

The Next Generation, Part 4: Blessing Thru Imperfect Parents (Gen 28)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at GCBC on October 13, 2013

Click [here](#) for Family Worship Supplement with today's songs. Worship is not just something we do on Sunday morning before the sermon. It's also what we're doing, or should be doing, during the preaching, which is very much a part of worship, if not the apex of worship, hearing God speak in the Word. Sunday evening is another opportunity for corporate worship that we want to encourage you to, a way to make the Lord's Day really His day. But beyond the Lord's Day worship services as a church family, we're also called to make worship a priority in our family the other 6 days of the week.

Some are already doing that and don't need helps, but most of us can use some helps, and that's the idea of this "Family Worship Supplement." The songs we sang today are printed out on this bulletin insert so you can sing them also with your family during the week (or in your personal worship) to continue the Lord's Day worship, to learn the songs, meditate on the words. If you don't already worship in the week, here's a resource for you as a help

I trust all of you pray *before dinner*, and this is something you could add to your dinner routine this week, before you leave from the table to whatever else you do; why not pray *after* dinner, read a passage of Scripture (there's also suggestions on the sheet that go with the songs if you're not already doing your own reading or if you don't know where to start), you could talk about it some, sing one or more of the songs, and then simply pray together.

Our family also tries to pray for things going on in our church family or for missionaries, read at least a short passage, sing songs we'll sing Sunday.

If you wanted to start out small and just sing 1 song each night, there's 6 songs, 1 for each night, and suggested readings for each night on this. If another time or place in the day or other way works, that's fine. Mornings can be a great way to start the day with a song in our hearts to sing or hum throughout the day. If you prefer to sing with a music CD instead or even as you drive in your car, that's fine (if you live by yourself, sing it out louder even), but all of us are called in the psalms to sing God praises day to day.

We're commanded in Colossians 3:16 when it introduces the section on the family, it tells us "*Let the word of Christ dwell* [present active imperative, a continual command every day, to live] *in you richly, teaching one another ... in psalms, singing hymns and spiritual songs, giving thanks to God ...*"

Then it talks about husbands and wives and parents and children. Ephesians 5 says much the same thing, in the context of the family, we're to speak to one another with psalms, sing together hymns and spiritual songs, and then it says husbands are like Christ to bring the sanctifying water of the Word to their wife (Eph 5:19, 25-26) and to bring up their children in the instruction of the Lord (Eph 6:4). We pray together as spiritual soldiers (6:18-20). So if you're not already worshipping during the week, let me just remind you that Scripture call us to family worship and private worship, not just at church [it can be minutes, not an hour, but 1 hour Sunday isn't enough]. So I hope this sheet will be helpful for dads/families -- if it is, let me know.

Let's start at Genesis 18, and which ties into our study. Adam and Eve were the first to teach their children about how to worship God in Genesis 4 and by the end of that chapter it says

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people were calling on the Lord's name in public worship. It's clear they had passed on what God taught them about Christ to come, because in chapter 5 they were looking for the promised one to come (5:29). First thing Noah's family does when it comes off the ark in Genesis 8 is to worship God, with Noah leading as the priest of his home. The first thing Abram does as God calls him in Genesis 12: leads his family in worship, calling on God's name, making sacrifice as priest of his home.

God promised to bless Father Abraham who was then responsible to pass on what God had taught him and be a blessing to the next generations to come.

Let's look at Gen 18:17: *The LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, ¹⁸ since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed?" ¹⁹ "For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him."*

God's blessing was not just to go to one man but *through him to his family* as father Abraham teaches his family and in this all the families of the earth for all generations to come shall be blessed as well in following God's plan:

- To the end of the OT, it's God's pattern, from Genesis to the prophet Joel, Joel 1:3 says: "Tell it to your children, and let your children tell it to their children, and their children to the next generation."
- Ps 48:13 commands of God's ways: "tell it to the next generation."
- That's the title of this series in Genesis after looking at Abraham's life of Faith, "the next generation" (looking at Isaac and Jacob).
- Psalm 71:18 prays "Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation..." (NIV)

That's where Isaac was in Genesis 27. At the start of the chapter he's old and gray, and declining not just physically but spiritually as well, but a gracious God doesn't forsake Isaac, He allows Isaac to still bless the next generation.

