

Genesis 33:1–17

Blessed to Be a Blessing

Main idea: God makes clear that He has followed through on His promises to bless us in Jesus, so that we will be free to insist upon pursuing His priorities in and through our lives.

¹ Now Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and there, Esau was coming, and with him were four hundred men. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two maidservants. ² And he put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children behind, and Rachel and Joseph last. ³ Then he crossed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

⁴ But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. ⁵ And he lifted his eyes and saw the women and children, and said, "Who are these with you?"

So he said, "The children whom God has graciously given your servant." ⁶ Then the maidservants came near, they and their children, and bowed down. ⁷ And Leah also came near with her children, and they bowed down. Afterward Joseph and Rachel came near, and they bowed down.

⁸ Then Esau said, "What do you mean by all this company which I met?"

And he said, "These are to find favor in the sight of my lord."

⁹ But Esau said, "I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself."

¹⁰ And Jacob said, "No, please, if I have now found favor in your sight, then receive my present from my hand, inasmuch as I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God, and you were pleased with me. ¹¹ Please, take my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough." So he urged him, and he took it.

¹² Then Esau said, "Let us take our journey; let us go, and I will go before you."

¹³ But Jacob said to him, "My lord knows that the children are weak, and the flocks and herds which are nursing are with me. And if the men should drive them hard one day, all the flock will die. ¹⁴ Please let my lord go on ahead before his servant. I will lead on slowly at a pace which the livestock that go before me, and the children, are able to endure, until I come to my lord in Seir."

¹⁵ And Esau said, "Now let me leave with you some of the people who are with me."

But he said, "What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my lord." ¹⁶ So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. ¹⁷ And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, built himself a house, and made booths for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.

Introduction

Surprises that remind us that God works all things according to the counsel of His will, overruling them for His people's good.

1. Jacob's Preparations, v1–3
 - a. An army v.s. a family, v1–2
 - b. A man by himself, but (again!) not actually by himself, v3
 - c. Why you are always free to be humble
2. God's Power, v4–7
 - a. Esau acting like the father from the parable of the prodigal son, v4 (cf. Luk 15:20, Prov 21:1)
 - b. Jacob realizing that, as God had promised in the blessing of 32:28–29, this is the grace of God to him, v5b
 - c. What we should see always, and especially when God rubs our noses in it
3. Jacob's Present, v8–11
 - a. Jacob asking for grace, v8
 - b. Esau having enough, v9
 - c. Jacob having God Himself, v10, and by grace therefore having all, v11
 - d. Why you are always free to insist upon being a blessing to others
4. Jacob's Pursuit, v12–17
 - a. Family over army or alliance, v13
 - b. Plans that can be interrupted for spiritual considerations, v14
 - c. Refusing worldly help or entanglement, v15
 - d. Pursuing the promised land, v16–17 (cf. 31:3, 32:9)
 - e. What we should be pursuing, according to the promises of God (cf. Matt 6:33 in context of Matt 5–6)

Conclusion

By giving Himself in Jesus, the Lord has assured believers of all of His promises. This does not preclude preparations, but it does establish the priorities of being a blessing to others, and pursuing the Lord's promises in and through us.

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are welcome to listen to the audio recording, which you may find via tinysa.com/hopewellarp)

Come now to offer God the hearing of his word preached. As worship we know that when he gathers us to himself he also says today when you hear his voice. Do not wander in your hearts and that we should not refuse him who speaks from heaven. So let us ask God for that help that we need in order that we would hear with good and know the hearts that's great.

Our Lord Jesus, we rejoice over your rescue mission from the Father. And we ask that even as you continue now even from glory. Speaking from heaven through preaching of your word on earth. That you would do so now in this place that. Your Holy Spirit would help the your servant who opens and explains and proclaims and applies your word.

And that your Holy Spirit would also help us all. That our hearts would be as good soil. That what you speak to us would take root that we would not refuse you but be saved and preserved by you and prepared for that glory that you have earned for those who believe in you.

So we cling to you as we ask it now for the preaching. And we ask through your name. Amen. Genesis 33 verses 1 through 17, these are God's words. Now Jacob lifted his eyes and looked and there he saw was coming. And with him were 400 men. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two made servants.

He put the maid servants and their children in front. Leah and her children behind and Rachel and Joseph last. Then he crossed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times until he came near to his brother. But Esau. Ran to meet him. And embraced him. And fell on his neck and kissed him.

And they wept.

And he lifted his eyes and saw the women and the children. And said who are these with you? So he said the children whom God has graciously given your servant.

