

April 14<sup>th</sup>

## GOD'S PRESENCE AND PROMISE

*"God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. And God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; no longer shall your name be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name." So he called his name Israel. And God said to him, "I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body." GENESIS 35:9-11*

**G**od whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world." These words from C.S. Lewis hold great weight during times of pain. And Jacob has suffered his share of pain, even though much of it has been self-inflicted! God also uses silence to speak. And Genesis 34 and 35 teach much about God's role in our lives.

I'd like you to do an exercise. Read through Genesis 34. Count how many times "God" is used. Now move to chapter 35 and count how many times "God" is used, including Israel, El Shaddai, and Bethel. What numbers did you come up with? That's right...there is zero mention of God in chapter 34 and there are ten direct mentions of God, and eleven mentions of God using Bethel and Israel. God's name of El Shaddai is given in verse 11. Why is God's name left out of Genesis 34? Because God isn't blessing Jacob's half-hearted obedience or the murders of the men of Shechem. God still remains present, but Moses makes a point here that God is displeased with Jacob and his sons. But God. God brings redemption and healing immediately in Genesis 35:1, "God said to Jacob, 'Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there. Make an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau.'"

Remember what Jacob was so worried about at the end of Genesis 34? He was worried that the violence from Simeon and Levi would wreak havoc on his family. Revenge was common in these lands. Why would anything different happen with Jacob? But God. God provides His faithful presence and protection: "And as they journeyed, a terror from God fell upon the cities that were around them, so that they did not pursue the sons of Jacob." The God of Jacob provides protection! And that's not all that God gives Jacob. God reminds him of the name that He gave to him during the wrestling match and gives the same words that He gave to his grandfather Abraham. God doesn't just give a grand promise; He matches the promise with showing His character as the Almighty God.

Men, what can we learn from chapter 34 and 35? God gives us free will and we often drift from His plan. But God. God is never far off but always near. The God who is absent from chapter 34 has been there all along. He comes swiftly with His grace and mercy to Jacob in Genesis 35. This gives you hope. Even as we struggle with growing in our relationship with God because of our sin, God remains faithful. He is God Almighty and He will accomplish His work. He gives us chances time and time again to repent and find healing in His name. Remember what God says about you in Ephesians 2:10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." How will you respond to God's promise today over your life?

***Spend some time praising God for His grace on every day of your life. Ask Him to help you see more of His daily grace today.***

**For Further Reading: Genesis 35:1-15**