1. First point today: God's Blessing Through Imperfect Parents (28:1-9)

Let's start reading in Gen 28:1: *So Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and charged him, and said to him, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. ² "Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and from there take to yourself a wife from the daughters of Laban your mother's brother. ³ "May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples.*

⁴ "May He also give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your descendants with you, that you may possess the land of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham." ⁵ Then Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Paddan-aram to Laban, son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau. ⁶ Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan-aram to take to himself a wife from there, and that when he blessed him he charged him, saying, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan," ⁷ and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Paddan-aram. ⁸ So Esau saw that the

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daughters of Canaan displeased his father Isaac;⁹ and Esau went to Ishmael, and married, besides the wives that he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebaioth.

It's so important for the faith to be passed on to the next generation and for the next generation to marry in the faith. Esau in the end of chapter 26 had married 2 wives who were pagan Hittites and this grieved his godly parents.

God's plan since Genesis 2 has always been one man, one woman, united as one flesh physically *and spiritually*, but Esau's plan is to marry more wives who are also spiritually outside God's covenant and the community of faith.

What's the purpose of these Old Testament stories, of Jacob, their fathers?

In Ps 78:2, the psalm-writer says: "*I will utter ... things from of old—³ what we have heard and known, what **our fathers have told us.**⁴ We will not hide them from their children; we will tell **the next generation** the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done.⁵ He decreed statutes **for Jacob** and established the law in Israel, which **he commanded our forefathers to teach their children,**⁶ so **the next generation would know** them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children.⁷ Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget*

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all God's people, are to speak of the things of old. Fathers, parents are to tell the next generation what God did in the OT, so that they can tell their children in the next generation, so they don't forget and so they put their trust in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is not the job of pastors or professionals or whoever you think would be more perfect for the job, God gives this job to imperfect parents like you, to be the primary teachers and most powerful influences in the lives of your children, for better or worse. Abraham and Sarah were very imperfect and so were Isaac and Rebekah as parents as we saw in our study last week, but God's plan and pattern is blessing through imperfect parents who trust Him.

In Gen 27, Isaac and Rebekah's influence on the twins was worse than better. Rebekah instructs her son Jacob on how to steal from his blind father the inheritance dad was trying to sneak to Esau. Gen 27:41: *So Esau bore a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him; and Esau said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob."⁴² Now when the words of her elder son Esau were reported to Rebekah, she sent and called her younger son Jacob, and said to him, "Behold your brother Esau is consoling himself concerning you by planning to kill you."⁴³ "Now therefore, my son, **obey my voice, and arise, flee to Haran, to my brother Laban!**⁴⁴ "Stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury subsides,⁴⁵ until your brother's anger against you subsides and he forgets what you did to him. Then I will send and get you from there. Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?"⁴⁶ Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am tired of living because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife from the daughters of Heth [or Hittite women], like these, from the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?"*

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One writer asks 'what sins we are passing on to our children day by day[?] We are typically so blind to our shortcomings as parents, until they are reproduced in magnified form in the lives of our children. What are our cherished sins and wrong ways of relating that we will transmit to our offspring? Will they learn from us merely how to abound in sin while successfully concealing it from the sight of others, or will they learn from our constant example how to repent of sin and turn from it? Are you setting an example for your children of godliness and holiness and of rapid and heartfelt repentance when your sin becomes plain, or are you merely modeling for them how to live as an effective sinner? Are there those around you who can freely confront you over areas of your life where you are going astray, or are you defensive and slow to receive criticism?'ⁱ Isaac may have been blind physically, but now he sees spiritually the truth.

This family had gotten off-track but now in Gen 28, the faltering father who had fumbled his responsibilities in the past, he's facing up to them now and taking responsibility like Abraham did before to seek a godly future for his son who it's not too late for. Life became a miserable mess with everyone in the family trying to live for themselves and do things their own way, but in v. 33, Isaac realizes his sin in trying to play favorites with Esau and give to Esau what God had said in Gen 25 must go to Jacob. Gen 27:33 says Isaac trembled violently or exceedingly, which I take as Isaac repenting and also recognizing God's will as he says in the end of v. 33 Jacob '*shall be blessed*'

Heb. 11:20 says "*By faith Isaac blessed Jacob ... regarding things to come.*"

At the start of Gen 28, we see this flawed father Isaac *by faith blessing his flawed son*, and telling him how to be blessed in the future in v. 1-2, by not marrying a pagan unbelieving wife. In Gen 28, despite family mistakes and missteps of the past, Isaac is repeating by faith the promises of God for the future, and he's re-teaching God's plan for the family to the next generation. In v. 4, the blessing of Abraham is being legitimately passed on to Jacob.

