

All's Well That Ends Well

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[0 : 01] We're finishing our studies in the life of Jacob, and up to now, most of the chapters have followed on from each other, but when you come to chapter 37, it's his family, especially Joseph, that now takes center stage. But Joseph is still around. So what I want us to do is, you're just going to have to follow with me. I'm going to flick through the pages, just picking up verses here and there that relate to Jacob, and then this will give us a feel of his last days as presented in Scripture. So try and stick with me as we read through this. So we left Jacob. He buried his father along with Esau, and when you come to Genesis 37, we are told where he lives at this time. Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan. And then you move down to verse 3. We see his relationship to one of his sons. Now, Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age, and he made an ornate robe for him. So he was loved more than his other brothers. And then you move up to verse 10.

You remember, he has dreams, Joseph has dreams. And then in verse 10, when he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually bow, come and bow down to the ground before you? His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind. You remember, he prophesied it, they would bow down, and Jacob was a bit miffed at this. And then in chapter 37, remaining in the same chapter, verse 26, Judah, you remember this was, they tried to kill Joseph, and then Reuben stepped in, and we read these words. Judah said to his brothers, What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites, and not lay our hands on him? After all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood. His brothers agreed. So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the

Ishmaelites who took him to Egypt. And then in verse 31 of that same chapter, Then they got Joseph's robe, slaughtered a goat, and dipped the robe in the blood. They took the ornate robe back to their father and said, We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son's robe. He recognized it and said, This is my son's robe. Some ferocious animal has devoured him.

Joseph has surely been torn to pieces. Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, and mourned for his sons many days. All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. No, he said, I will continue to mourn until I join my son in the grave. So his father wept for him. Here we see more trouble, family trouble, that always seemed to surround him. And then chapter 38, this whole incident with Judah and Tamar, but we won't read that. So turn with me. Now Joseph takes center stage, and then we move up to chapter 42, verse 1. You know there's a famine there. Jacob, Joseph is now basically head of that place, and he's in charge of the food and various things in the midst of a famine. And then Joseph's brothers are sent down to Egypt. So verse 1 of 42, Then when Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, Why do you just keep looking at each other? He continued, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die. And you know the toing and fro between the sons coming back and so forth, and all this in many ways is stressful.

But then you move to chapter 45, where Joseph makes himself known. He's not dead. He makes himself known to his brothers. And then in 45, verse 25, we read these words. So they went up out of Egypt and came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan. They told him, Joseph is still alive. In fact, he is ruler of all Egypt. Jacob was stunned. He did not believe them. But when they told him everything Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts Joseph had sent to carry him back, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. And Israel said, I am convinced. My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die. And then into 46, so Israel set out with all that was his. And when he reached Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. And God spoke to

Jacob in a vision at night and said, Jacob, Jacob, Jacob, here I am, he replied. I am God, the God of your father. He said, do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again. And Joseph's own hand will close your eyes. Then moving on to verse 29 of chapter 46. We read, Joseph had his chariot made ready and went to Goshen to meet his father

[5 : 51] Israel. As soon as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father and wept a long time. Israel said to Joseph, now I am ready to die, since I have seen for myself that you are still alive. Then into 47, verse 7. Then Joseph brought his father Jacob in and presented him before Pharaoh.

After Jacob blessed Pharaoh, Pharaoh asked him, how old are you? And Jacob said to Pharaoh, the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty. My years have been few and difficult, and they do not equal the years of the pilgrimage of my father. Then Jacob blessed Pharaoh and went out from his presence. Then in verse 11, we see that the family settle in Egypt. Joseph settled his father and his brothers in Egypt, gave them property in the best part of the land, the district of Ramesses, as Pharaoh directed. Joseph also provided his father and his brothers and all his father's household with food, according to the number of their children. And then you move on to 49. Jacob blesses his sons.

We won't look at this in detail. He goes through each of the sons, and he blesses them, and it's an appropriate blessing for them. But then you come to 49 and verse 29, the death and the burial of Jacob.

