

The Dreadful Places of Blessing

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon explores how the journey to receiving God's blessings often involves navigating through difficult and dreadful places in life.

Duration: 47:42

Scripture: Genesis 28:10, Genesis 32:24, Genesis 32:26, Jeremiah 31:31, Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 11:6, James 4:8

Topics: "Blessing"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of walking in the presence of God and bringing joy to heaven. The sermon also includes a segment on baby dedication, where babies are brought to Jesus for blessing. The preacher then focuses on the story of Jacob in Genesis 32, where Jacob wrestles with God and receives the blessing promised to him. The sermon concludes with the message that God wants to deal with the issues in our hearts so that His blessings can flow through our lives.

Transcript

This message is one of the Times Square Church Pulpit Series. It was recorded in the sanctuary of Times Square Church in Manhattan, New York City. Other tapes are available by writing World Challenge, PO Box 260, Vindale, Texas 75771, or calling 903-963-8626.

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My message is entitled today, The Dreadful Places of Blessing. That sounds like a contradiction of sorts, but you'll understand it as you go on a little longer. The Dreadful Places of Blessing.

Father, I thank you for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. I thank you for your quickening power and your strength. Mighty God, I'm asking that I may have the privilege today of knowing the anointing that sets people free.

I ask for an ability to speak clearly and intelligently that every heart, every person may understand, and the power to disappear, that you may appear, that your voice might be heard, that your kingdom may advance, that your purposes would be fulfilled in the lives of your people. Lord, I am wholly dependent on you, and I thank you for the strength that you freely give to those who acknowledge you and need you.

You never fail those who trust in you, and we thank you for it in Jesus' name.

Genesis chapter 28, a story about a man called Jacob, who is the grandson of Abraham. And Jacob went out, verse 10, Genesis 28, Jacob went out from Beersheba and went towards Haran, and he lighted upon a certain place and tarried there all night, because the sun was set, and he took of the stones of that place and put them for his pillows and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and, behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven.

And, behold, the angels of God descending and ascending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac, the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west and to the east, and to the north and to the south.

And in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Behold, I am with thee, and I will keep thee at all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land. For I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.

And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. And he was afraid and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and it is the gate of heaven. The dreadful place is a blessing.

Now, Genesis, if you want to go back to chapter 12 with me, tells us that Jacob's grandfather Abraham had received an incredible promise from God. Genesis 12, 1 to 3, here was the promise. Now the Lord said to Abraham, Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred.

That's Genesis 12, 1. And from thy father's house unto a land that I will show thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curseth thee.

And in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Now God spoke a very, very incredible thing to this man Abraham. He said, I'm going to increase you essentially, I'm going to multiply you, I'm going to bless you, and I'm going to bless your name, and I'm going to make you a blessing.

Not only will you receive from me, but what I give to you will flow out of your life to others around you. And God was essentially saying to Abraham, the blessing will be so great that people throughout the world will be touched of the blessing that I'm about to pour out upon you. Now go ahead to Genesis 22, if you will, with me.

Genesis 22, this is after Abraham was tested in the giving up of his son Isaac, that which was the dearest to his heart God required of him. And after he was faithful in the test that God had given him, in verse 17, God again said to Abraham, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed, as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is upon the seashore, and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. And in thy seed, verse 18, shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice.

Now God said, Abraham, I'm going to bless you, and I'm going to bless your generations. There's a blessing that's going to flow through the lineage of your family, and that blessing ultimately we know today was fulfilled when Jesus Christ was born of the house of David, as it is his mother Mary was of the lineage of David. And when Jesus Christ was born, that blessing became the reality of what he was speaking to

Abraham came to its fruition in Jesus Christ.

And now we are the body of Jesus Christ, the church of Jesus Christ in our generation. And that blessing, which was pronounced to Abraham and was passed on to subsequent generations, through Jesus Christ has now become ours. It's not just a blessing that's in a particular family lineage now, it's in those who are of the family of Jesus Christ.

