

# Kings Norton Baptist Church

Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2024 10 am

Jacob's ladder – comfort in trouble

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Welcome to all.

Opening Scripture and prayer

Hymn MP 1086 Light of the world

Scripture Psalm 77 (page 589)

Prayer of praise and thanksgiving.

Children's talk - Finding the treasure

Chorus MP 40 Ascribe greatness

MP

Notices Fellowship lunch, Church Thursday Prayer-time.

Prayer and share time.

Reading Genesis 28:10-22 (page 30)

Hymn MP 619 Such Love

Sermon: comfort in trouble

Hymn MP 1358 There is a hope that burns within my heart

Closing Prayer

[Sermon Index Database](#)

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990 I will offer up my life

## Prayer and Exordium

- Pilgrim's progress has sold 250 million copies and was once the second most popular book to the Bible. Have you read it? If you haven't then you should. It plots the troubles and snares that meet Christian as he makes his lonely way to heaven. Everyone who follows Jesus Christ will know something of those troubles, distractions and despair in this life

If you know what I mean, then this passage in Genesis 28 has something to say to you this morning.

When you go through difficulty and uncertainty, as you do - and I do, and ask "Lord where are you in this?" then this passage should encourage you.

Jacob is facing problems. Yet in the midst of this the Lord affirms three things, his *promises*, his *purposes* his *presence*. x2

Well we have that fourth 'p' Problem. Problem is like the middle carriage in the train, before are the *promises*, *purposes*, *presence*, and behind are the Lord's *Provision* and His *Providence*.

But we will start with yet another 'p' that is *postponement*.

Jacob has received Isaac's blessing instead of his older brother Esau – the Lord had promised and determined that this would happen – but now his brother hates him and seeks to kill him.

So Jacob flees. Jacob heads off, a man on his own away from the family home. He heads off towards the wilderness to what he must think of as a very uncertain future. An enemy at home - and plenty on the road ahead besides.

Jacob had received the blessing - so where now is this promised abundance of grain and new wine?

⇒ How often all we can think of is 'what' and not 'when' the timing. The Lord's 'when' is different from our 'when', which we spell 'n-o-w'.

### 10 Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran.

Postponement. The gift of Jacob's birthright is not forthcoming. Instead it looks like Esau, the one without the blessing, has prevailed - while the one favoured by God, is banished. That doesn't sound right does it? Jacob blessed by God is cast into exile; while the reprobate Esau is left in the possession of everything.

Jacob faced fear, for his own brother was out to kill him, He faced uncertainty, sent away from the family, he was on his own. Where is God? What of his purpose for my life? Where is He in this confusion? Have I misread things?

Let us not be disturbed when everything appears to be going in the wrong direction. When those against us sound their triumphs in victory - while we appear to come off badly.

11 Jacob **When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set.**

Moses is economical with the detail here about Jacob's journey. But it was clearly a lonely and severe journey, a long and arduous journey.

**Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep.** Here we see him lay down on the ground with a stone for a pillow, he's under the open sky, without a companion, and without habitation. Don't we see the despair of it, the loneliness of it. So Christ's journey was in this world, with nowhere to lay his head, he carried the burden alone.

As you read of Jacob do you think "how does this apply to me?"

Jacob is the promised line from Abraham from whom will come the Christ.

But Abraham is also the man of Faith, so Jacob represents the people of the covenant, the one true covenant in Christ's blood. Jacob represents the church. The church gives birth to Jesus, its own Saviour. (Rev 12)

So too do we as God's people the church have a rough time of it through this life until that day of Glory comes. We are people of hope and hope is all about the future, and faith believes we will get there, - but what about now?, today, in what I am going through. What about that?

Here's The Lord's answer to Jacob: 12 **He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.** What a sight. He saw a stairway or ladder (the phrase 'Jacob's ladder') which reached from earth to heaven, the angels ascending and descending upon it, and God himself at the head of it.

⇒ **The Lord gave this vision to comfort Jacob for the trials ahead.**

Jacob in this trough, this deep bog of despair, finds the Lord's help. He is strengthened. As Elijah experienced when he fled from Jezebel's death threats. The Lord helped his servant - and he now today helps His servants. No matter what Jacob was feeling he was not neglected by God, nor are His people today.