Let's read those words. Then he gave them these instructions. I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite, the cave in the field of Machpelah near Mamre in Canaan, which Abraham bought along with the field as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite. There Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried. There Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried, and there I buried Leah. The field and the cave in it were bought from the Hittites.

When Jacob had finished giving instructions to his son, he drew up his feet into the bed, breathed his last, and was gathered to his people. Joseph threw himself on his father and wept over him and kissed him. Then Joseph directed the physicians in his service to embalm his father Israel. So the physicians embalmed him, taking a full forty days, for that was the time required for embalming. And the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days. When the days of mourning had passed, Joseph said to Pharaoh's court, If I have found favor in your eyes, speak to Pharaoh for me.

[8 : 48] Tell him, My father made me swear an oath and said, I am about to die. Bury me in the tomb I dug for myself in the land of Canaan. Now let me go up and bury my father, then I will return.

Pharaoh said, Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear to do. So Joseph went up to bury his father. All Pharaoh's officials accompanied him, the dignitaries of his court and all the dignitaries of Egypt, beside all the members of Joseph's household and his brothers and those belonging to his father's household. Only their children and their flocks and herds were left in Goshen. Chariots and horsemen also went up with him. It was a very large company. When they reached the threshing floor of Attad near the Jordan, they lamented loudly and bitterly. And there Joseph observed a seven-day period of mourning for his father. When the Canaanites who lived there saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Attad, they said, The Egyptians are holding a solemn ceremony of mourning. That is why that place near the Jordan is called Abel-Misraim. So Jacob's sons did as he had commanded them. They carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave in the field of Machpelah near Mamre, which Abraham had bought along with the field as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite. After burying his father, Joseph returned to Egypt together with his brothers and all the others who had gone with him to bury his father.

This is the end of the life of Jacob. Let's just ask for the Lord's help as we come to his word. Father, with your word open before us, we pray that you would speak to us now. Lord, we've considered the life of your servant, but now, Lord, and he's in this last sermon, Lord, we want to focus on you and who you are and what you have done in the life of this individual.

So, Father, bless us, we pray. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. I don't know if you remember these wee images. I remember a number of years ago when they first come out. This is a bit fuzzy, but if you zoom out, you get these. I remember being so fascinated by the fact that images like that were made up with tiny wee pictures, and even the shadows, you think, well, how

did they choose the right picture, plump them all together to make a shadow?

[11 : 24] I just find it genius. I think it's just so very, very clever. And what we've been doing in the life of Jacob just now is looking at the mosaics of his life, his family life, his work life, his married life, looking at them in detail and how that affects him and how God worked in his life. But in this last sermon, I want us to zoom out and not just look at each of these, but see the big picture. Even in your life, you might be a tapestry that's woven, but if you look back in your life, you'll have a bit like it's a wonderful life. No, you wonder what your life would have been. But God uses you in your life.

He has used you. He will use you. So I want you to go through this fairly quickly as we look at Jacob's life. He says his life, his life has been difficult. But what has God been doing? So I've given this sermon the title, All's Well Days. As long as everything ends well, then all is well. But in the midst of it can be messy, and then all is well. And that's very much the life of Jacob. His life has been few and difficult. And it's been a difficult—he's struggled in so many ways. But his life ends very well, when you look at the promises that were fulfilled and how God worked powerfully in his life. So I want to look at the key things that stand out, and I want to go through this fairly quickly. The first thing is choice. That's the thing that very much strikes you in this. Number one, then, choice. Behind God's picture of Jacob is a man that God chose. He chose him specifically. He chose his father. He chose his grandfather, Abraham, Isaac, and now Jacob. It began with God choosing one man, Abraham. God had a plan. He drew up a plan of salvation to save the world, eventually leading in his son coming to be the savior of the world. Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. There is so much that has to happen between now and then, but God begins by drawing up a plan before the foundation of the world and making this real through choosing one man, Abraham. He gives him promises. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you, and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. And that is the promise personally to Abraham, but universally. And this is expanded on as God deals with Abraham. In Genesis 13, we are told that the land that you see I will give to you in your offspring, I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted.

