

Found by God

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- [0 : 0 0] Good morning, everybody. The song we have just sang, Amazing Grace, celebrates God's grace in our lives.
- And it was written by John Newton. His experience before coming to the saving grace was terrible. The research I did told me that he was stubborn, disobedient.
- He was always in trouble and his life was in misery. Characterized by despair, dangers at the sea, abuse, public floggings, destitution, depression, and near-death experiences.
- In that situation, God found him and saved him. Similarly, in the text that has been read, Genesis chapter 28 verse 10 to 22.
- In that passage, we see Jacob fleeing from home under difficult circumstances. He was having a guilty conscience. Firstly, he tricked his brother Esau into selling the birthright in Genesis chapter 25 verses 27 to 34.
- [1 : 2 0] Secondly, through his mother's help, he took advantage of his father's age to deceive him and store again Esau's blessings.
- Genesis chapter 27 verses 1 to 40. Jacob means supplanter, the one who takes the place of another by force or by plotting.
- It also means that he is a deceiver. We see this in Genesis chapter 27 verses 35. Now, Esau is very angry and he wants to kill him.
- Jacob had no choice except to flee to Haran. On his way, it got dark and then he slept. It was in that sleeping that he encountered God.
- God who is a promise-keeping God. God who accepted him and rescued him and changed his destiny. What was his dream all about?
- [2 : 2 4] In verse 11 and 12, we learn that he saw heaven and earth linked by a ladder.
- And the angels of the Lord were ascending and descending. Jacob was in a lost condition and God came to rescue him.
- Materially, he lost his land, yet the gracious God promised him land. In verse 18, we read that, I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are laying.
- Socially, he was separated from his family, fleeing for his life. His family relationships were strained, yet the gracious God is promising him many descendants.
- Verse 14, your descendants will be like dust of the earth. He had fear for the future and anxiety as well. Yet the gracious God is promising him a future and protection.
- [3 : 2 8] In verse 15, we read that God is saying, I am with you. I will watch over you. I will not leave you. Guess what? His father, Isaac, was the first person in the Bible to hear this assurance, I am with you.
- And it was later repeated to Jacob in the passage we read. And to Moses in Exodus chapter 3. And to Joshua in Joshua chapter 1.
- And to Gideon again in Judges chapter 6. And we also hear Jesus repeating it to all his disciples in Matthew chapter 28, verse 20.

Some time back, I read an article which reads as follows. While a man was tuning his car, his four-year-old son picked up a stone and scratched lines on the side of the car.

In danger, the man took the child's hand and hit it many times. Not realizing that he was using a wrench or spanner. Unfortunately, at the hospital, the child lost all his fingers due to multiple fractures.

[4 : 43] Normally, that's how we respond to those who offend us. But it is surprising that God, instead of punishing Jacob, he embraced him.

He even promised him land, descendants, future, protection, blessings. And even assured him that I will fulfill the promise.

Verse 15. This shows that our gracious God is faithful to keep his promises. And he is faithful to keep his promises even to sinners.

Now, let us see how he responds after encountering this gracious, faithful, promise-keeping God. Verses 16 to 22.

His eyes were opened. Jacob acknowledged that his dream was God's very word to him. In verses 17 to 19, we see Jacob pouring his contrite heart to God.

[5 : 49] When he realized that he was in the presence of the great and mighty God. For Jacob, it wasn't enough that God was God of Abraham and Isaac.

He was also his God. As a result, he entered into a personal relationship with him. And in verse 22, we see that he started to address God as my God.

He also realized that making God his God required a change in life and commitment. Not just in his person, but also in his possessions to God.

Now, what does this story teach us today as Christians? It teaches us three things. The first thing is we are saved by grace.

Verses 12 to 14. In Genesis chapter 28, verse 12, we see the heaven and the earth being connected by a ladder. And when we come to the New Testament, especially the passage we have read, we see Jesus alluding to Jacob's ladder in his dialogue to Nathaniel, particularly in verse 51, which reads, Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.

[7 : 14] Here we notice that there is a big shift from the ladder connecting heaven and earth to Jesus connecting heaven and earth.

My friends, Jesus is the only access to heaven. And he is the means by which heaven comes down to us and the means by which we go to heaven.

He did not just come to show us the way, but he is the way in himself. John chapter 14, verse 6. It is very interesting to note that when it comes to grace, it is Jesus coming to us, not us going to him.

It's nothing about us. It is about God through Jesus Christ. Like Jacob, we were wandering sinners and without hope, but God in his grace saved us.

Now we stand before God as redeemed children of God. What a blessing that God is pleased in his grace to speak to us on our road to destruction and to reveal his love to us.

[8 : 35] No wonder when John Newton realized this saving grace of God. He sang, amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.

I was once lost, but now I am found. The second thing we learn is that we are saved by a faithful promise-keeping God.

Verse 15. The promise made to Jacob in Genesis chapter 28, verse 18 to 15 of land, descendants, blessings, can be traced back to Abraham in Genesis chapter 12, chapter 15, and to Isaac in Genesis chapter 17.

