Redeeming Regret — Delivery Transcript

Genesis 32:1–21 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, August 4, 2024 · *The Patriarchs*

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If you have a Bible, we're going to be in Genesis chapter 32. I know all of y'all looking at me like he's going to preach a long sermon. We're already late. Don't worry. I'm going to try to tighten it up and get you out of here. In good enough time, but it is a fascinating passage today that's extremely practical and addresses a topic every single one of us, if we haven't already experienced, we will one day experience, which is regret. Do you have anything that you regret in life? I know I certainly do.

There are things I have done that I'm ashamed of. And that's why I'm glad none of y'all grew up in Roby, because y'all don't have to know about it. But y'all do watching on TV. Yeah. There's things I've done I don't I'm not proud of. There's words that I've spoken that I wish I could unspeak. There are purchases that I've made that I wish I wouldn't have made. Relationships that I formed that looking back, I wish I never would have formed. And the thing that's a common thread about all of those things is none of them are takebacks.

Once they're done, they're done. You can't undo it. I had a high school counselor one time tell me after I called this kid a bit a name. She made me nail a nail in a piece of wood said okay, take your the nail out of the wood. And she goes, you can say you're sorry, but it still leaves a mark. So I stuck with me. You can try to move on, but certain regrets have a way of leaving a scar on your soul. And I wish I could get up here today and tell you that there's this thing you can do to make your regrets disappear and go away, but the reality is there is no such thing.

Your past regrets cannot be erased. But what we're going to see in Genesis 32 through the life of Jacob is that your past regrets can be redeemed. And that there's a way for you to cooperate with the Lord. So that as you go and confront those regrets of your past and slay those demons that have been long unfaced, that you can go with the Lord, you can receive the help of the Lord, and in fact see the Lord redeem those regrets so that they find meaning and purpose according to God's redemptive plan.

Now if you're new to Bible study or if you're new to the book of Genesis or this basic story the book of Genesis is a book of beginnings, and what's been so fascinating to me as I've been teaching through this book, someone says it's not just showing us what happened, it's showing us what always happens. And what you see in the book of Genesis are some lives of individuals who have the same struggles that you and I have, and that when they implement certain principles, the Lord begins to come through for them in the way that he will come through for you and for me today as well.

In the case of Jacob in particular, he has a brother named Esau who if you haven't been with us for a while wanted to kill him because Jacob took from Esau the two things that meant the most to him. Number one, money. And number two, the approval of his father, or his father's blessing. He took his inheritance by stealing his birthright or tricking him for a bowl of stew. And then he tricked his father by pretending to be Esau so that he could receive Esau's blessing, a spiritual blessing, in which Isaac, Jacob's dad, made him a master over Esau and said.

That Esau would instead be a servant. So you can imagine Esau is very upset, vowed to kill Jacob. And so Jacob's mom and dad said to Jacob, You've got to get out of here until your brother's anger subsides. And they sent him on a trip up north about 550 miles, about a 30-day journey, to a place called Haran, where an uncle Laban lived. And Laban had two daughters. One was really super beautiful named Rachel And Jacob fell in love with her at first sight, and there was another daughter that wasn't so beautiful named Leah.

I nicknamed her lazy Eyed Leah, because I have a lazy eye, I can say that. But she was not so beautiful. Jacob worked seven years for Rachel, but instead got Leah. Laban tricked him, so the trickster got tricked. And so Jacob worked an additional seven years to get Rachel, and then an additional six years shepherding Laban's sheep, and he leaves Laban. Under bad circumstances. Laban is angry about it, but when we last left Jacob and Laban and that whole ordeal, they had established a treaty where Jacob said, I'm going home, you're going back.

You don't mess with me, I don't mess with you. And Jacob is finally coming home to confront the demon of his past, the demon of wronging his brother. And it's like a lot of our lives after you come off of a big spiritual mountaintop experience it's often the very next season in which you're going to face a very difficult spiritual challenge. And Jacob's spiritual challenge is confronting the sins of his past and being delivered from an unhealthy fear of man. And I don't know what your regret is this morning, but I know for many of us our regrets often center around an unhealthy fear of man, and we're going to see how God delivers.

Jacob from that in Genesis 32. So let's pick it up in Genesis 32, starting in verse 1. Again, he's on the heels of a treaty with his uncle Laban. And it says that Jacob went on his way and

God's angels met him. You know, I circle this phrase, angels. And it says when he saw the angels, Jacob said, this is God's camp. And so he called that place Mahanayim, which means two camps. Now, the reason he's calling it this special place, Mahanaim, is because the word angels here is not the normal word for angels.