And all the blessings God spoke to Abraham are now yours, and they're now mine. God says, I will strengthen you, I will bless you, and I will use you, and through your life, all nations. Now, doesn't mean you're going to go throughout the world, doesn't mean you're going to be a televangelist or anything like that, but it means that everyone around you, irrespective of race, color, creed, language, where they are in society, God says, I'm going to use your life and you're going to be a blessing.

It's not going to be you, it's going to be me that flows through your life. Now, Jacob knew this, and he wanted this blessing to come on him and to flow through him. Now, the scripture clearly tells us it was ultimately another man's before his, his brother Esau was the legitimate as it was inheritor of this blessing.

But Esau didn't esteem this blessing of God. God had made it available to him, but he played lightly with it. And beloved, there are many Christians like that today, not comprehending what it is that God wants to give to his people, the measure of his life that he wants to pour out to his church.

They don't understand it and they play lightly with it. And that is probably the most foolhardy game that any person in the world can be playing today. We think that some who play the lottery are foolhardy, trusting their future as it is to a happenstance.

But I think of those who are inheritors of everything that Jesus Christ purchased on Calvary, and they lightly esteem it, and they let it fall through their fingers and they don't seek it, they don't pursue it, they don't understand it. Now, Jacob, we understand from the scriptures, obtained this blessing through trickery. He went into his father Isaac and he pretended that he was his brother Esau.

Now, he obtained the blessing in a sense initially by pretending to be a man that he was not. And we must understand, however, that God gave it to him. It was ultimately God's to give or God's to withhold.

You cannot trick God, beloved, into blessing you. God wasn't tricked. God knew exactly what was going to happen in that circumstance.

And sometimes we look at Jacob and say, well, you know, trickster, supplanter. Beloved, there's a little bit of that in all of us, if we're going to be honest. We initially get saved and come into the kingdom of God.

And every one of us, to some degree, pretend to be somebody that we're not. If you're brand new to the Lord here today, or maybe walking a few years with God, you come into the church and don't try to tell me you didn't change your conversation the moment you entered that door, the lobby door of this church. You don't say you didn't say praise the Lord, brother, all the way to church in your car today with your family.

You weren't saying it to your neighbors. You all of a sudden just switched into Christian vernacular. You come in the door.

All of a sudden there's a big smile. You're shaking everybody's hand. You love everybody, irrespective of the fact that you're annoyed and can't stand anybody around you most of the week.

Now, all of a sudden, you're the of love has arrived at Times Square Church on Sunday morning. And we walk in and we pray and say, God bless me. And that's technically what Jacob was doing.

He was pretending to be a man. He was not. His father, Isaac, had said, Who are you, my son? And he said, I am Esau, your son.

And there's a measure of that trickery in every man. Now, we have no power to deal with that, beloved. We are.

That is the human nature. That's the flesh nature. That's the job of the Holy Spirit to begin to deal with that.

And the Holy Spirit, in effect, did begin to deal with it in Jacob. And God gave him the blessing because he wanted it. Now, folks, I want to tell you something.

You may not have it all together here this morning and you may be struggling and you may even be sitting here today thinking rightfully that just like Jacob said, God, I'm a fraud. I come to church and I'm raising my hands and singing the song. But I don't live that way.

That's not really what's in my heart the rest of the week. And I. But in your heart, you're saying like Jacob, I know I'm not Esau. I know I'm perhaps not the legitimate inheritor, as it is of the blessing in the Old Testament sense.

I'm speaking now. But deep within me, I want the blessing of God. You know it.

And God knows it. I'm tired of pretending. I'm tired of being something I'm not.

I'm trying to tired of trying to cover my own flaws and mistakes. I want reality. I want this life of God.

I want everything you purchased for me on Calvary. I want it all. Now, God bless me.

And so we raise our hands and Jacob came into to Isaac, his father, and said, now bless me, bless me. And then God through Isaac, not Isaac, apart from God, but God to Isaac blessed Jacob and the blessing that was promised to Abraham was now passed on to Jacob because Jacob wanted it. And God legitimately gave it to him because he desired it.

The blessing doesn't come just because you're second generation Christian folks. You have to understand that doesn't come because you come to Times Square Church or were raised in a Christian home or have been attending church for a number of years or a Christian lineage or family. The blessing comes because you and I want the life of God that is provided for us through Jesus Christ.

