

2005

Monday, January 24th - Genesis 16: 3-6

Sin not only perverts and confuses all relationships, but it also prompts the formulation of bad counsel which, if adopted and acted upon, produces nothing but bitter consequences. Sin, not faith, prompted Sarai's counsel for the production of a son for Abram through Hagar. Sin, not faith, prompted Abram to adopt Sarai's counsel. The bitter consequences of this sinful, faithless course soon sprang up. Once Hagar conceived a child, she also conceived and delivered contempt for barren Sarai. Sarai responded by blaming Abram for her miserable plight, leading Abram to deliver Hagar to Sarai's sinful abuse. Consequently, Hagar fled, and, with her, fled the carnal hopes of Abram and Sarai for a son. Sin can deliver nothing but misery and death for all parties involved in it. Rightly and blessedly are we commanded and enabled by our Lord to mortify sin (Rom. 6:11-13), and to exercise faith (Prov. 3:5,6)

Tuesday, January 25th - Genesis 16: 3

In this verse we are given a time note regarding the duration of Abram's having dwelt in Canaan. We are told that it was after ten years of Abram's life in the land promised to him by God that the patriarch committed this sin with Hagar. Further, when we recall from Gen. 12:4 that Abram was 75 years old when he departed Haran for Canaan, we are able to note that he was 85 at the time of this sin. The power of sin in a man's life does not diminish by the mere passage of time. Sin must be mortified, even if the sinner dies in the process. Rightly did Job express the attitude of the faithful when he declared of God: *Though He slay me, yet will I trust him.* (Job 13:15). Faith prompts its possessor to wait upon the Lord for His provision, rather than to resort to the devices of the flesh. Those exercising faith in the Lord will wait, if necessary, to the end of their time on this earth for the fulfillment of the divine promise, for they know their Lord to be sovereign over all time and eternity.

Wednesday, January 26th - Genesis 16: 3

The best construction we could place upon Abram's action is that he reasoned from the Lord's promise that his heir would come from his own body, and not from Sarai's (Gen. 15:4). Such fine logic, based upon no explicit mention being made of Sarai in the divine promise, fails, however, to reckon rightly that this same God, who had given Abram the promise of a son, had also instituted marriage between one man and one woman only, not one man and two women. In marriage, the two, not the three, become one flesh (Gen. 2:24). Right action must be based not upon a casuistic interpretation of a part of God's revelation, but upon a non-contradictory and consistent understanding of the whole counsel of God. Men can far more easily twist a verse of Scripture to justify their sinful desires than they can twist the entire body of Scripture to do so.

Thursday, January 27th - Genesis 16: 4

Abram's sinful agreement to Sarai's sinful plan soon produced pleasure and pain. Physically, in Hagar's womb, a child was conceived; spiritually, sinful conceit and contempt for Sarai were conceived in Hagar. Accordingly, Sarai received the thorn of Hagar's despising her before she received the rose of a son. Sin's pleasures flee as rapidly as its bitter fruit ripens. Weeds, thorns, and thistles spring up obnoxiously and rapidly, while cultivated plants take time and care to produce their beneficial fruit. Let us take note, therefore, and resist rushing to adopt quick and easy sinful solutions to our problems, while refusing the right, though costly, way of the Lord.

Friday, January 28th - Genesis 16: 5

Sarai's sinful plan contained within it a bitter barb unforeseen by her. Hagar, Sarai's servant, grew conceited over her exalted position as Abram's wife and especially over her production of a child for him. Thus, Hagar despised Sarai. This bitter, unforeseen consequence, however, Sarai seeks to foist upon Abram. Thusly does Abram's wife, being despised by her servant, despise and dispute with her husband. Sarai even calls the Lord to be judge between herself and her husband, as though He whose precepts and promises had been despised by both Sarai and Abram in this matter would declare either of these sinning partners just. The Lord would intervene, but not as Sarai expected. The Lord would graciously still the storm of misery aroused by the sinning of Sarai and Abram, rather than judge them as they each deserved.

Saturday, January 29th - Genesis 16: 6

When he agreed to Sarai's plan, Abram adopted a passive attitude wherein he abdicated that headship of his family that had been placed upon him by God. Now that bitter consequences were resulting, Abram plunges further into his abdicating passivity, delivering Hagar into Sarai's abusive power. Abram tells Sarai: *do to her what is good in your sight*. However, Sarai's sight was not pure and enlightened by faith in and submission to the Lord. Therefore, Sarai sinfully retaliates, inflicting untold misery upon the one whose haughty attitude had made Sarai miserable. Accordingly, the rising tide of sin and misery increases, as Abram and Sarai rely on their own passions and devices, while refusing to call upon the Lord for help.

Sunday January 30th - Genesis 16: 6

Hagar, who had inflicted misery upon Sarai, suffers misery at Sarai's hands in return. The slave, consequently, fled from her abusing mistress, and took within her womb the child who was the goal of all the sinful endeavors of Abram and Sarai. For all of their plans, efforts, and troubles, all that is left to Abram and Sarai is guilty recrimination and bitter misery. All the patriarch and his wife had hoped to gain by their faithless, sinful devices is now lost. Faithless, sinful action is ever and always suicidal.

Monday January 31st - Genesis 16: 7-9

With Hagar gone, so went the child of Abram and Sarai's hopes. The bitter fruit left in the wake of Hagar's leaving may have been sweetened to a degree for Abram and Sarai by their reckoning that Hagar and her misconceived child were at least out of their lives. But the Lord had other plans than to let Abram and Sarai drive away the consequences of their sin. One's acknowledging his sin with the exercise of faith, repentance, and confession is how sin and its consequences may rightly be dealt with by the cleansing and restoring forgiveness of God. Otherwise, try as we might, the spot of sin on us cannot be washed away by oceans of other inadequate attempts.

Tuesday, February 1st - Genesis 16: 7-9

Sinful man cannot cover or drive away the consequences of his sin. The Lord has greater respect for sinners and supremely for His own holy justice than to allow sin to be treated so lightly. Hence, in our passage, the Lord overrules Hagar's flight and sends her back to Abram and Sarai. Our Lord sees to it that our sins will find us out, and He will sinlessly superintend the consequences of our sin, making them to be thorns prodding us to repentance.

Wednesday, February 2nd - Genesis 16: 7-9

These verses teach us that our Lord has a greater care for the consequences of our sin than we have for them. Hagar is driven off by her sinning masters, but the Lord draws near to her. It is through the angel of the Lord's intervention that Hagar is turned back. Here is the first mention in the Bible, not of angels in general, but of the angel of the Lord, who is the pre-incarnate manifestation of Christ. It is a sobering truth that the angel of the Lord is first named in connection with His appearance to a fugitive slave who is not of the covenant people, rather than to Abram, the father of faith. Yet, when the Lord's own adopted people sinfully abuse their enemies, the Lord Himself takes a stand with those so abused and against the sinful exploits of His own people (Prov. 24:17,18).

Thursday, February 3rd – Genesis 16: 7-9

The angel of the Lord found Hagar by a spring, no doubt seeking to refresh herself. But it was not to be by water, but rather by the mercy of the Lord that she would be preserved and refreshed. She was also on the way to Shur, which is toward Egypt, when the Lord encountered her. Her blessing was not to be found in Egypt, but rather amidst the covenant people of God, however sinfully abusive they may at times act. Our blessing is never to be found in the world and outside of the Church, however fair the former and foul the latter may at times appear to us.

Friday, February 4th – Genesis 16: 8

The Lord not only found Hagar, but He also spoke to her words of merciful care and blessed direction. Yet, Hagar had herself sinned in her conceit at being given to Abram as a wife. Therefore, the Lord humbles Hagar by reminding her that she was Sarai's maid, not her equal. For her part, Hagar humbly acknowledges her true, lowly position,

when she refers to Sarai as her mistress. We must inflate our sense of self importance and diminish the respect we have for others before we can sin against them. When, however, we humble ourselves under the hand of God and honor others above ourselves, we relate to them in righteous ways.

Saturday, February 5th – Genesis 16: 8, 9

The Lord asks Hagar from where she had come and for where she was bound. She had originally come from Egypt, where Abram had emerged from his earlier sinful flight with many slaves (Gen. 12:16). She then had been taken to Canaan and into the household of a godly, though imperfect, family. She was going from the house of faith back to the godless realm of Egypt. The Lord graciously redirects her course. Life in the family of faith, even when the members thereof become sinfully abusive, is infinitely better than one's dwelling at ease amidst the sons of perdition.

Sunday, February 6th - Genesis 16: 9, 10

In these verses, the Lord blesses Hagar with words of command and comfort. The Lord commands her to return to her mistress, Sarai. It would have been less hard for Hagar had the Lord told her to return to Canaan or even to Abram. Yet, Hagar had fled fearfully from Sarai's sinful ire, and the Lord sends the fugitive slave back to the sinning mistress in order to accomplish His gracious and holy purposes through the reconciliation of these two women. The words of comfort from the Lord to Hagar are that her descendants would be multiplied, as Abram's descendants through Sarai would be multiplied (Gen. 15:5). Hard circumstances can be sweetly endured when we have assurance that God will provide a happy issue through them.

Monday, February 7th - Genesis 16: 10-12

The source of Hagar's multiplied descendants she carried in her womb. The Lord declared not only that she was with child, but also that the child was a son. The Lord also exercised a special act of authority when He gave the name by which Hagar and all others would call her son. The name of Ishmael is formed from the Hebrew verb, *to hear*. This son is so named because God had heard and had determined to tend to the afflicted cries of Hagar. Not only did God hear the cries of Hagar, but He also heard the cries of the sins of Abram and Sarai in their negligence and abuse of this woman. The Lord had a care that such sins should be rightly dealt with, not simply driven away by the sinner.

Tuesday, February 8th - Genesis 16: 10-12

The care that the Lord shows for Hagar and her son seems to be more lavish than what He bestowed upon His own Son when He was born into this world. Yet, in the case of Ishmael, God was pouring common grace upon one whose evil character would be manifested by his wild and warring acts against others. In the case of Jesus, God was exercising saving grace through all that His Son suffered, from His birth to His death, for

the sake of those who would inherit salvation. The true character of events must be judged according to their designs and ends.

Wednesday, February 9th - Genesis 16: 10-12

The character of Ishmael would reveal itself through his unruly and martial actions against those with whom he and his descendants would have contact. The Lord also here foretells that Hagar's descendants would dwell east of their brothers. These descendants, of course, are the Arabs, who, though they are descended from the half-brother of Abram's true son, Isaac, would be implacably against the Jews from Abram's day to our day. These Arabs have been historically a scourge to the Jews, and they are of Abram's sinful making. Nothing oppresses the people and work of God so much as do the sins of the saints.

Thursday, February 10th – Genesis 16: 13, 14

Hagar cries to the Lord of grace with a prayer of gratitude. She honors the Lord by her testimony that He is a God who sees. The Lord regards and responds with holy resolution to all things, whether they be in a desolate wilderness or in the dark womb of a fleeing, afflicted woman. Our joy and gratitude should be grounded upon the fact that God sees us and all things in our circumstances, not as a mere spectator, but as a gracious Savior, who causes all to work for our good.

Friday, February 11th - Genesis 16: 13, 14

Hagar marvels that she survived her beholding the all-seeing and resplendently glorious God of heaven and earth. Literally, she declares: *I live after seeing Him*. This expression conveys the idea that Hagar lived by her beholding the back side of the Lord, or that she lived by her beholding the God who went before her with omniscient power and tender care. We, too, live most vibrantly and victoriously, not when we let our passions and desires run ahead of our God, but when we follow the leading of our divine, wise, and loving Good Shepherd.

Saturday, February 12th - Genesis 16: 14

Hagar named the spring by which the Lord encountered her Beer-lahai-roi, meaning, *the well of the living one who sees me*. She was clearly more truly refreshed by her encounter with the living God than she was with the merely physically refreshing waters of the spring at that place. By her naming the place a well, not a stream or spring, she conveys the notion that she had drawn life from a deep and enduring source of living water. Do our words and testimony similarly honor and glorify the God who has so greatly blessed us in Christ?

Sunday, February 13th - Genesis 16: 15, 16

The sin of Abram bears its living fruit in the birth of Ishmael. Yet, Hagar had returned to Abram and Sarai, as the Lord had directed her to do, and, presumably, had dwelt with them peacefully, as no note of further friction between Hagar and Sarai is given for some time. Abram demonstrates his humility and submission to the Lord by naming his son Ishmael, as Hagar had indicated to him that the Lord had directed. Therefore, as these sinning characters submit to the Lord, we observe a degree of reconciliation and peaceful co-existence. Whenever the Lord rules over a people who obey Him, even if only outwardly, there is relative, if not perfect, peace.

Monday, February 14th - Genesis 16: 16

We are told that Abram was 86 years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him. This son of the bond-woman had a remarkable conception by such an elderly father. However, Ishmael was not the divinely promised and miraculously provided son that would yet be born to Abram. Sinfully produced counterfeit blessing may arrive remarkably and sooner than the miraculous and genuine blessing of the Lord, but it is the former that brings sorrow, while the latter only makes a man to be rich and rejoicing (Prov. 10:22).

