Roots

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[0:00] Genesis chapter 37, the Word of God blesses us by giving us so many different accounts of the lives of godly people, or will I say, people that God uses, sometimes godly, sometimes they're not godly in portions of their life. And he gives that to us to, I believe, to be a great help to us. One way they're such a great help is because none of them except Christ are perfect. And that means we got something in common with them because they all have problems and some are caused by other people and some are caused by themselves. Their lives have ups, their lives have downs. Lots of good happens in their life and lots of bad happens in their life. And yet in the midst of all of that, it's very real in their lives, is that God shines through. And when you look at the end of the book of Genesis, you'll find Joseph and that is the case in the life of Joseph as well.

God shines through. His life is described in the last 14 chapters of Genesis. And I find that interesting because Genesis is the book of beginnings. It's what the title means. It is the book of foundations. It is written by Moses as well as the Torah. The first five books of the Bible were written by Moses.
The only part that makes for an interesting conversation is in Deuteronomy chapter 34 when it records the death of Moses. And so, but I believe his authorship is one reason why so much time is spent on Joseph here at the end of Genesis. And I'll explain that in coming weeks. But for the first 11 chapters of Genesis, they cover a lot of primeval historical events. Begins with creation. It goes, that's the first three chapters. And just in the first three chapters of the Bible, we have what sets the groundwork for our doctrines. So many of them. The doctrine of creation is established in Genesis 1 through 30. The groundwork for the doctrine of God is placed there. The groundwork for the doctrine of man, for the doctrine of sin, for the doctrine of salvation, for the doctrine of Christ, for the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, for the doctrine of last things. All of them are found foundationally in Genesis 1 through 3. And that's just the first three chapters. When you follow that up with the flood and then the Tower of Babel, in response to that, God scattered the people. Then when you get to chapter 12 of Genesis, we're introduced to 12 chapters of Abraham. And the 12 chapters of Abraham are, it's huge. I mean, God's covenant with Abraham set the course for Israel. And after Abraham, there's his son Isaac. Isaac just gets three chapters. That's interesting. And then his son Jacob is next and he gets 10 chapters.
Jacob would later be named Israel after a wrestling encounter with God. That's interesting. His 12 male offspring would form the nation of Israel. And one of his sons, his favorite sons, would be Joseph, whose life makes up the last 14 chapters of the book of Genesis. 14 chapters. That's more than Abraham had. That's more than Isaac had.
[4:01] It's more than Jacob had. Even though God is often in the Bible described as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Joseph is discussed the most in this book and he's introduced in Genesis chapter 37. Beginning in verse 1, it says this, Jacob lived in the land of his father's sojourneys in the land of Canaan. These are the generations of Jacob. Now let me just stop there for a minute because that word generations there in the Hebrew is the word toldot. And you know what toldot is? It's generations. That's why it says that in scripture. But interestingly, that phrase there, the generations of, is used 11 times in Genesis.

And when you go back and look at those, you'll see transitions along the way. It happens in Genesis chapter 2. It happens in Genesis chapter 5. It happens in Genesis chapter 6. It happens in Genesis chapter 10. That's just some examples. And it happens 11 times. And it shows, one, the appreciation for good writing. Because Moses is making his transitions in that. It's called the toldots. But it also speaks of how he chapters out how God worked in his people. And this is the final toldot of all of Genesis. The final transition is here. These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being 17 years old, was pastoring the flock with his brothers. He was a boy with the, excuse me, he was a