Walk through the length and breadth of the land I am giving. It is for you. So he expands on what this blessing will be. He says, I will give you this land. I will give you descendants. And even in this choice, the descendants have to come through God. Abraham's wife is barren. She can't have any. How can I be the father of a multitude when my wife can't produce a single child? This is the plan of God. Blessings are always through God's handiwork. It's through what God does.

[14 : 56] And he does this with Rebecca's wife, Sarah. Then God chooses Isaac through who was born to Sarah, not Ishmael. And the blessings are repeated to Isaac. Nothing new, just the same things that were given to Abraham. But you know, once again, that his wife couldn't have any children as well, so the plan would have hit the buffers. How can this proceed? But God opened Rebecca's wife's womb, Rebecca's womb.

Isaac had prayed for her, and then Jacob appears. You remember the two sons, Esau and Jacob. And Jacob was always aware of this, that God's hand was on him, and the older would serve the younger. And in Hebrews, right at the—in Hebrews 11, by faith, Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of his sons and worshipped.

He worshipped God. Jacob knew how God was so good to him. And Jacob was really blessed, by God. It's the same with you and I. Lord chooses us. Paul makes this clear. Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise. Not many of you were influential. Not many of you had noble birth. But God chose. He chose the foolish things to shame the wise. God chose the weak things to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things and the despised things and the things that are not to nullify the things that are. And then you have this great verse. It is because of him, it is because of God the Father, that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God, our righteousness, our holiness, and our redemption.

He chose, as we are looking at in James chapter 1, he chose to give us birth. So, here we see the God who chose then is the same God who chooses now. That is the big picture. He chooses, not just individuals, but he chooses people and adopts us into his family. John 1.13, when it talks about children, true children of God, born not of natural descent, nor of human decision, nor of a husband's will, but born of God. That is, God chose us. He chose you. He chose me. As he said to the disciples, Jesus would say to us, you did not choose me, but I chose you. So, first of all, choice. You step back and you see Jacob was one chosen by God. Secondly, throughout the whole of his

life, you see the grace of God, or God is a gracious God. And as we mentioned recently, when you study the life of

Jacob, he doesn't come across as a particularly nice guy, planning and scheming, deceiving his brother, deceiving his boss, and liking one wife over another wife, having favorite sons and not liking other sons.

[18 : 11] And he just seems to bumble through life. He's self-centered. He can often be deceptive and selfish. And as we've said recently, why did God not just give up on him? If he was wanting to make this super nation, this super—the Lord doesn't have great resources to work with. He saved me. I'm your interim pastor. I came from Springburn. That's nothing to boast about. And you are nothing to boast of either, wherever you came from, your upbringing. Maybe you didn't go to Harriet Water, whatever, and you think, I'm just me. But the Lord saved you, and he saved you by his grace.

And he works in Jacob's life by grace. Without grace, Jacob would be lost and without hope. He had just been given up. And God entered into a covenant with his people. He entered into a covenant with the patriarchs. And the Lord has done the same for us. We are blessed. We are blessed through grace.

Every spiritual blessing is ours through Christ. To the praise of his glorious grace, in which he has freely given us in the one he loves. It is by grace we have been saved, not through works. And that is the most amazing thing. We are his workmanship. He saved us. And so, therefore, right at the very beginning, the word grace, you'll hardly find it in the Old Testament.

You'll find it a lot in the New Testament. But the theme of grace is throughout the Old, from Genesis to Malachi. And here, in the opening chapters of Genesis, if the world is to be saved, the covenant is to be fulfilled. It will only be by grace. It's not because Jacob and Isaac are anything great. It's because of the grace of God. And if people are to be saved, and even people in your family, it will be by the grace of God. And the grace of God leaps out in these chapters that we have looked at in the life of Jacob. Thirdly, faith also stands out. Jacob struggled to trust in God. God had given him promises, but he's trying to manipulate things to his own end quite often.