Tuesday, February 15th - Genesis 17: 1, 2

We have encountered various high points of great significance thus far in the Book of Genesis. Scripture has recorded for us such monumental matters as creation, man's fall and the world's curse, the flood, and the call of Abram. Now in Genesis 17, we come to another immensely significant event. This chapter contains the unfolded, explained, and ratified covenant of grace that was implicit in God's dealings with our first parents (Gen. 3:15), and only briefly mentioned in Genesis 15:18. We cannot exaggerate the significance of this covenant, or divinely instituted, unilateral commitment on the part of God to save a people for Himself. Moses makes much of it (Ex. 2:4), as do the psalmists (Ps. 89:28; 106:45), the prophets (Is. 59:21), Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist (Lk. 1:72), Mary, the mother of Jesus (Lk. 1:54,55), Peter (Acts 3:25), Paul (Rom. 3, 4; Gal. 3), and the writer to the Hebrews (Heb. 8-10). We should therefore, take pains so that we might productively study this vital subject of God's covenant of grace. This covenant is supremely significant to our God (Ps. 105:8), and so should be regarded as of greatest importance to us.

Wednesday, February 16th - Genesis 17: 1, 2

The Lord God gives this covenant to Abram when the patriarch is an old man, as good as dead (Rom. 4:19). We are told that Abram was 99 when the Lord appeared to him to give His covenant to him in all of its expansive fullness. At that time, it had been decades since Abram left Ur at God's bidding. It had been 13 years since Ishmael, the disastrous fruit of Abram's faithless attempt to produce the son of God's promise, had been born. Why did God delay so long in giving His covenant to His servant? Matthew Henry assigns some blame for the delay on the false start made by Abram and Sarai in producing a son from whom the promised multitude of descendants would issue, saying: *Comforts we sinfully anticipate are justly delayed.* (Commentary, vol.1, p.110). Added

to this chastising element of the delay, we may perceive how the delay laid low Abram's natural pride and magnified God's power. The wait would also serve to prompt Abram more highly to prize the precious value of Isaac. When our Lord makes us wait for His blessing, He is at work giving us a proper capacity for it while He enlarges it for us.

Thursday, February 17th - Genesis 17: 1, 2

Once again the Lord appears and speaks to Abram. It is a special divine manifestation, not meant to dazzle the patriarch, but rather as befits the Lord doing a new and critical thing with Abram. The Lord's self designation is God Almighty (yD:êv; laeä), meaning the One of supreme might and self-sufficiency. Whatever this God promises to Abram and to his descendants, He is well equipped to do. Our help is in nothing less than the name of this great and glorious God.

Friday, February 18th - Genesis 17: 1, 2

After His self-designation of omnipotence, the Lord announces an imperative to Abram. The patriarch is commanded to walk—that is to say, live, move, and have his being—before God with completeness. It is not a call to earn his salvation, but rather a divine imperative for Abram to work out his salvation by the gracious enabling of his almighty God. Abram is to grow and make progress in the grace, knowledge, and perfection of the Lord, and therefore the verb employed is *walk*. With integrity, or wholeness and consistent devotion, Abram is called so to walk in the knowledge that he lives and acts in the presence and by the grace of His Lord. The perfection he only imperfectly reflects during the course of his earthly life, will become his in fullest measure when he is changed after the completion of his earthly race and stands before the Lord blameless and with great joy. This is the divine calling and promise for every believer (Phil. 2:12,13; Jude 24).

Saturday, February 19th - Genesis 17: 1, 2

There is a personal and corporate dimension to this covenant of grace into which Abram is brought by God. Personally, the Lord pledges to Abram all that will prove necessary for the establishment and glorious fulfillment of the covenant. Corporately, the Lord pledges His commitment to do this not only between Himself and Abram, but also between all those whom the Lord would make to be spiritual descendants of Abram. The Lord would replicate a countless host of spiritual children from the father of faith. Hence, we who believe in Christ find that we have in this covenant, given by God many centuries ago and formed by Him before the foundation of the world, a vital interest.

Sunday, February 20th - Genesis 17: 3

The response of Abram to the lavish grace and inconceivable glory contained in this covenant given to him is thankful worship. The patriarch prostrates himself before the Lord, demonstrating bodily his confession that none of his natural endowments or attainments make him worthy of or able to produce the salvation here given to him, but

rather that all of his help and sufficiency are in the revealing Word and redeeming work of the Lord. Our only appropriate response to our being made partakers of such a great salvation is our gratefully worshipping our gracious and glorious God.

Monday, February 21st – Genesis 17: 3-5

The Lord responds to Abram's reverential reception of this covenant of grace by reiterating and elaborating the character and blessed consequences of this covenant. To those rightly and reverently thankful to God for what He has promised to and provided for them, the Lord gives greater measure of understanding of the rich ramifications of what they, by His grace, possess. We would be filled with grateful wonder more at the glory promised to us if we worshipped the Lord more for His grace.

Tuesday, February 22nd - Genesis 17: 3-5

The Lord reiterates that this covenant of grace is by Him unilaterally formed and applied to Abram and to all of his spiritual descendants. It is the Lord's part to do all in this saving transaction. Therefore, it is deemed the Lord's covenant. He planned it, purposed it, and provides it. It is with Abram and his descendants by God's doing. It requires nothing of Abram, but it changes everything for him and for the nations of believing descendants that will issue from him by faith. That is why the Lord, in an act signifying special propriety in and authority over Abram, changes the patriarch's name. No longer would he be Abram, meaning *exalted father*—a name that to this childless man had been an empty taunt. God gives him the name, Abraham, meaning *father of a people*, for so God would make this 99 year old man. A year later, he would have a son—a physical and spiritual descendant through Sarai (Gen. 21:5)—and through that child of promise the nation of Israel and many kings would issue. Yet, such natural progeny would but typify the multitudes of people of every tongue, tribe, and nation, that would be counted as Abraham's spiritual descendants by the Lord's saving application of this covenant of grace to them as well (Rom. 2:28,29; 4:9-17).

Wednesday, February 23rd - Genesis 17: 4-6

In vv. 4-5, the great quantity of descendants that would issue from Abraham is stressed by the Lord's promise that Abraham would be the father of a multitude of nations. In v.6 the quality of that multitude is brought into view with the promise that kings would issue from Abraham. This was certainly true of David, Solomon, and the other kings of Israel, all of whom were naturally descended from Abraham. The spiritual descendants of the patriarch have included godly Gentile kings, emperors, prime ministers, and presidents. Even the least in the kingdom of God belongs to a kingdom of priests (Rev. 1:6) who, by faith, reign as super conquerors in Christ. This is all the Lord's doing, and He never forsakes quality for quantity.

Thursday, February 24th - Genesis 17: 7

This verse stresses the certainty and gives expression to the essence of the covenant of grace. The certainty of this covenant resides in the fact that it is of the Lord's making and establishing. In v. 2, the Lord declared that He would establish His covenant between Himself and Abraham. Here in v.7 that declaration is reaffirmed. The significance of the divine promise to establish the covenant is that this covenant was not only graciously designed by the Lord, but that it would also be securely applied by the Lord to its promised recipients, namely, Abraham and his descendants. Out of the *I am* of v.1 flow several *I will* promises in vv.2-8. Our God is not only a God of gracious and saving disposition, but also of gracious and saving deeds.

Friday, February 25th - Genesis 17: 7

The essence of the covenant of grace is its restoration of that relationship between the Lord and His people that had been severed by the sin of our first parents and made only worse by the manifold transgressions of their descendants. Through the Lord's design and application of grace to His chosen people, a right relationship would obtain between God and His people. In that relationship, the Lord would be the God of His people and of His people's descendants. Those brought into this covenant would no longer serve sin and Satan, but would have a new, loving, and saving divine Master reigning over them.

Saturday, February 26th - Genesis 17: 7

Through the covenant of grace, the Lord would be the God of His people. This means that for those who are, by God's gracious, effectual calling, made partakers of this covenant, their only God would be the Lord. They would be freed from the dominion as well as the guilt and corruption of their sins (Rom. 6). They would be freed from the impossible demand of God's holy law, that they personally, perfectly, and perpetually keep the law in order to be right with God (Rom. 7). They would be freed from the just and holy condemnation of the Lord Himself (Rom. 8). They would be freed from the tyranny of Satan (Eph. 2:1-7). They would be freed from their guilty fears and sinful bondage and they would be free to devote themselves to the Lord as their wise, loving, and powerful God, the object of their grateful and loving worship and service, as well as the source of their supreme blessedness (Eph. 1:3). So run the contours of the covenant of grace, for Abraham and for all of his descendants.

Sunday, February 27th – Genesis 17: 7

The Lord in this verse promises not only to establish His covenant between Abraham and Himself, but also between Himself and Abraham's descendants. There are two lines of divine promise running from that word translated *descendants*. The primary line runs directly to Christ, as Paul makes clear in Galatians 3:16. Christ, who would be descended from Abraham (Mt. 1:1), would be the perfect incarnation and fulfillment of the covenant of grace. To Christ alone would the Lord be perfectly and perpetually the God of His life, for even Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all of their descendants—physical and spiritual—would sinfully stray from the Lord at times due to the residue of sin within them. However, there is a secondary line issuing from the word, descendants. While it is

true that the word in this verse literally reads in the singular, *seed*, there is an ambiguity in the expression that can, and in this case does, include a plural connotation. God is here promising not only to be the God of Abraham, but also the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, and the God of the children of Israel (Ex. 3:6,7). Therefore, believers not only have a personal interest in the covenant of grace, but their children do as well. It is the Lord who engages our children to be His, promising to lead them one day to exercise faith and repentance in their own right, as He had done with us. We will find later, with Jacob's sons ever more clearly than with Abraham's sons, that this covenant promise to believers' children is not absolute (cf. Rom. 9:6-13). But we are to treat it and trust in it as though it were, for this promise is a hope given to us for our children, while its distributive personal application is one of the secret things that belongs to the Lord (Dt. 29:29).

Monday, February 28th - Genesis 17: 7

The covenant of grace is termed by God to be an everlasting covenant. As such we are to understand that it loses none of its power over time. The passage of ages cannot weaken it, nor can our petty inconsistencies committed over the fleeting days of our lives make it void. It is the Lord's gift of eternal life offered to all of His people through all ages.

Tuesday, March 1st - Genesis 17: 7, 8

The people of the covenant are stipulated in v.7, while the Lord in v.8 reiterates His promise to give them property (Gen. 12:7; 13:15 ,17; 15:16 ,18-21). The land of promise would serve as a shadow of the glorious, eternal, heavenly dwelling of the people of God. What Adam had lost by his sin, namely, life in a garden and dominion over the earth, would be, by the grace of the Lord, more than restored to His people. For Abraham, the restoration was his sojourn in Canaan , augmented by the promise of God that his descendants would one day conquer and settle in the land. That settlement would be but a more highly defined shadow. The substance is the saints' eternal life in the celestial city (Heb. 11:13 -16).

Wednesday, March 2nd - Genesis 17: 7, 8

This covenant of grace is presented freely here to Abraham. Its cost, however, is hidden. In fact, it is an infinitely costly covenant, but God makes no mention of that here because He will Himself bear that cost in the giving of His only begotten Son. What is emphasized here is the result, or final fruition, of the covenant of grace. For those made partakers of this covenant, the Lord will be their God. Union and communion with the God of grace and glory is stressed by the Lord in each of these verses declaring that He would be the God of His people. The relation severed by man's sin would be restored by this divine pledge being fulfilled by the Lord's performing the costly redemption that would actually reunite God and man.

Thursday, March 3rd – Genesis 17: 7, 8

We perceive advancement in the revelation of the features of the covenant of grace here given to Abraham over the disclosure of this covenant to Noah. With Noah, the explicit content of the covenant was negative: the Lord would never again bring universal destruction upon the earth through a flood (Gen. 9:8-11). With Abraham, the covenant is expressed in positive and personal terms: God would provide His people with a land, and He would be their God. The fullest and final expression of the covenant of grace is found in Revelation 21:1-7. There the splendor of the glorified Church is sketched, while the relation that obtains between God and the believer is set out in filial terms: *I will be his God and he will be My Son*. With this covenant, the best is yet to be.

Friday, March 4th – Genesis 17: 9-11

To the promise of the covenant of grace the Lord now adds a sign and seal in pledge of it. With the Lord giving instruction that His people were to be circumcised, we have the divine instituting of the first Old Testament Sacrament. Centuries later, Moses would promulgate the Lord's instituting of the second Old Testament sacrament, namely, the Passover (Ex. 12). Both Old Testament sacraments were bloody, and with the shedding of that blood the cost of the covenant of grace is implied. Those bloody sacraments, however, point to the perfect and efficacious shedding of the blood of the redeeming Lamb of God, and because the substantial blood of the covenant has been shed by Christ, the New Testament counterparts of the Old Testament sacraments, namely, baptism and the Lord's Supper, are bloodless. These sacraments are the only divinely ordained and warranted sensible signs given in pledge of the great and precious promises of God's Word. Man-made symbols of salvation do not clarify but rather cloud the believer's apprehension of the Savior and of His great accomplished salvation.

Saturday, March 5th – Genesis 17: 9-13

The Lord in these verses gives to Abraham and to all of His people the mode of circumcision and the subjects of it. The mode involved the cutting away of the foreskin of every male member of Abraham's household. For any son born to Abraham, this would take place on the eighth day of his life; whereas servants purchased would be circumcised when they came to Abraham's household, or, if born into his household, they, too, would be circumcised on the eighth day. There would obviously be shedding of blood in this operation, as a foreshadowing of the atoning death of the Savior, who was born under the law to redeem His people from the curse of the law they had violated. The ordinances of God contain more deep and far reaching significance than we initially may realize.

Sunday, March 6th - Genesis 17: 9-13

The meaning of this rite of circumcision is not explicitly given, but may be deduced from our consideration of the mode and subjects of circumcision. The fact that the rite of circumcision cut and removed part of each male's most intimate organ of reproduction is most significant. It makes circumcision to be a sign of repentance, showing that whatever is hidden *in* man, from his birth, is polluted and requires removal. It further

shows that whatever is *of* man—all of his potential and the product of his generation—is likewise polluted. Man must be changed with a vital, permanent change. He cannot do this himself, so the rite is performed upon each male child by another. Clearly, this points to man's regeneration in Christ, wherein the old self is put off and the new self is put on (Rom. 2:29).

