

GOD'S PRECIOUS PROMISES

"And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Genesis 28:15.

Jacob was a man of striking contrasts and startling extremes. Nothing could have been more crafty and despicable than the way in which he took unfair advantage of the fierce hunger of his brother, bargaining with him to let him eat of the pottage if Esau would give him the birth-right. After he had defrauded his brother, Jacob, with the aid of his mother, deceived his father and obtained the coveted blessing. His angry brother resolved that he would murder Jacob at the first opportunity. So, to remain at home was no longer safe for him. Quick counsel with his mother started Jacob toward the habitation of his uncle, Laban, in the northeast country.

As Jacob left home, fleeing from the wrath of a brother whom he had wronged, his heart was heavy because of his sin which made it necessary for him to leave his family and home. The first day's flight was under nervous tension. At last came sunset and after that the dark. When the fugitive was overtaken by darkness he was in an uninhabited place, which was strewn with boulders. His scheming and lying had brought him to a place of weariness and fear. With the stars shining down upon him, and the winds moaning about him, Jacob threw his weary body upon the earth as a bed and sought rest for his throbbing head upon a stone of the field and the heavens only for his canopy.

Low in spirit, and weary from his journey, Jacob soon fell asleep. During the night something unusual happened to him. When all earthly help forsook Jacob, God visited him in that lonely spot. From this incident he learned that a stone pillow with God near is far better than a downy one with God far away. As Jacob dreamed he received a vision of a golden ladder extending from the window of heaven to the ground near the spot where he was lying. To him it revealed the nearness of heaven, as well as the open pathway between the two places. God had connected heaven and earth for Jacob's personal benefit.

While listening Jacob heard God saying, "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

When Jacob awoke the next morning, he said, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not." Then he added, "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Jacob took the stone upon which his head had rested and set it up as a monument, and poured oil upon it. Then he worshipped God and dedicated his life to Him. He also made a solemn vow to walk with God and to serve Him as long as he lived. Jacob called the name of the place Bethel, which means "House of God."

God's promises, "I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of," must have been exceedingly precious to Jacob. They were precious because of their origin -- they came from God. They were precious because of their

objective also -- they were meant to be helpful to Jacob and to all of God's children who might read or hear them. Let us note what God has promised in this verse!

I. His Presence.

To Jacob God said, "Behold, I am with thee, ... I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Jacob was the inheritor of a great blessing from his fathers, for this sentence was spoken in connection with the following words, "I am the Lord God of Abraham, thy father, and the God of Isaac." It is an inexpressible privilege to be able to look back to father and grand-father, and perhaps farther still, and to say, "We come of a house which has served the Lord as far back as history can inform us." Descended from Christian parents, we have a greater honor than in being descended from princes. There is no heraldry like that of the children of God. Do not be satisfied unless you yourself obtain such mercy as God gave to your ancestors and hear the Lord saying, "I am with thee." This mercy was brought home to Jacob at a time when he greatly needed it. He had just left his father's house and felt so lonely and alone. He was coming into special trial and then it was that he received a fuller understanding of the privilege which God had in store for him.

God promised Jacob that He would be with him then and there and continuously thereafter; in every act, in every movement and in every step of the way before him. Jacob was well supported when he had the Lord present with him. At the time when he was about to leave Laban, Jacob said, "The God of my father hath been with me." Seemingly he was saying of his God, "The God of my father is the One Who gave me my wife and my children; it was He Who prospered me when others tried to rob me; the God of my father hath been with me notwithstanding all my shortcomings." I trust that you can bear the same witness. Even though you have not been all that you could wish in your Christian life, yet you can say, "The God of my father has been with me." When God is with any person, there is no need of fear or failure.

In Genesis 35:3 is recorded Jacob's statement, "And let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress and was with me in the way which I went." Thus Jacob tells us that God was with him. Jacob was full of fear when he heard that Esau was coming to meet him. You can see that by the way in which he divided his flocks and his herds and set apart so large a present for Esau. But God does not leave his people because of their fears. We should be thankful for that. Jacob knew that he had mistreated Esau and robbed him of the blessing; but, for all that, he came with a penitent heart to submit himself before his brother and to do what he could to please him. Because of this, God was with him. At the close of his life, we find Jacob more fully than ever confessing that the presence of God had been with him. God was with Jacob. He had been with him from the first, though not always recognized, and He was with him to the end.