That's where the blessing comes from. And because he desired it, God began to lead him on a journey. It was a journey to being blessed and becoming a blessing.

And it led him to what in the natural would seem to be farther away from God than he had been before. Have you ever said that? I've heard that before. I feel farther from God than I've ever been before.

I want him. I'm seeking him. But all of a sudden it seems like I don't understand what's going on around me.

I thought God would just come down and zap me. And all of a sudden I'd be blessed. I thought it would be that easy.

I would just I would find the yield. I'd bow my knee one time and come in and say, Father, bless me. And I would be transformed.

Well, it would be wonderful if it happened that way. I'd be probably the happiest in the church if that's the way it was today. But it doesn't happen that way.

The change from image to image and glory to glory, beloved, is line by line, brick by brick, step by step, character trait by character trait. The old things begin to fall away and God, by his mercy, begins to plant within us a new nature. Jacob desires the blessing.

And the first thing that happens, he ends up fleeing from Esau or running, in effect, from the man he pretended that he once was. And that's, I believe, the first step. If we really want the blessing, we end up trying to outrun what we pretended to be.

Secondly, suffering the loss of the familiar needed love and acquaintance all around him. God seems to take everything away from him. He knows he may never see his father.

His mother tells him you better leave because your brother is going to kill you. And so he heads off into a distant place. And he suffered loss when he thought the blessing should be gained.

I thought the blessing was going to be instantaneous gain. Folks, we have multitudes of Christians running all over the world now. Well, not so much perhaps right now, but they were a few years ago just looking for instantaneous blessing.

Just bless me. Just touch me, preacher, and I'm going to be changed. I'm going to be blessed.

But folks, the pathway to that blessing leads through some very difficult places. It leads through some places that, like Jacob said, are dreadful. From a warm bed with a mother and a father's care, he now finds himself on the cold ground with a stone for his pillow.

It's a short distance, but what an infinite change has come into his life. All comfort now is gone. All the familiar is taken away.

And did it occur to him? I think it probably did. Some blessing. This is.

Did that ever occur to some of you here this morning? You come to Times Square Church and you've been hearing the Word of God and the covenant promises, and you sit here today and say, I've been at it six months now. Some blessing this is. I've lost my friends.

My family won't talk to me. I'm alienated at my work. I've spent all my time trying to pretend I'm not who I used to be.

And it just seems that instead of getting warmer, I'm getting colder. Instead of everything getting softer, it's getting harder. Some blessing this is.

From my grandfather to my father, now it's given to me. And Jacob says, if this is where God is found, this is a dreadful place. Now, the word in Hebrew for dreadful is yare.

And here's what it means. It means to fear or to be made afraid. It means terrifying.

It can mean it can be used in the context of an awe or reverence or fear of God. But it also means a feeling that things are going wrong. That's what it means.

Things are going wrong. I thought you're going to bless me. I thought I was an inheritor of this incredible promise that the world is going to be touched through my life.

And I can see now everything is going wrong all around me. This is a dreadful place. This is a hard place.

This is not what I thought the blessing was going to be. But in the midst of that, God gave Jacob a very strange dream. You see, God will never take away hope when he's dealing with us.

That's what makes God, God. That is his love and his mercy. The scripture says, endures forever.

And he gives him a dream. And at that dream, he sees the angels ascending and descending. And God Almighty himself at the top of the ladder as it is, speaking again, strength and life and hope into him.

And that's, beloved, why we must never forsake the assembling of ourselves. We must never forsake coming together to hear a word that can give us hope and encouragement in the time of our Christian growth. He's not at all understanding the pathway before him.

But inwardly, he's knowing that this had to be the pathway that led to the promises and power of God. I'm sleeping on the ground, a stone from my pillow, but I see that this is the way to God. That's what the dream was all about.

God's saying, this is the channel, Jacob. This is the way that you're going to find the life and the power. I'm in control of absolutely everything.

I know exactly where I'm leading you. I know exactly what I'm doing in your life. So, Jacob, you're going to have to trust me.

As difficult as it might be, you're going to have to trust me. The book of Hebrews, I'm just going to read it to you for time's sake. Please don't bother trying to find it.