Monday, March 7th - Genesis 17: 9-13

The meaning of circumcision is manifold. Not only does it signify repentance through the tokenary removal of a bit of a male's flesh, it also signifies through the fact that it was the male reproductive organ that was cut, that salvation is through the seed of Abraham. The line of the patriarch's physical descendants would point with a trail of blood to the substance of salvation, namely, to Jesus who would be reckoned in His humanity as the saving seed of Abraham (Mt. 1:1; Gal. 3:16). For centuries, countless Hebrew males bore in their bodies a sign that declared their need for repentance and God's promise of a Savior. Similarly are we marked in our persons with a baptismal sign that points to Christ's cleansing of our sins.

Tuesday, March 8th - Genesis 17: 9-13

Augustine saw in the ordinary time at which circumcision was to be performed a token of the resurrection of Jesus, that took place after the seventh day, or Sabbath, and ushered in a new life for the people of God. All Hebrew males would live through at least one Sabbath prior to their circumcision. Thereafter, they would bear in their bodies the sign of saving change, of new life, of repentance from the old, natural, sinful self, and a prospect of the salvation signified in their circumcision and provided in the Savior to come of the seed of Abraham.

Wednesday, March 9th - Genesis 17: 9-13

The subjects for circumcision were to be Abraham and the males of his household, as well as their descendants. Females were included in the sign of the covenant of grace by their being under the male authority of their fathers or husbands. Not only sons born of Abraham, but servants belonging to him were also to be circumcised. This provision points to the ingrafting of the Gentiles into the people of God, wherein those who were strangers and slaves were treated, at least through this ordinance of grace, as sons. The primary sphere of the application of the covenant of grace is therefore the family of believers, and the redemption and regeneration of which circumcision was the sign and seal, makes those redeemed to be members of a family of faith and love, whether they be male or female, Jew or Gentile, slave or free (Gal. 3:28).

Thursday, March 10th – Genesis 17: 9-14

Another dimension of the complex meaning of circumcision is the seriousness of this sacrament. The Lord takes this sign of the covenant very seriously because He takes so seriously His covenant of grace. The seriousness of the sign is shown here by its

perpetuity. It is a permanent mark in the flesh signifying the everlasting covenant (v.13). There is also prescribed by the Lord serious discipline for those despising circumcision. If no sign is applied, no covenant is deemed to be in force (v.14). We, too, should highly esteem both the substance and the divinely instituted signs and seals of the covenant of grace.

Friday, March 11th - Genesis 17: 15 , 16

To the covenant and to its sign of circumcision that the Lord gave to Abraham is now added the divine promise of a son to be conceived in and born of Sarai. Although Sarai now comes more directly into the covenantal dealings of God, it is with Abraham, as head of his family, that the Lord continues to have direct dealings at this point. The first thing pertaining to Sarai that God tells Abraham is that her name is to be changed. The Lord, as supreme sovereign, exercises this act of authority over Sarai by commanding this change of her name. Yet, He instructs Abraham, as her earthly head, to exercise his authority blessedly over her by his administering the change of her name from Sarai, meaning *princess* or *my princess* to Sarah, the absolute form of princess, or a name meaning *noble woman*. The name, Sarah, may also be derived from an Arabic cognate, meaning *fruitful*. Her name change implies that her regality issued not from one man, namely, her father (from *my princess*), but rather through her inherent blessedness and her blessed relation to ones such as Abraham and Isaac, and to the nations and kings that would issue from her. Thusly does God make fruitful the barren and exalt the humble.

Saturday, March 12th - Genesis 17: 15 , 16

The change in Sarah will not be merely nominal, but actual. Not only was her name to be changed, but, by her bearing Isaac, the men and nations of the world would be changed. Abraham and Sarah would bear a son, and, through him, many sons, who were not destined to populate hell, but who would worship the King of kings and would reign in this life as more than conquerors, and would enter eternal glory blameless and with great joy.

Sunday, March 13th - Genesis 17: 17 , 18

These verses record the response of Abraham to the promise the Lord had given to him of a son through Sarah. The father of faith laughs at the prospect. He does so not because his faith was strong, inspiring within him an unspeakable joy. Instead, his laughter issues from his finite and fallible logic, that reasoned the great age both he and his wife had attained to be an impossible impediment to the conception of a son. In short, Abraham finds the Lord's promise to be incredible, and therefore he ridicules it, rather than gratefully relying on it. Perhaps he thought that by his believing this promise, the laugh would be on him, as being one so foolish as to believe and commit to the incredible. How many of the great and precious promises of the Lord are we tempted to laugh off?

Monday, March 14th - Genesis 17: 17 , 18

Abraham's lack of faith shows not only in his ridicule of the divine promise, but also in his request for less than what the Lord was promising him. At least his ridicule Abraham kept in his thoughts, refusing irreverently to express them (as Asaph also did in Ps.73). But by his request that God own and bless Ishmael, he manifests with respect to the rich grace and almighty power of God a distrust that dishonors the Lord. Abraham believed, but he needed to be further delivered from his unbelief. Many times we, too, want our Lord to own and bless what we see and what we have produced by our own fallible and sinful plans and purposes, rather than to trust Him and gratefully to accept from Him new, pure, and exalted blessings above what we ask, think, or deserve.

Tuesday, March 15th - Genesis 17: 19

God denies Abraham's request for divine blessing to be upon and pass through his then thirteen year old son, Ishmael (compare Gen. 16:16 with Gen. 17:1). The low request for the blessing of God to be upon the son of Abraham's sinful production is refused because the Lord had higher and better provision to make for and through Abraham. The promise of God would not be retracted for a pragmatic and faithless substitute. The provision of a son from Abraham and Sarah would come, containing the blessings of the covenant of grace. We must learn to accept that the Lord's denials of some of our most prized petitions make way for the better provision He is determined to lavish upon us.

Wednesday, March 16th - Genesis 17: 19

God not only reiterates his promise of a son to Abraham, but He also directs the patriarch to call the promised son by the name *Isaac*, meaning *he laughs*. By this name, Abraham would have a living reminder of his faithless laugh of nervous ridicule by which he inwardly balked at the promise of God. Such remembrance would serve to humble Abraham, and spur him to recall that no thing is too difficult for the Lord. The name would also befit the fresh joy that Isaac's birth and life would bring to Abraham, as God had the last laugh upon doubting Abraham by turning his sinful mocking into living joy and holy mirth.

Thursday, March 17th - Genesis 17: 18 -20

The Lord's refusal of Abraham's request concerning Ishmael was not entirely a denial. While the everlasting covenant would be established by God with Isaac and his descendants, and not with Ishmael, the Lord determined not to withhold all blessing from Ishmael. Therefore, we see that the Lord informs Abraham of His intention to shower great and manifold temporal blessings upon the son of the bond woman, because Abraham was his father. In this, the Lord is gracious to both sons of Abraham, conferring His redemptive blessing upon Isaac and His common blessing upon Ishmael. No man can justly charge God with providing for him less than gracious treatment.

Friday, March 18th - Genesis 17: 21

The promises of God become increasingly detailed and clear. The Lord has stipulated that Abraham would have a son named Isaac through Sarah, and that with that son would be established God's covenant. To these details, the Lord now adds the specification that Sarah would bear this promised son approximately a year from the time of this appearance of the Lord to Abraham. The Lord is graciously sovereign over all the details of the lives of His people. He knows what rich blessing is in store for them and when it will be delivered to them because He controls all events in time and eternity. He ever causes all things to work for the good of His people.

Saturday, March 19th - Genesis 17: 22

At this point, the appearance and words of God cease for Abraham. We are told that God went up from Abraham, and the mental picture we could form from this might be that of a physical ascent. What is actually represented by this mode of departure is not that God put distance between Himself and Abraham, but rather that God returned from His condescension to Abraham to the exalted and glorious throne of His sovereign authority and power. There the Lord would not be remote from Abraham, but would be reigning over all matters pertaining to the patriarch, causing them to work together for his blessing.

Sunday, March 20th - Genesis 17: 22 , 23

When the appearance and words of God to Abraham ceased, the time for the work of Abraham had accordingly arrived. Hence, we see the patriarch immediately carry out the Lord's instructions with respect to the application of circumcision to himself and to the males of his household. Abraham performs complete, immediate, and faithful actions in conformity with the Word of God to him. Anything less would have been faithless disobedience. The rich and free grace of the Lord, as expressed in His Word, is given to us for our performance, not for the fostering of indolent presumption in us.

Monday, March 21st – Genesis 17: 24

This verse explicitly notes for us that Abraham personally received the sign of the covenant of grace. His being a subject for circumcision is implied in v.10, as well as in the nature of the sacrament and its vital importance. Our verse also notes the great age of Abraham when he received circumcision. Due to no negligence or procrastination on his part, but rather due to the holy providence of the Lord, the patriarch could not receive the sign of the covenant until God instituted it. This occurred when Abraham was ninety-nine years old—an age at which the rite would have been uncomfortable, if not dangerous, and an age that human logic would deem to be past the point necessary for one's receiving this sign. Yet, with Abraham, we learn that it is never too late for one to receive God's gift of saving grace or to obey the Lord in receiving the sign and seal of that salvation.

Tuesday, March 22nd - Genesis 17: 25

We learn in this verse that although Ishmael was, by God's explicit declaration, excluded from the covenant of grace (vv.18-21), yet, because he was Abraham's son and a male belonging to his household, under the express provisions of what God also commanded in vv.9-14, he was rightly to receive circumcision. Had he failed to apply circumcision to Ishmael, Abraham would have been disobedient to the express commandment of God, notwithstanding the doubts that God's own Word planted in Abraham's mind regarding the ultimate salvation of this particular son of his. Surely this Scriptural commendation to us of the believing parents' responsibility to have applied to their children the sign of initiation into the covenant of grace, irrespective of their showing any signs of regeneration, serves to confirm the validity of the blessed doctrine and practice of paedobaptism.

Wednesday, March 23rd - Genesis 17: 26

We are told that Abraham was so certain of his responsibility to circumcise his son, Ishmael, that the patriarch performed the rite on his son on the very day wherein he had received the same rite himself. Abraham allowed no amount of inconvenience, discomfort, or incapacitation to impede or delay him in applying to his son the rite of circumcision. Ishmael's submission to his father is seen in this as he, being thirteen years old, was of an age sufficient to resist the application of this rite to himself. Abraham's faith is evident in his own circumcision, since he underwent a delicate operation that could have mutilated his reproductive organ through which his hopes and expectations to have a son would be instrumentally realized. When the father of the faithful shows such immediate and painful obedience in applying to himself and to his son the sign of a covenant from which he was expressly told by God that Ishmael would be excluded, what are we to think of believing parents who unnecessarily delay the baptism of their children? For believers, whether or not today is the day of salvation for their children, it is clearly the day for their baptism, if they are at least eight days old.

Thursday, March 24th - Genesis 17: 27

Abraham was not only quick to obey the Lord in applying circumcision to himself and his son, he was also thorough in his carrying out of the divine instructions regarding the extent to which the sign of the covenant was to be applied in his household. All the men of the patriarch's household, all who were acquired by purchase or who were born to those so acquired, were subjected to circumcision along with Abraham and Ishmael. By his fully obeying the provision of vv.9-14, Abraham not only demonstrates the completeness of his faith in and obedience to the Lord, but he also represents, by the circumcision of those slaves, the eventual incorporation into that covenant of the Gentiles, who were strangers to and aliens from the covenant of grace (Eph. 2:11-22).

Friday, March 25th - Genesis 18: 1

It was not long after the Lord had appeared to Abraham, to change the names of the patriarch and his wife, to give to Abraham the sign and seal of the covenant of grace, and to promise him a son through Sarah, that the Lord again appeared to the father of the

faithful. What had intervened between the two appearances was Abraham's trusting and obedient applications of circumcision to himself and to all males of his household. There is nothing better than our quick and total obedience to God's Word to prompt the Lord's continued coming to us.

Saturday, March 26th - Genesis 18: 1

The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, where the patriarch dwelt and where he had previously built an altar to the Lord (Gen. 13:18). Places devoted to the worship of God should become dear to us, as they become places where our Lord is pleased habitually to manifest Himself to us.

Sunday, March 27th – Genesis 18: 1, 2

It was an ordinary day at its start. At noon or soon thereafter, Abraham was sitting at his tent door, sheltering himself from the hot sun. There is here recorded no sign of the patriarch's expectation of a divine and angelic visitation. Yet, the Lord comes in His perfect timing, not according to our imperfect expectation. The Lord also came to Abraham in a fashion calculated to draw out the gracious character of the patriarch. The God who had given grace to Abraham delighted to make its reflected essence shine more brightly than the blazing sun from the father of the faithful. Hence, when Abraham saw three men walking through the heat of the day, he hastened to provide blessing for them, little expecting the blessing they were bringing to him. If we would treat others in a gracious, Christ-like way, we should not be surprised to find ourselves commended and rewarded with blessing from the God of heaven and earth (Mt. 25:31-40; Heb. 13:2).

