

Light On Our Path



*Messages by Pastor Paul Aasman
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Pastor Paul Aasman

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Genesis 27:14-17 “So he went and got them and brought them to his mother, and she prepared some tasty food, just the way his father liked it. Then Rebekah took the best clothes of Esau her older son, which she had in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob. She also covered his hands and the smooth part of his neck with the goatskins. Then she handed to her son Jacob the tasty food and the bread she had made.”

Jacob Lies

Reading: Genesis 27:1-29
Text: Genesis 27:14-17

Esau's promise was worthless. He had sworn an oath to Jacob, selling his birthright. He no longer had any rights as the first-born son. Those rights now belonged to Jacob, his younger brother. It might have been a bad deal, but he had made it, and now he must stick to it.

But he didn't. One day, his father Isaac called Esau, his favourite, and instructed him to hunt some game, prepare a feast, and serve it to him so that he might bless him. Esau should at that point have said, “Ah, Dad... there is one problem. I gave the birthright to Jacob. You'll have to give the blessing to him.”

But he didn't. Instead, he went off to do as his father told him. What did it matter that he had sworn an oath in the name of God. How often don't you think like that: “I know I'm lying, but

hey, who will ever know. Only God, but what does that matter. At least nobody important will know.” You see, lies are always acts of unbelief - and that is what Esau was doing. He did not believe in God, so he didn’t mind at all to break an oath he had sworn in God’s name.

Rebekah knew her son Esau, and expected him to break his oath, so when she heard Isaac call Esau, she listened secretly. She learned that Esau was going to get the blessing anyway. Well, that just wasn’t right. God had given the blessing to Jacob. She wasn’t going to let Esau get away with this. If God would not take care of things, then she’d have to take matters into her own hands.

You can see that Rebekah was not interested in God’s purpose but in her own ambition for her son. So it’s not surprising that she should do something very wicked to get what she wanted. She thought up a plan: a deceitful, tricky and risky plan. She decided to fool her husband Isaac. She got Jacob to put on Esau’s clothes, wear furry goatskin, so that when Isaac touched his hands, arms and neck, he would not feel Jacob’s soft smooth skin, but skin that was more like Esau’s. What a nasty trick Rebekah and Jacob played on Isaac. But it worked.

Yes, Jacob got the blessing. But it is not the way that a child of God should act. The Bible says that we need to act in faith. We should not push ourselves forward, as Rebekah and Jacob did. They did not show love for God but love for

themselves. Jacob was wiser than his mother, in this respect, for he had warned her against trying to trick his father for, as he said, “I would bring down a curse on myself rather than a blessing.” (verse 21) He got the blessing, but his life also came under a terrible curse. He fled from home to a distant land, and never saw his mother or father again.

God teaches us here that we need to be patient. God will accomplish his good purpose, even when everything seems to fall apart. Psalm 91 says that even if a 1000 soldiers fall at your side in battle, and 10,000 fellows soldiers at your right hand, yet do not fear. God is still in control. In Psalm 27 David says, “*Thought an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident.*” And he ends by saying, “*Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.*”

So often, things in our lives seem to fall apart. We get one piece of bad news, an uncle went to the hospital; the dentist tells you that you’ve got a tooth that needs to be removed and it’ll cost lots; that’s just the time that you need to move to a new place; and your best friend is spreading stories about you... Sometimes we wonder how we will ever cope.

But at such times, remember this: our God is absolutely amazing. He turned chaos into this beautiful world. He will make sense of the chaos of your life too.

Or think about Jesus Christ: Everything in his life was falling apart. First the leaders turned against him, then his home town, then all the people turned against him, then one of his own disciples, and then all his disciples fled, and then he heard his leading disciple swear an oath that he did not know Jesus. Then he was crucified.

Could things ever be more hopeless?

Yet Jesus waited patiently for God's good purpose to come through. That is what Rebekah and Jacob should have done. That is what we need to do. So renew your faith in God's love for Jesus sake, and submit yourself to his glory.

You will receive the blessing. Don't ever doubt it. It is coming. You will not regret the wait at all!

November 11, 2007
Pastor Paul Aasman

Genesis 28:12 "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."

Jacob's Ladder

Reading: Genesis 28:1-22
Text: Genesis 28:12

A man stops at the side of the Red Hill Creek Expressway, opens the door, lets out a little creature, a hamster, shuts the door and drives off. His children haven't looked at the hamster for months. His wife is tired of having to clean the cage and feeding an animal nobody cares about. So they released him in Hamilton's inner-city wilderness, the Red Hill Creek corridor.

What now for the hamster? It will probably die - from exposure, starvation or an enemy.

It was like that for Jacob. He was a quiet man who liked to stay among the tents (Gen. 25:27). But now he had lost everything. He was running for his life because his brother was going to kill him. His had mother sent him away, and his father had blessed him. He left the only home he'd ever known, and now he was like that hamster, released to the wild. How will he survive? The chance that he might die from exposure or starvation was real, or be killed by a thief or animal.

