

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**
[Adapted from Bethel Bible-
Presbyterian Church, 10 Downing St.
Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 21

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

Chapter 28

INTRODUCTION

No one is perfect. We make mistakes. We sin and sometimes, our hearts are impure and our hands unclean. We have a propensity to do things in our own way. We think that our way is better than God's way. We rarely seek the God's guidance. So, we fall into all kinds of troubles and tribulations. We pay a very heavy price for our wrong doings

It is true that God hates sin and He never condones sin. And those who sin will eventually bear the consequences of their sinful acts. But God is sovereign, He is patient, He is gracious and merciful, He cares and is concerned, and above all, He is ever faithful to His promises and Word.

In the case of the family of Isaac and Rebekah, God had clearly revealed His purpose concerning Jacob. But

Isaac and Rebekah did things in their own way to serve their own self-interest. They eventually paid a heavy price for their actions.

OUTLINE

A. Isaac Blessed and Charged Jacob (28:1-5).

1. Isaac blessed Jacob before he left (v.1a).
2. Isaac charged Jacob not to marry Canaanite women (v.1b).
3. Isaac instructed Jacob to find a wife from among the daughters of Laban (v.2).
4. Isaac sent Jacob away with the full Abrahamic blessing (vv.3-4).
5. Jacob left for Haran (v.5).

B. Esau Remarried (28:6-9).

1. Esau saw the blessing and charge, which Isaac gave to Jacob (vv.6-7).
2. Esau married Ishmael's daughter (vv 8-9).

C. JACOB ENCOUNTERED GOD (28:10-15).

1. Jacob set out from Beersheba to Haran (v.10).

2. Jacob stopped to rest at a certain place (v.11).
3. Jacob dreamt of a ladder (vv 12-15).
 - a. The ladder stretched from earth to heaven (v 12a).
 - b. The angels of God were ascending and descending on it (v.12b).
 - c. The LORD stood at the top of it (13a).
 - d. The LORD God of Abraham reiterated the Abrahamic covenant (vv.13b-14).
 - e. The LORD promised to be with him and blessed him (v.15).

D. JACOB BUILT A STONE MEMORIAL (28:16-19).

1. Jacob sensed the presence of the LORD in the place (vv.16-17).
2. Jacob built a memorial of stone (v.18).
3. Jacob called the place Bethel (v.19).

E. JACOB MADE A VOW (28:20-22).

1. Jacob stated a condition (v.20).
2. Jacob hoped to return to his parents in peace (v.21).

3. Jacob promised to tithe to the LORD (v.22).

Christians Live By Faith

Isaac sent Jacob away with his full blessing. This time he willingly and openly blessed Jacob even in stronger terms. Isaac had undergone a change of heart. Earlier he had been shaken by God for secretly trying to bless Esau instead of Jacob. Isaac's blessing upon Jacob consisted of two parts. The first part pertains to his charge to Jacob not to marry outside his own people and kindred. The purpose of going to Paddan-aram insofar as Isaac was concerned, was for Jacob to take a wife from among the daughters of Laban. The second part of his blessing upon Jacob is the reiteration of the covenant blessings, which God gave to Abraham. He used the name, "God Almighty," (Hebrew, *El Shaddai*, 17:1) which depicts the Almighty power of God who is the Creator of heaven and earth. The name assured Jacob that he would inherit the land. He pronounced that God Almighty would bless him, make him prosperous and give him many descendants, and that the covenant blessings would be passed down to his "seed." That the word "seed" is singular is significant. Here is a reference to the final seed in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The editorial report in verse 5 mentions the name of Jacob, the younger brother first, and then Esau. It is not a mistake made by Moses. It is deliberate for Jacob was now the rightful heir because God had elected him to receive the blessing.

Jacob had a long journey to travel. Paddan-aram was about 640 kilometres (400 miles) north of Beersheba. What thoughts could have run through his

mind taking into consideration that Jacob had a homely disposition and seldom ventured out of the house? There would definitely be fears of what was coming ahead. If he turned back, there was Esau to contend with. When would he see his mother and father again? How long would he have to stay away? Was the blessing worth all the effort? There were so many uncertainties ahead, and surely this parting was sad for the parents, especially Rebekah, and Jacob. It was a bitter lesson for Jacob and Rebekah. They had to reap what they had sown.

Be Wise and Understanding

God, in His infinite wisdom, blesses some more than others. Esau received the lesser blessing. He tried to ask Isaac to revoke his blessing of Jacob and bless him instead. Esau still did not understand. When he saw marrying a Canaanite woman displeased his father, he took a daughter of Ishmael, by the name of Mahalath to wife. Did Esau just find out now that his marrying of the Canaanite women had grieved his father? Or was he doing it to please his father hoping that his father might bless him just as he had blessed Jacob? If the latter is true, then Esau lacked spiritual discernment. He was unlike his father Isaac who repented and accepted God's choice and decision.

God's Care and Concern

Jacob travelled for about 80 kilometres (50 miles) and it was almost nightfall. He rested there for the night. When he slept he dreamt of a stairway stretching from earth to heaven. God's angels were ascending and descending on the stairway. At the top of the stairway, stood the LORD. God

appeared and spoke to him. There are three elements in the LORD'S Word to him: 1) the LORD identified Himself as the God of Abraham and of Isaac; 2) the LORD reiterated the covenant promises to Abraham—the land on which he was lying would be given to him and his posterity, his descendants would be as “the dust” spreading to the four corners of the earth, and all the families of the earth would be blessed; 3) the LORD assured him that He would be with him, to protect and preserve him wherever he went, and to bring him back to the land and that He would not forsake him.