Then the maid servants came near they and their children and bowed down and lay all also came near with her children and they bowed down afterwards Joseph and Rachel came near and they bowed down. The knees all said, what do you mean by all this company, which I met.

And he said these are to find favor in the sight of my Lord. But e saw said. I have enough my brother. Keep what you have for yourself.

And Jacob said no, please if I have now found favor in your sight then receive my present from my hand in as much as I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God. And you were pleased with me. Please take my blessing. That is brought to you.

Because God has dealt graciously with me. And because I have enough.

So he urged him. And he took it.

Then he saw said let us take our journey. Let us go and I will go before you. But Jacob said to him. My Lord knows that the children are weak and the flocks and herds which are nursing are with me. And if the men should drive them hard one day all the flock will die.

Please let my Lord go on ahead before his servant. I will lead on slowly. And a pace which the livestock that go before me and the children are able to endure. Until I come to my Lord and say here. And he saw said now, let me leave with you some of the people who are with me.

But he said, What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my Lord. So he saw returned that day on his way to say here. And Jacob journeyed to sucketh. And built himself a house. And made booths for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called.

Sucketh. So far the reading of God's inspired in an errant word, we look to him to add his blessing to it.

Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 11 tells us that in Jesus we have obtained an inheritance. From him who has according to the predestination of him. Who works all things according to the Council of his will.

That's one of the reasons why it's a little bit sloppy, although we probably know what people mean, hopefully when we hear them say, that was a God thing. Well, we just prayed together for our daily bread. And in a few moments a few more since we have the bread from heaven who is the Lord Jesus Christ.

His table today will be over there and we'll be in the line and the adults will be interested to see how much of it is left after the swarm. And when you sit down to eat it will be a God thing. He will genuinely have been responding to our prayers in his good providence sustaining an upholding all things by the word of his power and feeding us so that we should be enjoying his goodness even through the deliciousness that he has gifted so many to prepare.

Everything is a God thing. But sometimes God does do things in such a way to remind us because while everything is a God thing we do not have the consistent faith to see it. And so you'll hear things like I heard this weekend. A man from Fayetteville Tennessee who left when he was one year old and didn't come back until he was 76.

And ended up sitting on session with another man. Who? Just a year or two ago, he's been there three years had been there for some time. He was looking at these birth certificate from down there in Fayetteville and it was the same last name. And so he went to his friend who is on the session had been three quarters of a century away.

He said you didn't relate to this guy. And he said, that's my granddaddy. The Lord sometimes does things to remind us? That he is the one who works all things according to the Council of his will and that the will according to which he works all things is one in which he has predestined people to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and obtain an inheritance with him.

That everything he does is designed to make sinners into joint inheritors with Jesus. By the worthiness of Jesus. Because the sinners don't have any of their own.

Now the Lord does that for Jacob here? We're gonna see in verses one through three that after this wrestling match in which God responds to Jacob's prayer for help by removing any illusion of ability on his own part that Jacob is still acting with wisdom and even amazingly for Jacob and this is amazingly for Jacob self-sacrifice and verses one through three.

And that God then does something. So spectacular.

That Jacob responds to the grace of God in the rest of the encounter and a great display of God's power and God's providence and in response to that as God has displayed his power and directed. Jacob to the fact that he is being sustained by grace will then see what Jacob does as far as his present how he has been freed to to commit himself to being a blessing to others.

And his pursuit how he makes his. Real estate decisions at least in the rest of this text in the beginning of next week's text according to the promises of God that his life becomes not just being a blessing to others but a laying hold of God's promises and so will consider this passage in those four sections.

Jacob's preparations. God's display of his power Jacobs response with his present and with his pursuit or priorities. First then Jacob's preparations a text calls us back to what is going on it's been it's been stunning as we were stunned with Jacob last week that he was able to see the face of God and survive but now the the original logistics are back in play now.

Jacob lifted his eyes and looked and there he saw was coming and with him were 400 men and the news of Esau with the 400 men was what originally had caused Jacob to cry out to God for help. And so we see Jacob he divides the children among Lea and Rachel and the two made servants and we know that he prefers Rachel over Lib but we're glad that he at least prefers Leia over the maid servants.

And he puts them in order to increase the likelihood of survival and escape. And so, he he puts the maid servants in front and then he puts Leah behind the maidservance so that you know, the main servants have a good bunch with them and so if Esau attacks them, perhaps Leia can.

Escape with her children. But if Leah can't escape well then he puts Rachel and Joseph his favorites in the back and Jacob as we've known him so far we kind of expect him to be like behind Rachel and Joseph, don't we? But by God's mercy to him he goes before them.