He was afraid now for his life. He was a homeless man. He did have a place to go, but it was many day's journey away. The sun had fallen, and as it got dark, Jacob realized he needed to find shelter. There was no hotel or a warm air grate. It was a cold, lonely place. But he was tired; he laid down and of all things, he used a stone for a pillow. Yet before long, merciful sleep swept his troubles away.

But it seems that even in his dreams he was searching for comfort. And God gave it. Now, don't think that when you need help, you should hope to get it from dreams. God has given us the Bible and a rich church community, and the Holy Spirit to guide us, but Jacob had none of these, so God spoke to him in a dream.

Jacob dreamed - and what does he see? A staircase, not a ladder. What's the difference between a ladder and a staircase? A staircase is permanent. Though Jacob felt like the world was spinning out of control, the fact is the earth is firmly connected to heaven. Nothing happens on the earth by accident. Your life, no matter how troubled your might feel, is not out of control. There is purpose and a grand purpose for you.

Jacob might have felt like a hamster released into the wild, but he was protected by the almighty God.

Now, what did Jacob see on the stairs? Angels, going up and down. Why do angels go up and down? Is it not to bring things? So what might angels be bringing down from heaven? Of

course, they are bringing blessings from God. And what might they be bringing up to heaven from the earth? Well, Jacob's prayers, reports on Jacob needs, and whenever they can, the sacrifices or songs of praise, the acts of devotion and love which God's people do for God. It is like gold mined from the earth brought up to heaven by the angels, and laid up in heaven's treasuries.

Jacob was not alone. He was not unprotected. He had good friends all around, though he could not see them. And then in verse 13 we read, "*There beside him stood the Lord.*" Just as in paradise when God came down to Adam to walk with him in the evening of the day, so God himself came down to Jacob. A father cares about his children. He will take care of them.

This care is what God promises to all who believe in him, who are united to him in the covenant. At baptism, God promises you, "I will be your Father, and you will be my child." Jacob receives here assurance that what God offers in the covenant, God gives. And God assures that to each of you today too.

One more thing: the staircase is an image. The New Testament reveals what the image stands for. It is Jesus Christ. He says, "*I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.*" (John 1:5)

Jesus Christ is the one who connects us to God. So you see, you need to believe in Jesus Christ. If you know him and surrender yourself to him, he will connect you to heaven, and blessings beyond counting will be carried down to you, and angels will take up your prayers and love to the Father. Pray to God in the name of Jesus Christ, and because of him, you will live.

November 18, 2007
Pastor Paul Aasman

Genesis 29:20 “So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.”

Jacob in Haran

Reading: Genesis 29:14b-30
Text: Genesis 29:20

When I first heard this story, I was about 7 years old. I couldn't believe it - Jacob had worked 7 years for his father-in-law to earn the hand of his bride in marriage. Seven years! How could he do that? It seems like a lifetime!

And yet, we read, it seemed to Jacob like only a few days. Now as a child, I knew what it was like for time to go fast. Every time I ate cake, or had fun at a friend's birthday party, time went very fast. For Jacob, time went fast like that. Seven years seemed like a few days to him.

Why was that? Well, because Jacob was in love - yes, he had fallen in love. He had left the home of his father and mother - he had to run for his life because Esau was ready to kill him. He had travelled to a distant land in the East, to a place called Haran. God protected him as he promised and gave him success. As soon as he came to the village of Haran, he met the most beautiful girl in his life: Rachel, and immediately fell in love with her. She was her mother's brother's daughter - that is, his cousin. Rachel brought Jacob home and her father Laban took his nephew Jacob into his house. Every day then, Jacob saw the woman he loved. Of course he had to earn his keep, so he worked hard. He wanted to impress Laban, to show him that he was a hard worker, responsible and upright. But he also wanted to impress Rachel and win her love. He hated to part from her and when away, he thought often of when they would be together again.

Yes, these were happy days like none he'd ever known before.

What will a man do for the woman he loves? He will climb the highest mountain, sail the stormy sea, cross the driest desert - anything to show his love. And because he loved her, to do such things was as nothing to him. Love changes nearly everything in a person's life, and most importantly, it changes the person.

Paul says love is patient. It is not self-seeking; it always hopes, always perseveres. Jacob was a new man. Because he

loved Rachel, the seven years seemed like only a few days to him. Each day brought him closer to his goal. Seven years? What does it matter? He will marry this woman. That's what love will do to a person.

And you have experienced love, have you not? You know what it's like, do you not? To wait for what you hope for in love? For you have goals. Perhaps you really want to have a solid and godly romantic relationship with someone one day, or to become healthy and stable, to get an education, a job, a family.

But surely, we all share certain goals: for instance that Streetlight becomes a mature, self-governing and self-supporting congregation. Some of us have been hoping and waiting for some years, and see the huge step forward we make toward that goal next Sunday when 11 people formally join the church as full members with all the privileges of membership. Ah, it seems like only yesterday that some of you began coming to church.

Surely, there are other goals that unite us. With the church of all ages, we dream of the day when all humanity bows before the throne of Jesus Christ and say "Jesus is Lord." Do you not long for that even more than Jacob longed for Rachel? Paul wrote of how the church fixes her eyes on what is unseen - that eternal glory which far outweighs these light and momentary troubles we now have.