This revelation of the LORD to Jacob was precisely what Jacob needed. It removed any doubt of his rightful position and succession in the covenant, which God made with Abraham and Isaac. His fear of whether he would return to the land was alleviated. It also assured him that whatever uncertainties there might be ahead of him, the LORD would preserve and protect him. Indeed this reassurance from the LORD raised his confidence and comforted him.

We are comforted and encouraged by the precious truth about God. In the time of our greatest need, He will similarly care for us. God has thousands upon thousands of angels. Angels are God's agents to guard, communicate, rescue, and protect at His bidding. Another comforting and encouraging truth about the LORD our God is that, despite Jacob's act of deception, lying, and blaspheming, God did not write him off. God kept to His Word, which He gave to Rebekah (25:23). We can be rest assured that the security of our salvation cannot be broken. It is true that as Christians we do sin, as John the Apostle pointed out

(John 1:8—*If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*). The basis of the security of our salvation rest irrevocably on God's Word and promises. It is not of works. But this does not mean that we do not do good works. Our Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to do good works in order to glorify our Father in Heaven (Matthew 5:16).

Responding to God's Grace

When Jacob awoke, his spiritual senses were heightened. He was overwhelmed by his dream. His first response was one of fear. This attitude of fear was appropriate. The biblical idea of "fear" is a blend of terror and adoration. It is a worshipful fear. Then he renamed the place "the house of God," *Bethel* (Hebrew *beth*=house; *el*=God). There was neither an actual "house of God" nor an actual "gate of heaven," but these expressions indicated that he acknowledged the presence of God. He erected a pillar of stones to commemorate his experience at Bethel. Then he poured oil on the pillar of stones. The pouring of oil was a symbolic act of offering a sacrifice to the LORD. This ritual act demonstrated his devotion and consecration to the LORD. Jacob's appropriate response to God's revelation serves as an example to us. Like Jacob, we ought to fear and obey Him.

Making Vows

Jacob's consecration to the LORD was evidenced by the vow he made. A vow is a solemn promise to behave in a certain way, perform a certain deed, reach some goal, or make a certain gift. It would be profitable for our learning to evaluate Jacob's vow. Each vow

comprises two aspects: the *protasis*, and the *apodosis*. The *protasis* is the "if" clause which forms the basis of the promise, whereas the *apodosis* is the content of the vow.

The *protasis* of Jacob's vow is this: *if God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come to my father's house in peace*, and the *apodosis*: *then shall the LORD be my God . . . and of all that Thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto Thee*. What is commendable about his vow is that he took God's blessings and Word seriously. Secondly, he promised to offer to God one tenth of all that he is blessed with. This is indicated in the *protasis*. The negative comment about Jacob's vow is that it is self-centred. In three verses (20-22) the use of the first person personal pronoun "I/me," adds to no less than ten times. He sounded calculative.

Christians should take God's Word seriously. But sad to say many Christians do not. Their lifestyles do not show that they take God's Word seriously. For if they have taken God's Word and promises seriously, their lives would be different. Our Lord declares that whoever seeks the kingdom of God and its righteousness first will be richly blessed. Yet there are many Christians who do not honour God by faithfully attending prayer meeting, reading and studying the Word, but who prefer to work extra hours on those days in order to earn more money or watch their favourite TV shows or are just plain lazy and indifferent. How many times are our prayers like Jacob's—self-centred? Compare the many things we ask for ourselves to the number of times we seek to praise, adore, and thank God.

One good point of Jacob's response to God's revelation and blessings is that Jacob was prepared to offer ten percent of all that God blessed him with. It was voluntary. The Mosaic Law was not implemented yet. The giving of the tithe is an acknowledgement that all one's possessions belong to God. The tithe is a token gesture. It belongs to God. This is a good guideline of our offering to God. It is a timeless principle.

THEOLOGICAL VALUE

The precious lesson is that in spite of our weaknesses and faults, God sees and cares for us. His promises and Word are true and cannot be broken. He is always gracious and gentle with us. AMEN

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 21

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

Chapter 28

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION

QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

Monday: Genesis 28:1-5; Isaiah 40:18-31; Numbers 6:22-26.

Tuesday: Genesis 28:6-9; Deuteronomy 5:16-21.

Wednesday: Genesis 28:10-15; John 1:43-51.

Thursday: Genesis 28:16-19; Psalm 51:1-19.

Friday: Genesis 28:20-22; Malachi 3:8-12.

Discussion Questions

1. How did Isaac's blessing and charge to Jacob encourage him?

2. Why was Isaac not angry with Jacob for deceiving him?

3. What were the thoughts of Jacob when he set out on his journey to Paddan-aram?

4. Why do you think Esau married Ishmael's daughter?

5. Briefly list the promises God made to Jacob at Bethel.

6. In what way was God's Word to Jacob in the dream suited to his circumstances?

7. A past sin or disobedience to God can leave us with a burden of guilt. How does Jacob's experience renew our confidence in God?

8. From Jacob's response to the dream, what was Jacob's relationship with God at this point in time?

9. Is it a good idea to make this kind of vow to God?

10. Jacob's tithing pre-dated the Law.
What does that indicate?

11. How would you explain God's
patience with Jacob?

12. Did Jacob see deeper than material
things in his vow to God?