He finds it hard to trust and to rest in God. When God told him to go back to the land, and he has to meet Esau, and he's fearful of this. He's anxious. He's troubled. He's planning and scheming and sending folk ahead of him, and so forth. Jacob struggled always to walk with the Lord. You and I are the same.

[20 : 50] We are told to walk or live by faith and not by sight. How many times have you challenged yourself with that? Lord, I'm struggling. I know you love me and you care for me, but I really don't like what's happening just now. And we are told to keep trusting and to keep walking, not just to be saved by faith, but to live by faith. Jacob, as he looks back in his life, acknowledges this, that even despite his failures, God has been with him throughout the whole time. If it wasn't, he says to Lepin, if it wasn't for God intervening, you would have robbed me blind. You would have hurt me. You would have taken my life.

He could see God's hand, not only in the womb, but also throughout his own whole life. That's what he believed. It's what we believe as well—the providence of God. So, fourthly then, the providence of God is seen in Jacob's life. We know God loves us. We know God cares for us. He provides for us. And even when things don't always go our way, we know that God is always at work. I've shown you this Westminster Confessional Faith quote. This is how God works in our life. Let me just remind, I won't dwell on it. It takes too long. Talking about the providence of God, although in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, God knows all things. He decrees certain things. The first cause—he is the first cause. All things come to pass immutably and infallibly. He decides that something's going to happen, and it will happen. It doesn't happen to us by chance. He is the first cause. But the second cause is he allows things to fall out necessarily, freely, or contingently. As you go about your life, there are certain laws that are put in place. Things happen necessarily, cause and effect.

That is still part of God's plan. Freely, as you go—for me, that's the most exciting—as you go about your life, things you think, well, I'm just doing this. God is really involved. As you live and as you breathe, God's will is working in your life. He's able to use your freedom in that sense. About like the example that's given to back that up, as you remember, one of the kings told he would die, dresses himself up in armor, and they're told an arrow—the soldier fires at random. He's not a great marksman. He's not singling him out. He's just firing away. But as this person works freely, God's

will is done. God's will is done for you. As you operate freely and contingently, as the Lord sees, he reacts to things in your life as well. He has these plans. So, Jacob knew this. He knew that God was in control of his life in so many ways. When he had to leave home, when he was a slave for 20 years, when he had conflict with his uncle Laban, when he had conflict with his brother Esau, when they returned, even when there was conflict within his family, and with Rachel and Leah and his sons, and then when his daughters raped, and his sons go on this murdering spree, and his favorite wife dies, and Reuben commits sin by sleeping with his concubine, and later Isaac dies. Then you have this passage that we just read, times of sorrow. Joseph, he thinks he's died, and so forth. Yet, he knows the Lord is still in control. He can look back and say the Lord has been faithful. He's cared for him all the way. And what a way to pass on this great multitude of people, dignitaries. This man who was born in a wee family with just him and his brother, and his mom and dad fighting with each other, and so forth. And this is how his life ends, despite the struggles, despite the difficulties. We never know how the Lord will work in our life, and how our days will end, and who we will bless at the time. Our God is a God of great providence.

Providence. One of the things that excites me in this reading, one of the readings that we read, was Leah, the life of Leah. Everybody that Jacob met just seemed to be a big waster, apart from Leah. Leah is about the best out of the whole lot. Remember, he's working, and he wants to marry Rachel, and I love Rachel. Rachel's great. Worked for me seven years, and you get Rachel, and ends up with Leah. And Leah, all Leah wanted was just to be loved. That was all. Rachel wanted kids, and she was beautiful, and so forth. She had it all, and obviously the Lord had to open her womb once again. But it's the same with Leah. Leah just wanted to be loved by Jacob, and Jacob never really loved her. And you remember how Rachel died. Rachel died as they were traveling, and she was buried, but not in the ancestral grave. Leah was, though. I mean, we just read this in Genesis 47.