⇒ **But how exactly does the ladder do that?**

This ladder connects heaven and earth. Since the garden of Eden; our fallen, sinful dark world is separated from the glory and purity of heaven.

2a

This ladder is Christ. Jesus Christ is this ladder. His foot is on earth in his human nature, the top in heaven in his divine nature: or the former in his humiliation, the latter in his exaltation. Christ is the way, the channel, the conduit, the connector. Through Him all God's favours come to us, and it is through Him our prayers rise to heaven. It is through him, in Him, that our God prompted our work earn treasure in heaven. If God dwells with us, and we with him, it is by Christ. We have no way of getting to heaven, but by this ladder; if we climb up any other way, we are thieves and robbers.

We know this is right because we hear of this ladder again in John's Gospel 1:51. Jesus says to Nathaniel "**I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending - on the Son of Man.**" Joh 1:51

⇒ **The ladder is Christ - they ascend and descend - on Him.**

Those angels are Christ's angels. Those spirits who help and protect and watch over us are from Him. How encouraging this must all have been to Jacob.

⇒ **When you are going through similar troubles pray "Lord open my eyes that I too may see these glorious things"**

Everything is ours in Christ. Have Jesus Christ then you have the full power, grace and presence of the Lord Almighty the one who spoke the world into existence, the one who raises the dead. Paul reminds Christians ....

**All things are yours, whether .... the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.** 1 Cor 3:21-23

Have Jesus and you have the favour of heaven itself looking down when you feel weak, vulnerable and exposed, as Jacob travelled exposed to wild beasts, and open to the elements, and all alone on the lonely road.

⇒ **At his moment of extremity and necessity - Jacob sees the Lord.**

In your need you too can expect the Lord show his hand. If you have it all sorted, all covered, you have it all taken care of everything – what can the Lord then do? You have done it. Walk in obedience to his will and you will see him providing for you, materially, mentally, emotionally in every way.

⇒ **God's time to visit his people with his comforts is when they are most destitute of other comforts.**

For most of us our problems are within, despair, disappointment, confusion, anxiety depression or melancholy are all within, and it is there He is at work.

⇒ **Gospel - But if you do not have Christ then you have every reason to fear x2.**

2b

Unforgiven sin leaves you alienated from God. There's no favour from above except what is common to man, and that can be withdrawn at any time. That rug will be pulled, you will slip and fall with no help. And then the door of hope - currently open in front of you - will be banged shut - and the Day of judgment will rush upon you. Do not let that happen to you! x2

The worst way to die is to die unforgiven and unrepentant. How miserable when you know Christ came to save sinners. How foolish to reject His love as He shed his blood on the cross to carry away, to bear away the sinners sin.

**“Salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”** Ac 4:12

⇒ **It is Christ alone who brings God down - and the sinner up.**

He is the only Mediator who descends to bring the gifts, the grace of God to us on earth. He can pluck us up from the depths of the curse and hell itself raising us up to God. Because the fullness of the Deity dwells in Christ. The Lord Almighty is seated on the ladder and it is His voice that Jacob hears 13 **"I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac.**

### ***His Purposes will prevail***

The Lord God had brought Jacob into the wilderness and spoke comfort to him.

**I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying.**

It didn't seem that way. Jacob was a stranger to the land he was currently lying on – “all of it”, he is told “will one day be yours”. Here is the OT promise of the eternal inheritance. Not for Esau, but for you Jacob.

**14 Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.**

▪ **Can you imagine a world with no hope was to be found anywhere? We all prisoners with no sign of reprieve, the key to the cell door thrown away.**

Praise the Father that the promised offspring of Jacob in the person of Christ came to reverse God's curse and wrath and bring in hope and happiness.

This source of life – is found nowhere else except this in Him.

▪ **Pearl divers off Bahrain are out at seas for months, where do they find the water from to survive? Salt water leads to death. How do they survive? Someone swims to the bottom of the generally shallow water and opens up the bag over a bubbling submarine spring. Here surrounded by salt water is a fresh water spring. Now they can live.**

Christ is that spring of living water. Christ the life giver is the great source of blessing - none are excluded but those that exclude themselves.