But in Hebrews chapter 11, verse 8, it says, By faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and he went out, not knowing whether he went. By faith, he sojourned or dwelled in a land of promise, in a land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles of tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Now, the scripture says that Abraham went to the land of God's promises, as it is, and it was a strange place to him. It was a strange place, and sometimes it can appear that way. A strange place, where all the familiar is gone.

All that I would like to... I would like... The human side of me would like to be formed. Humanity always wants form and tradition. That's why out of every revival, unfortunately, a religion will begin to form.

And people will begin to do things a certain way, because that's what humanity wants. But God kept Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob living in tents. They had to move continuously.

They had to move with the pattern and plan of God that he had preordained for their lives. And that pattern, of course, was to bring them into the fullness of his blessing and his presence. Now, we have to understand something.

This is one of the keys. Jacob didn't know his own heart, just as you and I don't know our own hearts. We may look in the mirror and see one thing, but I tell you, God looks and sees something else.

And we're crying out to God and saying, God bless me. God says, I want to bless you. You've got to let me lead you now.

It's not the way it looks. It's not the way things appear to your eyes. There are issues in your heart that you are not aware of.

But God says, I am aware of them. And I want to deal with them in your life and in your heart. The blessing was coming to him, obviously.

But first, something in him had to be put away. Because if it wasn't put away, it would mar, it would destroy, disturb the inheritance that God wanted to pour out through his life. Folks, there are men and women preaching the gospel today.

You can turn on television or radio, if you have that, or access to it. And you can see them preaching. And it's very obvious there's something marring the life of God in them.

You see, they short-circuited. Many of them were genuinely saved, if they still are. They were genuinely called of the Holy Ghost.

But they would not follow the prescribed path to obtain the blessing of God the true way. The way that God gives it to his servants. And so, you hear them preach.

And the words are coming out, perhaps are truth. But there is a disturbing of it. There's a marring of it.

It's clean coming in, but it's not clean coming out. Because they wouldn't let the life of God be formed in them the way that God wants to do it. And the inheritance that God wanted to give to them became altered by that which of themselves they allowed to remain alive.

And they begin to twist, as it is, the image of God. And they turn his image into something confusing. And we see that happening all throughout the world.

Even in the Christian church. Now, we know historically that God was going to do that for Jacob. He was going to bless him.

He was going to purge him, though, first. He was going to bring him to desperation. And then, he was going to meet him face to face.

And folks, that's exactly what God will do to you and me. If you want the blessing of God, He will purge you. And then He will bring you to desperation in whatever area of your life it is that God's trying to put His finger on.

And then, He will meet you and I face to face. Hebrews chapter 12, verse 5 to about verse 8, tells us that if we're not to faint when we are corrected of Him. For every son that God receives, the Scripture says, He

scourges.

He cuts deep. He goes after that which is going to mar the inheritance that He wants to give us. The writer of Hebrews says, if you are without chastisement, you are not legitimately children of God.

If you come to God and try to circumvent the deep dealings of God, where He's taking out the old nature, the old character, the writer says very clearly, this is evidence that you really don't have a living relationship with God and the blessings of God are really not legitimately being formed in your life. I seriously question the genuineness of the conversion of those who come to Christ and yet spend their life trying to duck correction, trying to dodge the challenging of their motives, the issues of their heart. Well, folks, that's not the easy way.

The easy way is to duck and dodge everything. The hard way is to face God. The hard way is to walk on the pathway that God has laid before us.

But it's the only way that the blessing of God will ever be formed in us. Now, the Scripture tells us in the book of Jeremiah, if you'll turn there with me very quickly, in the book of Jeremiah, the Scripture tells us there was a time when the whole nation of Israel pretended to possess a relationship with God that had no legitimacy in truth. And so God allowed the nation.

This was at the time when the kingdom was divided between North and South, and God allowed them to be chastised by their circumstances. You know, the Northern Kingdom was surrounded and eventually conquered by the Assyrians, the Southern Kingdom initially by Babylon, and then subsequently by the Medo-Persian Empire, who conquered Babylon and allowed them to return. But God chastised them by their circumstances.

