probably died while he was with Laban in Paddan Aram, because surely she would have been mentioned around about this time.

But this is mentioned, but her hopes were dashed, as we mentioned earlier. She never saw her favorite son. Things never work out the way that we expect. But despite all God's planning and so forth, God is faithful. God is a gracious God and a holy God. Thirdly, and with this I'll close, we see throughout this, throughout the whole of the life of Jacob, throughout the whole of Genesis, throughout the whole of the Old Testament, the faithfulness of God. That's what really leaps out the pages of this, the grace of God and the faithfulness of God. Jacob acknowledges God's hand throughout his life.

[28 : 40] He's been with me wherever I have gone. He's provided for me. He has protected me. And God acknowledged this right in verse 1, go up to Bethel, build an altar to the God, me, I appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother. And verse 15 of chapter 28, 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. And then in verse 3, he, Jacob says, the God who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone. And here we see a God who's faithful, who has been with Jacob wherever he's gone. And Jacob has wrestled with God. He changes his name to Israel. He's wrestled with God and man. He's a fighter in that way. He presses on. He's not placid. His dad was placid.

Isaac doesn't do any great things. Abraham's a pioneer. He's a pioneer Christian. And all the promises are given to him. Isaac just gets the same promises, nothing new.

Jacob is more like his granddad in that way, wanting to get on. We were having a lunch today for Father's Day. We were in an Indian restaurant. We were talking about the patriarchs. We got chatting.

And then I was just thinking, Christians are like that. We all have the same promises, don't we? Every one of us have the same. We're under the same covenant, the new covenant, the new testament. Some of us are more like Abraham. We hear the promises and we take them and we embrace them and we're a pioneer and we're prepared to leave whatever and go and do. Others get the same promises, a bit like Isaac, and we just get the promises. But it doesn't really affect us and change as much.

Some of us are like Jacob. We wrestle. We struggle. We're still trying to get on. We're with God and we're with ourself. And we have this wrestling. Times of life up here and life down here. And their life is a bit more like that. And in some ways we are similar. But God remains faithful. He tells them to be fruitful, verse 11, and increase. A nation and a community of nations will come from you.

[30 : 56] And kings will be among your descendants. This was the promises made to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And in these few sentences in Genesis 35, everything in Jacob's life is summed up.

That I will give you this land. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth. That he had said to him, that you will spread out from the west to the east, the north and the south.

All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. Obviously, ultimately leading to Christ. But the difference between this and what happened to Abraham and to Isaac is there's a new feature in this one. Because verse 11, and kings will be among your descendants. There's that extra feature. Not just will you have many descendants, but you will have kings as part of your descendants.

I've never, I'd love to know that program, Who Do You Think You Are? I'd be surprised if there's a king in there, or probably a rogue somewhere, or somebody interesting. I'm always intrigued. I never usually watch the program, but I have watched a few when you've got like a comedian and suddenly discover they're linked to Henry VIII or something. I think, wow, how does that happen? But we are told amongst this nation of Israel, which will grow kings will come. Obviously, you think of King David, who will eventually come. But the one who is king of kings and lord of lords will be part of his dynasty. And that really is quite something. Isaiah 9, of the greatness of his government and peace, there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. I just love the fact that despite of running about here and there and being frantic, and to think that when they're in Shechem and what they're getting up to, that God still says to them, a king, kings will come from you. That is grace. That is faithfulness. And God does this. And his plan is very much on track tonight. It really is quite something. And the land will be given to them. Jacob's response is he worships, he sets up a stone pillar, verse 14, where God had talked with him. He poured out a drink offering on it, poured oil on it, and he called the place where God met him, Bethel. So here you see, when you get to this chapter, you think, all is well. He's back, he's returned, he's fulfilled his vow. God's been faithful, I've been faithful. You'd love to draw a line under this. And he rides off into the sunset. That's the movie finished. Roll the credits. Life is not like that, is it? Even in the promises throughout the book of Genesis, they're always partial in that sense. They've never fully realized it at this time. And that's what's happening here. Joy is replacing. And we see two things. Spiritual elation turns as followed by family tragedy. First, his favorite wife dies, giving birth. A second son, Benjamin. It's particularly apt in Rachel's case.

She actually prayed, may the Lord add another son to me in Genesis 30. And in her very dying moments, her prayers are answered. That's quite something, isn't it? Give me another son. And she gets another son, but she dies in the process. The Lord's ways are not our ways. I mean, who can plumb the depth of how that has worked out? But that's how her prayers were answered. And she had, she died in childbirth. It was, it was common in those days, obviously. But in her case, it was obviously very tragic. She, you remember, she said in desperation to Jacob, give me children or I die.

[35 : 13] And that's exactly what happened. She was given a 12, another, a second son, and she died. She called him Benoni, son of sorrow. But for Jacob, the child was the son of his favorite wife, so she called, he called him Benjamin, which means son of the right. One of the commentators says the right side or the right hand, it's a place of blessing, the place of luck. I can't believe a commentator, it's not a word I use as a Christian, luck. But it's a place of blessing. And remember, Jesus talks about the sheep, and he will put the sheep where? On his right. He puts the right hand side of the father as a place of blessing. And so she, he calls him Benjamin, son of the right, son of blessing.

And it really is quite a good name. So there's this tragedy, despite the fact that he's right with God, he's restored to God, he's building altars, he's building pillars, he's fulfilled his vow, he's praising God for what he has done. Tragedy wasn't far away. Secondly, Reuben dishonors Jacob, his father, by committing incest. Verse 22, he sleeps with his father's concubine, Bilhah, who was Rachel's maid. What some of the commentators say is that his motives here were probably more than sensual. He's probably trying to prevent Rachel's maid, Bilhah, who he sleeps with, succeeding Rachel as his father's favorite wife. So he's making sure this doesn't happen. So he sullies her by doing this. He's also claiming authority over his father by acting in this particular way. It's a strange thing, because Reuben, throughout the Joseph story, when we, if you remember him, he's actually not as brutal as the rest of his brothers. He's trying to save Joseph, but he's obviously very dark at this point, and he does this. And Jacob is strangely silent once again. We are told that this happened, and we're not really told how he responded. It's only when you get to chapter 49, near the end of book of Genesis, that Jacob shows his deep anger for what Reuben has done. Verses 3 and 4. Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, the first sign of my strength, exceeding in honor, excelling in honor, excelling in power. Turbulent as waters, you will no longer excel, for you went up onto your father's bed, onto my couch, and defiled it. So although he doesn't act at this point, he knows what his son has done. And when he's blessing his sons, this is what he says about him. So life is not easy, even with the promises of God. And Jacob eventually reaches his father's house. He's moved from Beersheba up to Hebron. The place is very significant. It's where the greatest promises had been made, where Abraham had first purchased land in Canaan, and similar to what Ishmael and Isaac did when they buried Abraham, the story ends with Jacob and Esau burying their father. And there is still much to happen in the life of Jacob, much sorrow still to happen.

But the God who has been with him to this point, personally, and as a nation is being formed, will be with him in the days, the years that still remain to him. And next week we'll look at that again.

But here we see the grace of God, the holiness of God, and the faithfulness of God all coming together in this one chapter. May the Lord challenge you as it challenges me that our God is gracious to us. He's a holy God who's provided a sacrifice for us, but also he's a faithful God. He will, the God who's begun a work in you will bring it to completion, and he will save us. Let's stand and sing one of my favorite songs, How Firm My Firm.