***Jacob can know His Presence, Providence, Divine guidance and care***  
**15 I am with you - and will watch over you wherever you go, - and I will bring you back to this land.** He is going to be far away as in exile, but like the later exile there is the promise of return. **I am with you - I will watch over you - I will bring you back.**

▪ **An evangelist testifies to 51 years of ministry. No appeals for personal support, yet the Lord had provided all he needed. Even the mortgage for a house. Explain Nationwide Christian boss “come and see me”, 100%**

Will you rest on the providence of God – a God who **“will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”** Php 4:19, Prove Him in this.

### ***Promise***

**“I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”**

Jacob was apprehensive of danger from his brother Esau; but God promises to keep him. Jacob had now a long lonely journey before him, on an unknown road to an unknown country; but, **“I will not leave you until all is accomplished.**

⇒ **I will never leave you ... or forsake you.** Heb 13:5 **Christian take comfort.**

Jacob can be assured that all his steps are numbered by the Lord. And what of all those hardships to come? The Lord promises to preserve him, for His grace and comforts are with those who fear Him.

**“the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and for evermore.”** Ps 121:8

The apostle Paul having a hard time of it in Corinth said **“One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no-one is going to attack and harm you, ""** Ac 18:9-10

On trial: **“The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.”** Ac 23:11

Paul in the storm: **“Last night an angel of the God whose I am and whom I serve stood beside me”** Ac 27:23

In the difficult decisions, the pressures, the hardships, the trials, the hurts in this world, He is present with you – and that changes everything.

⇒ **We have the constant presence of God's Spirit within us - and His eternal Word to fill our minds - the Spirit applies those words to fill our hearts!**

Some Christians are always looking for comfort.

⇒ If you look for truth you may find comfort in the end, if you look for comfort you will not get either comfort or truth – only soft soap to begin, and in the end, despair - *C.S Lewis*

The Lord comforts by being ever present – but also through His people.

Paul up against it said **But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus**, 2Co 7:6. Your help, your presence, your visit, your phone call, your interest and support of a brother or sister are often the means the Lord uses to bring His grace and help to others, you are the answer to their prayers.

- On Friday Alec going on a mission trip, in conversation with others saw the Lord show him that this was for him - just the right time and length.

The Lord speaks through believers, non-believers, and through circumstances

- Don Wrapsom toying whether it is the Lord's Will to move from one ministry to another. A removal van came past with huge letters "Time to move"

That happens – but not that often lest we rely on circumstances instead of the Lord.

17-19 **When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it." He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven." Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. 19 He called that place Bethel, .... = The house of God.**

Look back at those easy days and there is little to see of the Lord's help.

Look back at those difficult times and you can say 'the Lord was there'. You will be able to speak of the Lord's presence and comfort in the dark valleys of life.

Jacob would never have forgotten that night. He refers to it as he returns in 31:13 When the Lord says to Him **"I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and where you made a vow to me.**

Again after the disastrous episode with the slaughter of those at Shechem he says in 35:3 **"let us go up to Bethel, where I will build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone."**

Bethel became that place, that 'go to' place in times of slipping back and failure for example in Judges 20 **Then the Israelites, all the people, went up to**

4a

**Bethel, and there they sat weeping before the LORD.** Jud 20:26. **The people went to Bethel, where they sat before God until evening, raising their voices and weeping bitterly.** Jud 21:2

*Finally Jacob prays v20-22*

**Then Jacob made a vow** He makes a vow, that is good, saying, **"If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's house, then the LORD will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."**

But it's not a good prayer. It's a worldly prayer. Jacob's faith is weak, his prayer is self-centered and carnal, "You do this and I will do that, this is the kind of bargaining the pagans do before their deities of wood, stone and metal. He does however, make a vow, a commitment a basis faith, a faith which grows.

How different Jacob is when something similar happens 14 years later as he returns. Here he meets and wrestles with the Lord. Then his prayer reflects a man who has walked with his God.

⇒ Will you grow this year in your walk with the Lord? Will you grow in confidence and faith? Jacob did.

*Peroration*

Will you learn the lessons that Jacob learned? Why have we read this passage in Genesis 28 today? **"For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."** Ro 15:4

Are you a slow learner? The Lord's grace does not come to only some of His people, but all of us, even as we learn many of the lessons of the faith.

The Lord is faithful to His *promises*,

He will *provide* even when his *purposes* seems to contradict his promises.

He is *present* with you through it, you will *prevail*.

Brother and sister in Christ - Take heart!

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