

• *God steps in to show Jacob mercy*

For many years Jacob had been stumbling through life with his manipulative ways, but now God decided it was the time to show Jacob mercy. We are all like Jacob really. We are deceitful. We want our own way. We want to get things arranged in such a way that they please us. We are self-centred. And sometimes we make such a mess of our lives. But when Jacob was helpless, hopeless, lonely, and facing disaster, God stepped in.

• *Times of folly and pride turned to blessing*

Perhaps you are suffering from the consequences of your own folly. You say ‘If only I had not done that ... If only I had not said that ... If only I had held on a bit longer...’. The trouble comes from your own pride and self-centredness. Yet that disastrous time in your life could turn out to be a great time of blessing in your life

1. God uses a desperate occasion

• *Open to God*

1. **God uses a desperate occasion.** Jacob was disgraced in the eyes of his family and must have been gripped with a sense of failure. But it is precisely at such a time when we are open to God. Jacob was just a self-centred character; it took some suffering to get him to be willing to listen to what God had to say.

2. When God intervenes it is altogether a matter of mercy

• *God speaks in a dream – giving His longstanding promise to Abraham to Jacob*

2. **When God intervenes it is altogether a matter of mercy.** Jacob leaves for Haran ^{□1}, and on the journey spends a night sleeping in the open countryside ^{□2}. He uses a stone as a pillow and while he is sleeping has a dream. In his dream there is a staircase linking earth and heaven. Angels are going up and down. In the dream, they are watching over Jacob and bringing him the necessities he needs to survive the hazards of his journey ^{□3}. At the top of the staircase is Yahweh, the LORD Himself. In his dream God speaks to Jacob: ‘*I am Yahweh, the God of your father...*’ The longstanding promise which God had given to Abraham, God now gives to Jacob. ‘*The land on which you lie, I will give it to you...*’ ^{□4}.

Jacob must have thought that he had lost all hope of ever being ‘*Abraham’s seed*’. He had tried manipulative ways to get the family inheritance. But now he was running away, and Esau was still back home close to Isaac and Rebekah. He was thinking that he had lost the inheritance for ever.

• *God’s purpose – not Jacob’s goodness*

But no, God’s original promise that He would use Jacob and that ‘*the older would serve the younger*’ still holds true. God had never chosen Jacob because of how good he was. It was before he was born, and before he had done anything good or bad, that God announced ‘*The older will serve the younger.*’ God gave the announcement before Jacob and Esau were born ‘*in order that God’s purpose according to His choice might stand firm, not because of works but because of Him who calls...*’ ^{□1}.

• *Mercy – at one of the worst times of his life*

Now God was calling Jacob, summoning him into fellowship with Himself. It is clearly entirely a matter of mercy. It takes place at one of the worst times of Jacob’s life!

Jacob is converted at this point, and is given the assurance that he will – despite all of his wickedness – be the one through whom the purpose of God will continue. It is he, not Esau, who will be the forefather of the nation of Israel.

• *Promised seed*

‘*In you and in your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed*’ ^{□1}. The promised ‘Seed’ will come through Jacob. ‘*I am with you...*’ says God. ‘*I will watch over you wherever you go ... I will not leave you...*’ ^{□2}.

□1 28:10

□2 28:11

□3 28:12

□4 28:13

□1 Romans 9:11–12

□1 28:14

□2 28:15

3. The promises of God concern both fellowship and future destiny

3. The promises of God concern both fellowship and future destiny. God was ready to come down the staircase to meet Jacob and be with him for the rest of his life. (One recalls John 1:51. Jesus says He is the staircase! He is the one through whom the angels ascend and descend to care for God's people.)

But not only is there the promise of fellowship and salvation, God plans to use Jacob and the promises concern Jacob's destiny. God says His plan will go forward through Jacob. The divine and angelic presence will stay with Jacob until God has achieved all of His plans for and through Jacob.

4. Purpose comes into Jacob's life when he responds to God

4. Purpose comes into Jacob's life when he responds to God. He acknowledges that God has spoken to him ¹. It is something he never wants to forget and so he takes the stone he has been using as a pillow and makes a small monument out of it to mark the spot where God spoke to him ². He takes God at His word, and gives himself wholly to God ³. As a mark of his dedication to God he determines he will give a tenth of his income to God ⁴.

• God still comes to us as we are in our sins

God still comes to us as we are in our sins, and He says 'I am willing to be with you, to use you, and never leave you, and get all My promises fulfilled through you.' This is why Jesus came. While we were yet sinners Christ died for us. We had not taken any steps to compensate for our sins. God stepped into the history of the human race.

• God is willing to change things

You cannot do anything to save yourself. God has to step into your life. It does not matter how badly you have been living; God is willing to change things. Come to God. God says to you 'You have damaged your life, but out of the sheer love of My heart I will give Jesus to you. I will never leave you or forsake you. I will fulfil every one of My purposes that I have for your life.'

• God is still the God of Jacob

'The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge' ¹. God is still the God of Jacob. He is the God of sinners, deceivers, manipulators. He comes to us when we have sinned, when we have damaged relationships. And He brings a change in our lives.



¹ 28:16-17

² 28:18-19

³ 28:20-21

⁴ 28:22

¹ Psalm 46:7, 11

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible</i> (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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