He goes first. He takes the brunt. There is perhaps the idea in his mind that even if he himself is personally destroyed that perhaps that would satisfy Esau. In his family might survive. Would that Jacob sanctification was perfectly consistent and had a curve straight up or curved up but we will be warned next week by Jacob's later conduct of how believing fathers and husbands do not always sacrifice themselves for their families.

But Jacob was doing that here and we can see the grace of God already at work in this man. And so he's making preparations. It's good to note that preparations are not inconsistent with faith. God uses means if God's means include the spiritual means God's means also include what he has built into the creation that he uses work to produce well-being and wealth and he has designed the family.

He has designed the roles in the family and so all of God's gods means our right to use. It's not faith to say well. I'm a man of faith and therefore. I will not take a job or I will not take this job that is the only one that I have available to me that I can provide for my family and and I will wait for God to send the money.

Now, that's not how it works. The faith that God's word that He has wrestled with God and with men and has prevailed is a faith that's still employs wisdom and takes action. Foolishness and passivity and inaction are not faith. And we'll be grieved to see those things in in the text next week.

But Jake Jacob is making preparations. And part of his preparation does include the faith because as he. Puts himself in front it's similar to when he had sent his family across the river. You remember and the text had said and he was by himself. But was he by himself?

Children who've been paying attention? When he sent his kids across the river and he was by himself what happened? There was another one with him the one who wrestled with him. And whom did that turn out to be? It turned out to be God. The Lord Jesus Christ indeed appearance before he becomes a man appearing as a man and wrestling with him.

So is Jacob really by himself in verse 3. And he crosses over before them and he's bowing himself to the ground these seven times. Of course, he's not by himself. The one who is always with us. Was with Jacob. This is why we are always free to be humble and to be courageous.

Jacob here is bowing himself down before his brother later he's going to actually end up pleading with his brother to take his blessing a wonderful reversal of the. Of the reds too and of the the goat skin on his arms episodes. But we are free to be courageous and humble and generous because the Lord is always with us.

And that is our greatest preparedness. Sometimes there are things that the Lord will put you through that you are not able humanly speaking as far as means and wisdom goes adequately to prepare for. There are many things that the Lord brings into our lives that we just don't have the wisdom or the resources or the ability or the personal connections or the influence or the authority.

There are many things that are out of our hands. But trusting in the Lord and doing what he has put in your hands, you are not then left. At the limitation of the ability that he has given you. And Jacob's limitations are great here, aren't they? Because he's coming out with a family to face an army.

And yet he is coming out as David did. With the Lord. His God. So we see in the first place Jake is preparations and the second place we see the display of God's power. When we read Luke 15, we need to read it like those who know Genesis 33.

We need to see the surprise of the prodigal son who has come up with the plan and he has made his preparations and he's going to say I am not worthy to be called your son allow me to be a hired servant or even a slave and and let me eat like one of one of them he's come up with the plan and as he approaches as the prodigal son is returning and he approaches what happens children.

What a glorious surprise. The father does not come yelling and saying how dare you show this face you who wish that I was dead that you could have your inheritance you've probably squandered it all. There's no place here for you. It's what you expect to hear. The father runs and falls on his neck and kisses him.

Does that sound like anything that has been read in your hearing this morning? And it was to people who knew Genesis 33. That Jesus first taught that parable, isn't it? That we might see the greatness of the surprise of the power and forgiveness of God. In this shocking display for Esau.

We know from the way this the text of Genesis has gone for chapters. We know Jacob did not expect this response. Can you imagine how strengthening it was to Jacob who had heard the that morning as the as the Sun came up and he was wrestling and clinging for the blessing and he said he changed his name to Israel God wrestles and he said you have wrestled with God and with men and have prevailed and so he blessed him.

And now he saw is running to meet me and falling on my neck and kissing me. To use the sloppy but we know gloriously what it means language. That's a God thing. God has worked in his providence in Jacob's life in such a way that he can see that God works all things according to the council of the will in which he has predestined that we would inherit with.

Jesus Christ.

Esau act in like the father from the parable of the prodigal son. These are days often and these are days in which we often pray don't we according to Proverbs? 21 verse 1 the heart of the King is in the hand of God like water to direct it, however he will.

And this applies even to enemies coming with 400 men. Jacob knew that the heart of Esau. Was in the hand of God like water. To direct it, however he would. And that strengthened him that opened his eyes to grace and what a testimony he gives his brother because he realizes that the promise in the blessing of chapter 32 and verses 28 to 29 is coming true and so you saw says who are these with you and he says the children whom God has graciously given your servant.

Not the wives for which I worked 14 years and the children that I suffered out in the field for another 12 years while Laban was changing my wages 10 times. No he says God has been gracious to me and God is being gracious to me, that's who these are these are just some of the many displays and gifts of the grace of God to me, brother.

