

An Example Not to Follow

by Conrad Murrell

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith and obedience, using Jacob's life as an example of unbelief and scheming, and encourages listeners to focus on waiting for God's return.

Duration: 23:07

Scripture: Genesis 25:21-23, Genesis 32:31, Genesis 35:1-3, Matthew 6:33, Luke 18:8, Revelation 21:1-2

Topics: "Example"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the state of Christianity and the signs that indicate the end is near. He points out that while Christianity may appear to be growing in size, prosperity, and influence, it is actually becoming further removed from the truth of God. The preacher emphasizes the importance of staying faithful to God and obeying His commands, rather than getting caught up in worldly concerns. He also highlights the story of Jacob from the Bible, showing how his life was characterized by unbelief and struggle, but ultimately led to a call to return to God and worship Him in spirit and truth.

Transcript

Let us please go to the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, Hebrews chapter eleven. Reading from Hebrews eleven, verse twenty-one, And by faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshipped, leaning on the top of his trough. Of all the mortal men in the history of redemption, Jacob is second only to Abraham in his significance.

As Abraham is called the father of the faithful, it is Jacob's changed name, Israel, that is employed to represent and to typify them. In both covenants they are known as Israelites, and all Israel shall be saved. God is not going to lose one, not a single one.

God has not cast away any of the people which he foreknew. But why is this particular act out of all history chosen to illustrate his faith? When he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, worshipped, leaning on his staff. His life speaks to us among that great cloud of witnesses, but his is not one for us to emulate.

He is no example to follow. Jacob's life, which was most of his history as concerned, is more characterized by unbelief and fleshy scheming rather than faith and trust. Struggle rather than rest.

Complaint rather than praise. Discontent rather than gratitude. His birth is recorded in Genesis 25, verse 21.

Now Isaac pleaded with the Lord his wife because she was barren. And the Lord granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived, but the children, she got twins, the children struggled together within her. And she said, If all is well, why am I like this? What's going on? So she went to inquire of the Lord, and the Lord said to her, Two nations are in your womb.

Two people shall be separated from your body. One people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger. Now that was prophesied before they were born, struggling in the womb.

So his birth was like that. He was a stay-at-home mama's boy who clung to the security of his mother. Esau, in contrast, would be what we'd call a he-man.

Masculine, outdoors man with hair on his chest. You boys who don't have any hair on your chest, that's more symbolic than the actual fuzz there. Jacob's plotting and scheming for the taking of Esau's birthright.

He had this foremost in his mind. He was a thief from the beginning, trying to steal his brother's birthright. Trying to get what was lawfully another's.

He had the mindset of a thief. He cleverly took advantage of his brother's fleshy lusts. The same principle which the world of both legitimate commerce and all scams are based.

He was a con artist, employing the irrational desire of fleshy lusts to stampede men into throwing away their treasure. His successful deception and theft of his brother's blessings. And his subsequent running for his life.

Again, he runs over here to his uncle. First thing he did, he started to figure out how he was going to steal Laban's cattle. Amazingly, God helped him do it.

He returned to Canaan in his fear of Esau. In his scheming to cool his brother's anger. The closer he got there, the more he was worried about Esau and what he might do to him when he found him.

There were few acts of faith. His few acts of faith were those when he was simply crowded by God. At Bethel, chapter 28, verse 20.

Then Jacob made a vow saying, If God will be with me and keep me in this way that I am going and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God. He's always trying to make a bargain with somebody. Even if it's God.

Then the Lord shall be my God. And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house. And of all that you give me, I will surely give the tenth unto you.

And that was the beginning of the practice of tithing. At Paniath, Genesis 32, verse 24. Then Jacob was left alone and sent a man to wrestle with him until the breaking of day.

And he said, Let me go before the day breaks. But he said, that is the angel he was wrestling with, I will not let you go unless you bless me. And he said, What is your name? And he said, Jacob.

And he said, Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, which means Prince with God. For you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed. Then Jacob asked him, saying, Tell me your name, I pray.

And he said, Why is it that you ask about my name? And he blessed him there. So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel. For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

Just as he crossed over Peniel, the sun rose upon him, and he limped on his hip. So he is on his way back to Bethel now, in chapter 35, in the first three verses. Then God said to Jacob, Arise and go up to Bethel, and dwell there, and make an offer there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother.

And Jacob said to his household, all who were with him, put away the foreign gods that are among you, and purify yourself, and change your garments. And let us arise and go up to Bethel, and I will make an offer there unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and has been with me in the way which I have gone. So he is continually under the chastening rod of God, which is a comfort to the mature saints, but a fearful event to the immature and carnal.

Considering now the wrath of Esau, in Genesis 27 and verse 41. So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him. And Esau said in his heart, the days of mourning for my father are at hand, and then I will kill my brother Jacob.

And the words of Esau, her older son, were told to Rebekah. So she sent and called Jacob, her younger son, and said to him, Surely your brother Esau comforts himself concerning by his intending to kill you. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice, arise and flee to my brother in Haran.

So he goes there to her brother over in Haran. Genesis 35. Well, let's go back to Bethel.

Genesis 28. Well, we've already covered that now. Genesis 27, the wrath of Esau.

This is disabling the deception of Laban. Genesis 29, verse 18. Now Jacob loved Rachel, so he said, I will serve you seven years for Rachel your young daughter.

And Laban said, It is better that I give her to you than I should give to another man. Stay with me. So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and it seemed only a few days to him because of the love for her.

And Jacob said to Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I might go into her. And Laban gathered together the men of the place and made a feast. And it came to pass in the evening that he cut Leah his daughter, brought her to Jacob, and he went into her.

