



THE BEGINNINGS!

The Book of Genesis

Faith and False Gods!

Genesis 35:1-29

Message #37 of 50 – S938

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Sunday Morning Service

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Faith and False Gods!

Genesis 35:1-29

Opening Comments

- Good morning – we will be in **Genesis 35**
- Today we continue our journey through **Genesis: THE BEGINNINGS!**
- As western Americans, most of us have much more than we need in our lives
- We might have two-car garages that have no cars in them, but they are full
- Or we rent storage units to hold the stuff we can't fit into our homes
- We keep it because it has some value to us, or we think we need it, or we will need it
- And while those things might be true, the question is, can we live without them
- If they are tucked away in your garage or in storage the answer is probably, Yes, you could live without them.
- But are there things in your life that you can't live without?
- This is a much more challenging question
- Because most of the things we say we can't live without would be better described as things we don't want to live without
- I could say I can't live without licorice – but I could – don't want to
- I could easily say that I can't live without my wife Kelly
- But the reality is that I don't want to live without her
- The very thought of living without her makes me want to throw up
- One of the things that will cause someone to struggle in their faith is when they substitute things they can't live without for things they don't want to live without
- Here is an example of what I am talking about
- Is air something you can live without? No!
- How about a donut? Can you live without a donut? Believe it or not, but the answer is yes, you can live without a donut.
- The problem with some Christians is that they are chasing after donuts while they are suffocating spiritually

- Let's pray and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal if that describes us
- Pray

Teaching

- **Faith and False Gods!**

- God is a good and gracious God, and he loves to bless His people

Matthew 7:11

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

- Sometimes God will take something away from us, sometimes something we believe we can't live without
 - He may do that to remind us to focus on the Giver and not on the gifts
 - In the last chapter, Jacob had settled down in Shechem
 - The problem was that he settled down only partway to where God had told him to go
 - His partial obedience led to his daughter Dinah being raped and two of sons slaughtering the men of Shechem
 - Jacob's security evaporated
 - **Genesis 34:30**
 - What God does next is remarkable
 - **Genesis 35:1**
 - God's grace is amazing – He simply tells Jacob to get to where he belongs
 - Thirty years earlier, Bethel was where Jacob had his first real encounter with God
 - Vision of a ladder – angels up and down – and the Lord
 - He heard the same promises his father and grandfather heard
 - But then there was one just for him **Genesis 28:15**
- Behold, I *am* with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.**
- God is sending Jacob back to that special place
 - But first, there is some work to be done in the camp
 - **Genesis 35:2-4**
 - These 'foreign gods' were various idols or images used for protection or appeasement of supposed deities

- Rachel stole her father's household gods – they may have gotten more after plundering Shechem
- Jacob is going to go the Bethel where He met with God before
- He anticipates a similar experience
- He wants to be ready and for his family and people to be ready also
- This is the role of a spiritual leader – to help people prepare to meet God
- This was a call to holiness
- Jacob buried them under a terebinth tree
- **Genesis 35:5-7**
- Jacob had prepared his family and moved to obey
- God caused the cities that Jacob was afraid of to be afraid – not of Jacob but of God **Warren Wiersbe**
- **“When God's people are doing God's will in God's way, they can depend upon God's provision and protection.”**
- We are not told how the people felt about the ‘foreign gods’ they and handed over to Jacob
- But it is not hard to imagine that some felt that they couldn't live without them
- By handing them over to Jacob they were sacrificing their safety
- As spiritual leaders we have to do what is right even if those we are leading don't understand or agree
- Something very important is in verse 7
- Jacob calls the place El Bethel = God of the House of God
- Before Jacob had focused on the place
- Now he is focused on the Person who makes the place special
- If you were to survey 1,000 people and ask them what they are looking for in a church, their responses would likely be:
- Moving Worship - Good Teaching - Children's or Youth Programs - Outreach/Evangelism/Missions
- As important as all those things are, they are secondary to the most important thing.
- Is God present in that place? Are you able to meet with Him in that church?