Very very different than the Jacob that he's all grew up with right the grasper that he'll grabber the deceiver mr plant himself with the red stew just where brother is gonna come in hungry. Mr have mom prepare the the savory food such as dad loves so that his soul may bless him.

No. Jacob says, they're the grace of God to me.

Indeed we should always see. That God has directing all things for our good if we are those who love him. In whom God has created love for him we love him because he first loved us and how do we know love in this is love not that we loved him but that he loved us and gave Jesus Christ to be the atonement for our sins and if he has made us to see that and he has made us to love him and as he loves us and he has called us according to his purpose then of course, he's the one who's working all things together through our good.

And everything that happens every day should look like that in our eyes. So that we are ready whenever anyone asks us about any blessing we have to say that's the grace of God to me. And whenever anybody asks us about the hope that we have in miserable suffering. And then the text the context of that text in the scripture, it's those who are torturing believers.

And the torturers can't take away the believers hope. And the apostle by the Holy Spirit says always being ready to give an answer for that hope, why won't you break? Because even your torture. Is by God's wise providence. The grace of God to me. There is nothing that you can do there is no circumstances that can come there is no cancer or dying sickness of a loved one there is no economic devastation, there is no political or revolutionary upheaval there is no foreign invasion, there is no plague that actually reduces the life expectancy of the nation.

There is nothing that can come apart from the grace of my God to me. Who in every one of those circumstances is always keeping his plan. And his promises. And that's why Jacob is able to offer this present to Esau. There's some double language here in verses 8 through 11.

Jacob now he's talked about God's grace and he's saying Esau. You need to look at your what would Jehovah do bracelet? And you need to be gracious to me too.

Esau says, what do you mean by all this company which I met Jacob says, these are to find favor in the sight of my Lord and he's using the same word favor that is translated the end of verse five graciously. Saying you be gracious to me too and God keeps doing it.

Esau says I have enough my brother keep what you have for yourself this really Jacob and you saw. The ones who we met that they were fighting so much in the womb that Rebecca came to God and still pregnant and said if it is thus, why am I? And here they are fighting to give one another.

Or at least to maintain each to the other and Jacob to give to Esau.

Jacob asking for grace. Esau recognizing. By God's mercy to both of them that he has enough. Jacob saying no, please if I have found favor and it's that grace word again in your sight then receive my present and it's actually a word for offering. Receive my present from my hand and as much as I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God and you were pleased with me now that is very flattering.

Flattering speech is a feature in the Bible and it's a feature in the the Near East where where this occurs for thousands of years and it's a feature and all human relationships or else Proverbs and other places you wouldn't get so many warnings to beware of the flat worse.

But he's also speaking rather truly just in a way that Esau can't tell. Because he has seen the face of God and God was pleased with him and Esau coming and treating Jacob like this is the evidence that God who smiled upon him and blessed him at the end of chapter 32 is now doing it in his providence as he meets his brother who actually is pleased to see him.

If the Lord is blessing you for Jesus's sake and you know that because you are trusting in him and you are clinging to the righteousness and sacrifice of Jesus. You can mend relationships. And you can come and you can place yourself in front of them and perhaps they will not be reconciled.

Scripture says if it is possible as far as it depends upon you don't always happen does it? But you can't operate out of the fear.

And so you can come and you can say I have seen the face of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. And I know that he is blessing me. Will you be reconciled to me? In this case. God had already by Esau's behavior shown him. And since God is the one whose face Jacob has seen and God is the one who is keeping his word.

Jacob actually says not just God has dealt graciously with me using that same grace word same word that translated there in verse 11, but and because I have.

Some translations say plenty, which is better because it's not the same word that Esau used in verse 9. You saw actually said plenty. I have a multitude of things. I have much. Jacob says, I have all. I have everything. I have everything I have and you know what he say I have everything you have.

That's what the Lord says to those who belong to him. Jesus Christ. Bless to the meek. They shall inherit the earth. How will he who? He who spared did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all how will he not also together with him give us all things.

All things are yours because you are Christ's and Christ is God's. Everything belongs to you. It's reserved for you. You are an inheritor with Jesus. Well, what exactly is Jesus inheritance?

And so you are free to insist upon being a blessing to others. You are free to be generous. Now, you're not free to be generous with that, which God has given you for the care of others. So don't any of you moms and dads run out and empty your bank account and give it to the nearest social concern recipient you can find because your first duty is to your family.

