

THE CROOKED MADE STRAIGHT, ISAIAH 40:3-5 (THE LIFE OF JACOB)

INTRODUCTION: There is a highway to be built in each of our lives, Is.40:3. It is the highway of holiness, Is.35:8. -a highway that leads us out of the Wilderness (Is.35:1-7) It is to lead us up to Zion, Is.35:9-10, Rev.14:1-3. The true Zion is at the throne of God!

God works in different ways in each of our lives, to prepare the way of the Lord. To make a smooth highway, some high places in a road need to be brought low. Young Saul of Tarsus was like a mountain: as a proud, talented, self-righteous success. Christ spent years humbling Saul, to prepare the way of the Lord in his life.

Simon Peter was the opposite of Saul: Simon was an uneducated fisherman, a sinner, who had many failures in life: He was like a valley that Christ lifted up. But another way that God often works is to take the crooked areas of our lives and straighten them out.

1. JACOB STARTED OUT IN LIFE WITH A CROOKED HEART

Gen.25:22-23 Wrestled with his brother in the womb. In vs.25-26 Esau was first born, with Jacob grabbing his heel! He was named "grabber" or "supplanter" or "one who trips up."

Gen.25:29-34 Jacob tricked his brother when he was weak and hungry, he was grabbing from his brother! Esau was a carnal man who sold his birthright for a meal, v.34.

Gen. 27:1-29 Jacob deceived his old, blind father & stole his brother's prophetic blessing.

2. GOD GAVE GREAT PROMISES TO CROOKED JACOB

Jacob's father prophesied great blessings: "Nations will bow down to you," Gen.27:29.

But Jacob had to flee from his angry brother who wanted to kill him, Gen.27:41-43

In a dream, God promised him the calling and the blessing of his grandfather Abraham & his father Isaac, Gen.28:12-15. God give these promises while Jacob was running away!

Jacob used lies & deception to get his elder brother's blessing- he was a crooked man who used wrong ways to gain what he wanted -But there was also good in Jacob's heart: he deeply wanted God's blessings, while Esau was ready to sell them for a bowl of food!

Mal.1:2-3 "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated." God predestined them according to His foreknowledge: Rom.8:29- "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined..." God knew what kind of character the brothers would each choose to develop.

God is not only the God of Abraham & Isaac, He is also the God of Jacob. There is hope for each of us, that God can straighten out our crooked hearts & bless us!

God can give a crooked person many promises- a great calling- to show us there is a great purpose for life which is worth aiming for, a goal and reward which is worth running a good race to obtain! But before God can fulfill those promises the crooked person needs to be changed- straightened out- to become ready for God's blessing and be a vessel of honor!

After God gave Jacob his calling & blessing in the dream, Jacob responded to God by dedicating himself to God, Gen. 28:16-17 & 20-22

3. IN THE NEXT YEARS GOD BEGAN TO DEAL WITH THE SIN IN JACOB'S LIFE

Uncle Laban deceived Jacob and gave him the wrong daughter to marry, Gen.29:20-25. Laban also deceitfully changed Jacob's wages 10 times, Gen.31:41.

Jacob reaped much suffering for his own lies & deceit, Gal.6:7, Ps.18:25-27, Ob.15. Jacob learned to hate his own sinful character as he suffered under the deceit of another!

Suffering changed him: "He that suffers in the flesh has ceased from sin, 1 Pet.4:1. King Solomon suffered for his profligate, decadent life, and turned back to God in his old age, Eccles.12:1-5 & 13-14. King David gained a deep repentance by the years of deep suffering that his sins produced, 2 Sam.12:9-14.

Are you reaping any harvests of trouble because of your past failures? Sow a new, good, spiritual crop, and be patient, Gal.6:7-9.

Has Satan been attacking you? First we must be correctly submitted to God before we can successfully resist the devil, Jam.4:6-7

4. GOD MADE JACOB FULLY FACE HIS PAST SINS, Gen.31:3.

His brother Esau came to meet him with 400 men, probably to kill him, Gen.32:6. Jacob sent large gifts ahead to Esau, but he knew a bribe would not rescue him, Gen.32:13-21. He then planned a sneaky escape, Gen.32:7-8 & 22-23.

Jacob stayed behind, alone and afraid- but God was with him, and wrestled with him all night, Gen.32:24. We need to wrestle with God to gain victory over our fallen adamic nature, Gal.5:17, Rom.7:22-25, Gal.5:24.

The dealings of God made Jacob a desperate man. Gen.32:25-26. He desperately needed God's blessing & protection. Jacob's ability, lies, & deceptions, were not enough!

Gen.32:27 "What is your name?" Jacob had to admit he was the grabber, the deceiver.

Gen.32:28 Jacob became Israel, a prince with God! Jacob's character had been transformed and as Israel he was ready to receive the promised blessings of God.

Gen.33:1-4 When the brothers met, Esau didn't want to kill Jacob anymore- because the Jacob he hated was dead! "I have been crucified with Christ" Gal.2:20

CONCLUSION: With his new name and authority, Israel went on to fulfill his calling, and for the nation of Israel to be brought forth.

After his death Jacob was prophetically called by a third name, Jeshurun, Deut.33:5 & 33:26. Jeshurun means "Upright" or "Straight." The man who began as a crooked deceiver ended up a righteous, "straight" man who fulfilled God's calling & entered a great reward!

If we will let God deal with & correct the problems in our life, God can prepare the Highway of Holiness in our life that will lead us to heavenly Mt Zion, Ps.84:6-7, Is.35:8-10, Rev.14:1-5.