

No Lost Cause  
Genesis 28:10-22  
8-3-2025

He didn't have a very auspicious beginning. His father died when he was a child. He dropped out of school in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade and had the vocabulary to show it. When he accepted the Lord, he tried to join a church but they rejected him and wouldn't let him become a member because they said he was unlikely to ever develop a clear understanding of the gospel and still less likely to fill any useful role in society.

In England many referred to him as the buffoon from America.

the world saw an uneducated dropout with coarse language and few skills. He was written off as a lost cause and would never amount to anything.

In spite of what the world saw and what so many may have thought, God had something very different in store for D.L. Moody.

what people thought and said about him reflected more about what they really believed about God than the potential of DL Moody.

They didn't understand nor believe in the power of God to transform his life.

In spite of the expectations and judgement of so many, D.L. Moody became one of the most influential Christians of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and one of the most effective evangelists the world has ever known. The shoe salesman turned evangelist was the 19<sup>th</sup> century's version of Billy Graham who despite his limited and sometimes colorful language, preached to massive crowds throughout both Europe and America. The man without even a 7<sup>th</sup> grade education, became a strong and tireless advocate for Sunday School ministry, and went on to found the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago.

Have you ever written off someone as hopeless, assumed that they would never amount to anything and given up on them as a lost cause because they didn't fit your standards and expectations, or the boxes you tried to force them into?

This may be saying far more about you and your lack of faith in the power of God to transform lives than it says about them  
It ignores what he is able to do when He gets hold of someone's life?

He is in the life changing business, the restorer of hope, provider of new beginnings, and source of unlimited possibilities.  
He knows our failures and weaknesses but isn't bound by them, he is able to do far more than we can ask or even imagine  
He knows what obstacles we may come up against, but breaks down whatever walls may get in his way

By His grace, he is more than able to take people we may have given up on and written off as hopeless  
and through Christ, do a work in their lives far greater than we have imagined

That is in fact, what he did in the life of Jacob  
If we look at his early life, it would not inspire much confidence and most would probably dismiss him as never amounting to anything

- Before he was even born, Gen 25:22 says he and his brother Esau struggled or were wrestling with each other within their mother's womb.  
In more colloquial terms, they were having a wrestling match in Rebekah's womb

- In verse 26 it says at birth he wasn't willing to let Esau get the better of him and came out of the womb grasping Esau's heel, which is where he got his name.

Jacob means heel grabber or schemer and describes perfectly the nature of his character, always scheming to get what he wanted from others, whether his father or his brother or later his uncle Laban

- In verses 29-34 he swindled his brother out of his birthright for a bowl of stew
- In chapter 27 he lied and deceived his father in order to steal Esau's blessing then had to run away to his uncle Laban, to escape his brother's wrath

The picture we have of Jacob in his early years is not very attractive.

He is self-serving, and a schemer.

always looking for an angle to get his way.

He's not someone we would want our kids hanging around with and certainly not someone we would want our daughter to bring home to meet the family.

We would likely have written him off as hopeless.

But God didn't.

God was, in fact at work in his life long before he was even aware of it

Like Paul's play on words in Philemon 11 in relation to the escaped slave

Onesimus, Jacob may have started off as useless, but God was going to make him useful.

He is not bound by our failures, weaknesses, frailties and misguided ambitions.

He is alive and well and may very well already be at work in someone's life or in our life, long before we are even aware of it, preparing and laying the foundation upon which to build and make us useful for his service

Genesis 28 says that after Jacob had stolen his father's blessing and earned his brother's wrath, Rebekah convinced Isaac to send him back to her family in search of a wife.

**Genesis 28:10–11 begins, “Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep.” While he slept, verse 12 says, “He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.”**

I can't imagine using a stone for a pillow but if I did, I imagine I would have dreams also.

In ancient Egypt Their headrests were actually made of metal.

Jacob still had a long way to go before he could be useful to God

At this point he seems to have understood little about the Lord

God was just something his father and grandfather believed in

His promises just something they would have told him about, yet now he is fleeing from the promised land

**one commentator described Jacob as “a perfect picture of the lost soul—in the darkness, fleeing for his life, away from the father’s house, burdened with sin, and ignorant of the fact that God is near him and wants to save him.”**

So, God introduced himself as the God of his father Abraham and Isaac then proceeds to reaffirm the same promise He had made previously to Abraham and Isaac

***“There above it stood the LORD, and he said: “I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.” (Genesis 28:13–14)***

And once again, along with the promise, comes Gods larger purpose in calling and blessing a people,  
Through you and your offspring, all the peoples on earth will be blessed

This is a constant theme stated again and again in Genesis which we can’t emphasize enough

In the N.T. both Acts 3:25 and Galatians 3:8 quote these words to emphasize that God blesses his people with the express purpose that we, his people, turn around and bless others with the blessings we have received

This is something Jacob the schemer needed to hear

The one who was always looking out for himself, God now tells that he needs to start thinking about others and how to bless their lives not just his own

In a world consumed with self-interest and selfishness, where we are told constantly to indulge ourselves and are promised blessings of abundance, we need to constantly be reminded of what following Jesus is all about

Gods' intent for our lives is not just an easy and prosperous life, his goal is not just to make us happy and fulfill our desires.

He calls and blesses us so that we can turn around and be a blessing to others through things like

**Freely you have received, Jesus said in Matthew 10:8, therefore freely give**

We bless others through such things as:

- the words we say to and about others: *"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."* (Ephesians 4:29)
- The things we do to care for others and this world he has placed us in: *"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."* (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- how we use our resources to help others in need: *"Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."* (James 2:15–17)
- praying for those who are hurting: *"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people."* (Ephesians 6:18)

He saves us to serve and to go and to bless and to build up to extend His mercy and love, grace and forgiveness, thereby revealing His glory not our own.