Monday, March 28th - Genesis 18: 2-5

Abraham, despite his great age, used his old eyes to see three men, whom he thought were strangers. He used his old legs to run to them, and prostrated his aged frame before them. He used his voice to communicate graciously with them, addressing them as honored lords, and beseeching them to partake of his refreshing and nourishing hospitality, as though the blessing would be more his in the giving than theirs in the receiving. This was all done because Abraham, who had received gracious blessing from the Lord, rightly reckoned himself to be richly enabled to serve generously for the blessing of others. Thus, the old man, by grace, renews his strength when he determines to employ it for the blessing of others. Such blessed giving will not fail to receive blessing in return.

Tuesday, March 29th - Genesis 18: 2-5

Abraham treats these three strangers royally. His object in doing so is the sheer exercise of free grace. He intends to strengthen them so that they might carry on with their mission (v.5), not to detain them in expectation of receiving favors from them. Soon he will learn that the honors he lavishes upon these strangers are rightly bestowed, for these three would reveal themselves to be the Angel of the Lord (v.13) and two holy

angels, on a mission to bless Abraham and Sarah richly. It is better for us to treat others with honor even greater than we might think that they deserve, than to treat them dishonorably. To our surprise and delight we may find the high honors we give fitting those receiving them more often than not.

Wednesday, March 30th - Genesis 18: 2-5

Abraham gives royal treatment to three strangers. In return, he receives incalculable blessing from the heavenly King of kings. It is true not only for this patriarch, but also for all of his descendants, that divine blessings shower upon those who give to others for the Lord's sake.

Thursday, March 31st - Genesis 18: 6-8

What Abraham offered to the three men, whom he presumed to be travelers, was water and bread (vv.4,5). What he provided for them was fine cakes, a cooked calf, curds, and milk. Abraham's provision was better than his promise. Similarly, we who live and serve in the kingdom of the Lord's grace should ever strive to make our works not only equal to, but better than, our words. The provision of our Lord is certainly always greater than His promise.

Friday, April 1st - Genesis 18: 6-8

We should note in these verses not only the generous provision of the father of faith, but also how well his household was ordered. By the blessing of God, Abraham had worked out his salvation in the practical and familial details of his life. We have seen him with lapses in his faith when he tried to pass off Sarah as his sister, putting her into harm's way to secure himself, and when he took Sarah's counsel regarding Hagar and sowed seeds of discord and bitterness in his own family. Yet, though the righteous fall, they are not cast down irreparably, but are ever lifted up again by the restoring hand of the Lord. Hence, in this passage, we detect a household well ordered and with sufficient stores to share with those in need (Eph. 4:28). When Abraham calls upon his wife and servant to make preparation for the surprise meal, they respond with immediate and cheerful compliance. Where faith prevails in a man's heart, its sweet fruit spreads through his household, causing peace, order, and efficiency also to predominate.

Saturday, April 2nd - Genesis 18: 9

The angels ask Abraham about Sarah's location. Scripture does not record for us that Abraham had told them his wife's name, or even that he had a wife. Their specific knowledge regarding Abraham and his family indicates to the patriarch and to us the first clue that there was more to these three men than appeared to the eye. The Lord, of course, would have known Sarah's whereabouts, yet the question is put to elicit a testimony from Abraham regarding not only where Sarah was physically located, but especially regarding the employment of Sarah. Abraham's answer, that she was in the tent, indicates that Sarah was with submissive obedience about the domestic business

assigned to her by her husband. She was here in a position far different from the one in which she had usurped her husband's authority and directed him to produce a son through her slave. Sarah was found occupied commendably in faithful deeds of service on the day of her divine visitation (1 Pet. 3:1-6)). In no better place and about no better business could she have been than where she was when God came to bless her with the promise of a son. Where shall we be and what shall we be doing when the Lord comes to us?

Sunday, April 3rd – Genesis 18: 10

In this verse, a single spokesman emerges from the three men who in v.9 inquired regarding the whereabouts of Sarah. This spokesman is, of course, the Angel of the Lord (v.13). In response to the disclosure of Sarah's location, the Lord announces where He will be a year hence. The Lord emphatically promises to return to Abraham and Sarah and further promises that the two, at that time, would be blessed with the addition of a son born of Sarah. This announcement, of course, is not merely a prediction of coincidence, but a declaration of causation. This leader of the three men is the Lord, who will open the womb of Sarah that He had closed (Gen. 16:2), and provide wonderfully for this couple who were at this time so graciously and generously offering the provision of their household to Him. Thus, we observe grace upon grace, or greater blessing promised by the blessing God who had been blessed by Abraham and Sarah's hospitality.

Monday, April 4th – Genesis 18: 10 -12

The natural impediment to the fulfillment of the Lord's promise is mentioned in v.11. Abraham was an old man, his body being as good as dead, as the apostle so designates it (Rom. 4:19). However, despite the decrepitude of the patriarch's body, his impediment was not as great as was that which afflicted his wife. In fact, Abraham would produce sons years later, from his second wife, Keturah (Gen. 25:1-4). However, Sarah was not only barren, but she had passed through menopause. The promise, being in Sarah's mind overshadowed by these natural impediments, rendered it laughable to her, as it had been to Abraham (Gen. 17:17). Ridicule is the natural response to the great and precious promises made in the Bible. Faith, however, takes these promises with vital seriousness, and accepts them with gratitude and holy rejoicing rather than unholy, unbelieving ridicule.

Tuesday, April 5th – Genesis 18: 10 -12

Sarah was not directly given this promise of a son. Abraham had received the promise earlier (Gen. 17:16,19,21), and he may have and should have shared that good news with Sarah. Here, again, it is Abraham that is told about the son to be born to Sarah within the coming year. Sarah learns of this second telling by her overhearing it. Then she, who thought herself undetected, laughed in her heart at the prospect. If Abraham had told her previously about the Lord's promise, this second word of confirming testimony should more readily have been accepted by Sarah. Even if Abraham had determined not to tell Sarah, for whatever reason, her first hearing of it should have been received with grateful joy rather than rejected with ridicule. Had there been more faith in

Sarah's heart, the rejecting ridicule that filled it would have been cast out and replaced with grateful and reverent joy.

Wednesday, April 6th - Genesis 18: 13

This verse clearly intimates that one of the three angels Abraham and Sarah were entertaining was the Angel of the Lord. There were hints respecting the divine character of this stranger contained in His questioning Abraham about his wife and His referring to her as Sarah. Such specific, personal intelligence regarding Abraham's family reveals a knowledge of the patriarch and his family beyond that which a stranger could have. Then, when the Lord reiterated His promise that Sarah would have a son within the year, Abraham must have realized the divinity of this leading guest. Finally, the identity of the Lord becomes clear to all, even to the concealed Sarah, when He asks Abraham to account for the laughing of his wife, who was hidden, and whose ridicule was kept in her heart. Both Abraham and Sarah initially laughed at the promise of the Lord. They did so because they overestimated their intelligence and underestimated the knowledge and power of the One announcing the good news. This gentle but effective revelation of the omniscience of the Lord, served to humble this couple, so that they would lean less on their own fallible understanding and more on the Word of the One who knows all things, even men's thoughts and intentions.

Thursday, April 7th - Genesis 18: 13 , 14

Not only is the omniscience of the Lord revealed in His knowing of Sarah's attitude of incredulity and ridicule regarding the promise of a son, but the omnipotence of the Lord is asserted in v.14. Abraham could have answered the Lord's question as to why Sarah had laughed, for he himself had laughed when the promise was first given. But the patriarch offers no answer because one's mouth is hushed in shamed silence in face of the omniscience and omnipotence of the Lord. What will we say when the Lord inquires into the reason for our doubts and fears?

Friday, April 8th - Genesis 18: 13 ,14

Surely it is not difficult for us rightly to answer the question that the Lord poses to Abraham in v.14. Nothing is too difficult for an Almighty arm to perform. If that is so, we must cease fearing things great and small in our lives, and rely upon the hand of divine might to supply abundantly what is purposed for us by infallible wisdom and promised to us by immeasurable love.

Saturday, April 9th - Genesis 18: 13 , 14

Sarah's ridicule issued from a heart filled with reliance upon her own understanding and experience. Never in her experience or knowledge had a woman in her state conceived, let alone given birth to a child. The Lord, however, by revealing His omniscience and omnipotence to Sarah (and to us), leads her properly to focus her faith upon His person and work. In this way, the Lord does a transforming work, opening the

heart and mind of Sarah before He worked to open her womb. Unbelief must be vanquished before great and precious divine promises are given to be fulfilled.

Sunday, April 10th – Genesis 18: 10 -15

Sarah's being in the tent making preparations for the refreshment of her guests is commendable. However, she was not completely concentrating upon her task. Her curiosity led her to listen to the conversation between the Lord and her husband. That is how she came to hear this promise of a son, and that is how she came to laugh, making an inappropriate response to the promise and earning for herself a gentle rebuke from the Lord. Curiosity is a universal human foible that can seem to us charming and endearing. However, curiosity is never a safe guide to our understanding and rightly appropriating the things of the Lord. Faith alone leads us reverently to seek to know God's will so that we might accept it with submissive and trusting gratitude, rather than reject it with cynicism and contempt.

Monday, April 11th - Genesis 18: 15

Sarah is understandably embarrassed at being caught in her unbelief. This verse tells us that she was afraid. How could she be otherwise? When faith decreases fears increase. Perhaps she feared that she had offended this angelic visitor who had promised her something so wonderful. Foolishly, she tries to deny her faithless, offensive laughter, only to be gently rebuked when the Lord, who knows thoughts and intentions, insists that her denial does nothing to change the truth of His charge that she had laughed. We can never deceive our all-knowing Lord. Why would we want to try to do so? He comes to us not to condemn us for our little faith, but to purify, exercise, and strengthen our faith. He comes not to punish us, but lovingly to bless us beyond what we can ask or think.

Tuesday, April 12th - Genesis 18: 16

The Lord had visited Abraham and Sarah on a mission of mercy; He went from them to continue on a mission of judgment upon Sodom . From the blessing of the righteous, the Lord proceeds to the punishment of the wicked. The coming of the Lord always has manifold purposes. He comes as a savor of life to the righteous and as a savor of death to the wicked. May we be ones with sure expectation of life and blessing from the Lord who is surely coming one day finally and fully to divide His blessed sheep from the world's cursed goats (Mt. 25:31ff).

Wednesday, April 13th - Genesis 18: 16 -19

As the Lord, with His accompanying angels, rose to leave Abraham and Sarah, they set their focus upon Sodom . Abraham had his focus set upon giving them an honorable send off. Men, even righteous men, do not see things as does the Lord. It is likely that as they walked, Abraham was taken up with thoughts of the promised son and the new life that would fill his house and heart. Yet, as the patriarch was in process of sending these heavenly conveyors of blessing away, little did he suspect that they went to strike many

homes with death. The Lord determined to open Abraham's eyes to this ministry of judgment, partly so that the father of faith would understand that he was what he was by the electing grace of God, and also to stimulate within Abraham the exercise of a ministry of gracious intercession. The Lord desires to lead His people into all the truth, into the whole counsel of God respecting salvation and damnation, mercy and judgment, heaven and hell. For our God is glorified in His justice and in His mercy.

Thursday, April 14th - Genesis 18: 17

The Lord, having revealed His gracious and blessed purposes for Abraham, determines to reveal His purposes of justice to the patriarch as well. The Lord would have His people not to walk in ignorance either of the glory of His saving grace or of the glory of His justice. Therefore, He determines to declare to Abraham the judgment He was about to send upon Sodom and Gomorrah so that the father of faith and His children would know that those cities were destroyed not by natural calamity, but by the just judgment of God upon their sins. Thus, the Lord gives to Abraham not only a son, but also a sight of fiery destruction, and insight into the gracious and just ways of his God. The children of the God of light will always be led into the light of the divine ways.

Friday, April 15th - Genesis 18: 17 , 18

The reasons the Lord revealed His purposes of judgment to Abraham are manifold. As the patriarch was the spring of covenant blessing, he, as the father and head of the faithful, must know the mind of God in order to communicate that knowledge to his children. Therefore, the people of God are not only to observe the acts of their God in providence, but also to understand the just and holy ways of the Lord of providence, and to declare those ways to others.

Saturday, April 16th - Genesis 18: 17 -19

Another reason the Lord revealed His purposes of judgment to Abraham was to anchor the exaltation to which the patriarch and his descendants were destined by God firmly in their fruitful knowledge of the Lord's grace. As Abraham and his descendants were to become great, the Lord would have them not to forget that they, whose sins deserved judgment like that brought upon Sodom and Gomorrah , lived lives as more than conquerors, not by their deserving or doing, but by the electing and enabling grace of the Lord.

Sunday, April 17th - Genesis 18: 17 , 18

The Lord would have Abraham and his descendants to know that they were saved from divine judgment by sovereign, divine grace. The Lord would also have them to know that they were so blessed to serve as instruments of blessing to others. The true blessing of all the nations of the earth results when the people of God declare to the nations of the earth their sins and their separation from God, as well as their guilt, the

coming of final divine judgment, and, above all, point them to the ark of God's salvation in Christ.

Monday, April 18th - Genesis 18: 19

The choosing of God entails a life of caring and commanding for the chosen. God made Himself known to Abraham so that Abraham would make God known to his children. The Lord speaks of Abraham commanding his children in the knowledge and ways of God. The word, *command*, conveys the idea of the exercise of familial headship and authority. Yet, Abraham and all godly parents accomplish this by way of commanding example rather than by simply directive words. Abraham would lead his children by first himself keeping the way of the Lord. He would not only profess righteousness, but he would perform it. The result would be the full blessing of the Lord brought upon Abraham through his working out his salvation in fear and trembling. Nothing is so effective in leading our children into the way of the Lord as our own walk in that blessed way.

