

Failure Is Not Final
Genesis 28:10-22
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Take a moment and think about some of the familiar stories we heard as children ---like "Cinderella" or "The Ugly Duckling." What do they have in common? They are stories of transformation.

There's a story of true transformation you will find in Genesis 28. Jacob turned out to be one of the brightest stars in the Hebrew heaven, but he didn't start out that way. He began as a failure with so much going against him.

He had family problems. His father, Isaac, loved God, but he was a very sensual man. His mother, Rebekah, was a scheming woman who helped Jacob deceive his father. And Jacob's twin brother, Esau, was a self-sufficient, self-centered lout who didn't care at all about the things of God.

Jacob also had internal problems. His name originally meant "conniver" or "liar," and that's what he was by nature. It was hard for him to do right. He was just moving through life from one failure to another. But I want you to see God's grace in Jacob's life.

Redeeming Factors

With all Jacob had against him, he did have a couple of redeeming factors. The first thing he had going for him was that God loved him. The Bible tells us clearly in Romans 9:13 that God said, "Jacob have I loved." He didn't love him because of his faults, but in spite of his faults. God didn't change him in order to love him. God loved him so he could change him.

The second thing Jacob had going for him was that he had a spiritual hunger. He wanted to know God. Early in his life, he had cheated his brother out of the birthright which was the spiritual blessing. Although Esau didn't really care about the spiritual blessing, Jacob wanted it, but went about getting it in the wrong way.

A Transforming Love

Because of these two factors, Jacob experienced a transformation in his life. You'll want to read the story in Genesis 28:10-22. Jacob had left his home because Esau was trying to kill him. He had been gone for many years. On his return trip he spent the night in the desert and had a dream about a ladder that came down from heaven with angels ascending and descending on it.

Up to this point, Jacob had been a religious man, but I don't think he was a saved man. He was like a lot of people: he knew about God, but he didn't know God personally. He was separated from God---separated by his deceitfulness and sentenced to death.

But God began to reveal Himself to Jacob. And suddenly Jacob had a new consciousness of God. Verse sixteen says Jacob awakened out of his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not." God revealed Himself to Jacob but he almost missed him!

Along with a new consciousness, Jacob also had a new communion with God. Verse seventeen says he was afraid. He said, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." It says that Jacob rose up early in the morning, took the stone that he had used for his pillow and set it up for a pillar. He poured oil on the top of it and worshiped God. Jacob then changed the name of the place as it's told in verse nineteen, "He called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first." *Luz* means "separation" which is what it used to be. But now he calls it *Bethel* which means "the house of God." It's the place where he met the Lord. Meeting God at Bethel transformed Jacob's life.

Your Own Bethel

Do you have a Bethel? Do you have a place where you moved from separation to fellowship with God? from failure to success? God loved Jacob, and He loves you. Even though you may see yourself as having so much against you, you have the same thing going for you that Jacob did, and that is that God loves you. God saw in Jacob a hunger for Himself. Do you have a hunger for God?

There's a ladder that goes from Earth to heaven. His name is Jesus, and He said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." He wants to transform you from a failure into a success.

• Love Worth Finding (*Monday, August 28, 2006*)