Gods' blessings multiply when they are shared not when they are hoarded

**Jesus did say in John 20:21, Just as the father has sent, so now I am sending you.**

Here he is speaking of his purpose which he said was to seek and to save the lost me

Then God promises Jacob he wouldn't be alone or have to figure things out on his own

***For God then said, "I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." (Genesis 28:15)***

Jesus mirrored this promise to us, his followers so many years later, that when we go, we won't be alone either – I will be with you always he said, to the very end of the age

it is likely that it was his sense of helplessness and feeling sorry for himself that finally allowed God to begin to break through to him assuring him that despite what he might be going through, God was there; he just wasn't aware of it.

***"When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it." He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven." Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it." (Genesis 28:16–18)***

How well this describes the place many of us may find ourselves God is in this place but we just aren't aware of it because we are so distracted by other things, pursuing our own agenda, sidetracked by our problems and difficulties, too busy running after selfish pursuits

Only looking back on our lostness and problems, do we come to realize we weren't alone, God was there all the time calling out for us to come to him, to open our eyes and hearts and receive him as he offers hope to the hopeless

**For as Madeleine L'Engle pointed out, God is over all things, under all things, outside all; within but not enclosed; without but not excluded; above but not raised up; below but not depressed; wholly above,**

**presiding; wholly beneath, sustaining; wholly without, embracing; wholly within, filling.**

Even though God began to break through to Jacob and he began to realize God's presence, he was still Jacob the heel grabber and schemer always looking for an angle so first thing he does after he wakes up is presume on God's grace

***"Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's household, then the LORD will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.""*** (Genesis 28:20–22)

True to his old nature, he's trying to bargain with God, make conditions as if he had something God needed

**If you will be with me, if you will watch over me, if you will provide me with food, if you will provide clothing, if you bring me back to this place**

**Then I will choose you as my God, then this stone I have set up will become a place of worship where I will worship you, and then I will give you a tithe.**

he still had a long way to go but this encounter was only the beginning of his transformation,

his transformation towards becoming useful to God started when he began to recognize that the God who had revealed himself to his Fathers Abraham and Isaac, was with him as well

And like them, he needed to learn to keep his eyes on the Lord

**A Corvette Twin Turbo accelerates at about 7.2 meters per second. A Ferrari Enzo boasts about 8.1 meters per second, which takes it from zero to 60 mph in about 3.3 seconds. And at 10 meters per second, the Cheetah accelerates faster than both. It is able to go from 0-40 miles per hour in three strides, 0-60 in less than 3 seconds. It is made for speed. But**

**they can't sustain it beyond about 30 seconds and 600 yards because of their disproportionately small heart, which causes it to tire quickly, unless it catches its prey in that first flurry, it must abandon the chase.**

If we are not careful, sometimes we can be like that Cheetah in the way we approach our faith.

- Then we jump into projects with great energy and enthusiasm.
- We get caught up in some new program or outreach and if we don't see fast results so we lose our enthusiasm, grow tired or bored and wander off to something else.
- Or we don't get quick answers to our prayers for our marriages or our health or our finances and conclude God has failed us or perhaps wasn't even there in the first place
- We lack the heart of sustained effort, fizzle out quickly.
- We vow to start faster, try harder and when we don't see movement, we move on.
- We give up on someone or something too quickly

Like Jacob, we fail to see and realize that God was in that place and we knew it not because we are looking for the wrong things or in the wrong places

If we aren't aware of and doubt his presence, we are far more likely to give up  
Yet he has promised that when we face trials of many kinds, he is there  
When we face difficulty and setbacks, God is there  
When we are discouraged and down, God is there  
When we are struggling with some relationship or issue or sin, God is there

Surely the Lord is in this place, we just may not be aware of it.  
Whatever we may be facing, Jesus has promised that he will be with us always!

As the Psalmist declared,

***"Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.***



***If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you." (Psalm 139:7–12)***

someone imagined what type of response Jesus would have gotten if he had used a management consulting firm to help evaluate the potential of the 12 apostles before he selected them. What they came up with was this:

**Dear Sir,**

**Thank you for submitting the resumes of the twelve men you have picked for management positions in your new organization. All of them have now taken our battery of tests, and we have not only run the results through our computer, but also arranged personal interviews for each of them with our psychologist and vocational aptitude consultant.**

**The profiles of all tests are included, and you will want to study each of them.**

**As part of our service and for your guidance, we make some general comment, much as an auditor will include some general statements. This is given as a result of staff consultation and comes without any additional fee.**

**It is the staff opinion that most of your nominees are lacking the background, education, and vocational aptitude for the type of enterprise you are undertaking. They do not have the team concept. We would recommend that you continue your search for persons of experience in managerial ability and proven capability.**

**Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper. Andrew has absolutely no qualities of leadership. The two brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, place personal interest above company loyalty. Thomas demonstrates a questioning attitude that would tend to undermine morale. We feel that it is our duty to tell you that Matthew has been blacklisted by the Greater Jerusalem Better Business Bureau.**

**James the son of Alpheus, and Thaddeus definitely have radical leanings and they both registered a high score on the manic-depressive scale.**

**One of the candidates, however, shows great potential. He is a man of ability and resourcefulness, meets people well, has a keen business mind and has contacts in high places. He is highly motivated, ambitious, and responsible. We recommend Judas Iscariot as your controller and right-hand-man. All of the other profiles are self-explanatory.**

**We wish you every success in your new venture,**

**Sincerely yours,  
Jordan Management Consultants.**

**In Christ there are no lost causes**

**we may not see it because the prophet Samuel when he was sent in search of a king, we are looking only at outward appearances while God looks at the heart  
Like God corrected the prophet Samuel, man looks at outward appearances but God looks at our heart.**