Tuesday, April 19th - Genesis 18: 20 , 21

The counsel of the Lord was recorded for us in vv.17-19. That counsel is followed by the Lord's conversation with Abraham. While the patriarch was focused upon his sending the Lord and His angels away (v.16), the Lord was focused upon the sin of certain people. God takes note of all sin, but he especially notes great sins. What the Lord reveals to Abraham here is the great sin of two great cities, so that Abraham would recall that by saving, divine mercy he had been delivered from fellowship with such sinners and from partaking of the divine judgment that would surely come upon them.

Wednesday, April 20th - Genesis 18: 20 , 21

The Lord declares there to be a great outcry from Sodom and Gomorrah , and further declares their sin to be exceedingly grave. What men in those cities thought they did secretly or openly with no accountability, in fact formed a swelling chorus of testimony against them before God. Sodom and Gomorrah apparently were great cities in their day. Yet the Lord and Judge of the world is not impressed with the splendor of man's achievement, but is rather sensitive to and grieved by their production of rising mountains of sin.

Thursday, April 21st – Genesis 18: 20 , 21

These verses appear to indicate that the Lord is not omniscient, but instead stands in need of reports and testimonies to inform Him of the true nature of things. In fact, these verses are intended to convey to us an understanding of the orderliness and just procedure that characterize the judgments of the Lord. Our God's wrathful condemnation of sinners is not an explosive, raging passion. It is rather the appropriate and duly measured exercise of moral authority, wherein sinners are justly tried before Him and condemned

by the truth of what they are and what they have done—truth that they would vainly try to suppress in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18).

Friday, April 22nd - Genesis 18: 20 , 21

What was the great sin of these two cities? Some say that it was their depraved and perverted sensuality, notably the sodomy practiced by many of the men in the city (Gen. 19:4,5). It is true that such sin represents the ripe fruit of a society far from the Lord (Rom. 1:26ff). But the root of such fruit is mentioned in Gen. 13:13: *Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the Lord.* In contrast to Abraham, who would teach his children by his doing righteousness and justice, the men of Sodom and Gomorrah practiced great and open rebellion against the Lord in all areas of their lives. All men are sinners. Yet those who nourish, rather than crucify their sins, will one day cross a line, drawn by God—not by themselves—when the Lord’s patience gives way to His righteous judgment.

Saturday, April 23rd - Genesis 18: 20 , 21

This divine judgment against men fully ripened in their sin is part of what the Lord would have Abraham to know and teach to his children. Do we know vitally and do we teach others, especially of our own household, with sincere and loving urgency, the whole counsel of God with respect to both man’s greatest peril and the Lord’s exceeding great provision? Half a gospel proclaims half a Savior and half a salvation, which is essentially no salvation.

Sunday, April 24th - Genesis 18: 22

Two of the three men whom Abraham had been refreshing from the heat of that day (v.2) departed for Sodom . Those two were angels, as we learn from Gen. 19:1. The third was the Lord Himself. Abraham does not curiously follow the angels to observe what they would do. He does not plead with them. Rather, he remains with the Lord of those angels, who sovereignly bids them to perform His work. Rightly, therefore, does Abraham stay with the Lord to labor in intercession for the righteous remnant he believed dwelt in Sodom and Gomorrah . Especially did the patriarch have his nephew, Lot , burdening his heart and calling for his intercessory prayer. The Lord would hear and grant Abraham’s intercession, not for the sparing of the sinful cities, but for the delivering of the miniscule righteous remnant within Sodom . Accordingly, the angels do not destroy the cities, but, instead, deliver Lot and his family from the consuming fire of judgment that the Lord Himself would rain upon the sinners of Sodom and Gomorrah . Our prayers to our Lord move glorious angels to serve as ministers of mercy. Let us, therefore, pray more, not less, for the deliverance of the righteous from the temporal judgments of God.

Monday, April 25th - Genesis 18: 23 -25

Believers called on the name of the Lord long before Abraham's day (Gen 4:26). However, these verses contain the first prayer actually recorded in Scripture. The prayer is offered by Abraham in response to the Lord's Word to him regarding the sin and judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah (vv.20,21). The essence of any true communion with God consists of our hearing His Word and responding in prayer. It is most significant that this first recorded prayer in Scripture is a cry for mercy. The justice of God is what sinful men deserve, but it is the mercy of God that triumphs over justice for the righteous, who have been accounted so by the Lord's saving grace.

Tuesday, April 26th - Genesis 18: 23 -25

Abraham rightly demonstrates the vital priority of prayer. He has been told of the divine judgment about to fall upon Sodom and Gomorrah . Yet, the patriarch, who ran to meet the men, who proved to be celestial visitors, when they approached him (v.2), does not hasten to the wicked cities to warn the people in them and call for their repentance. Instead, Abraham more effectively stays with the Lord, and employs his words in prayer. Our cries to men and our caring deeds for them are not nearly so valuable and vital to them as are our prayers for them.

Wednesday, April 27th – Genesis 18: 23 -25

As are all prayers recorded in Scripture, so this intercessory prayer of Abraham's is most instructive to us. We do not know how rightly to pray, so we must be taught by the God to whom we pray (Rom. 8:26 ,27). This prayer manifests Abraham's loving care for others. The Lord reveals His righteous judgments to His people in order to awaken in them a loving concern for others. The sovereign grace by which we have been saved does not reduce us to being passive spectators of men's plights, but empowers us to have a hand in their blessing. Through our prayers, we not only speak the truth in submission to our God and in loving care for others, but our words serve to change the truth about others as they and their circumstances are blessedly changed by the Lord's answer to our prayers.

Thursday, April 28th - Genesis 18: 23 -25

Mercy and justice kiss in the prayer of Abraham, as they do in all proper prayer. We see this when we observe that Abraham prays not for the sparing of the wicked in Sodom and Gomorrah , but for the sparing of those cities on account of the righteous minority dwelling within them. The basis for this request is the justice of God, for Abraham rightly pleads that the Judge of all the earth cannot do anything so unjust as to punish the righteous along with the wicked. Yet, when we remember that men are made righteous by the sovereign, electing grace of God, the dimension of divine mercy comes into view.

Friday, April 29th - Genesis 18: 23 -25

Abraham prays for his brethren, not for the world, and in this his prayer fits the pattern set by our Lord in His high priestly prayer (Jn. 17:9). The father of faith

understood and accepted that his God was a discriminating God, whose holy wrath rightly would punish the wicked. Yet, the discrimination made amongst the solid mass of sinful humanity was a fruit of divine mercy that snatched sinners from their transgressions and guilt and clothed them in perfect righteousness.

Saturday, April 30th - Genesis 18: 23 -25

Abraham forms his prayer requests according to the judgment of charity. He knew something of the character of Sodom from his dealings with the king of Sodom (Gen. 14). Yet, he reckoned that there must have been at least 50 godly souls residing within those two great cities. If we fallible creatures are to err in our assessments and petitions, Scripture indicates to us that we should err in favor of charity.

Sunday, May 1st - Genesis 18: 26

In this verse, the Lord indicates that He had heard Abraham's intercession, and that He would grant to the patriarch all that he had asked. If we have not in our lives, it is because we ask not of the Lord (Jas. 4:2). Our God delights to hear our prayers, and to answer them even above what we ask or think.

Monday, May 2nd - Genesis 18: 27 -32

The Lord answered Abraham's prayer above what the patriarch asked. For when God agreed to act according to Abraham's request, the father of faith was led to a more realistic conviction that he had asked for insufficient mercy. Therefore, Abraham proceeds through a series of sight adjustments, endeavoring to hit the mark. Repeatedly he asks the Lord to spare the wicked cities on account of an ever decreasing number of righteous persons living within them. In this way, Abraham wrestles and perseveres in his praying, asking for ever greater measure of God's mercy, while the Lord grants his every request. Our God grants our too often too low requests for His mercy as well. Let us learn from this neither to be ashamed nor to be timid in our asking greater mercies of our Lord.

Tuesday, May 3rd – Genesis 18: 27 -32

Abraham's praying had affected him before it touched anyone else. We see him growing in humility as he refines his intercessions. At first, he asked the Lord to spare the wicked cities on account of 50 righteous persons dwelling within them. When the Lord granted that request, Abraham marveled that the King of heaven had regarded the petitions of one who was dust and ashes (v.27). In v.30 he confesses that his repeated asking could justly try the Lord's patience, and in v.31 he acknowledges that prayer is something of a bold undertaking. As Abraham asks of God, the Lord increases and the patriarch decreases. Thus is the glory of God's grace apprehended and exalted most by those who pray most.

Wednesday, May 4th – Genesis 18: 27 -32

Abraham grows in holy boldness even as he grows in humility through his praying. He builds one request upon another, asking, seeking, and knocking as he perseveres and increases his indebtedness to the Lord's grace. Those who pray rightly marvel that the Lord hears and heeds the least of their requests, and are filled with encouragement thereby to ask for greater things. Divine grace hereby draws the prayerful to ever higher, greater, and surer expectation from God.

Thursday, May 5th – Genesis 18: 32

The Jews reckoned that at least ten Israelite men were required to constitute a synagogue in a given city. No doubt, that minimum requirement was based on this verse where Abraham ceases asking God to spare Sodom and Gomorrah if He should find ten righteous men living in them. Did Abraham conclude his intercession at this particular number because he felt that he had asked for a sufficiently small number to make certain the sparing of the cities? If so, he overestimated the number of believers living in those cities even with this small figure. It is more likely that Abraham realized that the line where mercy would become unholy indulgence had been reached. That the Lord was willing to spare two great cities steeped in wickedness on account of only ten believers living as salt and light within them, manifests the exceedingly great mercy of the Lord. That the cities would not be spared for less than ten reveals that divine mercy has limits of which the righteous should be aware and to which they should respectfully submit. We are taught, for example, not to pray for one committing a sin leading to death (1 Jn. 5:16).

Friday, May 6th - Genesis 18: 33

This verse records the parting between the Lord and Abraham. The Lord departed from the patriarch in order to proceed to the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah . Abraham went to his home, the place that by the Lord's gracious giving was his place of sojourn during his earthly pilgrimage. Abraham returned to his tent with a clear conscience, knowing that he had availed himself of the precious and powerful divine gift of prayer. Although the Lord would destroy the wicked cities in apparent contradiction to the spirit of Abraham's prayer, in reality the Lord answered that prayer above what the father of faith had asked or thought. For prior to his judgment of holy destruction, the Lord wrought through the ministry of the two angels a merciful deliverance of Lot and his family—fewer than ten righteous souls—and thus did as Abraham had asked by not sweeping away the righteous with the wicked (vv.23,25); and yet He did it by a deliverance of the righteous for which Abraham had not asked. Our Lord always does above and beyond what we ask or think in our prayers.

Saturday, May 7th - Genesis 19: 1-3

There is a triad of sobering, devastating divine judgments in the earliest days of man's history. In Genesis 3, there was the fall of man and the resultant curse of God upon the earth. In Genesis 6, 7, the ripened, universal wickedness of man called the flood upon the earth. Here in Genesis 19, we have fire falling upon the cities that had filled up

their measure of sin. With each of these judgments, however, the dealings of God begin with His people. Divine judgment always begins with the household of God. The righteous do not partake of the punishment of the wicked because the wrath of God has already fallen on their sins at the cross of Christ, to which the justifying faith of the Old Testament saints looked forward, as our faith apprehends it having been accomplished in the past. Believers in every day and situation are, by God's saving grace, more secure than they ever fully realize (Rom. 8:1).

Sunday, May 8th - Genesis 19: 1-3

As the angels had come with the Lord to Abraham for his blessing, so now they approach Lot in Sodom for his deliverance. They came as the sun's light was fading, a time fittingly signifying the approaching darkness of death that would descend upon Sodom and Gomorrah as soon as the light of the few righteous persons living there was removed from those cities. Our Lord knows how to find and to rescue the godly from the thrall of the wicked and from the condemnation and execution of His holy wrath.

Monday, May 9th - Genesis 19: 1-3

Abraham had been sitting in the door of his tent when the visitation of the celestial company occurred. We are told that, later in the day of Abraham's visitation, Lot was sitting in the city gate of Sodom when the two angels approached him. The contrast is between the purer faith of Abraham, whereby he was content to live as a sojourner in the land of promise (Heb. 11:8-10), and the less pure faith of Lot, whose seeking of the blessings to be found in this world led him to dwell in fearfully close proximity to the wicked. The fact that Lot was sitting in the city gate indicates that he was a settled, respected member of the community, for the city gate served as the seat of the city's judges (v.9). This worldly respectability brought Lot perilously close to his partaking of the judgment of the wicked. The blessed man does not sit in the seat of sinners (Ps. 1:1).

Tuesday, May 10th – Genesis 19: 1-3

For all of Lot's weakness of faith, he does manifest that he is a trophy of saving grace. As his uncle Abraham had done earlier in the day with these same angels, Lot rose to meet them and bowed respectfully before them (Gen. 18:1,2). Lot also did as Abraham had done, offering to the angels, who appeared to him simply as men, gracious and refreshing hospitality. Lot, like all believers, lived in two worlds: the city of sinners, and the kingdom of God's grace. It is the latter world that would and did prevail for Lot, as it will do for us.

Wednesday, May 11th - Genesis 19: 1-3

The sinister character of Sodom is in these verses already apparent for those with eyes to see it. Lot's insistence that these two men not stay the night in the city square surely proceeded from the knowledge that he had of the sinfully perverse and abusive nature of the carousing citizens of Sodom. Thus, Lot offered to the angels his house and food not

only as gracious refreshment, but also as an oasis of security amidst a wild desert of wickedness.

