

Jacob's ladder (Quality: Average)

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- [0 : 00] As the Lord may be graciously pleased to help us, I would direct your prayerful attention this morning to the chapter that we have read, the 28th chapter of the book of Genesis, and particularly to the 12th verse, Genesis chapter 28 and verse 12.
- And he, Jacob, dreamed, and behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven, and behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it.
- It lays upon my spirit to bring before you today two cases of conversion of the Lord's dealings with his covenant people.
- And this morning we shall consider, as the Lord may be pleased, the case of Jacob. And as in every case of the Lord's dealings with his people, there is a heretofore, there is a present, and there is a hereafter.
- And it is in this way that we want to look at this case. You know, the name Jacob means supplanter.
- [1 : 43] Jacob deceived his brother twice and his father once. Esau had been hunting and had come in and needed food.
- And it was an easy matter for Jacob to take the blessing from him. That first rite of the firstborn child, as was the tradition at that time.
- And with that, everything came to him. It was a great sacrifice, in a sense, that Esau made.
- But nevertheless, Jacob was guilty of taking advantage. We see in the natural man that sin which so easily besets, that sin nature that is found in every son and daughter of Adam.
- That sin, which unless it is tamed and brought under control, will rather grow than do the other.
- [3 : 20] Now, we know that Esau was an ungodly man. But at this time, Jacob also was a very sinful man.
- And yet Isaac and his mother also were not guiltless in this transaction.
- And so as Jacob came in, disguised, as it were, as his brother Esau, the blessing of his father Isaac came upon him.
- The firstborn would receive the full inheritance. Everything would be given unto him. And so at that time, he received from his father the inheritance of his father's estate.
- And all the comforts and all the favors that went with that position. But we can be sure that sin will find us out.
- [4 : 38] And Esau vowed to kill his brother Jacob. What a sad situation.
- When sin is found in the family to separate. And sin, you know, always does separate.
- And especially it separates between us and God. Because God cannot with any degree look upon sin with any toleration.

Where there is sin, it must be judged. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. And so the sentence of death is upon each one of us by birth and by nature.

And that nature is soon practiced in the hearts and lives of men and women. And left untamed, it will only wax worse and worse.

[5 : 49] We see in our present day and generation how sin has expanded, as it were, to an awful degree.

Things that were once done in secret are now done openly. Things which were once ashamed are now promoted.

And governments and authorities are no example in this way. Because of this, Jacob would have to leave his home.

And we have read how that his father charged him not to take a wife of the children of Canaan, but to go unto his mother's brother's house and to take a wife from thence.

And so Jacob begins upon a journey. And this journey was going to conclude with a complete change of the direction of the life of this man.

[7 : 06] The word of God says, come out from among them and be ye separate and touch not the unclean thing.

Where the work of the spirit begins in our hearts, there is a separation. We see it in the case of Abraham.

Abraham was brought up in Ur of the Chaldees, an idolatrous nation. And no doubt Abraham would have been part of that scene.

But God chose him in eternity past. And in the fullness of time, he called him.

He called him to come out from among that people. That he might separate him unto himself. The work of God is a work of sanctification.

[8 : 15] The word sanctification in its simplest form means setting apart. We find that in the vessels of the temple, that they were set apart for holy use.

And so the Lord's people are called. As the Lord Jesus Christ told his disciples, be ye holy, for I am holy.

For Jacob begins upon this journey. And the day is fast spent. And the night begins to draw in.

And Jacob finds a place where he may lay down to rest. But can he rest?

Can a person who's burdened with the sins of their lives find any peace and rest?

[9 : 21] I want you to consider the advantage that was Jacob's in the natural sense. He was brought up in a home where God was recognized.

Where the Lord was worshipped. He was brought up with the advantage of praying parents. Jacob knew about God.

But at this time, he didn't know God. And if there are any here this morning, I would consider probably the majority of my congregation have been brought up.

Either of godly parents or at least brought into the house of God under the sound of the preaching of the gospel week by week.

So God is not unknown to you. In your mind, in your understanding, you believe there is a God.