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boy with the sons of the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought a bad report on them, speaking of his brothers, to their father. Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colors. But when his brothers saw that their father loved them, loved him more than all of his brothers. They hated him and could not speak peacefully to him. For the next several weeks, we're going to look at the life of Joseph. He begins here at the age of 17. And scripture will take us until he's about 30 years old. And I will tell you, if you're not familiar with the story of Joseph, it is a story of ups and downs. His life has amazingly high points.
And his life has low points as well. And they get really low. But it is an absolute amazing life.
And it speaks to much of what was happening in the world at that time. I call it a roller coaster ride because he was left for dead at one point. And then at another point, he's leading the world's powers. It's a topsy-turvy up and down kind of life. And do you know who else lives a roller coaster life? A topsy-turvy ups and downs kind of life? We do. We do. And I want to get one strong point across through weeks of sermons. I'm just going to go ahead and give you the thesis here. Whether up or whether down, God's in the midst of all of it. Even when it don't feel like it, God's still there. Even when you're in the middle of it, God's still there. So not only does he live a topsy-turvy life with God in the middle of it, but we live that kind of up and down kind of life. And I am thankful that God is in the midst of our ups and downs as well. Now part of what makes lives full of ups and downs, topsy-turvy, is that the people that God has planted around us to live with us and to live around us. Some of us have been blessed with wonderful parents. And they've marked our lives because of it. And some of us, not so much. We wouldn't think that Jacob, remember later named Israel for God's people, we would think he'd be wonderful. But I got news for you, he's not.
[9:10] The reality is I'm not preaching through the life of Jacob because I can't clean it up good enough for Sunday mornings. It's a mess. And I want us to understand that the background that led Joseph down the path, I want to go back to his roots because you're going to see the evidence of it come forth in his life again and again as we look through the life of Joseph. To be blunt, Jacob was a mess. He's a mess. I preached on Genesis 1 through 11 last year. The first full year I was here, I preached on Abraham. And we'll look at Joseph this year, but not so much Jacob, who is the father of the 12 tribes.

God is identified in the Old Testament, as I said earlier, as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And Jacob, it's mentioned 12 times in Scripture just like that. But we'll get an overview of Jacob in just one message. And it's about as messy as a sidewalk in the shade this morning. His 10 chapters are messy.
His life begins with him coming out right behind his twin brother with his hand gripped on his brother's heel. He was trying to get out first. And when he didn't get out first, I don't know that as a baby he understood all this. But when he didn't come out first, he didn't get the birthright to be the first son. And the first son received two-thirds of the estate, was the privileged one in that atmosphere. He didn't get that. And so later, his brother, who was rough around the edges to say the least, was really hungry one day. And Jacob was eaten. And Esau wanted what he was eating and must have been famished, quite honestly, because Jacob said, I'll give you this stew for your birthright. And Esau said, whatever, and ate the stew and gave up his birthright.
He was country. Esau was. He was rough. He could fight. He could hunt. I don't think he was that sharp, but he could do those things. And Jacob was a home dweller. Where I'm from, we'd call him a mama's boy. He, Rebecca favored him over the rest of the children in our house. And so did his dad, Isaac.
Jacob not only took his brother's birthright, but he also stole his blessing as well, because when they were older, Isaac brought Esau in and told him to go and kill some game and make him a meal and bring it back to him, he'd bless him. And when Rebecca heard what he said, she told Jacob to go get some of the flock and let her prepare a meal. And he bought. He said, there's no way I can pretend to be my brother. For one scripture says that when his brother came out, he was covered with hair. He was a hairy guy. And Jacob was not. And he said, I can't, I can't pretend that. And, and my daddy, even though he, he was old when they were born and he had poor sight at the time of all this happening, he said, my daddy's going to know the difference. I'm not doing that. And my interpretation is, is mama told him to hush and do what she told him to do, that she'd take care of it. And she went in and got some of Esau's clothes and put it on Jacob and took the skins of some goats and put them in strategic places on the skin of Jacob to fool his daddy. And on his hands and

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on his neck, scripture speaks of. And Isaac was old, he couldn't see well. And he, he took the stew in and he picked up on something wasn't right.
[14:00] He said, you don't sound like Esau. You smell like him. You feel like him, but you don't sound like him.

But he blessed him. Now, thinking that he was blessing Esau. Now, that blessing there is not really a, a territorial, inherited rights kind of situation. It was really ceremonial more than anything else. Jacob already owned the birthright. And so, but to receive the blessing from his father was huge. It was huge. And it was wrong for him to take it. Later, Isaac wanted to make sure that Jacob did not marry a worldly pagan woman.
And so, he sent Isaac to his uncle's house to marry a cousin. And his uncle had two daughters. And one knew how to make a great impression. Right out the bat. Met her at the well. And she made a great impression. She did. And Jacob fell in love instantly. He served her at the spot right there at the well.
[15:39] He kissed her on the first date. Shouldn't have done that. He took care of her flock. Went home with her and was welcomed by her dad.

