

Turning Pillows to Pillars

Genesis 28

Hey Kingdom4C family and friends, we are glad you tuned in with us today. Whether you are watching this with your families or by yourself, I want to encourage you to continue pursuing God in this time, because it's so crucial that we stay spiritually connected to each other, and to hear what God is teaching us as a family.

Today we will continue our series through the bible, and our story is found in Genesis 28, also well known as, "Jacob's ladder. I have titled this sermon, "Turning Pillows to Pillars" because through this story, we will see how God uses hard places as pillars, reminding us of his promise.

I know last week we just talked about Abraham killing Isaac, now we jumped to Jacob. There was so much that happened in between that we have skipped over, but if we want to make it to Revelation by December, we gotta book it! But I hope you have been keeping up with it in your reading plan! You should have read this story last week and are caught up with what's going on.

- Isaac married Rebekah, it's a cute story how they meet, you should read it.
- Rebekah gave birth to Esau and Jacob
- Isaac is about to die and wanted to bless Esau,
- but Jacob deceived everyone and stole the birthright and the blessings.
- Now Jacob must run and hide from his brothers or he might kill him.

Now this is where our story starts, in Genesis 28. Isaac blessed Jacob with God's promise to Abraham, and commanded him to run to his grandparents' house, and marry one of his cousins, so Jacob obeyed and went. His brother Esau on the other hand, wanted to please his father by marrying the daughter of Ishmael, to add on to the wives he already had.

Right here, you see a contrast between two brothers, one obeyed the promise and walked in faith, the other disobeyed God's commands and sought for approval.

This is in fact the difference between a **child of faith and a son of religion.** I really think this is one of the main themes in the whole bible; you have Cain and Abel, a raven and a dove, Abraham and Lot, Ruth and Orpah, Jacob and Esau. As if God is showing us the 2 choices, we could make here on earth. Every day God gives an opportunity to trust him and hold onto his promises, or to reject him and his teachings.

Through this story, I want to show us that we can completely rely on God's promises through any situation of any seasons of our lives.

Promises to rest on for Journey

1. **God's plans always in line with his precepts (v1-9)**

Read (v1-9)

Esau wanted to please his father, but he did it in the wrong way, he ended up disobeying God, by marrying people outside of the faith.

Esau represents people who wants to do what's right, they want to please God, they want to receive the blessings of God, but are not willing to follow through in obedience to God.

You see, Esau was trying to work his way back up to the promise, back up to his position, back up to the power he had. But he did it with his own strength, in his own way. **This is religion.**

When we rest in the promises of God, means we are willing to obey God over ourselves. How often is it, that we make selfish decisions or even sinful ones and then ask God to bless it?

"God, I didn't study at all, could you just give me a good grade?"

"God, can you make her like me, because that would benefit me a lot?"

"God, give me more money because I heard you're a good God."

Let me tell you right now, he is able to work all things together for your **good**.

But that often means you have to give up your ways, and surrender to his idea of **goodness**.

Because his plans always in line with his precepts.

So many of us wants to follow his plans, but are not willing to listen to his precepts, we are like Esau, trying to please God by doing all the wrong things.

We will begin to see, that Esau's actions in marring Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael, gave birth to bad news, the Edomites, one of the enemies of God's people. Later, one Edomite will rise to power, he was known as king Harold who tried to kill Jesus.¹ And let me remind you, that's what **religion** does. Religion will try to kill your faith in Jesus.

That's why, Paul says in his letters to Rome, "**13 Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." Jesus hates religion 14 What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! 15 For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." 16 It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy.**"

That's why we can never work our way up to heaven, it's not up to us, it was never by our desires or efforts. But in this story, we will see that while Jacob was passed out on a hard pillow, while he was unconscious, heaven opened up and a stairwell came down.

Let me ask you, what did he do to deserve this dream, heaven gates opening for him? **Nothing**. Only that in verse 2 he arises and went to Paddan-Aram as he was told by his father, following the promises of God.

Because God's plans always in line with his precepts

¹ <https://amazingbibletimeline.com/blog/edomites-descendants-of-esau/>

2. God's plans can happen while in a hard place (v10-14)

Read v10-14

"Certain Place" out of the ordinary things, can happen in ordinary places. God can reveal his promises to you anywhere. Anytime, through anyone, a certain place.