Thursday, May 12th - Genesis 19: 4, 5

These verses briefly but clearly describe the sordid, perverse, and violent character of the inhabitants of Sodom . All classes of persons, of all ages and from all parts of the city, descended upon Lot 's house, demanding sexually to abuse the visitors sheltered under Lot 's roof, whom they viewed as being no more than fresh meat for their jaded and perverse consumption. Here are people whom God had given over to the full power of their sins (Rom. 1:26 ,27). They were a disgusting crowd who richly deserved the heavenly fire that would consume them. So would have been the eventual development and destruction of all of us, were it not for the saving and transforming grace of God in the lives of the righteous.

Friday, May 13th - Genesis 19: 6-19

Lot attempted to intervene on behalf of his threatened guests. He placed himself between the perverse and threatening mob and his angelic visitors. However, his intervention is sadly imperfect and ineffectual. He offers his own daughters to the abusing lust of the crowd, a desperate and sinful expedient that is despised by a mob so far gone in sin that they will be satisfied by nothing less than feeding their lusts seasoned with the aggravation of perversity. How awful is sin in its full fruition! How necessary is hell for such sinners, and how it redounds to the glory of God's justice that He has created such a place for the devil, his fallen angels, and the sinful people who give themselves to the demonic thrall.

Saturday, May 14th - Genesis 19: 6-9

Lot 's ineffectualness in his dealing with his wicked neighbors resulted from his superficial apprehension of the plague of sin in its full fruition. He appealed to the mob as being his brothers (v.7), thereby indicating his lack of appreciation for the irreconcilable difference between light and darkness, good and evil. When the wicked arise against the Lord and His anointed, we who are Christ's do well to stand fast with and for the Lord, hating those who hate Him, and counting them as our enemies (Ps. 139:21,22), and not deluding ourselves into thinking that we share a common humanity with them. Our true brethren are the redeemed, not the reprobate.

Sunday, May 15th - Genesis 19: 7, 8

The notice in v.1 of Lot 's sitting in Sodom 's gate, signifies his settled complacency amongst the wicked. These verses indicate to us the extreme degree of his complacency. He regards the riotous reprobates of Sodom as his brethren, while he considers his own daughters as expendable chattel to be given away to feed the lusts of these perverse sinners. Lot does right when he tries to protect his threatened guests, but his tactics are sinful. They are sinful because Lot had, by his complacent dwelling amongst the wicked,

grown used to depending upon sinful devices rather than upon the faithful and righteous provision of the Lord. Bad company corrupts good thinking and acting, especially in a crisis, when carnal reasoning becomes the default mode, rather than faith.

Monday, May 16th - Genesis 19: 9

This verse shows how wasted are the appeals and offers made by Lot to his wicked neighbors. Those given over by God to the power of their sin will accept nothing but their own sinfully determined course, which is a course offensive to God and injurious to man. Such people are fit only to hear declarations of divine judgment pronounced against them by the righteous. When was the last time we declared to a hardened sinner that his chosen course would land him in hell?

Tuesday, May 17th - Genesis 19: 9

This verse shows us how maddening and suicidal sin is when it is given free reign in men's hearts. The Sodomites despise Lot, and refuse to have him not only as a judge over them, but also as the one living amongst them. Little did they realize that the continuance of their lives depended upon there being more of the righteous like Lot dwelling in their midst (2 Pet. 2:7-9). The verse also shows the righteous how vain are reconciling appeals made by them toward those given over to the power of their sin. Let us then learn to praise the Lord that He has delivered us from our sins and that He judges those who refuse to repent and accept His saving grace.

Wednesday, May 18th - Genesis 19: 10 , 11

Lot's good impulse to defend his house guests from the perverse ravishment of the Sodomite mob was rendered ineffectual by the heat of the crowd's sinful passion and by his own complacency with life in the wicked city. Therefore, he could really offer the angels no help. Yet they could and did give effectual help to poor Lot. First, they snatched him from the immediate threat of the sinful crowd. This was but a prelude to their delivering Lot from the divine punishment that was about to rain down upon the Sodomites. Then, the angels struck the mob with physical blindness as a fitting fruit of their spiritual blindness, thereby rendering them incapable of making good their threat to Lot's life. We are not called to defend the Lord, nor are we capable of doing so. We are called to serve Him and to separate ourselves from sinners for Him, while he makes our security His effectual concern.

Thursday, May 19th - Genesis 19: 12 , 13

The angels' deliverance of Lot from the threats of his sinful neighbors was the lesser of the blessings they came to give to him. In these verses, the angels begin to reveal the greater blessing they came to provide for Lot. The sole righteous man in Sodom and Gomorrah is told to gather his family in order to flee from the wrath of the Lord that these angels were to be instrumental in bringing upon the wicked cities. Too many of us fear the wrath of man as being the greatest danger we shall face; too few of us regard

rightly the infinitely greater and more awesomely dreadful wrath of the Lord as the supreme and well-deserved punishment that will surely befall the wicked, and from which believers, by the grace of God, have been delivered.

Friday, May 20th - Genesis 19: 14

Lot's spiritual complacency in Sodom served to compromise his spiritual authority. Hence, when he sounded the alarm to his future sons-in-law, they did not take him seriously. Those nearest to us, who see that we do not take the Lord and His salvation seriously in days of calm, will not take us seriously when we, in a day of crisis, announce to them the necessity to flee from the divine calamity to come.

Saturday, May 21st – Genesis 19: 14 -16

Lot's raising the alarm did not prevail with his future sons-in-law, but their lethargy seemed to prevail with him. Therefore, we find Lot requiring renewed arousing by the angels the morning after they had told him to flee with his family from the divine wrath to come. Lot resisted even their repeated alarm. So strong had the charms of the wicked cities become to him that he was rendered spiritually sluggish. Even as a redeemed man, Lot manifests his unworthiness and residual unwillingness to receive the Lord's saving mercy that would appear to cost him so dearly. Yet, the Lord does not save us because of our worthiness, but in spite of our consistent unworthiness. Therefore, the angels, knowing that the sign of divine compassion was upon Lot, as the blood of the Passover Lamb would many years afterward be upon the houses of the Israelites in Egypt, led him by force out of the place they were about to destroy. It is not for nothing that the Scriptures tell us that it is with difficulty that the righteous are saved (1 Pet. 4:18). Our fascination with the world weakens our flight, by faith, from the wrath to come upon the world.

Sunday, May 22nd - Genesis 1: 17 , 18

The angels resuscitated Lot by their work of dragging him and his family out of their house. In v. 17, they attempt to revive him by their strong words of warning. Lot is told to escape for his life. He is told not to look back upon the cities, implying that he should radically sever all affinity with and fond but misplaced affection he may have had for them. He is told, in fact, to get well clear of the entire region containing the cities and to go to the mountains to avoid being swept away in the coming destruction. Yet, Lot responds to these clear and compelling admonishments and commands with a countering denial. His words, *No my lords*, are self-contradictory. We do not say *no* to true lords over us, especially when they serve the Lord of lords for His glory and our good. Lot more readily stood against these ministering holy angels than he did against the Sodomite mob. We contradict the Word of our Lord not to our good, but to our harm.

Monday, May 23rd - Genesis 19: 18 -20

In face of the mortal danger from which the Lord's angels were endeavoring to deliver him, Lot balks and bargains for less radical terms of salvation. He argues that divine grace and lovingkindness should be less demanding upon him. He maintains that if he must flee to the mountains, his heart, if not his feet, would fail him, leaving him in the path of destruction. He asks to be allowed to flee only so far as to the little town of Zoar . Lot pleads for less, not more, love; for less, not more, grace; for a less sure not a more sure, salvation. The cost of this cheap grace will become evident when Lot , with delayed obedience, flees from Zoar to the mountains, there to disgrace himself with his own daughters (vv.30-38).

Tuesday, May 24th - Genesis 19: 21 , 22

In answer to Lot 's cries for a less radical deliverance, the Lord allows His angels to declare a concession to Lot 's weakness. Zoar will be spared due to Lot's settling there, just as Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction was delayed due to a single righteous man's dwelling in Sodom—spiritually feeble through righteous Lot may have been. We should be careful for what we ask the Lord. So influential are the righteous in heaven and on earth, that we more often than not receive according to our asking, and if our asking is amiss, what we receive will contain thorns amidst the roses that attracted us to ask for them.

Wednesday, May 25th - Genesis 19: 23

It was dawn when the angels first urged Lot to flee from Sodom to the mountains (v.15). Lot hesitated and argued with his angelic deliverers, thus spending more time in jeopardy of divine judgment than he should have done. We perceive how little distance Lot put between himself and the cities targeted for divine judgment when we read that the sun had risen to its height—meaning that it was about noon —when Lot reached Zoar. He had removed himself no more than he could almost begrudgingly have traveled on foot in a few hours. Such reluctance on Lot 's part to flee as quickly and as far as possible from the wrath to come indicates to us how spiritually lethargic he was. May we not fall into similar spiritual sluggishness.

Thursday, May 26th - Genesis 19: 23 -25

It was at about noon , when the Sodomites were likely sleeping off or just awakening from their previous night's carousing, that the judgment of the Lord descended upon the wicked cities. When the unrighteous were least aware of any danger, God struck with a sudden and awesome consuming fire. It is right that the Lord confront the wicked when they are at the height of their carnal complacency, as He did with Noah's generation (Gen.7), with Saul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9) and as He will do on the final day (1 Thess. 5:2,3; 2 Pet. 3:10). It was when the rich fool comforted himself with thoughts of his having many years to enjoy his fortune that his soul was required of him (Lk. 12:20). The righteous should ever be ready for the Lord's coming; the wicked never are ready for that great day.

Friday, May 27th – Genesis 19: 24 , 25

The form which the Lord's judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah took was a consuming fire that fell upon the wicked cities from the sky. Whence came the elements for this inferno? Did a volcano erupt? Did an asteroid fall from above? Naturalists can understand better the rains of Noah's flood falling than they can this fire descending from the sky. Some go so far as to say that the fire was lightning that struck Sodom's tar pits (Gen. 14:10), igniting them into an unquenchable blaze. However, we are told that fire and brimstone (sulphur) fell not from the sky (which the Old Testament often refers to as *the heavens*), but from heaven itself, the seat of God's majestic power and consuming glory. As the Lord is even now preparing a place for the redeemed in His heaven, so He is preparing fit retribution for the wicked from the place of His just and holy sovereign power (2 Pet. 3:8-13).

Saturday, May 28th - Genesis 19: 24 , 25

The fiery judgment of God destroyed Sodom , Gomorrah , and all the cities, people, and vegetation within the entire Siddim valley, except for Zoar, to which Lot had fled. This awesome fire gouged out a depression in the land (overthrew those cities), leaving the valley to fill up only with the Dead Sea that, to this day, casts up a sulphurous vapor and is surrounded by utter desolation. After millennia, this area presents a striking testimony to the catastrophic and fearfully sobering judgment of God against perverse and presumptuous sinners.

Sunday, May 29th - Genesis 19: 25

As with the flood in Noah's day, so with the fires that fell upon the Siddim valley, the destruction of the wicked was complete. But where Noah's flood was a universal judgment, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah , while it was entire, was limited to one small area on earth. This would seem to make the latter judgment less awesome than the former. However, after the flood, the Lord gave Noah and his descendants a covenant pledge never to bring universal destruction upon the earth by a flood again (Gen. 9:11). No such covenant of divine restraint follows the incineration of Sodom and Gomorrah . In fact, Scripture clearly teaches that on the final day, a much greater fire shall destroy not only the earth, but also the heavens (2 Pet. 3:10 -12). Therefore, let us learn to regard the divine judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah as an admonition for our good, as we learn to be grateful for our deliverance from such condemnation to those flames that burn not only on the last day, but for eternity in hell.

Monday, May 30th - Genesis 19: 26

We have seen how wavering was Lot's resolution to avail himself of the deliverance from destruction offered to him and his family by the Lord's angels. The resolution of Lot's wife was even more weak. In defiance of the divine command prohibiting Lot and his family from looking back upon Sodom (v.17), she lagged behind Lot in their escape, and then stopped her progress away from the smoldering remains of the wicked cities and

beheld them with longing. Thus, she, who by her actions demonstrated her resolute affinity for the wicked cities, though she escaped burning in those cities, was struck in such a way as to become herself a partaker and part of the remains of those cities, namely, a mass of sulphur and salt. This woman is urged upon us as an admonition by Jesus, who tells us to remember Lot's wife (Lk. 17:32) so that we might refuse to love the world or the things in the world (1 Jn. 2:15 -17), for the world, with all of its seeming strength and charms, will be destroyed in a day (Rev. 18:8,10), even in one hour (Rev. 18:17,19).

Tuesday, May 31st - Genesis 19: 27 -30

The passage of vv.27-38 is one that gives us post-Sodom and Gomorrah perspectives. We are told how Abraham and how Lot each reacted to the holy judgment of God that was brought upon the wicked. The more pure faith of Abraham enabled him to accept the divine judgment, seeing grace within it, while Lot's less pure faith left him haunted with fears from which he sought to escape, first in a cave, then in a state of intoxication. It is no wonder that Peter designates our faith as a powerful possession more priceless than gold (1 Pet. 1:7). For faith attaches itself to the promises, not to the punishments, of the Lord.