It's a special word for angels that only shows up one other time in the Old Testament, one other time in the Bible, period. And it's in Genesis chapter 28. If you'll go to the next verse on the screen, Genesis twenty-eight twelve, you see the same word, God's angels going up and down on the stairway to heaven. And that's not just a famous Led Zeppelin song. It was a key moment in the life of Jacob where he encountered the Lord and the Lord said to Jacob, Don't worry, son, I'm going to be with you, I'm going to bless you, I'm going to prosper you, I'm going to get you where you're going, and I'm going to bring you safely back home.

It was at this experience where Jacob anointed a rock, put oil on it, and said, this is Bethel. This is God's house. And God, if you do what you're saying you're going to do, which is get me where I'm going and get me back home, then indeed you will be my God. But the vibe I got from Genesis 28 when Jacob said all that is that God was kind of localized to this place. It was a specific encounter, specific geographical region, and God kind of lives there. And now what Jacob is discovering.

Is that God is not a God that is localized and geographically restricted. He is a God who is with me wherever I go. He is Mahanaim. He's in my camp. Which is one of the most important things for us to remember in confronting the demons of our past. Never confront those regrets without God's help. Without an acute awareness that God is with me in my camp, that if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have God on your side as you confront those past regrets. You do so with his help, relying on his power and in accordance with his designs.

Otherwise you'll find yourself making the same sort of regrets that you came to fix in the first place. So Jacob isn't doing that. He recognizes God is in his camp. And having met with God's messengers, he sends messengers of his own to his brother Esau, who remember wanted to kill him last time they met. So it says Jacob sent messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the territory of Edom. And he commanded the messengers with this message. He said, You are to say to my lord Esau, this is what your servant Jacob says.

I've been staying with Laban And I've been delayed until now, and I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, and male and female slaves. I've sent this message to inform my Lord in order to seek your favor. Now I know the word slaves here it's conjures up in our American mindset chattel slavery which is a stain on American history. This type of slavery is similar to the kind of the indentured servitude, not quite like having the job today, a little a little more

grievous than that, but it these were people who worked for Jacob for a not for a wage but for shelter and those kinds of things like you'd have back in the day.

He sends these servants with a message to his brother that is really interesting if you know the background. If you know the background, you'll know that when Isaac blessed Jacob, he said to Jacob you will rule over your masters. In fact I think it's in the next phrase if next verse he says in verse chapter twenty seven when Isaac when Jacob stole Esau's blessing, Isaac said to Jacob, You're going to be master over your relatives. Esau and your mother's sons are going to bow and worship to you. He says to Esau, you will serve your brother.

And that's why Esau got so angry. I'm not going to serve this trickster, this deceiver. But now when Jacob comes home, notice the shift in language. He says to Esau, no, you're the master. I'm the servant. Why is he saying that? Is it just is it insincere? No. I don't believe it's insincere. The other reason I don't think it's insincere is he talks about I've got these goats and these cows and all of these animals. What's he doing? He's not just bragging about his wealth. What he's doing is he is acknowledging to Esau, I recognize the wrong that I've done.

And I know if I was in your shoes, I would assume that the reason I've come home is to claim my rights. To get my inheritance, to exercise authority. And I just want you to know, Esau, that's not why I'm here. You're the master. I'm the servant I'm not here for money because the Lord has blessed me incredibly with vast amounts of wealth. I'm not here to take from you. I'm not here to lord authority over you. I'm here to confront the wrongs that I've done, which is a really important principle if you're going to go back into your past and try to redeem the regrets that you have.

Very likely some of your regrets had a tremendously negative impact on people that you know or love. And it would be foolish for you to go back in there stomping around, pretending like nothing has happened or to just show up unannounced and allow people to assume the worst about your motives. Wiser is what Jacob is doing to recognize this is probably what they're thinking. This is probably how they're feeling. This is probably how my actions are going to be interpreted without some kind of a context. And so I'm going to approach with humility.

And I'm going to approach with honesty. And those are the two things that Jacob does. And it's what I think is a great way to be properly prepared to confront your demons in your past. To approach with God's help, certainly, but also to approach with a spirit of humility and honesty. He's extremely honest. He says, I'm not here for money, I'm not here for authority, I'm here for your favor. I've come to inquire of you so that I might receive your favor. Would you accept me again? So what's Esau going to say?