He stayed with them for about a month and just fell in love with Rachel. And he offered to work for seven years on Laban's farm to have the opportunity to marry Rachel.
And I guarantee you, as a man with a farm, looking at a boy like that, said, sure. Seven years? Jacob went to work for seven years.
Seven years later, he married a veiled woman. Took her home. And in the morning light, found out it was her ugly sister.
Now, I'm not being mean this morning. I'm preaching scripture, okay? She's ugly, all right? I'm being truthful. Scripture says, what a euphemism.
[16:54] Scripture says, she was weak in the eyes. All right? Now, look, that don't mean she couldn't see. That's not at all what it means.

Tell you what it means, literally what it means, is she didn't have a sparkle in her eye. She didn't have a sparkle in her eye. She was less than desirable.
But he was married to her. Sounded like a country song to me, but I'm not going there. His uncle had messed him over is what he had done. And now he's married.
And he wanted to marry Rachel, so he was willing to work for another seven years in order to receive Rachel's hand.
14 years. That's love, folks. I mean, lust wears off after that, but love lasts. And Jacob had children with both of his wives and two of their handmaids.
[18:12] Now, scripture just states stuff like that. But I want to be clear about something. That was culturally appropriate in that day.

Culture did that. Didn't think much about it, okay? But that does not mean that God's people were to be doing that even at the time they did it.
God didn't justify that. God didn't amen that. He didn't okay that. It was not right to do it. Period. So I don't ever want you to read the Old Testament because you ought to be about here.
You're getting to Joseph by now if you're reading your Bible this year, okay? So, I mean, when you get there, I don't want you to think, well, I guess there's nothing wrong with that. There's a Greek word for that.
Baloney. There is something wrong with it. And it was wrong at the time it happened, too. But they were just living the culture of sorts. And you see it again and again. You see it in each of these generations.
[19:12] Stupid decisions about things like that. Trying to take it into their own hands and handle it their own way. And it was not of God to do that. And I'll tell you what it caused.

It caused a rivalry between the children's mother. And when Jacob got ready to leave Laban's estate after being there 20 years and to establish his own home after 20 years, two wives, some children, they had a fight over how to split the livestock.
I would have thought Laban would have gave him the world after serving all of his years. But he had conflict there.
Later, when he caught back up with his twin brother, and they got together and tried to divide, they had conflict as well. Now, they made up. And Jacob was very relieved about that.

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One is because his brother was a brute, and he wasn't. That's one reason why he was relieved. But he was relieved about that. Scripture says he was. Later, Joseph's sister, Dinah, was seized, laid with, and defiled.
[20:27] There's a current word for that, and it's rape. She was raped. And her attacker tried to make it right after the fact and said he wanted to marry her.

And he approached her daddy, Jacob, about wanting to marry her.
Jacob didn't really respond, and the brothers did respond. They responded to him, and the brothers said, she's not marrying anybody or among anybody that's not circumcised.
You want to marry her, you got to get circumcised. So every guy in the village got circumcised. And while they were healing, which is not the time to go to war, okay, Dinah's brothers attacked them while they were not up to fighting back and killed every last one of them.
What did Jacob do? When they came back home with blood on their clothes, Jacob said, I think you might have messed me up. We might be in trouble for this.
[21:52] Possibly out of fear, probably the highlight of Jacob's life was revival came to his home.

I think it was out of fear. But he said, I want to remove every idol that anybody has from this home. I want them all gone.
None of you are going to be worshiping other gods. Now listen, there's all kinds of idol worship in the Old Testament.
There's all kinds of idol worship in the New Testament. Listen, folks, there's all kinds of idol worship today, too. But I ain't going there. But there's all kinds of idol.
It's in different forms. But anything that you put before the Lord that's more important to you than the Lord is an idol. And they just happened to have them handmade and laying around and believing in them.
[22:53] And he cleaned them out of all of those things. And revival came to his home. And because it was just too common for people, good people, to let other loves get in the way of their service to the Lord.

And it still is, by the way. It still is. Joseph's mother had one more child, Benjamin. And that becomes very significant in this story later.
But that's his only whole brother. But then Rachel died in childbirth. So all in all, Jacob had 13 children from four women, two of them his wives, two of them servants.
Hardly any of that is pretty. But I said all that because I wanted to lay a backdrop of the childhood of the man that has more chapters in Genesis than anyone else.
And if you're not familiar with the story, I'll just tell you, God uses Joseph mightily. But it is a life of ups. And it is a life of downs.
[24:03] And I believe at some point or another it speaks to every last one of us in some circumstance that we've been in in our life. These generations are filled with embarrassment.