That's exactly what He will do. God will lead us into circumstances because He wants to bless us. He wants to keep us.

He has made promises that He's not fickle about. He's not going to run out because we make mistakes. God is going to keep working with us, but He will chastise us by our circumstances.

And then, at exactly the right time, when hope of change in their own power seemed to be lost, we see that in Jeremiah chapter 32, verse 36. And thou, therefore, thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning this city, whereof ye say, now this is the city of God, this is the inheritance of God, whereof you say, it shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword and by famine and by pestilence. In other words, God's saying, there does come a time when the hope of change seems to be lost.

Where the people of God even say, if left to myself, I'm going to be devoured by the word or the sword. I'm going to be devoured by the famine in my soul. I'm going to be devoured by the trouble that's on every side.

I feel that if God doesn't intervene, there's no hope. And you see, the people had dealt loosely with their relationship, and that looseness brought them into captivity. It always will, it always has, it always does.

But God, in His mercy, said, yes, even though you're in captivity, I am not going to forsake you. I'm going to pursue you. I'm going to go after you because I bought you.

You are mine. You are my inheritance. You are the people through whom I want to bless.

First, I want to bless you. And through you, I want to bless the nations. So even if you are in captivity, God says, I'm going to go after you and you're going to know me at the time of desperation.

When you've finally given up, when you finally get to the point saying, if God doesn't intervene, I am never going to get out of here. I'm going to be swallowed and held captive all the rest of my life unless God comes and makes the change. And then, when the people get to that point, God makes His mercy known to them again.

Jeremiah 32, 37. He says, behold, I will gather them out of all countries where I've driven them in mine anger and in my fury and in great wrath. Now, I want you to picture Jacob being literally driven out of the land of his father, being sent into a dismal place as it is.

If you know the history of Jacob, he was about to be double dealt with himself. He was about to be taught some life lessons. And I will bring them again into this place.

That's the place of God's promise, provision, protection and blessing. I'll bring them back and I will cause them to dwell safely. God says, there's going to be a time of turmoil in your heart as it is, but then I'm going to bring you back.

And they shall be my people and I will be their God. And I will give them one heart and one way, verse 39, that they may fear me forever for the good of them. Now, God says, I'm going to put my fear in their heart because they're going to know that you don't play games with God and get away with it.

The New Testament church, for example, is not an excuse to play games with God. And it's as tragic in this generation as it was for the children of Israel and of their children after them. You see, you see the heart of God in verse 39.

God says, I've always wanted to bless you. I've always wanted to bless your home. I've wanted to bless your family.

I've wanted my life and power to be there and to flow through you and to keep going through your subsequent generations. And because in your heart you still will cry out to me, even if I have to produce the circumstances that produce the cry. If I at least know, God says, there's going to be a cry, I will come after you and I will bring you back and you will understand what it means to walk with me.

And I will make, he says in verse 40, an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them to do them good, but I will put my fear in their hearts and they shall not depart from me. Verse 41, he says, yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good. And I will surely plant them.

I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and my whole soul. God says, I will put everything I am into accomplishing this. I will do it with all my heart and with all my soul.

You know, we think sometimes when Jesus said to the Lord, oh, love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, that it's almost like a one way relationship. You know, God, you seem to be a million miles away and yet I have to love you with all my heart, soul, mind and strength. God says, no, no, you've got to understand something.

When you look at my word, you're going to see that I've given my whole heart and soul to you already. I'm not asking you for anything that I'm not willing to do or to give anything that I haven't already freely given to you. For thus saith the Lord, like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I promised them.

Verse 43, and the fields shall be bought in this land whereof you say it is desolate. God says, I'll bring you back and you're going to possess the place of promise without man or beast and is given into the hand of the Chaldeans. Men shall buy fields for money and subscribe evidences.

I was talking about land transactions and seal them and take witnesses in the land of Benjamin and in the places about Jerusalem and in the cities of Judah and the cities of the mountains and the cities of the valley and the cities of the south. God says, for I will cause their captivity to return, saith the Lord. God says, I will bring you back into the land of promise and it will be a complete possession, not a partial possession, but you will have land, cities, places.

