

24. I will let You be my God, if you do this...

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Someone says, "God, if You just let me get out of this awful situation, I will go church every Sunday."

Or "God, if You let me win this lottery, I will give 20% to the church."

Or "Lord, if You allow me to marry that beautiful woman, I will be Your servant."

Or "Oh God, don't let the cops find my pots in the trunk. I will do anything."

By the way, the last comment was the actual comment made by a person who got pulled over for a suspicion of drug trafficking. His comment was recorded in the dashboard mounted video camera while he was confined in the back of the police squad car. He didn't know he was being recorded.

Many people including ourselves have tried to make a deal with God while they were in their tight corners. Maybe you are making one right now and that is the reason why you are here - to get some brownie point from God. You might attend church until you get what you want, after that you might say, "Going to church on Sunday morning? Are you kidding me? Don't you know there are a great line up of college footballs and golf games on TV?"

If you are in the process of trying to make a deal with God or thinking about it, this message is for you.

A. ISAAC'S BLESSING FOR JACOB

Genesis 28:1-5 Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. 2 Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother. 3 "May God Almighty bless you, And make you fruitful and multiply you, That you may be an assembly of peoples; 4 And give you the blessing of Abraham, To you and your descendants with you, That you may inherit the land In which you are a stranger, Which God gave to Abraham." 5 So Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Padan Aram, to Laban the son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.

Perhaps now Isaac resigns himself to what his wife Rebekah told him was the Lord's will all along – that the older would serve the younger and that Jacob, not Esau, would receive the birthright. So he sent Jacob on with blessing and instructions.

It is essential Jacob not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan, as his brother Esau did. Jacob is the one who inherits the birthright and carries on the seed of the Messiah.

If you were to give the nationality of this family, you would have to say they were Syrians because that is what they are called in the Scriptures. Sometimes the question is asked, "Was Abraham a Jew? Was he an Israelite?" No, actually he was not. There were no Israelites until the time of Jacob whose name was changed to Israel. His twelve sons were Israelites.

Tragically, this is the last time Jacob will see his mother. Because he would spend next twenty years of his life at the home of the master of deception his uncle Laban. His mother Rebekah died during that time.

Even though Jacob was raised with the covenant of God through his father, he personally has not experienced the relationship with God. Every man and woman comes to the point where he or she has to decide whether they are going to make a choice to follow God or not.

For Esau's case, he made it very clear from the beginning. He had nothing to do with God. You may know a few people around you who don't give a rip about God. Or you might be one of those who doesn't care. Today, you are going to face a decision that would change your eternal destination from hell to heaven.

Somehow we think that when Jacob was leaving his parents' home, he was at his early twenties. How wrong our guess is!

Let's calculate Jacob's age:

Genesis 47:9 states that Jacob was 130 when he went to Egypt.

Subtract 39 years from 130. Because Joseph was seventeen when he was sold into Egypt, and was thirty when he was presented to Pharaoh. Add, then, Joseph's thirteen years as a servant to the seven years of plenty and two years of famine, and you have Joseph at about thirty-nine years of age when Jacob came to Egypt. This means Joseph was born when Jacob was ninety-one.

Gen. 30:25 indicates that when Joseph was born Jacob had already fulfilled his fourteen years of service for his wives. This indicates that Jacob was about seventy-seven years old when he began to walk "on his own."

Wow, he was a 77 years old single man. Some of you who are single, get your hope up. Your day is coming!!!

B. BROWNY POINTS FOR ESAU TOO?

Genesis 28:6-9 Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Padan Aram to take himself a wife from there, and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan," 7 and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Padan Aram. 8 Also Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan did not please his father Isaac. 9 So Esau went to Ishmael and took Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife in addition to the wives he had.

All of sudden now the blessing and the birthright seem important to Esau. They were important enough to him that he tried to impress his father by marrying a non-Canaanite woman when he saw that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother.

C. GOD AND JACOB AT BETHEL

Genesis 28:10-12 Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran. 11 So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep. 12 Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

Jacob traveled about forty miles from Beersheba to Bethel. The fear, the loneliness – the first time away from his mama and daddy, the isolation, the excitement and the anticipation. This was an absolutely important time in Jacob's spiritual life.