They're filled with mistakes. They're filled with restorations. They're filled with blessings in spite of sometimes who is involved in all of that. And there are lessons in all of it for us.
And I believe that's why God empowered Moses to write what he did. The mistakes that are in Scripture are there. And I'm not talking about mistakes and what's supposed to be.
I'm talking about the mistakes people make in Scripture. The mistakes that we see people make in these narratives in Scripture are there for a reason. For us to learn from them. Not to justify our own action, but to learn from them.
And there are lessons from what we see in Jacob's life. And I just want to give you three real quick. One is good parenting makes a world of difference.
[25:06] It makes a world of difference. God did mighty things through Jacob in spite of himself. And the 12 tribes that make up Israel were his offspring. However, it was not because he was exceptional.

It took him a long time to tell his family to finally get rid of his idols. But possibly his greatest weakness in all of his life was as a father.
I mean, the man was good at having kids. He had 13. He was just too busy and too preoccupied and too sidetracked to raise them. He was a passive father.
And passive fatherhood can be destructive to a family. You can live through it. But the war wounds are horrible.

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He was passive because he didn't act when he needed to. When Rachel couldn't get pregnant, she told him, give me children or die. That's what she told him. She was upset.
[26:13] And he responded and told her, that's up to God. That's not up to me. And she said, well, then have a child with my servant. And he went, okay. So he did.

Now, it was common in that day. But God did not approve of that. When his daughter was raped, he didn't do anything.
His sons responded to it. But the other most telling part of his weak, passive fatherhood is favoritism.
Passive parents have favorite children. And you know who their favorite children are? The ones that cause the least trouble. And that's what he did. He favored the one that stayed at home.
It's hard to raise a knucklehead. And when you've got 13 kids, you're going to have a bunch of knuckleheads. At least at some point or another. And I'll tell you what you do not do.
[27:16] You don't adorn your favorite one with special items. He gave them a special tunic. It has become known as the coat of many colors. But the wording for that robe, that tunic that he gave him, really means a colorful, elegant garment.

And when it speaks of tunic or robe, it actually refers to something with cuffed sleeves. Now, what's the significance of that? It's not a work outfit.
It's not something that's ceremonial. It's Easter clothes. It's wedding clothes. It's the special stuff. When I was a kid, I came home from school and got out of school clothes and got in my play clothes.
Okay? And I had school shoes and I had play shoes. My mother worked at Montgomery Ward at Greenville Mall.
And she bought me the ugliest, cheapest, and toughest shoes known to man. I'm scarred by them.
[28:31] She'll call me today and apologize after she hears this message. But they were the shoes of many colors. In the day when Nike was just coming out with the swash. And it was a basic white shoe with a swash on the side that you had to have to be the cool kid.

And mama went and got something with a big old rubber end on it. I think they were green with a red and white stripe. They were horrible. I tried to find a picture of them online. And they're too ugly to put online.
I already had big feet and they made them look bigger. I had fights in the yard because of them shoes. And I couldn't wear them out. I tried to.
I'd take them off and rub them against the concrete and the brick. Tried to wear them out. They couldn't. They had toughest shoes. Somewhere in my carbon footprint, size 8 at the time, is laying in some ditch somewhere.
Because they never will go away. Toughest shoes known to man. And the cheapest probably. I didn't want to wear them. But I couldn't wear my school shoes.
[29:34] Well, this coat was special. But apparently he wore it everywhere. Next week we'll see how he walked 50 miles to get to his brothers.

And guess what he had on? In the desert, by the way. He had on his coat. His favorite coat. That none of the rest of them had.
Because they were too busy keeping the shoes. He's the only one that had it. He's wearing that coat. I got a doctoral robe. It's cuffed.
Sometimes for weddings I'll wear that. About it. But I promise you, you see me walking down Main Street tomorrow, I ain't going to have that robe on.
How you doing? I'm the Reverend. Not going to do it. Not going to do it. I don't have that robe on when I'm calling them football games in the fall.
[30:40] You know? I ain't wearing that everywhere. I said all that to say, I want you to understand what Joseph was doing. He's proud of that coat, but he was wearing it to show off to his brothers.

And that's just part of the problem of passive parents. They have favorites. It's destructive. It's destructive to the favorite.
We'll get there. And it's destructive to the rest. Second lesson is this. I'm running late, but y'all ain't coming back, so I don't care.
Sin is always more costly than it looks. Sin is always more costly than it looks.
The name Jacob means deceiver, and it also means chiseler. Knocking off the edges. He manipulated his brother out of his birthright.

