

Looking Back At His Faithfulness

Genesis 35-36

I. Remember God's _____ Because He Alone Gave Us Victory During Our Greatest Fears (35:1-8)

A. Make An Altar

1. _____

2. _____

B. Put Away Foreign gods

II. Remember God's _____ Because He Alone Is The Transformer Of Our Lives (35:9-15)

III. Remember God's _____ Because He Alone Turns Life's Hardships Into Good (35:16—29)

Conclusion:

- When we're faithless, He's faithful
- When we're self-destructive, He saves
- When we're down, He resurrects

Looking Back At His Faithfulness

Genesis 35-36

Introduction:

- Fires – look back and see that God is good
- Wars, tragedies

I. Remember God's Faithfulness Because He Alone Gave Us Victory During Our Greatest Fears (35:1-8)

1 God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there. Make an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau." 2 So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you and purify yourselves and change your garments. 3 Then let us arise and go up to Bethel, so that I may make there an altar to the God who answers me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone." 4 So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods that they had, and the rings that were in their ears. Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree that was near Shechem. 5 And as they journeyed, a terror from God fell upon the cities that were around them, so that they did not pursue the sons of Jacob. 6 And Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him, 7 and there he built an altar and called the place El-bethel, because there God had revealed himself to him when he fled from his brother. 8 And Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried under an oak below Bethel. So he called its name Allon-bacuth.

A. Make An Altar

- v. 1 – God reminds Jacob to go to Bethel
 - 31:3 – Jacob was to go to Bethel
 - because he dilly-dallied in Shechem and the horrible incident with Dinah happened there
- **Why make an altar?**
 - **To Remember**
 - **To Worship**

1. Remember

- An altar is a monument of rocks
- Jacob is to remember God, not idols, not self
- God is faithful

Deuteronomy 32:4 The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.

- A. W. Tozer: "God, being who He is, cannot cease to be what He is, and being what He is, He cannot act out of character with Himself. He is at once faithful and immutable, so all His words and acts must be and must remain faithful. Men become unfaithful out of desire, fear, weakness, loss of interest, or because of some strong influence from without. Obviously none of these forces can affect God in any way. He is His own reason for all He is and does. He cannot be compelled from without, but ever speaks and acts from within Himself by His own sovereign will as it pleases Him." (*The Knowledge of the Holy*, p. 85)

Deuteronomy 7:9 Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the **faithful** God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations,

- God keeps His covenant with Israel, even to this day

Numbers 23:19 God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?

- Wayne Grudem: "*God's faithfulness means that God will always do what he has said and fulfill what he has promised* (Num. 23:19; cf. 2 Sam. 7:28; Ps. 141:6; et al.). He can be relied upon, and he will never prove unfaithful to those who trust what he has said. Indeed, the essence of true faith is taking God at his word and relying on him to do as he has promised." (*Systematic Theology*, p. 195)

2. **Worship**

- the occupation of the heart is worship
- English Origin - Anglo-Saxon word - "ascribing worth to someone or something" (Psalm 96:5-8), "Worship"
- Martin Luther: "Worshiping God is nothing else than glorifying God." (*The Theology Of Martin Luther*)

What Do We Worship?

- **Romans 12:1** - worship involves sacrifice
 - "...present your bodies a living sacrifice...which is your reasonable service"
- **Jeremiah 2:13** - we spend time, energy & money on what we worship
 - "For My people have committed two evil: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns - broken cisterns that can hold no water."
- **1 Kings 18:21** - we follow after what we worship
 - "Elijah...said, 'How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is /God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him.'"

- **Matthew 12:34** - we speak frequently about what we worship
 - "How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."
- **Joshua 24:14-20** - we serve what we worship
 - "Fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth and put away the gods which your fathers served...Serve the Lord! Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."
- **Romans 6:16** - we are slaves to what we worship
 - "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness."
- **Matthew 6:21** - we treasure what we worship
 - "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

B. Put Away Foreign gods

2 So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you and purify yourselves and change your garments. 3 Then let us arise and go up to Bethel, so that I may make there an altar to the God who answers me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone." 4 So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods that they had, and the rings that were in their ears. Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree that was near Shechem.

- Putting away foreign gods was a process of purification before worship
- As we can't properly worship God when we're in sin, neither could they in the OT
- They had to put away false idols
- Rachel had previously stolen her father Laban's false idols because it's comfortable to rely on the old things we relied on in the past instead of trusting God
- **1 Kings 11:4** "Solomon...his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God."
- **Ezekiel 14:1-11**
 - v. 4-5 - idols are put before them, causes them to stumble, estranges them from God
 - v.6 - need for repentance
- **Romans 1:25** "exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever."
- **1 Corinthians 10:6-14**
 - v.6 - lust after evil things
 - v.7 - became idolaters
 - v. 7-11 - sins categorized: hedonism (7), sexual immorality (8), tempt Christ (9), murmur (10)