In Gen 28:3 Isaac says truly to Jacob "*May God Almighty bless you...*" (it's the Hebrew name for God *El Shaddai* - the Almighty all-powerful sovereign God). That's not a common name for God but it emphasizes the Providence and power of God who sovereignly is overruling all things for His purposes, including the sinful acts of sinful people (like all the people in Genesis 27). Using that name for God I think shows Isaac bowing his will before God's.

And in v. 3 the blessing spoken is that Jacob would be fruitful and multiply children, the same blessing spoken to Adam's family and Noah's family, but a new blessing is added at the end of v. 3: "*that you may become a company of peoples*" (other versions say "a community of" or "assembly of peoples"). This isn't just Isaac speaking. It's also God's inspired promise using the OT equivalent of the word for *church* - an assembly of peoples in community, nations, not just Israel. It prophecies the church in God's multi-ethnic family.

A commentator explains it this way: 'What the Hebrew word has in view is not a community of peoples in the sense of an international organization like the United Nations, in which it frequently seems that each nation is continually doing its utmost to protect its interests against those of the rest. Nor will theirs be a brotherhood like that of Isaac and Ishmael or that of Jacob and Esau, with one brother continually in the other brother's face ...

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What God promised to Jacob through Isaac's blessing is nothing less than ... a true community of brothers dwelling together in unity. In fact, we may even say that this promise is [ultimately looking forward to] the beginning of the church, since the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, most commonly translates [this] Hebrew word *qahal* by the Greek word *ekklesia*, which is the New Testament word for "the church."ⁱⁱⁱ

This assembly or community in unity would be a stark contrast to what he had experienced in the chapter before, a dysfunctional family in disunity and discord. God's going to make a new family through Jacob and through his descendants, a family of faith He'll use to bless all families of the earth, a family not dependent on father Abraham or Isaac, but a heavenly Father.

Which takes us from #1, God's Blessing Through Imperfect Parents, to ...

2. God's Blessing Through the Only Perfect Son (v. 10-15)

I don't have to tell you Jacob is a sinful son. He earlier took advantage of his meathead brother in his weakness for meat. Esau the original redneck was swindled out of his birthright for a mess of pottage and now Jacob the worm and weasel takes advantage of the blind old man. Jacob is a mama's boy who has never grown up and still obeys his mommy and is still living at home even though he's well beyond the age he should be married and raising a family. The text doesn't say he has a job or has done much out on his own ... any of that sound like men nowadays, living at home, never growing up, no job and their only real aspiration is food and video games?

Now he's forced out on his own. Ill-prepared, imperfect parents had raised an imperfect son whose sin now puts him on the run homeless as a fugitive:

¹⁰ Then Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran. ¹¹ He came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place. [he had no place to lay his head literally except a stone]

There's no room in the inn, no Middle East motel advertising "we'll leave the light on for you." He has no pillow, at least not a very soft one. There's no mommy to tuck him in tonight. Jacob is literally between a rock and a hard place. He can't run back to home, as his betrayed brother has Jacob on his hit list. Esau is comforting himself in hateful thoughts of Jacob "How do I hate thee? Let me count the ways." Jacob can't run back to mommy as the apron strings have been cut now (decades later than they should have been). But he also doesn't know what lies ahead or if he'll make it. If you read v. 20 he knows he will need food, clothes, and help to get there safely (v. 21).

Look at v. 20 where Jacob says "... If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear, ²¹ and I return to my father's house in safety, then..." See those things were in doubt for Jacob, whether he'd make it safely, have enough food, etc.