This is a physical type of a spiritual application in the New Testament. God says, I'm not just bringing you in to give you piecemeal verses in the New Testament that you can say, well, this is mine. No, he said, the whole thing is yours, the whole thing.

And wherever you want to go and whatever you desire, I will give it to you. I will bless you with blessing and life beyond your greatest comprehension. As a matter of fact, God says I can do above and beyond beyond all you even are able to think or imagine or ask for.

I will even do more than that. I will do beyond. I will pour the life of God.

I will pour my own life into you. That's beyond anything we can understand. We don't fully understand the life of God, folks.

But God says, I will give it to you anyway if you ask for it. If you truly want this blessing of my presence, I will give it to you and you will be turned into another person. Hallelujah.

Now, he doesn't do this, the scripture tells us, because we are righteous. He doesn't do it because we do everything right. Ezekiel, when he spoke through the prophet Ezekiel in chapter 36, he said, I do not do this for your sake, so house of Israel.

He says, you have profaned my name everywhere you've gone. He said, but I do it for my own namesake. I do it because I said I'm going to have a people and I have declared if they will call out to me, I will bring them home.

I'll sprinkle them with clean water. I'll give them a new heart. I'll give them a new mind.

I will put my spirit upon them. I will cause them to dwell safely. I will give them vineyards in all of your.

I will so prosper them the world around will take notice of what I have done to my people. God says, I do it for my namesake. Folks, that takes away self effort.

That takes away all the competition in the church of Jesus Christ. God says, I'm not interested in what you've done. I'm only wanting a cry from your heart.

That's all I'm looking for. I'm only wanting an honest face to face dealing with you. And I will do it for that blessing you've desired for.

And the testimony that you will have will not be about your family, your church, your generation. The testimony will be of Christ and Christ's life alone. Psalm 23, even David the king knew this.

He said, he leads me in paths of righteousness for his namesake. That's why he does it. Now, secondly, he makes his promises known when there's a cry.

And he moves upon his people to ask that they might possess them. Right after all of this, God says to Jeremiah in chapter 33 and verse 3, Call to me and I will answer thee. And I will show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest.

And the word knowest in the Hebrew text means understand. Which you cannot understand. He says, now you know my heart.

You see, once we know God's heart, that's what covenant is about. Once you understand that, now the progression is prayer. He says, if you know my heart, then what are you doing sitting there in silence? What are you doing still trying to resolve your own issues? Call to me.

Call to me. Didn't he tell us in the New Testament? You've asked for nothing, he said to his disciples so far. Now ask that your joy might be full.

Ask, ask me. How many times in the New Testament does he have to tell us? Ask, ask, ask, ask. I want to give it to you.

If you understand my heart. If you understand relationship, I want to give it to you. And then he begins to move in response to the prayer with healing.

Verse chapter 33, verse 4. For thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city and concerning the houses of the kings of Judah, which are thrown down by the mountains and by the sword. They come to fight with the Chaldeans, but it is to fill with the dead bodies of men whom I've slain in mine anger and in my fury. And for all whose wickedness I've hid my face from this city.

But listen to verse 6. He says, behold, I will bring it health and cure and I will cure them and I will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth. If they will cry to me once they've known my heart, if they understand I want to bring them home. God says, I'll bring them health and I will cure them.

Now, we're not talking necessarily all physical things here, but he said it's a spiritual health. It's a relationship health with God. And I will reveal to them the abundance of peace and truth.

And I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return. And I will build them as at the first. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me.

This is verse 8, chapter 33. And I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned and whereby they have transgressed against me. Now, I want you to catch something in verse 9. Here's the key.

And that shall be to me, God says, a name of joy and praise and an honor before all nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them. And they shall fear. These are the nations of the earth.

They shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it. God says, I'm waiting for your call. And I will so move in your life.

I will so transform you. I will so change you. Not for your namesake, but for mine.

So that the world will know there is a God who created the universe. He does sit at the right hand of all glory and all power. And it will be to me a name of joy and praise and honor before all nations of the earth, because they will hear of the good things that I do to you.