Meditate on those words, "I am with thee." They are too full for complete explanation. I defy anybody to measure their height, depth, length and breadth. That God should give to Jacob bread to eat and raiment to put on was much, but it was nothing to compare with his statement, "I am with thee." That God should send His angel with Jacob to protect him would have been much, but that was nothing compared with His statement, "I am with thee." This includes countless blessings, in fact, much more than we can conceive.

When God is with a man, he is guaranteed an infinite love. God does not forsake His people. He will go before His own. He will stand by His own. He will be behind His own. It is wonderful to have the consciousness of His presence. He will be true to every promise He has made to His servants. The living God is close to us. His hand touches our lives at every point. His statement, "I am with thee," means practical help. That is, whatever we undertake, God is with us in the undertaking; whatever we endure, God is with us in enduring. We can trust Him. We can depend upon His promises. We can stand on the promises of God. He will keep His promises to us.

"If God be for us, who can be against us?" We not only have His presence, but His sympathy also. He means, I am feeling with thee and suffering with thee. If there be a load, I will bear it with thee; if there be work to do, I will work with thee. "I am with thee." Oh, the richness of this special blessing!

How precious this promise must have seemed to Jacob in that particular place, where he lay with the hedges for his curtains, the heavens for his canopy, the earth for his bed, stones for his pillow and God for his companion!

II. His Power.

"And will keep thee." Thus we have not only present blessings, but we also have the promise of His power and future blessings. There are two very observable facts which may be gathered from the study of the Bible and of our own hearts. One fact is that we are prone to distrust the promises of God, although we know Him to be unchangeable. The second fact is that God repeats His promises in order to inspire our confidence. God speaks to His people of sin blotted out, of the thorough reconciliation which Christ has effected between Himself and the sinner, of His presence as accompanying the pilgrim through the wilderness, and of His grace as sufficient for every trial which may or can be encountered. The things of which God speaks to His people spread themselves through the whole of the unmeasured hereafter, and it must follow that the pledge of our not being left until the things spoken of are done is tantamount to an assurance that we shall never be left nor forsaken.

God is bound to perform whatever He has promised. The power of the Lord will save from sin, direct from every danger, protect in every peril, guide to His glory, seek for success, and lead to the top of the ladder in every attainment for His cause. His power is with us. He promises all the power that we will need to accomplish His purposes in life. His gracious power is sufficient to meet every demand and to satisfy every need that we will have on every occasion as we seek to serve in His kingdom. We can certainly depend on the power of the Lord.

III. His Protection.

"In all the places whither thou goest." We are going; no doubt about that; and going fast! But whither? Here uphill; there downhill; yonder on level lowland. Now in midnight gloom, and then in glory. Often among friends; occasionally among foes. Sometimes on solid rock; sometimes in slippery places.

Who then is with us? The God of our fathers is our God. He is ever with us as He was with them--our companion in fellowship, our comrade in

facing realities and our comforter in the valley of the shadow. In particular, He keeps us so that we are safe from all harm and secure in every storm. We are "kept by the power of God."

God had a plan for the life of Jacob. He promised to lead Jacob in the way of right and righteousness. His hand guided Jacob every step of the way. His presence and power assured him that every need would be supplied.

God has a plan for every life, and His purposes embrace every part of that plan. He desires to work out this plan in every life as He worked it out in the life of Jacob. He will do even more for the life in this day than He did for Jacob, because His revelation to man is fuller now, and His grace is abundant and sufficient through Christ and the Holy Spirit. "God is love," and love means care. This care is promised to all who will trust and obey Him.

It is wonderful to have the presence of the Lord, and even more wonderful to be assured of His protection. God is gracious to go before His own to prepare the way; to be at their side to keep away any harm and danger; to be behind His own to prevent any harm from overtaking them; to be above His own to keep calamity from falling on them; to be beneath His own to uphold in all hours of need. How all need the protection of the Lord from disease, dangers, destruction and death! He will protect His own.

Walking in the presence of God, using the power of God, trusting God for His protection and providential care, and being assured that He will work out His plan in our lives, we can well afford to trust the Lord and depend on every promise He has made.