- Because all the doings of the church will not satisfy the greatest need of your soul, to be in intimate communion with Almighty God, the Lover of your soul.
- All the doings of the church can do is help you to enjoy communing with God more fully.
- If they become the object of your worship, they will eventually leave you empty and hungry.
- There is only one thing in this life that you cannot live without – God
- Everything else is secondary – temporary – possibly important, but not something that cannot be lived without
- When God is our highest desire, greatest love, and most intimate relationship – all else in our life lines up and experiences His blessing
- Jacob is on the right track now
- Then something hard happens
- **Genesis 35:8**
- We were told that Rebekah, Jacob’s mother had a nurse in chapter 28 but this is the first and only mention of her name
- Jacob grew up with her in his life, especially when he was very young
- She would have been like a second mother to him
- We are not told when she joined Jacob’s entourage
- She may have been the one who told him about his mother’s death
- We know this was hard on Jacob because the name ‘Allon Bachuth’ means Terebinth of Weeping
- Then God meets with Jacob
- **Genesis 35:9-15**
- God changes Jacob’s name to Israel and repeats the promises made to Abraham and Isaac and him
- ‘kings shall come from your body’ – natural physical descendants will be kings
- 1,000 years later King Saul and then David
- And 1,000 after that the King of kings, Jesus the Christ
- Loving God with our whole heart, soul, and strength does not prevent hard things from coming into our lives
- But it does help us to endure them
- As Jacob is about to discover

- **Genesis 35:16-20**
- Jacob's marital situation was weird by any definition
- He loved Rachel at first sight – worked seven years to marry her
- Her father switched her less attractive sister Leah in the dark
- Worked another seven year
- Then a baby war ensued and he ended up with two concubines/wives
- But Rachel was the one Jacob loved – now she is gone
- We are not told of Jacob's grief here
- Then something weird happens
- **Genesis 35:21-22a**
- Rueben is Jacob's oldest son – the firstborn – place of honor in the family
- Everything is wrong with this sordid event.
- She was his father's concubine/wife.
- She was at least twenty years older than him.
- She was the mother of two of his brothers.
- 'Jacob heard' but doesn't seem to do anything about it
- But he doesn't forget it – it will come up in chapter 49 at the end of Jacob's life
- Then a quick genealogy
- **Genesis 35:22b-26**
- Then Jacob is reunited with his father
- **Genesis 35:27-29**
- There are about 17 years between verses 27 and 28
- Jacob was separated from his father for about thirty years but was able to spend the last years with him
- The next chapter is a genealogy of Esau, then the focus shifts to Jacob's favorite son Joseph
- This was a chapter of loss for Jacob – Deborah, Rachel, and Isaac
- But what he gained was a profound understanding of God Almighty
- Want to close with three quick things out of verse 2 so that we can have that same understanding
- First - **Put Away Foreign Gods**
- Anything that takes the place of God
- Focus of our affections & loyalty higher than God

- Possession, hobby, job, person, fame, wealth
- Second - **Purify Yourself**
- Our sins make us unclean, filthy, disgusting, repulsive
- Want to pray a prayer of great faith? Ask God to show you how dirty your sins make you.

- God gave us cleansing tool **1 John 1:7,9**

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin... If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- Confess your sins – be cleansed, purified
- Put away foreign Gods, purify yourself, and...
- Third - **Change Your Garments**
- Speaks of our habits and behaviors
- Salvation should change me
- If God is in you must cause you to change - You must cooperate
Ephesians 4:22-24

Put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

- We begin to change when we yield our will, mind, and strength to God
- God is the only thing in this life that we can't live without
- Don't make Him prove it to you – you won't like it
- Jesus said the greatest commandment **Matthew 22:37**
Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'
- Make God your greatest desire, your highest hope, your deepest love
- And then watch Him move heaven and earth to bless you
- **Invitation/Prayer!**