[10 : 31] But it's one thing to know about God. I say, and another thing, to know God. To know him for ourselves.

And unless we come to know this God, then all is lost with us. We shall perish in our sins. So Jacob lays down.

And perhaps fear would come upon him because of his former sins. As I said, his sins catch up with him.

And often it is when we lay down to rest at night. If we have a burden upon our minds, we cannot sleep.

Or if we sleep, we wake again. And the troubles seem so much more enlarged than they did during the day.

[11 : 37] Now there's nothing to distract our thoughts. And so we lay burdened. And you know, if we have sinned, as we all have sinned, there is a guilty fear that comes upon us.

Because we know that God must judge sin. We recognize it in the scriptures. We recognize it in society.

That where God's hand has been stretched out toward guilty sinners and brought them unto destruction.

Would God deal with Jacob in such a way? Would his sins so testify against him?

Now I'm sure that Jacob knew that God was a God of mercy. But when our sins are exaggerated in our minds, and perhaps they need not to be exaggerated, perhaps they are large enough as it was.

[12 : 53] But these things weigh heavy upon us. Naturally, he may have considered that Esau may have come out to find him.

And he might never rise from the place where he lay because a sword be thrust through him. But natural fears are one thing.

Spiritual fears are much greater. They're a much greater burden. Well, let us ask ourselves the question.

Do we know ourselves to be sinners? Have we been taught by the Spirit of God? You know, the scriptures determine that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

There is none righteous. No, not one. Not one can claim perfection. We're all guilty. How deserving sinners. And if God should come and judge our sins, we know that ours is a lost condition.

[14 : 12] But Jacob's sins are great. Like the Apostle Paul, perhaps he fails himself to be the chief of sinners.

Can God forgive such extreme sins as is? Remember, of course, that a person who comes to confess their sins hasn't experienced the love of God, the mercy of God, the compassion of God toward them.

God is seen as this great judge who sits upon the throne, bringing judgment to bear upon the nations of the earth.

And what mitigation can we have? What can we say in support of our case? Ah, we have to be brought to humility.

We have to be brought low. Because the word is if. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[15 : 36] Do we know ourselves to be sinners? Has the weight and burden of sin come upon our consciences? And have we been led to the throne of grace?

To cry, God, be merciful to me, a sinner. Man will never come there by nature.

People speak of man's free will. If man has a free will, it's only free, as it were, to depart from God.

To turn his back upon the most high. We cannot keep ourselves. Neither can we bring ourselves.

None come except the Savior draw. And without that drawing of the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, we will never come to him.

[16 : 44] Naturally speaking, when we do something wrong, we ask forgiveness of the one that we have wronged. And that's not always easy for proud nature to do.

But when we consider the mountain of our sins, the depths of our depravity, our awful, sin-bound nature, to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, to come low at the feet of Jesus, to confess.

Repentance is a grace that has to be given. We don't naturally possess it. But where the Lord begins a work, he will perform it to the day of Jesus Christ.

So in those beginnings of separating, you know it's no easy thing to be separated from our families, our loved ones, our friends, and all those things that we have enjoyed.

Yes, Jacob may have received the blessing of his father, but he did not now come into the possession. He had to leave the comforts of home.

[18 : 18] Now he is alone, very much alone. And perhaps on the whole journey, he never met a soul. And he must have felt that loneliness.

He must have felt the separation that was made. This is no easy pathway. People make light of religion. And so all you have to do is believe.

Well, yes, there is a sense in all that we have to do is believe. Oh, that I could believe, then all would be easy be. I would, but cannot, Lord, relieve.

My help must come from thee. And it is to the Lord that we have to look. For all needed help, for all needed wisdom, for all needed understanding, we need the Holy Spirit to be our divine instructor.

So as he lay down that night, I'm sure there must have been many thoughts that went through his mind.

[19 : 29] We know, of course, that sometimes when a person is physically tired, they can fall to sleep. But is it an uninterrupted sleep?

Is it a peaceful sleep? I think not. I think that these weights that come upon us distract us, distract the very motion of our sleep.