If your wife your children. Your next duty is to your family and the Lord. This congregation first where God has put you. And then in his church as more broadly like the a cans in Corinth giving to. Help giving along with the Macedonians to help the Christians and Judea and then your neighbor who's next door to you.

And those whom he has put near you whom you can see. Okay, there's biblical priority. But you are not following God's direction to be a blessing to others if you take that which was for the provision of your children and dispense so much that you can't do that anymore.

He who does not take care of his own household actually the apostle says is denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. So Jacob's present because he sees that if God is being gracious to him that he actually has everything and finally Jacob's pursuit. That family is more important to him than Army or Alliance Esau says verse 12, let us take our journey let us go.

I will go before you. He's offering him and alliance. Jacob says the Army idea is okay, but I don't think my family my children and the flocks which are nursing. I know I don't think my household corresponds to that very well. I'm choosing my household over that alliance. You may have to make such a decision in pursuing God's providential assignment to you at some point.

You have an opportunity to move up in your career, but where you are moving would not be healthy for your wife or for your children. You have an opportunity to stay where you are but that's not healthy for your wife or for your children and you say no I'll go where I don't have the 400 men.

I'll go where I have the lower salary I'll go where I have less notoriety, but I will go where it is good for my wife and my children. Because God who is gracious to me. Has placed me in that position. And I rest in His grace. I don't rest in the security of the 400 men or the alliance of Esau.

So, he refuses the the worldly help of Esau and. By the time we get to the end of the chapter which gets into next week's text a little bit but we'll read down into there. We understand a little bit more why he would not go to say here. Because say here was not the land of blessing.

And so he says, please let my Lord go on ahead before his servant. First 14, I will lead on slowly at a pace which the livestock that go before me and the children are able to stand until I come to my Lord in say here. So you understand that that he's recognizing that what Esau is offering is to go to Esau land.

That's what say you're is. It's Edom which is Esau's other name but he wasn't supposed to go to Esau land. He was supposed to go to the land that God had promised to Abraham and Isaac. As the Lord had said 31 verse 3 always said to Jacob return to the land of your fathers and to your family and I will be with you 32 and verse 9.

Jacob said Oh God of my father Abraham God of my father Isaac you all way who said to me return to your country and to your family. I will deal well with you. And so there might be security from Canaan in say here. There's gonna be problems with the Canaanites Jacob's about to run into them in the next chapter.

And so there might be secure in Esau security and Esau land, but there is the promise of God in Canaan.

And so, He preempts Esau's offer or plan for what ends up being spiritual considerations verse 18 from next week's message then Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem which is in the land of Canaan when he came from Padana Ram and he pitched his tent before the city and so the Padana Ram..

Is over and the and the Canaan period is starting again.

And he is prioritizing God's promises God's commands. That's what the Lord Jesus tells us to do too. He's at the end of Matthew chapter 6 and he's dealing with the worrying about food and clothing and he says don't worry so much about what you will eat or what you will wear seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and by the time he says that in Matthew 6:33, he is not saying, you know warm up your heart with spiritual mushy fuzzies about Jesus.

And you'll. Get everything you like. There's two chapters of teaching what the seeking of the kingdom of God looks like dealing with sin to to the core of your heart desiring that the goodness of God would be shown in the righteousness of your life. The doing works of mercy and praying and fasting another things.

He says get your priority straight. Because God has already taken care of you and that frees you to follow what He has promised for you and what? He has commanded you that you would be made like Christ and to display of His character. You're not saved by works, but you do them.

Why? Because we're His workmanship created in Christ. Jesus for those good works. That. He prepared beforehand that we should walk in Him so that it would be apparent when your mind is changed that you don't walk like the Gentiles do. But Jesus is displayed. And as He makes you more like Himself.

He's getting you ready for glory. So that our life becomes a pursuit of the promises of God.

By giving Himself to us in Jesus the Lord has assured believers in Christ of all of His promises. And so, yes. Do things like prepare and use wisdom. And work hard. But do so with the priority of being a blessing to others. And pursuing the Lord's promises in you and through you.

A man wants pray.

Our Father in Heaven, we are grateful to you that. You have worked in the lives of. Redeemed but imperfect sinners before. And that you have given us inspired record of it in Scripture. So that we might see even as you are bringing Jesus into the world through Jacob. What it is like for us who trust in Jesus in this world like Jacob.

And so we pray that you would stir up in us faith in Christ that we would see your grace to us in everything that happens that you would liberate us to be generous and godly and righteous. Because we know that you are taken care of us. That you would do all these things by the power of your Holy Spirit both because Christ is our worthiness and He deserves it for us.

And because it was in your love to begin with that you gave Him to be that worthiness. And so we ask it in his name and your people here, say. Hey, man.