- v.13 - solution for temptation
- v.14 - flee from idolatry
- note connection between sin and idolatry
- **Effect of Idols:**
 - Deceive – trick us
 - Destroy – ruin us
 - Detain – enslave us
- **Obvious Idols:** Buddha, Ancestor worship (difference between honoring and dependence), Animism (attributing godlike power to stones, statues and animals) – e.g. Pocohontas
- **Modern Idols:** Approval, Health, Appearance, Comfort, Hedonism, Power, Control, Significance, Peace, Respect, Success, Possession, Marriage, Pregnancy, Dating, Education, Money, Safety
- **Change Clothes** – part of consecration and purification before worship
 - Symbolic of not carrying in the world to our worship

II. Remember God's Power Because He Alone Is The Transformer Of Our Lives (35:9-15)

9 God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. 13 Then God went up from him in the place where he had spoken with him. 14 And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had spoken with him, a pillar of stone. He poured out a drink offering on it and poured oil on it. 15 So Jacob called the name of the place where God had spoken with him Bethel.

- Jacob's name was changed when he wrestled with God in Gen 32
- Jacob – no longer a schemer ("heal tripper"), but **ISRAEL** ("Prince with God")
 - ie/ Joy – my nickname of Jacob changed to Israel by Pastor's wife
- Jacob was transformed to Israel
- Jacob remembered this by erecting an altar and pouring oil on it
- God is all powerful
 - Definition: Omnipotence is the absolute ability and power for God to accomplish His will.

Psalm 62:11 Power belongs to God.

Job 9:19 If it is a matter of strength, indeed He is strong

Psalm 115:3 But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.

- *Omni* = all; *Potens* = power

- “The omnipotence of God is His ability and strength to bring to pass whatsoever He pleases.” (Stephen Charnock, *The Existence And Attributes Of God*)
- “God’s omnipotence means that God is able to do all his holy will.” (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 216)
- “God’s omnipotence includes the exercise of His choice to use His unlimited power to reflect His divine glory and accomplish His sovereign will.” (Tony Evans, *Our God Is Awesome*)
- “Since He has at His command all the power in the universe, the Lord God omnipotent can do anything as easily as anything else. All His acts are done without effort. He expends no energy that must be replenished. His self-sufficiency makes it unnecessary for Him to look outside of Himself for a renewal of strength. All the power required to do all that he wills to do lies in undiminished fullness in His own infinite being.” (A.W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*)

III. Remember God’s Goodness Because He Alone Turns Life’s Hardships Into Good (35:16–29)

16 Then they journeyed from Bethel. When they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel went into labor, and she had hard labor. 17 And when her labor was at its hardest, the midwife said to her, “Do not fear, for you have another son.” 18 And as her soul was departing (for she was dying), she called his name Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin. 19 So Rachel died, and she was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem), 20 and Jacob set up a pillar over her tomb. It is the pillar of Rachel’s tomb, which is there to this day. 21 Israel journeyed on and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder. 22 While Israel lived in that land, Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father’s concubine. And Israel heard of it. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve. 23 The sons of Leah: Reuben (Jacob’s firstborn), Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. 24 The sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin. 25 The sons of Bilhah, Rachel’s servant: Dan and Naphtali. 26 The sons of Zilpah, Leah’s servant: Gad and Asher. These were the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Paddan-aram. 27 And Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, or Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned. 28 Now the days of Isaac were 180 years. 29 And Isaac breathed his last, and he died and was gathered to his people, old and full of days. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

- V. 8 Deborah dies – she was 180 years old and had taken care of Rebekah
 - Allon bakut = the oak of weeping
- V. 18 Benjamin born
 - Ben-Omi – son of my sorrows
- V. 19 Rachel dies in childbirth
 - Ie/ Cali’s birth
- V. 20 Pillar on Rachel’s tomb – remembering God in Rachel’s life

- V. 21-27 Jacob's family thrives
- V. 29 Isaac dies
- V. 29 Jacob & Esau bury father
- Ch. 36 Esau's family thrives - prosperity
- **God Is Good**
 - A.W. Tozer defines God's goodness as: "that which disposes Him to be kind, cordial, benevolent, and full of good will toward men. He is tenderhearted and of quick sympathy, and His unflinching attitude toward all moral beings is open, frank, and friendly. By His nature He is inclined to bestow blessedness and He takes holy pleasure in the happiness of His people." (*Knowledge of the Holy*, p.88)
 - Heb. *Hesed* = lovingkindness, compassion, goodness
 - Heb. *Yatab* = to be good, pleasing
 - Heb. *Rason* = pleasure, delight, favor, good will, acceptance of others

Ezra 3:11 He is **good**, for His loving-kindness is upon Israel forever.

Nahum 1:7 The Lord is **good**, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him

- Cali's birth
- Cancer support group

Conclusion:

- When we're faithless, He's faithful
- When we're self-destructive, He saves
- When we're down, He resurrects