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[31:43] That was prophesied by him coming out holding on to his heel. He deceived his father to receive his blessing. He followed his wife's advice instead of God's advice.

He caused dissension between his children. All of that is sin. He neglected Esau, his other son, and that led Esau to marry an Ishmaelite woman, and there is still conflict in the Middle East among those descendants.
He never thought about the hate among his children. He never thought about how his softened favoritism of one child would cause so much heartache. He just never thought. In verse 2, what I read a little while ago, it says Joseph gave a bad report about his brothers.
Bad there means evil, or it means a whispering report. You know what that means? That means not only did Joseph have his coat on and showing out, but he'd come back and tell on his brothers.
He's a title tale. I mean, he's the kind of guy you want to push down in the playground. And that was due to his dad. It's not always that way, but it wasn't his case.
[32:58] It was due to his dad. Sin's always more costly than it looks. And third thing is this. Thank God.

God can work in and through all of it. The story of Joseph is a powerful story, and God does amazing things through Joseph that affects the whole known world.
And that's not because he was perfect, and it's not because he came from a perfect family. He was not. They were not. Folks, listen. We are not.
We all got stuff. And all of us could sit down and say, let me tell you the rest of the story about my family. We all got crazy cousins.
We can all tell something. And Joseph could have done that, and Jacob could have done that, and his dad Isaac told his wife to tell people that she was his sister instead of his wife to keep him from getting killed because she was so attractive.
[34:15] That was Jacob's dad. Isaac's dad had stories, too, and that's Abraham. He had stories about him, too. All families have those things. And that's not to underestimate the damage of dumb sin.

That's not what I'm trying to do. I'm telling you it's horrible, and it causes tremendous damage. It is to say that God can work through all of that.
He'll work in that. He'll work through that. Do not write yourself off because thank God, God's not written you off. He'll meet you where you are.
Do you know why Christ went to the cross? For sinners. Do you know who are sinners?
All of us. And thank God, because of his grace, he'll do a work in us regardless.
[35:20] I'll tell you what that means, and I'll close. It means we have no excuses. We have no excuses. We all have a burden to bear.

You know what we can do with that burden? We can lay it at the feet of Jesus and let him carry it and follow him. God teaches us through the good lessons in people's lives.
He teaches us through the bad lessons in people's lives. We're all affected by how we were influenced somewhere down the way. And God, in his omnipotence and in his grace, can use all of it for his glory.
And so why don't we meet him where we are and let him take us to where he wants us to be. With every head bowed and every eye closed this morning, you may be here this morning, you say, you're right, preacher, I am a sinner.
And I've sinned against God, and I know that that has caused a problem in my relationship with the Lord. Well, join the club. We're all in that boat.
[36:36] The difference is that if you'll ask the Lord Jesus to forgive you of your sins, if you'll ask him to come into your life and to save you, he'll save you, he'll change you, he'll make you and mold you to be exactly what he'd have you to be.

The only hope you have is in Christ. And you don't have to clean up to come to Christ. You come to Christ, he'll clean you up. He'll take care of those things. Maybe you're here and you have done that, but you've never acknowledged that publicly.
It's always been a private matter to you. Jesus said, if you're ashamed of me before others, I'll be ashamed of you before my Father. And so I encourage you to be obedient to what he shows us. Step out boldly and say, I know the Lord and I want to live for it. Maybe you're here and Jacob's story just brings up too much of your own situation.

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Things you've experienced from others, things that you've done yourself, whatever. Take this time before you even leave this place to bow your head where you are or at this altar or with a pastor praying for you and say, dear God, I want to start afresh today.
[37:50] Thank God for the blood of Christ that allows me to start fresh. To go forward. To heal the hurt. To drop the excuses.

To walk from this day forward in the power of God. Or maybe God's drawing you to First Baptist Church. This is the place that he'd have you to serve. If that's the case, I encourage you to come. I'd love to talk to you about that. I don't know what God's telling you. I know what he told me to share. And I trust him. I trust him to work and move in our lives.
And I hope and pray that we'll just be obedient to follow him. Lord Jesus, I love you and I thank you for your love for us. I ask, oh God, that you'll lead us right now to be obedient and to follow you as you lead, Lord.
In Jesus' precious name. Amen.

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