

## **“Grace that Leads us Home”**

**Genesis 35:16-29**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

“Why can't things be like they used to be?” - “Why won't God just heal her?” - “Why am I still alive?”

If you live long enough you will ask questions like these. We all suffer loss because we live in a sinful world. And it may even seem like God is punishing us, or we have no reason left to live. Suffering is not always a punishment for sin, but suffering always works for the long-term good of those who love God.

In this chapter of Jacob's life, we see God working His good purpose even through sorrow, even if we may not understand how. God always has a good reason for keeping His people in the world, and for taking them home. Sometimes, we see God's reasons, sometimes we don't. But we always find comfort if we look to Him in trust.

*In sorrow and frustration, take comfort in God who has a good purpose for each of your days; seek His will on hard days.*

### **Gen 35:16-20 Jacob Loses His Wife but Gains a Son**

Vs 16-17 Years ago, Rachel told Jacob that if she had no children she would die of shame. And now she is in labor with her second son and fighting for her life. The midwife tries to keep her going, but the labor is too hard. As she passes away, she names the child “Son of sorrow”.

But Jacob changes the son's name to honor the wife God had given him; “son of my right hand”.

Vs 20 This is the fourth pillar Jacob has set up. In Gen 28 Jacob marks his meeting with God in Beth-El, in Gen 31 Jacob marks his separation from Laban, in Gen 35 Jacob marks the faithfulness of God's promises even after his sons' sin, and again in Gen 35, Jacob marks the death of his most beloved.

Jacob acknowledges grief and mourns loss. If the blessings of the first three pillars come from God, then the sorrow of the fourth must as well. Or as Job 2:10 says... “What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?”

*Accept the sovereign hand of God and commit yourself to His plan for your life.*

### **Gen 35:21-26 Jacob Loses Even More**

Vs 21-22 This is a disgraceful act. A sin like this is brought up in the New Testament and the response is “To deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor 5:5).

At the end of Jacob's life (Gen 49:3-4) he prophesies that this sin will follow Reuben for the rest of his life.

Vs 22-26 But, even in this time of grief and disappointment, the 12 fathers of the 12 tribes are complete.

This loss and disappointment are hard. We don't know why it was necessary to take Rachel home at that time, but God knows. We don't know how Reuben could be so disappointingly wicked, but God knows. One thing we do know:

By Rachel's labor, the tribes are complete. Benjamin was born in her death, but his name will out-last the world and be written on New Jerusalem in the Kingdom of God. But before that glory, the line of Benjamin will produce the man that God will use to write most of the New Testament – Paul. (Rom 11:1).

Another name will be graven on the gates of New Jerusalem – “Reuben”. For all of Reuben's disappointing sin, he is an heir to the promises of God and a hope that is greater than any sin or sorrow.

*In sorrow and disappointment do not lose sight of the lasting gifts and grace of God.*

### **Gen 35:27-29 Jacob and Isaac see God's Purpose and Providence Even in Loss**

Vs 27 What a homecoming! Imagine the memories of this place. This is the area where God appeared to Abraham and ate with him, where the family had settled, and where Jacob was likely raised.

Vs 28-29 Isaac thought he was close to death in Ch 27; 40 years ago! But God kept him around, why?

Isaac saw both of his sons grow to be leaders of mighty families, he saw the promise of Abraham grow through his 12 grandsons, and he saw his two boys finally reconciled. And the genealogies show that Isaac lived for more than another decade– long enough to see his family grow and grow.

God had a reason for keeping Isaac on earth.

*Live knowing that every moment of your life has a purpose to God almighty; seek that purpose.*

### **CONCLUSION**

Even a victorious Christian life lived for God will have some suffering. You can do everything "right" and God may still allow sorrow into your life. These times are not punishment and they're not "bad luck", they are important moments that God is working to the good of those that love Him. Acknowledge the sovereign wisdom of God, keep your eyes fixed on His grace and promises, and seek God's will for this time in your life.

*In sorrow and frustration, take comfort in God who has a good purpose for each of your days; seek His will on hard days.*