And Laban gave his maid Zilpah to her daughter Leah as a maid. And so it passed in the morning, behold, it was Leah. And he said to Laban, What is this that you have done? Was it not Rachel that I served you for? Why then have you deceived me? And Laban said, It must not be done so in our country to give the younger before the firstborn.

Fulfill her week, and we will give you this one also for the service. You will serve with me until another seven years. And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week, and gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife.

And Laban gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as a maid. And Jacob also went into Rachel, and he loved Rachel more than Leah, and he served Laban still another seven years. So he is continually

under the chastening hand of God.

He is continually under the wrath of Esau and the deception of Lahan. He is disabled now at Paniah, Genesis 32, Genesis 32 and 25. Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled him into the breaking of day.

And when he saw that he did not prevail, he touched the socket, and it was out of joint. And he said, Let me go. And he said, I won't let you go unless you bless me.

And he said, What is your name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Your name shall be no longer called Jacob, but Israel, for you have struggled with God. And Jacob asked, saying, Tell me your name, I pray.

Why is it that you ask my name? And he blessed him there, so Jacob called the name of the place Paniah. And from there his life was preserved. So there was the disabling.

And there was the loss of Rachel just short of Bethlehem, Genesis 25, Genesis 35 and 19. So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath, that is at Bethlehem. He lost her there.

So he could not even take his first love, the light of his eyes and the joy of his life, his dear companion. He had to go on alone. And there was the matter of Shechem and Dinah, and the jeopardy was put in among the inhabitants of Canaan, and the loss of Joseph, later Simeon, and later Benjamin.

When he was dying, what a marvelous and certain comforting phrase this is. The point is not so much as how we live, but how we die. Many make a fair show of their lives, yet somewhere along the way, abandon their faith and give up their pretense and show what they really are.

They die in unbelief, not faith. The just shall live by faith, but they who truly live by faith die in faith. All of us, the best of us, have some unbelief in our lives, but we cannot die in that unbelief.

We must die in faith. Notice, his prophetic act here is free, deliberate, and sure. Genesis 48, verse 13.

And Joseph took them both, his grandsons, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near. Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was younger. And his left hand he put on Manasseh's head, guiding his hand knowingly, for Manasseh was the firstborn.

And he blessed Joseph and said, God, before whom my father Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has fed me all my life long to this day, the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads, and let my name be upon them, and the name of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth. His prophetic act here is free, deliberate. It flows from a man who has finally knows to listen to God.

One who no longer doubts, but knows the sweetness of full and unquestioned trust and obedience, irrespective of how displeasing this might be to his beloved son, he calmly and resolutely speaks God's word. The principles set forth by Jacob's blessing of his son are these. God's consistent rejection of the firstborn and anointing of the second, the rejection of flesh and the anointing of the Spirit.

Adam, the firstborn, Christ, the second Adam. Cain, the firstborn, rejected the secondborn Isaac. Esau, the oldest, Jacob, the younger.

Jacob, later Israel. Manasseh, then Ephraim. Reuben, then Judah.

Saul as a king, then King David. Flesh, then Spirit. The duodecimal of Scripture is preserved.

Two plus ten equals twelve. Joseph's double portion leaves yet twelve tribes after Levi is separated from the priesthood. Ephraim came to be synonymous with the non-spiritual mass of Israel, what we call today the Jews, the unbelieving multitude.

Judah, the royal tribe from whom Christ, according to the flesh, descended, represents a faithful remnant under the true King who is Christ. Romans 2.29 We are the true Jews. Jacob worshiped leaning on his staff.

Instead of struggling, he's leaning and resting. Instead of scheming, he's proclaiming and preaching. Instead of whining, he's praising and exalting in God.

What may we then learn now from Jacob's successful probation? Our expectation of the Lord's return can be encouraged when we see the ruin and the corruption and downfall of all nations, ours all included. The more we spend in efforts to improve things, the worse they get. When we see what professes to be Christianity growing bigger, more prosperous, more powerful and influential, and at the same time further and further removed from the truth of God, this tells us that the vine of the earth is ready to be reaped and the end is near.

When we see churches, little flocks, composed of the purest and godliest of saints, shrinking smaller and smaller, when we see more cities, large areas of the country, in which not a single Christian worshipping the living God and Spirit and the truth can be found, no single soul can be found walking with God with all his heart and soul, when we see that, we may be encouraged that the harvest of the earth is near. Luke tells us, when the Son of Man comes, shall he find faith on earth. Well, what are we to do then in our understanding of these things? Nothing different from what the Scriptures have always enjoined us to do.

Believe God, obey God, speak, live and teach the truth. Get our noses out of the newspapers and magazines, our eyes off the TV news nausea, conservative as well as liberal, our ears away from the right-wing talk shows, stop staring at the email forwards, stop our silly babbling about how bad this is and wagging our heads about the liberals and infidels. Instead, get our eyes on God, our ears attuned to his truth, our souls living in the Spirit and keen to the saints.

Get a song in our hearts, word of praise upon our lips and the light of Christian joy in our eyes. We're not here to fix anything. Not this world, not the nation, not our community.

We're here to obey God, worship him in spirit and truth and wait on him to set everything right that needs correction. A new heaven and a new earth is coming for Indwell's righteousness. All in due time.

Our Father, we could never in a thousand millenniums give any good reason why you should be so good to those of us who are privileged to sit here with a good Bible in our hands amidst the sweetest people on this earth to understand and to be sane in our minds and to receive your goodness. We pray that you'll continue to bless your people, hear their cries when they cry out to you. Give them joy and peace and glory in walking in you.

Give us protection as we go to our respective homes and leaving here and cause us to wake in the morning thanking you for the night's rest that we'll have tonight and follow you for your glory until you come again. For it's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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