And perhaps we awake, fearful of the consequences of our former actions. So here we see the Lord leading his servant, separating him from everything that he has held near and dear.

But the Lord has a purpose in this. And if there's any here this morning that are in that darksome pathway, in that difficult situation where they feel separated from everything here below, then this is the way that the Lord will often lead his people into the truth.

And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven.

[20 : 58] And behold, the angels of God ascending and descending upon it. We need to remember that when Adam sinned, the door to heaven was shut.

No longer could man enter into that garden of perfection. The seraphims guarded it day and night. there was no way back.

But here, the Lord reveals unto Jacob a way for poor sinners to come to heaven at last.

And it is a glorious way because it is the way of the Lord Jesus Christ who said, I am the way, the truth and the life.

No man cometh unto the Father but by me. Here then is the communication which is made. I don't want to speak too much of this this morning.

[22 : 11] Perhaps later on in the day we may be led into this. but notice the language of this that the angels, God's representatives were ascending and descending.

That means that they were ascending first and then descending. and so they were carrying a communication up to heaven and receiving answers from heaven.

The Lord Jesus Christ by his vicarious death has made a new and living way whereby sinners may come unto God.

that way through his shed blood at Calvary when he laid down his life for his friends. That way of salvation the only way of salvation is through him and through him alone.

How favored was Jacob at this time to behold this vision and it would be reasonable to suggest that the base of this ladder was close by Jacob that he could see these things taking place before his very eyes.

[23 : 54] And here is the Lord communicating with his servant teaching him his need of God that his eyes might be opened that he may behold the wonders that God has made.

The angels of God ascending and descending on it. as Jacob lay down that night he did not know God.

When he awoke the next morning he knew God 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.

How merciful is the Lord toward his people. And let me say again we are unworthy of the least of his notice.

Jacob could come to that understanding thou God seest me.

[25 : 31] What a solemn thought isn't it? In the days of our unregeneracy when we are quite happy to walk in the ways of this world that the Lord has his eye upon us.

he sees us exactly where we are. Man can only look at the outward appearance. God looketh upon the heart.

And here is the wonder of the gospel that while we were yet enemies Christ died for our sins. Enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Enemies of the truth. And this is very graphically set forth in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Remember how Saul was going about hailing men and women into prison, witnessing the death of godly Stephen.

and everything seemed to be of that ungodly nature persecuting the church of Jesus Christ.

[26 : 54] And the man receives letters to take to Damascus to persecute the saints there. man. What can stop this man?

What can change his heart? Some people think that we've only got to preach a stronger message and hearts will be changed.

Can anyone suggest that the heart of Saul of Tarsus could have been changed by any language that might have been displayed toward him?

No, our heart by nature is a stone and unconcerned can look upon eternal misery. We are dead in trespasses and in sins.

What can quicken hearts of stone? of the Lord Jesus Christ met him in the way.

[28 : 04] Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And here again, Saul obviously knew the scriptures.

He sat under a great teacher, Gamaliel. He knew the scriptures. He knew about God, but he didn't know God.

and it's amazing that these can study the scriptures. They can quote great lengths of passages and yet be ignorant of the very foundation of them.

Until Christ is revealed to our hearts, we know nothing of these things. We are blind to the things of God.

But it's in the Lord's eternal purposes to open the eyes of the blind and to cause the lame to walk. And so Paul's eyes were opened.

[29 : 13] They were closed naturally. He became blind for a season, but spiritually his eyes were opened. now he had had contact with the eternal son of God.

Now he knew the Christ of God. Now he was humbled in the dust. What a great change took place.

man when the Lord spake to his servant Ananias, he said to him, behold, he prayeth.

No doubt Paul had prayed many prayers. As a Pharisee of the Pharisees, he would have had many long pretentious prayers. And yet the Lord said to him, as though this is the very first time in his life, prayer, now he begins to pray.

He begins to pray real prayer. We may have been taught as children to pray. We've repeated our prayers, but has there come a time when we can say that we've really prayed, when our hearts have been enlarged, when we come before God and poured out our spirits before him?

[30 : 35] real prayer. Real prayer will be answered. Saul or Paul was an elect vessel of mercy, one who was to be useful in his master's service.