It's should be interesting. The tent the text is kind of silent about the message between the messengers and Esau. All we get in verse 6 is that they return to Jacob and they say, we went

to your brother Esau, and he is coming to meet you. Which. Would have been great had it not been for the words that follow, which says that he has four hundred men with him. Your brothers come in to meet you. Great. With four hundred guys. Oh no. Four hundred guys is a lot of guys. If you remember from Genesis, earlier in Genesis, Abraham conquered five not one king, not two kings, not three kings, not four kings, but five kings from the east.

With 318 men. So this is 22 some odd more men than that. Jacob is probably thinking Esau is not only going to kill me, he's going to kill everything I have. He's going to wipe me off the face of the earth. This is not the news that he wanted to hear. And so they continue, he's got 400 men. Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed. He divided the people with him into two camps, along with the flocks. Herds and camels, and he thought if Esau comes to one camp and attacks it, the remaining one can't escape.

Now I've heard some people preach this sermon or preach this text and say Jacob is He's not believing the Lord here, he's not trusting the Lord here, and to a degree that's true. Right? He started this process. God is in this camp. God is with me. He's a little more fearful now because he got news he didn't want to hear. Just like you or I, if we thought, you know, God is with me, we're going to be unstoppable, and then you get some bad news and you think to yourself, oh no.

But he's not being totally unwise in his approach. He splits his people into two camps, not to use them as a human shield. Or they get in front and I get him back. This is basically him saying, if the worst case scenario happens and Esau comes and tries to destroy me, at least 50% of my progeny can live on and continue my legacy. Whereas instead of us being utterly wiped out off the face of the earth, this is wise and I think it's another principle for how to confront your past.

When you confront your pastor, you're probably going to be like Jacob in that you are a different person. The you of today is way different than the you of yesterday. And as a new person, you're probably going to have a new life and new people who you love and are called to protect. And it's wise for you if you're going to go stomping around in your past regrets. To proactively protect the people that you love and who are that you are responsible for so that the blowback that comes back doesn't blow back on them.

As well. And that's what you see Jacob doing. And I think it's a wise thing and it's a way to be properly prepared. So how do you prepare for slaying your demons? You remember you need God's help. You go at it with the spirit of humility and honesty. And then you prepare. You proactively prepare the people that you love. The last thing that he does after he's done everything he can do is he prays. Which I don't know that's the right order. Usually prayer should be our first resource, not our last resort, but for Jacob.

It's what he does last. So he says in this prayer, which I think is a beautiful model prayer in verse 9, God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the Lord who said to me, go back to your land and to your family, and I will cause you to prosper I'm unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness that you've shown your servant. Indeed, I crossed over the Jordan with my staff, and now I've become two camps. Please rescue me from my brother Esau, for I am afraid of him.

Otherwise he may come and attack me, the mothers, and their children. You have said, I will cause you to prosper, and I will make your offspring like the sand of the sea, too numerous to be counted. Beautiful example of how to pray when you're going to confront your past regrets. It's a beautiful example of how to pray, period. A lot of times when I pray I'll use a template or some kind of a grid to help me organize my prayer. And as I was looking at this prayer, I saw that template.

I don't know if it's really there, but I saw it. It's something I've taught on before. I think it would be helpful for you if you want to use it's a ACTS A C T S and if you look at Jacob's prayer he does all of these things plus one first he starts with a s a prayer of adoration he says God you are the God not only of Isaac and Abraham but you're the God that spoke to me you're the God who said, I'm going to be with you. You're the God that has prospered me.

So he praises the Lord. Then he confesses I'm unworthy of the kindness that you've shown to me. Then he gives thanks to the Lord. He says, I crossed over this river with nothing but my a staff in my hand, and now I'm two camps. There's nothing like looking at past faithfulness. Of God in your life to inspire future confidence for how to pray and how to believe God for what's next. So he gives thanks and then he number next letter S a word nobody uses anymore supplication just means he asked the Lord for something.

I need your help, God. And notice he's so honest in how he asks the Lord. He says, I'm afraid. You should never be dishonest to the Lord when you're praying to him. He knows your struggles. He knows what you're feeling. I'm afraid. He asks the Lord for help. I need you to deliver me for my brother who wants to kill me. And then he prays not only for himself, but he prays for his people. He says, I'm afraid for the mothers and their children. Please protect my wife. Please protect my kids.

The Bible, when it talks about prayer, says sometimes you don't have because you don't ask. But sometimes you don't have because you ask with the wrong motives. And so what you see Jacob doing here in a model prayer is Beginning his prayer by acknowledging who God is. And I would encourage you when you pray, always begin your prayers, our Father who is in heaven Hallowed be your name. What is something true about God that would remind me He is glorious? He is great. He is awesome. Is it because he is a God of promise, a God who speaks, a God who knows, a God who's who loves, find some reason to give praise to God.

