

## Prevailing Grace: A Troubled Departure from Home

Intro: A few years ago, while a missionary in Portugal, I met my supervisor at the plane from Atlanta. We usually got along great, but that time he seemed so taciturn and grouchy. After a day or two, he admitted, “I had a fight with my wife on the way out the door.” It is hard to be a long way from home and from your family; it is doubly hard when you didn’t leave on good terms. Today we pick up the story of Jacob when he is possibly at the most lonely time of his life. How will the crafty deceiver manage out in the world on his own? [*We will trace movement from alienation to encounter to faith, the general path each of has followed or will follow on our way to Christ.*]

### Deceit multiplies trouble and leads to alienation.

- Brother: Jacob got the birthright and blessing, but incurring Esau’s anger and intent to kill him.
- Mother: Rebekah, party to the deceit and sibling rivalry, now fears losing both her sons.
  - Jacob has to flee—with nothing of all that blessing, and for an indefinite time.
  - Backstory of Esau’s pagan wives (26:34f): Rebekah’s justification to Isaac.
- Father: Deceived, heartbroken, yet blessing his son.
  - Agrees with need for Jacob to find a wife from family line.
  - His patriarchal send-off blessing connects creation blessing with redemption blessing.
    - *May God Almighty (El Shaddai) make you fruitful and multiply you...a company of peoples.*
    - *May He also give you the blessing of Abraham to you and your descendants...possess the land.*
    - [Note: this blessing also ours in Jesus—born again through Jesus to creation forever.]

Transition: Alienated from all he’s known, exiled, alone, with nothing but a staff---and his father’s blessing!

### God encounters the lonely traveler. Fifty miles from home (350 to go to Haran), with a stone for a pillow...

- He dreams a vision of a stairway open to heaven, with angels back and forth on it, the LORD poised over him.
  - God speaks: *I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham, and the God of your father Isaac.*
  - *The land on which you lie, I will give it to you and your descendants...all families of earth be blessed.*
  - *I am with you, and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring your back to this land for I will not leave you until I have done all I have promised.*
- Reflection:
  - God takes the initiative to meet Jacob at his point of need, of emptiness and vulnerability.
  - God’s purpose for Jacob is far more comprehensive than he could then imagine or expect.
  - God convinced Jacob of both His awesomeness and love.

Transition: How will Jacob respond when he awakes?

### The believer responds in faith. Let’s be clear; his response is very “Jacob,” but God has awakened in him faith.

- *Surely the LORD is in this place, and I didn’t know it.* God’s presence is alarming, amazing, awesome.
- *This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.*
  - Not a building, but a presence. All creation cannot contain Him, but He is present in power and grace.
  - The house a place of dwelling, of security, provision, of joy.
  - The stairway the entrance to heaven. *You will see heaven opened and angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man* (Jn. 1:51). Who is this stairway, this gate to heaven?
  - *I am the door of the sheep* (Jn. 10:7). Jesus!
- *If God will be with me...keep, feed, cloth, bring me home...then the LORD will be my God.*
  - A profession of faith, though a bit cheeky, consider with Whom he bargains. Yet it is beginning faith.
  - Vows of commitment:
    - A stone pillar to mark the place
    - Tithe: At this point he has nothing to tithe!

Conclusion: Alienation (*Through many dangers...*), Encounter (*’twas grace that taught my heart to fear*), Faith: (*and grace will bring me home.*) Amen.