Hallelujah. And it will put fear and trembling in their hearts when they hear it. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. And lastly, He said, I will give you an assured future. Verse 10, He says, Thus saith the Lord.

Again, there shall be heard in this place which you say shall be desolate without man and without beast, even in the cities of Judah and the cities of Jerusalem that are desolate without man and without inhabitants and without beasts. There shall be heard, verse 11, He tells us, the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride and the voice of them that say, praise the Lord of hosts. For the Lord is good.

For His mercy endures forever. And of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the Lord. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land as at the first, saith the Lord.

God says there will be joy again if you cry out to me, even though you may think you're desolate. He says there will be joy again. There will be praise again.

You will come in to the house of God and this will be your testimony. Praise the Lord for His mercy endures forever. I don't deserve what I have.

I haven't earned what I am. But I cried out to Him and He heard me. He heard me.

I wanted an honest relationship and He knew it. Even though, even though I may not have been as honest as I ought to be, God knows my heart. I have wanted the blessing that He promises to those who cry out to Him.

Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, verse 12, Again in this place which is desolate without man and without beasts, and in all the cities thereof shall be a habitation of shepherds, causing their flocks to lie down. Not only, God says, will I bring you back to myself, but I will bring you to a place where there are genuine shepherds of God who will speak a word into your heart that will bring you to peace. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.

They will declare to you my heart. You will know my heart. You will know what it is to walk with me.

And the end result of the dealing I will do in your life will be peace. Absolute peace. You will be able to lie down in safety and without fear of tomorrow.

In the cities of the mountains, in the cities of the vale, verse 13, in the cities of the south, in the land of Benjamin, and in the places of Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah shall the flocks pass again under the hands of him that telleth them, saith the Lord. In other words, the flocks will come. And God says, the word hands means strength.

I will strengthen the church. I will strengthen the leadership. And the leadership in turn will be able to guide the flock.

They'll be able to tell the flock, this is the way where you're going to find life. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform the good thing which I have promised to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. God says, I will perform.

Now, let's go back to where we started in Genesis chapter 32. Actually, we started in 28. Let's go to Genesis 32.

This is where I'm closing. Genesis 32, verse 26. Let's say 24.

This is Jacob now going back. It's been a long journey. The journey has been a hard place.

And Jacob says, I've had it here. God speaks to his heart and says, now get up and go to the land of promise. Jacob, I've dealt with you.

You are now ready to inherit the blessing that I promised for your life. The scripture says in verse 24, And Jacob was left alone and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. Now, we know that to be Christ himself.

He wrestled with God literally face to face. And really, that's where it really ends up. A long path, a time of desperation, which ends in a wrestling in effect in every one of our lives, a literal face to face encounter with God.

In verse 26, and this is God speaking in a sense, He said, let me go for the day breaketh. And Jacob said, or he said, which is Jacob, I will not let thee go except thou bless me. And there gets a point, folks, of desperation.

It says, God, I will not let you go until you bless me. Lord, what you promised was going to be in my life and flow through my life. What you told my grandfather Abraham and my father Isaac and is now upon my life.

I've got a hold of you now, and I'm not letting you go until I know that blessing. Until I'm blessed, I have an assurance that that blessing is in my life. And then God said to him, verse 27, and he said to him, what is thy name? Now, it's very significant because the last time he sought the blessing, he lied.

The last time he was asked that question, he went in and said, Father, bless me. And he said, what is thy name, son? Said, Esau. So this is very significant.

He's gone on a long journey, and now he's coming back. And now he has to deal with the issue of his character. He has to deal with the issue of his truth.

If you will not deal with it, there is no blessing for your life. Ultimately, that's where it has to end. It comes right back to the issues of the heart, the issue of character.

Comes right back to the man or woman that says, I'm not interested in playing games anymore. God, I'm not letting you go until you bless me. I'm not letting go until I have this thing in my life.

And God says, what is your name? And he says, Jacob. Now, Jacob means trickster, supplanter, con artist, if you want to put it in modern terms. That's what his name means.

And God says, tell me your name, trickster. God says, OK, you want me to bless you? Then let's agree about your nature. Let's agree about what you are, because I'm not going to touch what you are.