Then secondly, confess your sin before the Lord. Father, forgive me of my trespasses, even as I forgive those who've trespassed against me. There's nothing like being acutely aware of your own sinfulness. To enlarge your vision of who God is and to create a spirit of humility that pleases the Lord when you pray. And then look back on your life and count your blessings. Where has God's faithfulness manifested in your past. How might that past faithfulness inform your future request? Adoration, confession, thanksgiving, then supplication. Then ask the Lord. And be honest, be sincere, but don't be selfish.

Pray not only for yourself, but for those that God has entrusted over you. And then the last thing he does, this isn't on the acrostic. It's letter E. It's expectation. Adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, expectation. You notice what he did. He quotes God's word back to the Lord. He says, you have said, verse 12, you have said, I will cause you to prosper, and I will make your offspring like the sand of the sea, too numerous to be counted. Lord, I'm banking on the fact that your promises are true and that He's not going to kill me or my wives or my children because it would be hard to be as numerous as the stars without any kids.

It would be hard to be as numerous as the stars with not being alive. And so what a beautiful example, a reminder, when you pray to the Lord, one of the best things for you to do as you pray is to claim the promises of God. Now I'm not talking about some Health, wealth, prosperity, gospel, name it, claim it, I can't ever get Joel Osteen out of my mind. Some Joel Osteen, I'm not saying everything Joel says is bad, but Nine ninety-eight percent, let's say that. Did an interview and he says, I driving by that house, big nice two-story house.

I said, I declare, that's my house. I declare. That is not what I'm talking about. I declare. True promises that are ours in Christ. Blessed are those who mourn. They'll be comforted. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst. They'll be satisfied. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Theirs is the kingdom. Lo, I'm coming soon. Lo, I'm with you always. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything through prayer and supplication. I mean we could the list could go on and on and on. And my point is when you pray, quote God's word back to himself because he's a God who keeps his promises, and if he has spoken it you can take it to the bank and live as if it's true, and it will inspire future obedience when you pray in that way.

So adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication. Expectation, I think it's so fascinating. We don't have time to get into it, but so much of that mirrors what he does with his brother. I think in your notes I put them under five R's He remembers God. He recognizes his sin that he committed against his brother. He rejoices in God's provision. He makes a request for favor and then he prepares as though the worst may happen. So he's properly prepared, he's properly prayed up, and then finally he's going to pay the price. He's going to he's going to go through the process and notice what he does in verse 13.

He spent the night there and he took part of what he had and he brought with him as a gift for his brother Esau. It's not all that he had, but it's a part of what he had. He takes 200 female goats, 20 male goats, 200 ewes, those are female sheep, 20 rams, 30 milk camels with their young. Forty cows, ten bulls, twenty male donkeys, ten fem twenty female donkeys, ten male donkeys, and he entrusted them to his servants as separate herds, and said to them, go on ahead of me and leave some distance between the herds.

And he told the first one, when my brother Esau meets you and asks, who do you belong to? Where are you going? Whose animals are these ahead of you? I want you to tell them they belong to your servant, Jacob. They are a gift sent to my Lord Esau, and look, he is behind us. He also told the second one, the third, and every one who was walking behind the animal, say the same thing to Esau when you find him. You are to say, look, your servant Jacob is right behind us Underline this phrase here in verse 20.

Jacob thought, I want to appease Esau. I want to satisfy his wrath with the gift that is going ahead of me. And after that I can face him, and perhaps he will forgive me. So the gift was sent on ahead of him while he remained in the camp that night. When you make a mistake in your past when you have a regret that you deeply, deeply regret. There are going to be people who are harmed by that decision. And choices have consequences, you know. And consequences can often create grudges. And grudges require some form of payment.

Tim Keller talks about forgiveness like paying a debt. I've always loved that analogy. You can either pay the debt yourself, that's called forgiveness, where somebody takes from you and you forgive them, which means you pay what they owe you yourself. You're double paying it. There's vengeance, which is you exacting that debt from them, sometimes against their will. Makes for a great action movie, but not always good for Christians. Vengeance is the Lord's But then there's atonement, and atonement is where you pay the debt. And this is Jacob's way of making atonement.