SLIDE of how long journey was, and this stopping point was Bethel (v. 19)

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It's ironic that the guy who used food to deceive his brother when so hungry Esau thought he'd die and didn't care about his birthright in Gen 25, Jacob is now worried he doesn't have enough food to live in Gen 28:20 and may die? The birthright wouldn't mean much to him now if he was about to die, just as Esau once said. It's ironic that the guy who had worn his brother's clothes to deceive dad into giving him a blessing, he's now in the end of v. 20 short on clothes. It's ironic that the guy who didn't like to journey out from his tent (25:27) is now on a journey where he may have no tent for weeks now. It's ironic the guy who had a rich inheritance would see none of it for years.

It's ironic that the guy who thought he had just won it all had lost his family, and the guy so dependent on his mom's voice would never hear it again. It's ironic the guy who liked the safety and comfort of staying home, now has no home and a stone is about as comfortable as he'll get for his bed now. It's hard to sleep and it's a rocky start to his journey in more ways than one. It's ironic that the twin who was not an outdoorsman like Esau is left outdoors. Gen 25 says Jacob was the indoors-type, but Jacob has to make his home on the range, where wild animals and bandits play. It would be discouraging to Jacob sleeping in the open field, not only homeless but becoming hopeless.

Donald Gray Barnhouse imagines some of the fears he might have had from his dark past, for the dark unknown future and even that night: "What a dark night! Isn't it darker than usual? What was that noise? What shall I do?"ⁱⁱⁱ

Kent Hughes imagines Jacob's thoughts before falling asleep: 'How bitter it must have been for Jacob to know that his misery had been unnecessary, that it was the creation of his own unbelieving deceit and stupidity, that the vulture that was eating his vitals was reared in his own nest.'^{iv}

SLIDES - visuals Jacob might have been replaying in his mind that night

Jacob is no perfect son, he needs the only Perfect Son who was still to come
When He came, the Perfect Son said "*Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but **the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.***" (Luke 9:58).

The Son of Man shared the nature of man like Jacob, except for sin. Jesus took on the weakness of humanity when He came down to earth fully man and fully God, both Son of Man and Son of God. Jesus was tempted in all things Jacob was, and could sympathize with Jacob's weakness, loneliness, rejection by His brother. Jesus also had no home or place to lay His head. Jesus also left His home and came to a faraway land through many dangers, toils, and snares, and He came with His Father's blessing to get His bride.

I never get tired of the gospel and preaching Christ from the OT and if you get tired of it, this may not be the church for you as it's all about Jesus and He's going to be our theme till He comes back or we die, whatever's first. It's been said that all roads lead to Calvary, and any OT sermon should be in the shadow of the cross, but in this case Jacob's road literally led there. It led through the mountain range called Moriah in OT times that included the mount called Calvary in NT times. That's the path Jacob travelled through!

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Jacob is no perfect son, but blessing is about to come *through One*, the only perfect Son, in the land Jacob passed through where Jesus would later atone for His sins. Jacob is not seeking Him, but "*the son of man came to seek and save the lost*" (Luke 19:10). And He came to seek and save lost Jacob here from the nightmare of his life, like we sang earlier "heaven came down": ¹² *He had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.* ¹³ *And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac ..."*

Notice He's not yet the God of Jacob, or at least Jacob doesn't know God in a personal way yet as Savior and Lord. There's no indication from anywhere earlier that Jacob worshipped God yet like Abraham and Isaac had done, but God is interrupting Jacob's journey and God is initiating a new relationship with sinful self-seeking fleeing Jacob. God had chosen or elected Jacob as we saw earlier (and Romans 9 explains), before he was born, but decades later in Gen 28 God now reveals Himself to Jacob and begins to make this deceiver into a believer by sovereign grace. God doesn't wait for Jacob to seek God (Rom 3:11 says no one seeks God, no not one). But God seeks and saves and changes hearts of sinners to seek His face, all by His grace. Then we do seek and love Him, because He first loved us and sought us out.

At Christ's birth, heaven came down with angels appearing to shepherds. Gen 28 in some ways is OT parallel to a NT story where heaven came down and glory filled the soul of a sinner who wasn't seeking God. Bethel in v. 19 was on the way from Beersheba to Haran (v. 10). So geographically Jacob would have traveled through the area of Mt. Moriah where his father Isaac was offered on the altar by father Abraham, a place later called Jerusalem, the place where God would meet His OT people, the place of true worship. In that same place the heavenly Father would offer up His Perfect Son Jesus

SLIDE - Jerusalem to Haran passed through Bethel on the way to Damascus

In Genesis 14, Abraham met the king of Salem, an old name for Jerusalem, and Abraham also went up from this area to Damascus (Gen 13:15, 15:2). So the city of Damascus was around in those days, and it was on the road to Jacob's family clan through Jerusalem, Bethel, a 'Damascus road' to Haran.

