Sermon Highlights

The Journey of Faith: Walking With God Through Life's Trials

Sermon Summary:

Drawing from Genesis 35:16-29, this sermon uses the life of Jacob as a picture of the believer's spiritual journey. Pastor Bruce Gordon emphasizes that salvation is not the destination but the starting point of a lifelong pilgrimage in which God disciplines, shapes, and draws the believer closer to himself. The choices made along that journey carry eternal weight, affecting not only present well-being but future rewards and responsibilities in eternity. Through the deaths of Rachel and Isaac, the sin of Reuben, and the eventual reconciliation of Jacob and Esau, the sermon calls believers to stop stumbling through life and instead engage intentionally with what God is teaching them at every turn.

Key Points:

- Salvation marks the beginning of a journey, not the end, and that journey has consequences that extend into eternity

- God desires to continually reveal himself to believers throughout their lives, and those who resist this process will barely recognize him in eternity

- The most spiritually dangerous moment for a believer is often immediately after a mountaintop experience with God, when self-sufficiency replaces dependence

- Staying where God has placed you and waiting on his direction is far safer than moving forward on your own initiative

- The correct response to trials is not to ask "why me" but to ask God what he is seeking to teach through the experience

- Sin carries certain and unavoidable consequences, including death, and the Word of God does not soften or sidestep this reality

- Preferential treatment within a family, as seen in Jacob's favoritism toward Joseph and Benjamin, produces lasting harm

- No matter how broken or difficult a person's circumstances, there is always hope for change and restoration as long as there is breath

- The goal of the Christian life is to finish one's days "full" -- having completed the task God assigned, faithful to the calling of Christ

Scripture Reference:

- Genesis 35:16-29, which recounts the death of Rachel in childbirth, the birth of Benjamin, the sin of Reuben, the listing of the twelve sons of Jacob, and the death of Isaac at 180 years of age

Stories:

- The birth of Benjamin and the death of Rachel, in which Rachel names her son Benoni meaning "son of my sorrow" but Jacob renames him Benjamin meaning "son of my right hand," illustrating both Jacob's love for Rachel and his ongoing pattern of favoritism

- The sin of Reuben, who lay with Bilhah his father's concubine in an apparent attempt to assert dominance and position within the family, a consequence of Jacob's absence of strong spiritual leadership

- The death of Isaac at 180 years old, described as one who was "old and full of days," held up as a model of completing one's God-given task

- The reconciliation of Jacob and Esau, who despite a history of betrayal and murderous hatred came together to bury their father, offered as evidence that God can restore even the most broken of relationships

- A reference to the parable-like pattern of Genesis 5, in which the repeated phrase "he lived and he died" underscores the universal consequence of sin upon the human race