Here in this place of **uncertainty**, the sun has set, it's getting dark, Jacob doesn't know exactly what he is doing, he is processing through how angry his brother Esau is, and how his brother might just jump out and kill him. He is in a very vulnerable hard place of uncertainty. And here was the certain place that God used to reveal to Jacob his promises.

I think this week, we have all found ourselves in this **place of uncertainty**, in a dark time when we feel like we are vulnerable and helpless. Or maybe you feel like Jacob, you have messed up, and now you feel like you have made your bed in a hard place, now you must lay down in it.

Question: What's your stone that you have been laying your head on, that has been keep you up all night? What hard places have you endure, that you can't rest in the promises of God?

God chose to encounter Jacob in this certain place of discomfort, to remind him that **his situation doesn't disqualify him from God's promises**.

His plan will prosper whether you are **with it or against it**. His promises are "yes" and "amen"! For those who confess their "yes" and "amen"!

No matter the uncertainty, or what hard places you are at, one thing is certain; **God is not surprised by what you're going through**. His plans and purpose have not been canceled, moved, postponed, or rescheduled. He has been the same today, as he was in February, his promises are still "yes" and "amen".

So, remember that on this journey, **God's plans can happen while in a hard place**.

3. God's plans are still working through broken people (v15-17)

It says, v15, **"I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."**

What a promise to rest on. God will not just be at the destination when you complete his command, he is with you **on the way**. God appeared to Jacob **on the way** from Beersheba to Haran. And he will be here with you, *"from life's first cry to final breath, Jesus command my destiny. No power of hell, no schemas of man, can ever pluck me from his hands."*

If you have not seen God's promises in your life, know that he is not done with you yet.

God's plans are still working through broken people, and if you belong to him, he is still working through you.

16 When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it."

You know, a lot of times God is at work in moments when you are not aware of it. Like Jacob, some of you think God's presence is no longer with you because you have made a huge mistake or you have deceived people, or you have committed deep sexual sin, like Esau.

You are still not disqualified from the promises of God, God's plans are still working through broken people that repent and know they need a savior.

17 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."

The man who was afraid of the uncertainties on the journey, now fears God, and finally recognized why he was at that place. It's awesome not because of how he felt, but because of what he received. He saw the promises of God revealed to him in a personal way. Now it became real, now he finally can hold on to that promise, and know that God is not done with him yet. And he is not done with you either.

God's plans are still working through broken people like you and me.

4. God's plans were to send Jesus as the only path (v18-22)

Read v18-22

Jacob renamed the place Luz to Bethel. **Bethel** means house of God. Luz means a rugged bare bone tree². If you want to talk about hard places, the place where it seemed like all hope was lost, the place in history when it looked like darkness had won, Jesus defeated death on that rugged cross and **turned a hard place into the gate of heaven**, the house of God, turning the place of Luz into the place of Bethel. **Turning hard pillows to pillars of promise.**

If God can do that through the cross of Jesus, think of what he can do when we lay down our lives and pick up our crosses.

Jacob had a dream of the promised stairwell, the pathway connecting earth to heaven. Once again reconciling us with God. In **John 1:51** Jesus fulfilled that dream when he said to Nathan sitting under a tree, "Very truly I tell you, you will see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on' the Son of Man."

On a rugged tree Jesus will die for the mistakes and wrong doings of the world and those who are found lying at his feet, heaven will open to receive you, because you have received him.

Again, this is not a ladder you work up, this is more like an escalator you just have to be still and know that he is God. Jesus alone is the only way the truth and the life, no one comes to the father but through him.

You see, Jacob set up the stone that was his pillow, to a pillar and poured oil to anoint that place as **a mark of Gods promises to him**. This stone was a place holder, it was set up as a reminder that something better is coming.

When our Lord and Savior died on that cross it seemed like everything was over, but three days later a **stone** was rolled away, revealing the promised one. This **stone** marks another promise of God to us, that Jesus has risen from the grave, and he will come back to take us home.

If you are a child of Faith, he is not finish with you yet, until he calls you home.

In the meantime, on this journey, you better turn those **pillows**, those hard places you have been laying for years into a **pillar**. Into moments where you could point back and say, "*There! that was when God revealed himself to me and gave me a promise.*"

These are crucial promises you can rest on during times like this. That God can turn **hard pillows to pillars of promise** if you are willing to let him, and receive him into your life.

If you have public or private prayer request please submit your response, and if you want to talk more about your faith or make a decision to follow him, please message me and I can pray for you thank you.

² <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/luz/>