Wednesday, June 1st - Genesis 19: 27 , 28

Lot lingered while his life had been in jeopardy in Sodom . Abraham shows himself more diligent to behold the answer to his prayers than Lot was to escape for his life. Lot had to be awakened by the angels and thrust out of Sodom a matter of hours before its destruction. The carnal man is never as mindful of his true plight as he should be. That same morning, Abraham sprang up of his own accord and returned to the place of his previous night's intercessions, there to inspect the answer the Lord would give to his prayers. By the time Abraham reached the place of his previous intercessions with God, the valley of Siddim had been reduced to a smoldering waste. Thus did Abraham look upon Sodom , as Lot's wife had done. Yet, the faithful patriarch did not look on the smoking residue with grief and resentment over the Lord's terrible judgment. Such grief and resentment would have been natural emotions springing not from one who by God's grace through faith looked for the celestial city whose architect and builder is God (Heb. 11:10). Instead, Abraham viewed the ruined cities with reverential awe and holy resignation. The man of prayer will be at peace even with the darkest divine providences.

Thursday, June 2nd - Genesis 19: 27 -29

Abraham sees Sodom's smoldering ruins, yet he sees more than that in this awful phenomenon. As, by faith, the aged patriarch would regard the reality of his own body, being as good as dead, and yet would regard more highly the power of the Lord who had promised him a son (Rom. 4:19-21), so here Abraham sees Sodom's incinerated remains and the smoke of God's dark providence arising from it, but also he looks through this black haze to perceive the light of the glory of God's justice, and, in time, he would perceive the Lord's delivering grace that saved Lot and his daughters. Faith always sees

in divine judgments divine grace, for justice and compassion characterize all of the Lord's doings for His people.

Friday, June 3rd – Genesis 19: 29

The wording of this verse is significant. We are told that it was *God* (‘~yhi{l/a/), not the *Lord* (hw"hy>) who had delivered Lot from Sodom's destruction. The use of the former implies divinity, while the latter implies that as well as the notion of covenant mercy. The significance seems to be that when Lot separated himself from Abraham, he also separated himself from intimate knowledge of Abraham's covenant making Lord. Accordingly, we should understand that Lot's salvation from this temporal judgment depended not upon his own wandering from the Lord, but upon the nearness of his godly uncle to the Lord, as he served as a praying intercessor with the Lord. The nearness of such an intercessor to the Lord does us more good than such an intercessor could do being near to us.

Saturday, June 4th – Genesis 19: 30

That Lot left Sodom at the urging of the angels indicates that he had faith. Otherwise he would have refused to heed the angelic admonitions. However, the fact that Lot was so reluctant to leave Sodom, and that he bargained to settle in Zoar, manifest how little, impure, and weak was Lot's faith. This verse shows us the manifold miseries that afflict those who walk by a faith adulterated with fears. Lot nourished a carnal security while he lived in the doomed city of Sodom. Now that he had escaped the divine judgment, instead of thanksgiving to God filling his heart and mouth, terror seizes him and he flees from Zoar to the mountains. Not only do the wicked, but also do the weak in faith flee when no one pursues.

Sunday, June 5th – Genesis 19: 30

Lot was granted safety in Zoar as a concession by the Lord to his weakness of faith. Once the full terror and awe of the Lord's holy wrath was unleashed against the wicked cities of the Siddim valley, Lot realized how frightfully foolish he had been to bargain for such a narrow escape from so great a destruction. However, rather than confess his sin and seek the Lord's forgiveness, Lot seeks to make right his sinful unbelief by his fleeing from Zoar to the mountains to which the angels had first told him to flee. This is not delayed obedience to God, but a fearful mistrust of the Lord, akin to that of the builders of Babel's tower when they sought to secure themselves by their building an edifice reaching to heaven, and thereby, they foolishly thought, securing themselves from any future flood that would be sent upon the earth by God—a flood that God had given His Word would never come upon mankind again. Our security is in our trusting God's holy Word, not in our reliance upon our fearful and fitful works.

Monday, June 6th - Genesis 19: 30

Delayed obedience to God's express will is disobedience and dangerous. The mountains would have harbored Lot safely had he fled to them at God's Word. However, a day later those same mountains were not as safe for Lot as was Zoar, the refuge granted to him by the Lord. Lot fled to the dark, lonely cave in the mountains where he would be plagued by his fears and would fall into gross sin with his own daughters. The people of Israel later discovered how costly was their delayed obedience. They fearfully refused to enter Canaan at Kadesh-Barnea, and were sentenced by God to die in the wilderness (Num.14). A day after their refusal to enter the Promised Land, with a glib change of mind, they sought to go into Canaan at Kadesh-Barnea and were repulsed by the Amalekites and Canaanites (Num.14:39-45). Delayed obedience is dangerous disobedience.

Tuesday, June 7th - Genesis 19: 30

Lot fled to the mountain cave with his daughters. There he would dwell in close proximity to them, while seeking to keep away from the Lord who had just proven Himself to be awesomely destructive. Lot would come to substitute unholy intimacy with his daughters, producing bitter fruit that would plague his descendants for centuries, for the holy intimacy he should have cultivated with the God who had graciously delivered him. Such holy intimacy ever, only, and always issues in life, health, peace, joy, and gratitude.

Wednesday, June 8th - Genesis 19: 31 , 32

The fearful man in flight from his God abdicates his God given responsibilities. Consequently, those less qualified to exercise leadership rise up to fill the void, taking the lead and proposing godless ventures. Thus, we see Lot abdicating and his daughters usurping their father's position as head of the family. They concoct an unholy plan to carry on their family name, a plan that never would have occurred to them had Lot remained in populated Zoar rather than flee to the isolation of a cave. Sinful cunning of inferiors stands ready to replace a man's godly reasoning and his fulfilling of righteous responsibility when he lets his fears overcome his faith.

Thursday, June 9th - Genesis 19: 30 -36

Lot's release of his faith and clinging to his fears regarding the judgment of God led him not into less sin but into more sin. To calm his fears he does not exercise a trusting faith in his gracious, delivering Lord, but delivers himself, instead, into an intoxicated state. This in turn, leads him into actions that, were he sober and standing by faith, would have been to him unspeakably monstrous and revolting. One facet of the fruit of the Spirit is self-control (Gal. 5:23), and it is entirely lacking in Lot at this sad and shameful point, where he sins perversely with his own daughters in the dark and lonely cave, and in the even darker state of his faithlessness.

Friday, June 10th – Genesis 19: 30 -36

Though Lot and his daughters had been taken out of Sodom , a residue of Sodom remained within them. It is soberingly instructive for us to note that the fearful sin of these three took the form of sexual perversion that was so prevalent in Sodom . Bad company corrupts good morals. When we refuse the Lord's blessing that we enjoy only by our not living in company with the wicked (Ps. 1:1), then we imbibe seeds of sin that in the right circumstances will spring to life, corrupting us and creating complicating and miserable consequences.

Saturday, June 11th - Genesis 19: 30 -36

Lot dwelt fearfully in a dark cave. Of him, Matthew Henry remarks: *He that, awhile ago, could not find room for himself and his stock in the whole of the land, but must jostle with Abraham, and get as far from him as he could, is now confined to a hole in a hill...and there he is solitary and trembling....See also in Lot what those bring themselves to, at last, that forsake the communion of saints for secular advantages; they will be beaten with their own rod. (Commentary, vol.1, p.120).* The Lord had purged Lot 's environment of its carnal distractions, but his impure heart and floundering despair emboldened his daughters to act on their fears of remaining childless, and to do so in the carnal and perverse ways they had learned during their sojourn in wicked Sodom . The feet of Lot carried him out of Sodom , but the faith of Lot was too impure to keep him out of sin. Let us remember not only Lot 's wife, but also Lot , and so learn to walk by faith, not by our own desperate passions.

Sunday, June 12th - Genesis 19: 30 -36

Lot had for years taught his daughters to live by fear rather than faith. He apparently feared being poor, and therefore he determined to secure himself with riches—even if that chosen career track led him into Sodom and into countless moral compromises. His bargaining for a minimal salvation in Zoar and then his overreacting fears prompting him to flee to the mountains taught his daughters that God's salvation should not be too costly, and that His promise of security could not be trusted. His repeated exaltation of self-determination and this view of God as a harsh and punishing Master, taught his daughters that in the dark night of the soul, they should depend upon their own devices, rather than upon the promises of the Lord that seemed to them inconvenient and inadequate.

Monday, June 13th - Genesis 19: 30 -36

Lot and his daughters were understandably shocked and physically and emotionally drained by all they had just experienced. Lot had lost his standing in Sodom , his possessions, and his wife; Lot 's daughters had lost the men who were to have been their husbands. However, there were purifying and fruitful consolations provided by the Lord in His deliverance of this trio. Would not Abraham, from whom Lot had separated himself, welcome Lot back? Certainly he who had interceded for Lot would invite him to share his home. Would not the Lord, who had destroyed Lot 's intended sons-in-law, provide for Lot 's daughters more godly men and, through them, a faithful line of

descendants? But where faith is lacking, such vision of the Lord's abundant grace is hidden. Thus, Lot and his daughters sulk and sin in the cave. Lot seeks to be fortified by wine and his daughters by their own cunning devices, rather than by their seeking fortification in the grace of their saving God.

Tuesday, June 14th - Genesis 19: 37 , 38

The sin of Lot and his daughters is painfully recorded in vv.30-36. The bitter fruits of their sin are mentioned in vv.37,38. Far from Lot 's daughters having succeeded in preserving their family, they bore sons from whom enemies of Israel would arise to afflict the people of God. As Abraham's sin with Hagar produced Ishmael, from whom the Arab enemies of the Jews sprang, so Lot 's sin produced the Moabites and Ammorites, who afflicted, rather than aided, the people of the Lord (Josh. 24:9; 2 Ki. 24:2). The sins of the saints always do more to oppose the cause of the Lord than do the sins of the wicked.

Wednesday, June 15th - Genesis 19: 37 , 38

This chapter concludes with a mention of Moab and Ammon, who were the sinful issue from Lot . At this low point, Lot falls out of the record of the Old Testament. Of this fact, Matthew Henry comments regarding drunkenness that, "...as it makes men forgetful, so it makes them forgotten; and many a name, which otherwise might have been remembered with respect, is buried by it in contempt and oblivion. (Commentary, vol. 1, p. 127). And yet, Lot is mentioned again in the New Testament, being there referred to as *righteous Lot* (2 Pet. 2:7-9). Where men's sins increase, even to this awful extent, the resurrecting grace of the Lord abounds, bringing His people out of this world to stand before Him blameless and with great joy (Jude 24). It is *righteous Lot* , not Lot the ruined and forgotten, that is the last designation that Scripture gives to this man. What great debtors we poor sinners are to the mercy of our God.

Thursday, June 16th - Genesis 20: 1, 2

At this point, the Word of God turns our focus from the sins of fearful Lot to the sins of his more faithful uncle, Abraham. Once more, the father of the faithful is on the move toward the south. Previously, he had headed into Egypt to escape Canaan 's famine (Gen. 12). There he fearfully viewed his wife's beauty as a threat from which he would secure himself by lying. Now he repeats what must have been his besetting sin. Our sins do not wear out with the passage of time, but must be mortified by us.

Friday, June 17th - Genesis 20: 1, 2

Lot had fled from the place to which the Lord had allowed him to escape from judgment. There Lot fell into sin. Abraham once more departed from the Promised Land. We are not told why, but perhaps he, too, sought to be farther away from the site of divine judgment. Perhaps, too, Abraham sought to distance himself from Lot 's

scandalous sin. Movement without a distinct goal and godly warrant, however, always leads to disaster.

Saturday, June 18th - Genesis 20: 1, 2

The direction in which Abraham fled was south, then west. He started toward Egypt , then stayed in Gerar, which was Philistine land. His movement into such places, whatever good and necessary reason he thought impelled him, was a flirtation with sin. We should determine ever, only, and always to flee far from the borders of wickedness.

Sunday, June 19th - Genesis 20: 1, 2

It is difficult for us to say whose sin is worse— Lot 's or Abraham's. The former perversely makes his daughters to be his wives, while the latter would have his wife to be his sister. Sinful fear, not faithful trust in the Lord, is the same root of both men's sins. That root in us will produce no less heinous and bitter fruit.

Monday, June 20th - Genesis 20: 1-7

Abraham's fears lead him to view his God-given helpmeet as a liability and the men of Gerar as godless latches (v.11). Both perceptions were false. When we fearfully expect the worst, we are inexorably led into a situation worse than the worst we expected. Accordingly, Abraham once again relies upon a lie for his protection, rather than upon the living God, and he loses his wife to Abimelech, thereby sinning against Sarah, Abimelech, and above all, the Lord. It is far better to die in truth and righteousness than to live by such cowardly, costly sin.

Tuesday, June 21st – Genesis 20: 1-7

Some Bible scholars note how closely in almost all details this incident resembles that which is recorded in Genesis 12, when Abraham went into Egypt , lied about Sarah, and Pharaoh took her for his wife. Such scholars assert that these are but two tellings of one event in which Abraham sinned by his lying about his wife. Yet, those asserting that fail to reckon with the reality of sinful human nature. We sinners are prone to repeat our offenses, using tried and failed sinful devices again and again. It is no wonder that our Lord tells us to forgive those who sin against us seventy times seven times, for all sinners are repeating offenders in need of repeated forgiveness from man and from the Lord.

Wednesday, June 22nd - Genesis 20: 3-7

Thankfully, the Lord intervenes in the sinful courses into which His foolish children throw themselves. Contrary to Abraham's fears (v.11), God is in Gerar. There, even in a dream, He can and does inspire fear in the heart of Gerar's king. Although Abimelech's sin was unintentional, God announces that he is a dead man, for all sins kill, whether great and conscious or small and unconscious (Rom. 6:23).