In this desolated wilderness, Jacob had a significant dream as he used a stone for a pillow which would make just about anyone to have a strange dreams. You've got to be extremely tired to use a stone as a pillow.

Jesus made this portion of Genesis 28 clear in John 1:51 that He is the access to heaven. He is the means by which heaven comes down to us and by which we can go to heaven. He is the "ladder."

John 1:51 And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

Jacob is a perfect picture of the lost soul – in the darkness, fleeing for his life, away from the father's house, burdened with sin, and ignorant of the fact that God is near him and wants to save him. The ladder pictures Christ as the only way from earth to heaven.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

Jesus opens heaven for us and brings heaven's blessings to our lives. And He alone can take us to heaven. Jacob thought he was in a lonely wilderness and awakened to discover he had been at the very gate of heaven!

God was meeting Jacob when he felt lonely. He was telling Jacob to have a heavenly perspective. Jacob tried to steal the blessings from his brother Esau with everything he had. He didn't know that the real blessing was waiting for him: God Himself.

A side notes before we go any further:

- **No angel worship:** It is a completely unbiblical to do angel worship. They are messengers, not God. There are only one who is worthy of our praise and worship, it ain't saint nor angel. It is Jesus. I find many New Age people in Sedona, AZ, Tucson, AZ and Santa Fe, NM get into angel worship. Stay far away from it.

D. GOD'S ASSURANCE TO JACOB

Genesis 28:13-15 And behold, the Lord stood above it and said: "I am the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. 14 Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. 15 Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you."

Essentially, God repeats to Jacob the terms of the covenant He gave to both Abraham and Isaac. Jacob had no doubt heard about the great God who appeared to his grandpa Abraham and to his father Isaac, but now this same God has a personal encounter with Jacob himself. This was a life-changing experience for Jacob.

We, too, have the same assurance from God for us as Jacob had. God won't let us go until His work is complete in us.

Philippians 1:6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

E. JACOB'S VOW AT BETHEL

Genesis 28:16-22 Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it." 17 And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!" 18 Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it. 19 And he called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously. 20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, 21 so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God. 22 And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."

Jacob was right in sensing the presence of the Lord there. However, he was wrong in thinking God was in one place and nowhere else. Our God is omnipresent that means He is everywhere.

His experience that night not only changed him, but it changed the name of the place where he slept. "Bethel" means "house of God." Bethel would eventually become a high place, notorious for idolatrous sacrifice according to Hosea 10:15.

Setting up a pillar was an act of faith for Jacob. It was his way of dedicating himself to God. It is a wonderful thing that by faith a believer can turn a "pillow" into a "pillar".

If Jacob stopped there, it would have been good. He went on with his wheeling and dealing con-artist attitude toward God. Even though God already has given him a promise, yet he is still making "deals" with God, even promising God money if He makes good on His promise.

The way Jacob prayed, it was evident God's mere word was not enough for him. He had to see God do it before he would believe. Are we the same way?

Philippians 4:19 And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Nahum 1:7 The Lord is good, A stronghold in the day of trouble; And He knows those who trust in Him.

Do we believe these things before we see them?

Jacob sets the terms of his covenant with God. He is laying down the deal for God, instead of humbly receiving what God said would be the deal.

Obviously, Jacob isn't very submitted to God. God will teach him submission in a very tough situation, through a school of Hard Knocks where the principal is his Uncle Laban.

God is gracious enough to not call off the whole deal when He saw such a carnal response from Jacob.

Is our God supposed to be impressed with deals we can offer to Him? He owns everything in the universe, our money came from Him, He is the One who sustains our lives and gives breath each moment. So what do we have to offer Him that He would be so impressed to make a deal with us? Do you see how absurd this idea of

wheeling and dealing with God?

How much better if we trust our faithful God with everything in our lives!

F. APPLICATION

1) When we have a prayer request to our God, we must come to Him with humility, thanksgiving and request, not scheming as if we can fool Him.

Philippians 4:6-7 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.