And it finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Today, God is speaking to us through Jesus Christ, repeating the same promise in a different way.

And in Matthew chapter 28, verse 20, Jesus says, I am with you. Jesus is always with us. In his covenant mercy, in his covenant mercy, in his redemptive grace and constant love.

[9 : 52] His name is Emmanuel, God with us. And in John chapter 6, verse 37 to 45, and John chapter 10, verse 24 to 30, we learn that Jesus is saying, I will watch over you.

This is a promise of protection. We are chosen by God in eternity and redeemed through Jesus Christ. And our salvation is secured.

We will not lose it. It is very interesting that when it comes to land, that it was very important.

It was in the land where Jacob's descendants were going to experience blessings and life in its abundance and rest.

And there, they were also to know about God and his name. And it is only in Jesus that we have these blessings in fullness.

[11 : 00] Life in its fullness. Rest in its fullness. And we can know God through Jesus Christ. And God also promised that I will fulfill, I will make sure that I will fulfill the promise I am making to you.

God is faithful in his promises. God is faithful in his promises.

We are saying, Newton saying, The Lord has promised good to me. His word my hope secures. He will my shield and my portion be, as long as life endures.

God is not like us, friends. He keeps his promises. And the third thing that we learn from this passage is, we are awakened by this grace.

Verses 16 to 22. We have learned that we are saved by grace. Secondly, we are saved by a faithful promise-keeping God.

[12 : 32] And now, this grace awakens us. The moment God's grace starts to be realized in us, it awakens us.

We see this when Jacob realized that God was speaking to him. His view of God changed.

He started to commit himself to God. So it is this awakening grace that leads us to honoring God, exalting him, and fearing him.

And if we can, we are still remembering one of the stanzas. We didn't sing it, but it is one of the stanzas in that song, which says, It was grace that taught me to fear, and grace that my fear relieved.

How precious did that grace appear, the hour I first believed. This awakening grace causes us to commit ourselves to God, just as Jacob committed himself to worship God and to pay tithes.

[13 : 46] Now, as Christians, we are faced with two challenges. The first challenge is the fear of commitment. So we see Jacob committing himself after experiencing God.

But our challenge is we have the fear to commit ourselves to God's things. We sit back and relax and become observers when it comes to God's things.

We just say, Oh, we're saved by grace. That's fine. And then we sit back. We need to commit ourselves. Our commitment to God is seen by the effort we do.

The effort doesn't save us, but when we are saved by grace, we need to commit ourselves to God and show effort in doing God's things. This morning, let me challenge you, as I challenge myself, that how often do we commit ourselves to doing things in our church, rich as the whole, and St. Mark's in particular?

How often do we want to participate even in things that are minor or small, things like serving tea and water and washing dish after the service?

[15 : 11] And we know that the church is in need of musicians and singers. how many times do we want our pastor to persuade us so that we can participate in that ministry?

And we are all aware, I guess, that we are pursuing the mission, the Great Commission, and how far are we willing to participate in that Great Commission?

Are we committing ourselves to speak to anyone about Jesus Christ and even encourage that person to join a good evangelical church, preferably, if that person is within this community, to encourage him to come to St. Mark's.

The point is, my friends, yes, we have to praise God that we are saved by grace, but let us work for the Lord. Another challenge is we forget.

So when we are faced with challenges, we forget about God's promises. We forget about God's faithfulness. We forget that we are saved by grace.

[16 : 35] My dear friends, we might be encountering difficulties of various types. Maybe we are having longer seasons of joblessness in our lives.

Maybe we have lost hope and we are thinking that God has turned his back against us. Let me challenge you this morning that God is still with us.

Maybe you are sick and there is sickness in your family. You have tried doctors one after another and it's not working. Our gracious God is still with us.

And he is saying, I am with you. Whether he heals you now or in the life to come, his grace is more valuable than our grace.

Because no one is going to take away that grace from us. Maybe you are going through financial stress, marriage strain, or any other frustrations which might seem overwhelming, the world seems not functioning to you.

[17 : 53] Yes, in that situation, our gracious God is not silent. He is still with us. Our God will not take us where his grace is not sufficient for us.

And maybe you are here and you haven't given your life to Christ as your Lord and Savior. It is not too late. You can still do it today.

You can talk to our pastor, Nick, you can wave your hand. There, after the service, you can speak to him. As we go home this morning, my friends, let us remember that we are saved by grace, and we are saved by a faithful promise keeping God, and let us not forget that this grace awakens us.

Let us pray. Thank you, our Heavenly Father, for your grace towards us. In your grace, you chose us in our way to destruction, and you gave us life and assurance of eternal security.

Thank you that you are still speaking to us in Christ. Thank you that we have hope in you. Please, Lord, use us for the further ends of your gospel, despite our circumstances.

[19 : 12] As we leave these church premises, help us to reflect on your grace. In Jesus' name, Amen.