And so we see many examples throughout the word of God, God. And we see it today. Although we may not come into the experience of Abraham or Jacob or Paul, yet the pattern, if I might put it that way, is the same.

the Lord separates. He convinces of our sin. He leads to the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we are made alive unto God. There comes a realization that the Lord has a favor toward us.

Oh, how blessed to know that the Lord is favorable to such worthless creatures. To that opening hymn, great God, how infinite art thou, what worthless worms are we.

[32 : 05] Fallen creatures, we recognize our fallen state, our weakness. Now, did Jacob become a perfect man?

Well, we know as we read through the history of this man that there were things in his life after that that he regretted.

And we will have that body of flesh with us until it's laid in the grave or until the Lord Jesus Christ comes again.

Jacob then realized the Lord's presence. We often sing, don't we, by presence, gracious Lord, afford, prepare us to receive thy word.

Oh, how we need the Lord to appear, the Lord's presence to come in the assemblies of his people. We come here purportedly to worship God, to worship him in spirit and in truth.

[33 : 23] But we need that help of God, so to do. we again have to realize that we cannot give ourselves worship.

We seek to worship God. Now a change has taken place. Now it's our very nature to desire the things of God.

And when we come into the house of God, we beg a crumb of mercy, we beg a word from God. Lord, speak and let thy servants hear.

Be not silent to us, lest if thou be silent to us, we be like those that go down into the pit.
Speak the word only.

We want the Lord himself to speak to us. You know, the Lord's servants feel insufficient in the preaching of the gospel.

[34 : 27] We feel to be such poor instruments in God's service. We wonder at times why the Lord didn't call a person who was much more knowledgeable and much more eloquent in speech to do his work.

But like Moses of old, the Lord gives what is necessary. God's love to preach to sinners. It is for sinners that the Lord calls to preach to sinners.

He doesn't call angels to preach unto us. The angel cannot enter into our pathway. way. We are to preach Christ.

Christ who went before us. Christ who trod this earth below. Christ who knew what temptation was.

Christ who knew what weakness was. He said at one time, the birds of the air have nests, the foxes have holes, that the son of man hath not where to lay his head.

[35 : 43] And so Jacob awakes anew. A change has taken place. And now he sees it as the house of God and the gate of heaven.

What a wonderful awakening it was. surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not. Perhaps there are some here this morning who can enter into this same experience.

Who perhaps for many years have come week by week under the sound of the solid preaching of the gospel and yet it meant nothing to them.

But then perhaps there came a day. The appointed time rolls on apace, not to propose, but call by grace, to change the heart, renew the will, and set the feet to Zion's hill.

Does that day come to you when perhaps a word was spoken, perhaps a line of a hymn rested upon your spirit.

[37 : 04] Perhaps you felt that softening of heart, that tenderness of spirit. You felt the Lord was near, and you felt that the Lord had a word just for you.

Whether others received it, you could not tell. You knew that the Lord had visited your soul. Or perhaps you had left the services of God's house one Lord's day.

You had gone home, and no great impression had been made upon you. And when you came down to lay down to rest at night, then the spirit of God appeared and applied the word that had been spoken earlier in the day, and a change took place.

Not a superficial change, not a temporary change, but a real change of course. Those things which once were your delight, you saw nothing in.

And those things that perhaps you spurned in earlier days, now became your delight. and your desire was to be counted among the Lord's people.

[38 : 35] And you said effectively in your hearts, may I number with them be now and through eternity. Now, words at times come easy.

change. It's a walk and conversation. Where the Lord, the Spirit works, that change cannot be healed.

It will become evident. There will be those that hate the change, those who know not God. But there will be others of the Lord's people, who will recognize that the Lord has met with this person, that a change has been brought in their heart.

Their very face begins to shine, as Moses did when he came into contact with God in those 40 days and nights in the mount.

there will be something new, something real in their lives. And they will display that characteristic of God's people.

[40 : 06] Perhaps at the beginning we feel that no one knows what the Lord is doing. I can remember this in my own experience.