2,000 years later a descendant of Jacob of the tribe of Benjamin was also on this same path from Jerusalem on the Damascus road. But he went north not to escape his brother's murderous threats. This Saul of Tarsus himself was breathing out murderous threats against his Jewish brethren, and he actually had been putting them to death. Saul wasn't seeking the Lord any more than his descendant Jacob was when the Lord appeared to him and spoke to him.

It was on this same path that Jacob had walked where we read in v. 13 that the Lord spoke to Jacob saying "I am the Lord..." the same Damascus road was where the Lord appeared to Saul and audibly called Saul also by grace. Saul said "*Who are You, Lord?*" *And the Lord said, 'I Am Jesus...'*" This is the name of the Lord who said "I Am" in Gen 28:13 in the same lands. Saul recognizes from his OT that a heavenly vision is the Lord, and he asks '*who are you Lord?*' The

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Lord answers "*I Am Jesus.*" The God of Abraham and Isaac is the Lord Jesus, the One who turned Jacob's darkness to light as well

As the glory shone around Saul at his heavenly vision, the Lord Jesus called Saul to go to Gentile lands "*that they may turn from darkness to light ... that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.*" So [Paul explains in Acts 26] *I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region ... to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God ...*" (Acts 26:15-20).

Paul repented, his sins were washed away as he turned to the Lord (22:16).

Perhaps we could also call Genesis 28 'Jacob's Damascus Road experience.' Like Saul the Hebrew of Hebrews, Jacob the father of Israel also needed the forgiveness of sins as a fellow chief of sinners. Jacob by falsehood received earthly inheritance, but by grace through faith receives a greater inheritance. This is sheer sovereign grace that God does for Jacob, not Esau, Saul, not Caesar. Why? It's unexplainable, just pure grace undeserved and unsought. Jacob wasn't seeking God any more than Saul but God seeks and meets him.

O what a wonderful, wonderful day, Day I will never forget
After I wandered in darkness away, Jesus my Savior I met
O what a tender, compassionate friend, **He met the need of my heart**
Shadows dispelling with joy I am telling, He made all the darkness depart!
... My sins were washed away, and **my night was turned to day**
Heaven came down and glory filled my soul.^v

That's a better song than "we are climbing Jacob's ladder" because we can't climb up, heaven must come down. In v. 16-19 Jacob responds in worship to heavenly hosts coming down (we'll study next time), but notice in v. 13-15 for today, how these words are ultimately words of Jesus. He is the One at the top of the ladder standing before the throne of God above. Verse 12 says the top of the ladder (maybe better translated "staircase") was heaven.

¹³ *And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants* [confirming Isaac's word in v. 4].¹⁴ *"Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south...*

Jesus in Luke 13 says people would '*come from east and west and north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God*' with '*Abraham and Isaac and Jacob*' (v. 28-29). These words of the Lord I think aren't just about Bible times, the Gen 28 promises extend to end times, beyond the 2nd coming. Jacob's descendants didn't fully fulfill v. 13-14, Jesus will for them. The end of v. 14 is quoted several times in the NT as referring to Jesus: "***in your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed***" [repeating v. 3].

Jacob as a sinful son tried to *get the blessing* from his family sinfully, but God's plan was for him and his seed to *be a blessing to all earth's families.*

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Jacob thought it was more blessed to receive than to give, but God blesses so that we might give, so that others might receive the blessing we share. Jacob by nature was a go-getter. God's grace would make him a go-giver.

Boice: 'Jacob would have felt the scorn of those he was leaving. He was fleeing in disgrace. To this, God speaks a word of future blessing to come to all people through Jacob's offspring ... This was a great promise because it demonstrates that however badly we may have acted in the past - and however ashamed we may be by it - God is always able to begin with us where we are and use us as a channel for blessing in the lives of others. Are you ashamed of your past? Are you devastated by something you have said or done? If you are, God is able to start over with you right where you are ... confess the sin that troubles you ... then go on in whatever direction He sets before you. He is far more ready to give blessing than you are to receive it.'^{vi}

This should greatly encourage us, no matter our mistakes in the past; it's not too late for failing dads, moms, sons, daughters, if we look to Jesus above.