Love must drive us. Paul worked hard for this goal, and it

was not difficult for him because, as he said, "Christ's love compels me" (1 Cor 5:14). He said that while he was struggling for the growth of the church. It does not matter that he suffered so much for the churches, that he experienced frustration when they did not live Christian lives, that he was often resisted and slandered by the very people who should have loved him, that the authorities would arrest him for witnessing in the name of Jesus - none of it mattered, for he was compelled by Christ's love.

What about you? Does any of it matter, really? The suffering you endure, the disappointments you struggle with, the hopes for this world that never seem to be realized? In comparison to the goal that our love for God drives us toward, what does it matter?

Jacob laboured hard for seven years for Rachel's hand in marriage and the years passed in a flash. The church labours hard in this world for God's glory and the years keep on passing - some 2000 years now. But what does it matter? Let us press on, let your love never fail. Endure whatever life lays on you. You will see Christ in glory. The years of your life, till that day, will be as nothing in comparison to the joy that will begin at the marriage feast of the Lamb.

November 25, 2007
Pastor Paul Aasman

1 Thess 2:13 “And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.”

You Received the Word of God

Reading: 1 Thess 2:1-16
Text: 1 Thess 2:13

Today we celebrate the power of God: He has performed miracles among us. Eleven individuals among us will say, “I believe in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I believe in the Bible and want to be a living, active and cared for member of the body of Jesus Christ.”

That is a miracle, because it is not easy to believe in the Bible, nor in the God who speaks to us through it - for the Bible tells us things that are strange. It speaks of a snake that spoke to Eve in paradise; a donkey that rebuked Balaam the Eastern guru. The Bible tells us about a day when the sun stood still in the sky so that Israel might finish off the enemy in a battle; and about another day when the sun even travelled eastward in the sky instead of west, as a sign of God’s power for King Hezekiah.

There are things in the Bible that nobody can understand - that God is one and yet that God is three; that God is in such

control of events that not even a sparrow falls to the ground unless it were God’s will, and yet, we are fully responsible for the things we do. How can you understand these things?

Yet these 11 people come forward today to say that they believe, accept and submit to these things because they are taught in the Bible.

That is a miracle. And in our passage, the Apostle Paul rejoiced because of it. “We thank God continually because of it.” There was nothing that could make Paul happier than to learn about the faith of the congregation in which he laboured.

For he had laboured hard. He uses two very important images to describe his work: In verse 7 he uses the image of a mother: “*and we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children.*” A mother nurtures her children because she loves them, and there is nothing too much for her to do for her little ones. She works hard, finishing chores after her children have gone to bed, and rising early before they get up again in the morning.

Paul says we were like that among you. We did not just share the gospel with you, but our very lives. We could not tell you about Jesus Christ and then leave you. We cared about where you lived, how you were doing; we defended, comforted and helped you. That is what a congregation does for those who come to the Lord among them - they reach out in love.

The relations we experience in the church are formed by love.

Then in verse 11 Paul uses the image of a father: We were holy, righteous and blameless among you, the way a father should be to his children. A father does not so much nurture as *lead*; he urges his children to be like him, to live up to the goals that they as parents cherish. He encourages them when they loose their way; he comforts them in their troubles; he urges them to live as a child of God.

And that too is what the church is to new Christians. We have not only nurtured your faith like a mother, but also led you on the path of faith like a father and even walked alongside you on the path.

Yet, nobody believes simply because of what the church does; faith comes only from God. But what a fantastic partnership we experience: God takes up the labours of the church and uses their devotion, love and service to make people believe the Bible. He makes a connection in the minds and hearts of individuals so that they see that the Bible, with all its difficult teachings, is not the word of man, but the word of God.

How do they know? Because they have experienced it themselves. God's word has nurtured them, healed them, given them life, hope and purpose. One after another, Richard, Case, and myself heard that when individuals spoke about their faith before us during their interview for the profession of faith. Let me make

public some of the things they have said:

Charlie and Murray, though they speak few words, can communicate powerfully. They not only said that they love the Lord, but their whole face shone with the love they wanted to tell us about. Ken said that he feels that he has always belonged to the Lord Jesus. Marvin spoke convincingly that, though he struggles with sin, God brings him to repent and he knows that God forgives him for Jesus' sake. He is clean! He trusts God to help him live as his child. Bert and Lisa, like Gordon and Evelyn, spoke in vibrant ways about their total dependency on Jesus Christ to save them, and their need to live out of him. Tony exemplified them all when he said, "Without Jesus, I'm nothing." Hsermular knows the serious call to forgive and has experienced God's grace that enables her to forgive those who have hurt her family and her people in Burma. Frank said, "The Lord has an everlasting grip on my life." That is such a beautiful testimony of God's providence and love in his life.

Yes, they believe because the word of God is at work in them.

May each one of you here this morning experience the power of God at work in you.

Today we celebrate the miracle of God among us. You are here to witness it, and today we celebrate. Tomorrow, let us get back to work in partnership with God so that others may

experience the miracle of God's love - may we, the children of
God, be as fathers and mothers to those who believe.