It was where Abraham and Sarah was buried. It was where Isaac and Rebecca were buried. And there I buried Leah. Lefty Jacob, he'd have buried Rachel here. He wouldn't have buried Leah there.

[26 : 35] But in the providence of God, God says, Leah will be buried there. That just thrills me, that God looks after those who cannot look after themselves, those who are loved by God, but vulnerable. And she never knew really the love of her husband. She certainly knew the love of God.

I mean, what a tomb this is. What a grave this is. And you've got Abraham and Isaac and their wives, and you've got Jacob and you've got Leah. It's quite something. And then Jacob dies. Jacob dies, and you have all these dignitaries. His life ends well. So, choice. He was chosen by God, the grace of God. He was a man of faith who struggled, and yet God was with him. God looked after him in his providence. This is our God, a God who loves us and a God who's chosen us. I want to just finish.

by mentioning the last point, Christ. How do all these things come to us? They come to us only through Jesus. And he is the one we should consider in the last minute or two before we finish. All the promises. We didn't meet the Lord at Bethel. We didn't meet him, and he just gave us our personal promises. We have all the promises in the Bible, and they're all ours, not because we met God at Bethel or somewhere else. They're all ours in Christ. 2 Corinthians 1.20. No matter how many promises God has made, whether to Isaac, Abraham, or Jacob, they're all yes in Christ. And through him, the amen is spoken by us to the glory of God. Choice. We, too, have been chosen by God. We are part of the the family of God, the promises of God. This is all by grace, by the grace of God. It is through faith.

Through faith. God so loved the world, he gave his one and only Son. Whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life. We have protection, as God promised to protect and to bring Jacob back to the land. So we, too, are protected by God the Father. I give them eternal life, Jesus says in John 10, and they shall never perish. No one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. My Father who has given them to me is greater than all, and no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.

Jesus said, I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you. This is really quite something. The promises that Jacob had, we have bigger, better, many more promises. And we are not looking for a place on earth. We are not looking for a piece of land, wherever that might be. Our place is in glory. Do not let your hearts be troubled, Jesus says. You believe in God, believe also in me.

[29 : 42] In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, I would have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place, I will come back and take you to be with me, that you also may be where I am. Revelation 21. This new holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. We were at a wedding yesterday, seeing the bride stunning for her husband. We have this new Jerusalem. Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

This is our God. He's the same God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I remember the first time I did this series. I've grown to love that wee phrase. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. There's three different individuals. Abraham was very pioneering. He took God at his word, and he launched out.

Isaac was more passive, and he just received what his dad received. Jacob just seemed to struggle all the time. But God never said, I'm the God of Abraham. Maybe Isaac, and certainly not Jacob. He is the God of the three of them, and he is your God. No matter how weak and how frail that you are, he is your God, and Jesus is your Savior, and all the promises from here to eternity are yours, and he will lead, and he will guide, and he will use you even in your failures as he used Jacob. I don't know when you pass away whether the Scottish Parliament will be sending dignitaries up, and there'll be a big cortege, and then the horses, and I don't know. We don't know where we'll finish up, but the Lord knows, and the Lord will bless you. But whatever happens, one day we will see him. There'll be a multitude of angels. The Lord will be there. Our faith will be turned to sight, and we long for that time. We're still on the journey, and there is ups and downs like Jacob's life, no doubt, but he will be with us. He will never leave us nor forsake us. Let's stand, and we're going to sing, Christ is mine forevermore. The ladies were teaching you this when I came in, so hopefully it'll come back to you. We've sung it once or twice before, so we'll stand and sing, Christ is mine forevermore. If you know this, sing out your very best.

[32 : 15] song to finish with. Let's just close in prayer. Our loving Heavenly Father, we praise and thank you, Lord, for the gospel. We thank you that all the promises in your word are ours in Christ.

We thank you for us. The future is bright. Lord, the future is certain. We have that hope. We have that purpose. Lord, send us into this week, Lord, with a spring in our step, with that sure and certain knowledge that you love us and care for us, and one day Christ will return and take us to be with him. We long for that day, and we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Thank you, folks.