The deacon's wife came up to me after the service. Regarding baptism, she exhorted me not to wait. I didn't know she knew anything about it.

I hadn't spoken to anyone. But she recognized something. that even I did not fully recognize at the time.

To be given that spirit of discernment, to discern the Lord's work. You know, we had an old gentleman in our church, the church that I was sent out to preach from.

He was in his mid-90s, a little senile, shall we say, because of age. And he would often repeat himself when called on in prayer.

[41 : 21] And one of his favorite expressions was, birds of a feather flock together. And there's so much truth in that.

You know, if the Lord has truly converted us, we can no longer walk with those in the world. We have to give up our carnal friendships.

We have to turn aside, even from family, that love not the Lord Jesus Christ. And we have to turn toward the Lord's people.

Here, my best friends, my kindred dwell. Here, Christ, my Savior reigns. This is none other than Bethel, the house of God.

And what a wonderful thing when it becomes truly the house of God to us. When we feel that love toward the Lord's servants, when we feel that love toward the Lord's people.

[42 : 30] And you know, in most churches, people are brought from different situations, from different families, in different ways.

The Lord is diverse in his work. But he brings his people together. He unites them in the bond of Christian love and fellowship.

And this is where they love to be, the house of God. It means everything to them. And at this time, it meant everything to Jacob.

And you know, for the Lord's people, all the promises are given unto them. All the promises in Christ are yea and forever.

Amen. And this promise that was given to Jacob is given to all the Lord's people, that he will be with them and guide them all their journey through.

[43 : 38] Up until this night, Jacob knew not the ways of God. But from that day on, he knew that God was near. He knew that God would be his sovereign helper and protector.

he knew that he could turn to the Lord and seek that help that so often he needed. Because we know not what lies before us.

We know not what today may bring forth. We don't know what the future holds. We don't know what we've got to tread out in this life yet. Someone had told us earlier on what we had to pass through.

We would have completely shrunk from it. But if God be for us, who or what can be against us?

If God be for us, then no matter what we have to pass through, we can understand that all things work together for good to those that love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose.

[44 : 49] And behold, I am with thee. And we'll keep thee in all places whither thou goest. Strange and mysterious are our lives.

What contradictions seemingly we come into. And yet, the Lord does not fail us nor forsake us. Even down to all as I am thee, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.

and we can look to the promises of God. Lord, hast thou not said, then do as thou hast said.

And the Lord is faithful. We are so often unfaithful, aren't we? We so often fail, we so often come short. We need, at the end of the day, to kneel down before our God and confess our sins daily.

I repent of sin, daily washed in Calvary's love. It is in that confession that we acknowledge our many faults and failings.

[46 : 01] And we seek God's favour and blessing upon us for the night, for the coming day, and through the rest of the journey of life.

that the Lord will help us in all situations. We have to remember what the Lord Jesus Christ himself passed through.

The opposition that he met with, the persecution that he endured, even unto death, and that the death of the cross.

Did my Lord suffer and shall I repine? Forbid it, Lord. Oh, may we be helped to go forward in faith, trusting in the Lord our God.

Trust ye in the Lord at all times, and lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths.

[47 : 05] Left to ourselves, what confusion we would come into, what mistakes we would make. We need the voice of the Lord quietly to speak from behind us, saying, this is the way, walk ye in it.

You know, sometimes we have to take the hardest path, as the Lord directs us. We have to wait upon him in all things.

We cannot, we dare not take a step by ourselves, but trusting in the Lord. So often in my life, the various difficulties that I've come into, I've had to pray that prayer of Moses, if thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.

So to look to the Lord Jesus Christ, Abraham rejoiced to see my day, he said, and I believe that Jacob here saw something of the great Messiah who was promised, the Lord Jesus Christ in his day, in that way that was opened up to him, that way to heaven itself.

And is not this the good hope of every true believer? I trust I shall be saved at last. To think of the glories of Emmanuel's land.

[48 : 44] The half has not been told us, but nevertheless, glory, glory dwelleth in Emmanuel's land. and he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven, and behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

May the Lord be pleased to bless these few scattered thoughts for his own namesake. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.