Jesus is the perfect Son and perfect Seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He blessed their family in Bible times, and Jesus is also promised to bless all the families of the earth who believe in Jesus, no matter their past sins. It is Jesus who also says to Saul, renamed Paul, the same words He says in v. 15 "*I am with you...*" (Acts 18:10). Same words here to Jacob, renamed Israel.

Spurgeon: 'precious it must have seemed as it came to Jacob in that den of a place, where he lay with the hedges for his curtains, the heavens for his canopy, the earth for his bed, stones for his pillow, God for his companion ... [who says to him] Though thy mother is not with thee, "I am with thee."^{vii}

Gen 28:15 "*Behold, I am with you...*" (words of Jesus in Matt. 28:20 ESV)

The Lord says here in v. 15 "*I will keep you*" (Jesus repeats, Rev 3:10 ESV)

The Lord also says here "*I will bring you back*" and then He says at the end of v. 15 "*I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you*" (very similar to John 14:3 where Jesus promises to bring His children back home and in v. 18 of that same chapter He promises "*I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.*" Jesus never leaves or forsakes His promises)

That same word "leave" in the Hebrew was also used in Psalm 22:1, which Jesus quoted on the cross: "*My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?*" Because Jesus was forsaken on the cross bearing Jacob's sin and mine and yours, if you are in Christ by faith, we can have the assurance that God will never leave us nor forsake us for our sin, no matter how much we deserve it. There's great comfort to know God's choice of us isn't caused or kept by us.

He says in Isaiah 41: "*My servant, **Jacob whom I have chosen, Descendant of Abraham My friend, You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, And called from its remotest parts And said to you, 'You are My servant, I have chosen you and not rejected you. Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely***

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I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.' ... Do not fear, you worm Jacob ... I will help you ..." (v. 8-10, 14)

Jesus transforms Jacob a worm lying on the dirt into a worshipper in v. 17.

Jacob had much reason to fear before God chose and called him His friend. Even the Lord saying in v. 13 "I am the God of Isaac" may have struck fear in Jacob's heart to know the God of the father he had deceived has tracked him down. Jacob may have supplanted and tried to get away from Esau but he can't supplant or deceive God. But the Son of Man came to seek and save

Turn to John 1 and I want you to see I'm not just being clever talking about this vision being about Jesus. Jesus said this was really a vision of Himself.

In John 1:47 it says '*Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!"*' Jacob's name was Israel, but he had deceit in him. Here's a true Israelite with no deceit.

Look at v. 51: "*Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.*"

Jacob, the original man re-named Israel, that original Israelite saw heaven opened and angels of God ascending and descending on a stairway. Jesus says a true Israelite will see the reality Gen 28 represented. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, the only way man can get from earth to heaven. That was a vision Jacob had, but God's angels literally descended and ascended upon Jesus in His ministry, in Gethsemane, after His death and resurrection, and when He went back up to heaven without needing a ladder. Jesus is the one and only bridge to heaven. No one gets to the Father but through Him.

Wesley: What does the ladder mean, Sent down from the Most High?

Fastened to earth its foot is seen, Its summit to the sky,

Jesus that ladder is, The incarnate Deity,

Partaker of celestial bliss, And human misery;

Sent from His high abode, To sleeping mortals given,

He stands, and man unites to God, And earth connects to heaven.^{viii}

Heaven is open to all who come through Jesus in faith. This is the gospel to the whole earth. Let's preach its encouragement to our own hearts as well, and let's praise our Savior now as His family and this week in our families.

ⁱ Iain Duguid, *Living in the Grip of Relentless Grace*, p. 48-49.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

ⁱⁱⁱ Barnhouse, *Genesis*, vol. 2, p. 83.

^{iv} Hughes, *Genesis*, p. 360.

^v John W. Peterson, "Heaven Came Down."

^{vi} Boice, p. 769.

^{vii} C. H. Spurgeon, "Four Choice Sentences," *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 27 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1881), 647.

^{viii} David L. Jeffrey, *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1992).