He's paying what he owes. Now how does he do it? Well he does it pretty wisely. He splits up his gift that he was going to give Esau and he sends it in stages. And I think that's instructive because when you're asking for forgiveness, you need to know. Some may some may want to forgive you, but they can only release what they're able to release, and you can only pay what you're able to pay. And sometimes forgiveness is a process because you're always finding more and more of the debt that has yet to be paid.

And so you have to keep saying you're sorry, you have to keep earning the trust, you have to keep eating the crow, demonstrating humility because you're making atonement. You're paying for what you owe. Sometimes when you forgive someone, you can release them from their debt to you, and then four or five days later, four or five months later, you realize, oh, I'm still harboring something. And sometimes it takes stages. And that's what Jacob's doing.

He's sending these stages. And each time he's saying to his brother, I want you more than I want my stuff.

I don't care about money anymore. I don't care about status. I don't care about what people think. I just want to make it right. He sends everything that he has to give. At the end of the day it's only him, his two wives, and his children that are left behind. And then he's going to cross over and basically meet Esau where there's nothing left but himself. He gives everything he has to give. And if he's honest at that moment, I think he probably realizes what a lot of us realize, that there are certain debts that cannot be paid.

No matter how hard you try, no matter what you do, some things, you just can't make atonement. Because either the people are not there to receive it, you don't have the resources to pay it. Or the thing that you've done is so grievous, even if you had a thousand lifetimes to pay it back, you would never be able to do so. Which is really what I think Genesis is creating attention around that reality to point to the fact. That even though Jacob rightly recognized that choices have consequences and debts must be paid, there is a sense in which our greatest debts cannot be paid.

We cannot pay our greatest debts. There are there is a sense in which we maybe can make it right with the person, but at the end of the day, the most offended party has always been the Lord. And you cannot pay an infinite debt as a finite person. There has to be something or someone else to pay that debt for you. And that's where Genesis is pointing us to Jesus. Jacob is pointing us to Jesus because Jesus pays the debt we cannot pay. I think the way I put it in your notes is there's some debts we cannot pay, which is why Jesus paid it all.

Jesus paid it all, so all to him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain, but he washed it white as snow. So if you're here this morning and you would say, you know, I've got some regrets, and you know, that's really helpful. Humility, honesty, God's help. I would be lying to you if I said, if you're properly prepared and you pray really hard that it's going to solve the problem because it won't. It may not. It might help, it might get you a long way, but there's only one person who can pay your debt.

There's only one person in it who can truly forgive you. They can release you from what you owe them, but who will release you from what you owe the Lord? The truth is he's a holy God, and we're sinful people who stand condemned in light of his holiness and our sinfulness, and someone must make atonement for our sins. And that atoning sacrifice was made by Jesus Christ on the cross. And just as these students publicly profess Jesus as Lord, what they were essentially saying is, I'm done paying for my own sins, I'm done resting in my own righteousness.

I confess Jesus has paid it all for me and I'm going to live my life to him. And if you've never made that decision this morning, I want to invite you during this time of response to publicly

confess Jesus as Lord. You may have some questions or some hiccups and you want to talk to somebody about that decision. There's a QR code you can scan and you can fill out that connect card and you can talk to us later on this week. Or after the service. But I really believe in a room this size, on a day like today, there's some individuals here who've never really surrendered to Jesus for salvation.

And you came in today with some regrets that were heavy on your heart, and you were asking the question, can I ever make it right? Can I ever be forgiven? Will God ever love me again? Will I ever be accepted? And the answer is yes. He loves you so much. You have no idea. Your sins, your warts, the things that you're ashamed of, his love is so much greater than that sin in your life. And he is calling you today to come and receive his love, to receive his forgiveness, but he can't just give it to you because you're not worthy.

That's why he sent Jesus to do for you what you couldn't do. He took the only one who was worthy, the Lord Jesus Christ, to pay the debt you couldn't pay. And if you'll repent of your sins and put your faith in him, you can find salvation today. So would you bow your heads with me? And if that's something you feel like the Lord wants you to do, would you just pray a prayer, something like this? Heavenly Father, I know that I'm a sinner. I admit that my sins have separated me from you, my Creator, my Heavenly Father.

And no matter how hard I try, no matter what I do, I can't do enough. It's never enough. But I believe that you sent Jesus into the world. To live the life I couldn't live and to die the death I should have died. And I repent of my sins and I put my faith in Jesus for salvation. I want to make Jesus the Lord of my life. I confess that just as Jesus was buried in the tomb, he buried my sin and my old life with him. And that when you raised him from the dead three days later, just as you gave life to that body, you can give me new life in Jesus' name.

And so would you come into my heart? I receive you in Jesus' name. Amen.