The blessing doesn't come from you. It comes from me. You've got to agree with me about your nature before you will ever know the blessing of God.

And he said, Jacob. And now the Lord responds, verse 28. And he said, thy name shall no more be called Jacob.

Here's the change. But Israel, for as a prince that has power with God and with men and has prevailed. Now, you have to understand something.

Some people look at this and say, OK, if I just wrestle in prayer all night, I will win and prevail. I'll have power with God. But the word power in Hebrew is Sarah.

It's his grandmother's name. And what it really means is strength to conceive seed when you are past age. Strength to prevail when you have no power.

That was the power. God says you now have power. It's not you.

You now have my life, Jacob. You now have my life. And because you have my life, you now have a new name because you have a new nature.

There is no new name until there's a new nature. And there's no new nature until we finally agree with God. That within us dwells no good thing.

That all that will ever give us life and happiness and strength has to come from the hand of mighty God. And Jacob asked him, verse 29, I love this. This is I find it humorous.

Jacob asked him and said, tell me, I pray thee thy name. I was talking to God. You have to understand.

And he said, this is God. Wherefore is it that thou hast asked me my name? You see, here's what the interaction is meaning. Jacob, you don't have to ask my name because I don't need to change.

He said, Jacob, I am the one who changes everything I touch. And those I touch, I give a new name. You cannot change me, Jacob, but I can change you.

Hallelujah. Don't ask my name. You don't need to know my name.

There's nothing in me that changes. I am the Lord. I change not.

I am the same yesterday, today and forever. Hallelujah. I change everything I touch.

I change Abraham to Abraham. I change Sarai to Sarai. I change Simon to Peter.

I change Jacob to Israel, a prince with God, because the power of God is now upon his life. And the scripture says he blessed him there. He blessed him there.

He gave him the blessing. But, folks, with the blessing, he also gave him a limp. Verse 25 says, he touched the hollow of his thigh.

And the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with God. And therefore, verse 32 says, the children of Israel, he nodded the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh unto this day, because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh. Now, folks, this is exactly what it's about.

God says, Jacob, I'm going to bless you, but I'm going to touch your body. And I'm going to give you a weakness. So you will never again lean upon your flesh.

You will never trust in your flesh again. Hallelujah. That's why the apostle Paul says, I will glory in my infirmity that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Hallelujah. Paul said three times, I asked him to take it away. And God says, no, my grace is sufficient for you.

So much for the hyperfaith and healing and prosperity camp. So much for the theology. God says, no, I've given you revelation.

And Paul, in order to keep you, I'm also going to touch your body and I'm going to give you a limp. And God may put something in your life that will keep you dependent on him. He may do it, but you'll be the happiest tamper in the church of Jesus Christ.

Hallelujah. I see Jacob coming back across the border. How are you doing? I'm not worried about what's going on in my physical body.

I'm blessed because the power of God is on my life and he's making me what I cannot be. He's taking me where I cannot go. He's giving me what I could never possess.

And he's leading me where I cannot follow. Verse 30, last verse, Jacob called the name of the place Peniel. He says, for I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved.

Now, the word preserved in the Hebrew text means snatched away, free. It means free. He said, I have seen God face to face and I am free.

Hallelujah. I'm free. I'm free.

I've seen him. He didn't condemn me. He didn't destroy me.

He set me free. I'm free. Hallelujah.

I'm free from the bondage of this flesh. I'm free from the things of the past. I'm free from the torment of my mind.

I'm free from the weakness of misunderstanding God. I am free by the power of God. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Free. If the son shall set you free, you shall be free indeed.

We worship you, Lord. We worship you, Jesus. We bless you, Lord.

We magnify you, O God. Hallelujah. Free.

Free. Eternally free. Free to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Glory to your name, O God. Glory to your name. Glory to your name.

Today, we're going to sing a song about freedom. Maybe He Touched Me would be a good song. We never envisioned that song to be giving you a limp.

You know, He touched me. Oh, He touched me. Oh, the joy that floods my soul.

If you are on the verge of giving up, don't. If you don't understand the pathway that God has you on, don't.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/2/SID2783.mp3>

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