Thursday, June 23rd - Genesis 20: 4-7

In these verses, the goodness of the natural man and the grace of the Lord are contrasted. Abimelech pleads his righteousness. He had not had physical relations with Sarah, and he had taken her predicated upon Abraham's declaration—one that had been confirmed by Sarah herself—that she was Abraham's sister. The Lord acknowledges Abimelech's relative righteousness, but declares that it was due to His common grace intervening that Abimelech had been kept from greater sin. Apart from that grace, Abimelech would have sinned with Sarah, despite his innocent intention. Apart from that grace, he likely would have sinned with Sarah, even had he known that she was married to Abraham. Even the best of natural men are worse than they realize. Only the grace of the Lord restrains sinful men from becoming worse and doing worse.

Friday, June 24th - Genesis 20: 7

The Lord gives Abimelech the choice to live by his repentance or to die because of his sin. Not only so, but consequences other than his living or dying attend each course before him. If he sinfully retains Sarah, not only will he die, but his family will also be put to death. This may seem harsh, but it is a fact that all sin affects many more people adversely than the principle sinners themselves. If Abimelech repents, he will live and secure the wise and prevailing prayers of Abraham, whom the Lord calls a prophet. We have already seen how Abraham's prayers saved Lot . This same choice is given to all who sin, the wages of sin being death, the reward of repentance being abundant life. And though Abraham lost Sarah by his sin, the Lord intervenes to see to it that all is restored to him, including his honor as a seer and servant of God. Similarly, the Lord restores to all of His people the years the locusts of their own sins have eaten (Joel 2:25).

Saturday, June 25th - Genesis 20: 8

The conviction the Lord wrought upon Abimelech was so strong that the king quickly repented of his transgression. When he awakened, he did not dismiss the divine visitation as a meaningless dream but arose from his bed and acted in ways that revealed the fruit of his repentance. First, he gathered his servants and declared the words of the Lord to them, and they, too, were sobered with convicting fear. It is right, but also remarkable, that men who were strangers to the God of Abraham should have had such immediate and reverent regard for the Word of the Lord. It should be convicting to those of us who are redeemed and regenerated by the Lord, that pagans at times hear and heed the Word that we can take for granted and ignore.

Sunday, June 26th – 20: 9, 10

The Lord, having confronted Abimelech with his sin, makes the repentant king of Gerar an instrument of Abraham's conviction for his sin. Thus, Abimelech, having confessed his sin to his own servants, summons Abraham to confront the patriarch with his more serious, less excusable sins. For his part, Abraham is the last to know of his

own sins, which is often true of those who are in sin. Abimelech demands of Abraham a reason for his sin against the king and kingdom of Gerar . Abraham had, by his lie, put Abimelech and his people in jeopardy of divine judgment, and the king of Gerar demanded that Abraham tell him what he and his people had done against the patriarch to deserve such injurious treatment. Abraham could give no excuse for his sin. He could point to no cause for it in Abimelech or in his people. More often than not, our sin issues from our own fears, and not from the facts of our circumstances.

Monday, June 27th – Genesis 20: 11

Abraham cannot excuse his sin by pointing to factors in the king or kingdom of Gerar . Rather, the energy driving Abraham's sin resided in himself, not in his circumstances. It was his fearful assessment of the attitudes and likely actions of the men of Gerar that prompted Abraham to lie about his true relation to Sarah. Our fears exaggerate our dangers, demonize our neighbors, and diminish our apprehension of the wisdom, power, and love of our God. The truth to which Abraham's fear had blinded him was that God could, and in this case did, strike fear into the hearts of the men of Gerar, and that far from them killing Abraham on account of Sarah, they placed their own lives in jeopardy because their king had transgressed, though unwittingly so, in his taking of Sarah. The Lord's people are never as vulnerable as they feel, but are always more secure in the Lord than they believe.

Tuesday, June 28th - Genesis 20: 11 -13

The fearful lying of Abraham is confessed in v.11. The faithless cunning of the patriarch is confessed in vv.12,13. It was partly true that Sarah was his sister. In fact, she was his half-sister. Yet this fact was used by Abraham to conceal the more pertinent fact that Sarah was his wife. Faithlessness toward the Lord will lead us to deal faithlessly toward others, even toward those nearest and dearest to us. Faithlessness will lead us to view others as being worse than they truly are, and will lead us to make less, not more, of the precious ties that bind us to our Lord and to one another in Him.

Wednesday, June 29th - Genesis 20: 11 -13

No doubt Abraham had considered his determination to lie about his true relation to Sarah a reasonable precaution and necessary expedient. Now that the Lord was convicting Abraham through Abimelech's searching questions, the patriarch sees and confesses his thoughts and actions as being faithless, unnecessary, and sinful.

Thursday, June 30th - Genesis 20: 14 -16

Despite Abraham's worst fears, despite his sinful and faithless lying, and despite his having sinned against the Lord, Sarah, Abimelech and the people of Gerar, the patriarch is treated with lavish grace, not according to what he justly deserved. Sarah is restored to Abraham, and livestock, servants, land, and money are given to him by Abimelech. If our God can superintend the affairs of one of his sinning servants so that all things work

together for his blessing and good, why do we doubt that our Lord will cause all things to work for our good, especially when we walk in faith and obedience (Rom. 8:28,32)?

Friday, July 1st - Genesis 20: 17 , 18

From these verses we learn how the Lord's graciously convicting and restoring work with Abraham served to return the patriarch to his ministry of intercessory prayer. The father of faith was called and equipped by God neither to employ his mind in fearful anticipation nor to employ his mouth in the telling of lies. Rather, Abraham's mind was to serve in his apprehending the great and precious promises of God, and his mouth was to serve in his praising the Lord and praying for men. As was the divine calling and career of the father of faith, so is the Lord's calling and career for all of his descendants.

Saturday, July 2nd - Genesis 20: 17 , 18

These verses also inform us that the Lord had brought a degree of judgment upon Abimelech's family for his sin with Sarah, unintentional though that sin was. By Abimelech's taking Sarah, perhaps with a view to his increasing the number of his descendants through her (for her beauty belied her great age, Gen. 12:11,12), all he succeeded in doing was to provoke the Lord to close the wombs of all the women in the household of the king of Gerar. If such serious consequences attend unintentional sin, then greater judgments can be expected to come upon those who sin knowingly before the Lord. Recall the striking of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11), and the sickness and death amongst the members of the church at Corinth because of their unworthy partaking of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:27 -32).

Sunday, July 3rd – Genesis 20: 17 , 18

Abraham's prayer was effective. The interceding patriarch prevailed in moving the hand of God that was afflicting the family of Abimelech. Abraham should have prayed to God before he entered Gerar. He should have asked for the mighty hand of the Lord to protect him and vanquish his fears. If the Lord heeded the cries of a repentant sinner, He surely would have heard and answered the prayers of a faithful saint. Let us learn from this to pray more, not less, for ourselves and for others.

Monday, July 4th – Genesis 20: 17 , 18

How could Abraham have sinned as he did in this matter with Abimelech? In view of the recent divine judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah , he should have dreaded sinning against his God. In light of God's promise to him of a son, he should have determined not to be so ungrateful as to dishonor the grace and power of the Lord by heeding his fears rather than relying on the Lord in faith. In consequence of his earlier sin in Egypt (Gen. 12:10ff), how could Abraham have repeated the same sin in Gerar? In answer to these questions we recall that Abraham was a sinner, as are we all. The saints of God are destined for perfection in glory, but while they are on pilgrimage through this life they sin and then revert to their besetting sins. But it is with all of the redeemed as it was with

Abraham. Where sin increases, the Lord's grace abounds all the more. If we think we stand, let us take heed lest we fall; and when we do fall, let us take heed of God's grace and rise again to live and serve for His glory and for the blessing of others.

Tuesday, July 5th – Genesis 21: 1, 2

Abraham's sin did not thwart the good and gracious plans God had for him. In due time—according to the Lord's gracious, wise, and loving increase—the Lord provided what He had repeatedly and with increasing clarity promised to Abraham (Gen. 12:2; 15:4; 17:1-5, 15-17; 18:1-15). The Lord regarded Sarah according to the word of promise He had given, and his provision was according to that word of promise. Sarah conceived, though she was past the age for naturally doing so (Gen. 17:17; Rom 4:19), and she carried her child to a safe delivery. This was all according to the promise and appointed timing of the Lord, for whom nothing is too difficult (Gen. 18:14). Such accounts in Scripture of the Lord fulfilling His promises should teach us to trust and treasure the many great and precious promises we have from our gracious God.

Wednesday, July 6th - Genesis 21: 3

The gratitude Abraham had toward the Lord who had given him this son is demonstrated by the name he gave to his son. The naming of a child is an exercise of parental authority over the child. Here Abraham gives to his son the name that God had given to him. In this way, the patriarch gratefully accepts the authority of the Lord not only over his own life, but also over the life of his son. The name, Isaac, means *he laughs*. It served as a living reminder of Abraham's previous unbelieving laughter (Gen. 17:17), as well as the unbelieving laughter of Sarah (Gen. 18:12), and so humbled these aged parents, but also made them happy with holy joy in the gift of the Lord. Our own expressions of gratitude and obedience to our giving God will make us joyful also.

Thursday, July 7th - Genesis 21: 4

Abraham further demonstrates his gratitude and obedience to the Lord who had graciously given him his son by his circumcising Isaac. Since the sacramental sign of circumcision was applied to an intimate part of the child's body, we should understand that this sign and seal was to indicate an intensive application of God's authority over Isaac, just as his name indicates an extensive application of that authority. In body and soul, Abraham therefore devotes his only legitimate son to the Lord, as all believing parents should do with their children.

Friday, July 8th - Genesis 21: 5

This verse indicates, once again, the remarkable nature of Abraham's having a son at this particular time in his life. The patriarch was 100 years old when Isaac was born. This shows us that one is never too old to trust and obey the Lord, and never too old to be blessed by the Lord in such a way that the sorrows and sufferings of early years are

swallowed up in the holy joy of the best wine, that the Lord reserves until the latter years of our lives.

Saturday, July 9th - Genesis 21: 6, 7

Sarah testifies of her gratitude to the Lord by declaring that He had turned her unbelieving ridicule at the Word of promise into holy rejoicing by the provision of Isaac. She further testifies that her joy found its ultimate source not in her son, but in her God, for she declares that it was the Lord, not Isaac, who had made her laugh. It is the deep and strengthening joy of the Lord that fills us when we look to Him as the one thing necessary, the secret of contentment, and the source and giver of all true blessing.

Sunday, July 10th – Genesis 21: 6, 7

The joy of Sarah would prove to be contagious. All who would hear of it would rejoice with her. For her own miracle son was a token, not only to her, but to all believers in every age that the Lord could and would do above what believers ask or think. The God who brought life out of the dead womb of Sarah is rightly apprehended by faith to be the God of restoration and of resurrection. He shows Himself to be so by His pledges in time—pledges that will be perfected in eternal glory. Who would not rejoice to know this wonderful God?

Monday, July 11th - Genesis 21: 8, 9

The joy that believers receive from the Lord in this world is not without its challenging sorrows. Therefore, we learn that soon after Isaac was weaned, while Abraham made a feast of joyful celebration for the growing development of his son, Ishmael, the son of Abraham's sin with Hagar, laughed not in grateful joy with Sarah and Abraham, but in mocking contempt at his growing half brother. John Calvin remarks on this that, *Isaac brought laughter with him from his mother's womb, since he bore—engraven upon him—the certain tokens of God's grace. He, therefore, so exhilarates his father's house that joy breaks forth into thanksgiving; but Ishmael, with canine and profane laughter, attempts to destroy that holy joy of faith (Genesis, pp.542,543).*

Tuesday, July 12th - Genesis 21: 9

In Hebrew, the words used for what Ishmael was doing and for what Isaac was named both come from the same root, meaning laughter. Yet, Isaac was a legitimate and God-given source of joy for others, while Ishmael indulges in unholy ridicule perversely to please himself. Not all joy is in the Lord, nor is all happiness holy. Ishmael derived wicked glee from his casting ridicule upon his brother, upon the faith of his father, Abraham, and upon the word and work of God. Such laughing is sinful and will rightly be turned to sorrow. Let us beware of making an idol out of humor and happiness at any cost. The psalmist does not ask for joyous revival from any source, but seeks it only according to God's Word when he prays: *Revive me according to Thy Word (Ps. 119:25).*

Wednesday, July 13th - Genesis 21: 10 -12

Sarah's response to Ishmael's ridicule of Isaac may appear to us to be merely an expression of natural motherly resentment against anyone who expressed anything less than the highest thoughts about her child. In fact, her demand that Abraham drive out Ishmael and his mother might seem sinfully vindictive and excessive. Sarah seems to be repaying contempt with contempt when she refers to Hagar and Ishmael not by their names, but by the designations *this maid* and *her son*. It is, therefore, no wonder that Abraham was grieved over this matter. It no doubt grieved him that Ishmael mocked Isaac, but it was Sarah's seemingly severe and graceless demand that especially grieved him. He who had endured the familial separation of his nephew, Lot, was pained to think of yet another familial separation. Yet, not all within the family of faith are truly of the family of faith. Neither are all things that look like harmless child's fun or a mother's sinful behaving truly as they appear. We must judge not by appearances, but according to righteous judgment (Jn. 7:24).

Thursday, July 14th - Genesis 21: 10 -12

Sarah's reaction to Ishmael's mocking laughter may have appeared sinfully small-hearted and vengeful, but Abraham's wife was acting by faith, while Abraham was being moved by foolish fondness for his misbegotten son. This unveiling of true motives becomes apparent when we learn from v.12 that God accepted and confirmed Sarah's determination to be rid of the bond woman and her sinful issue. The Lord even uses the sort of contemptuous language as did Sarah when she referred to Hagar and Ishmael as *this maid* and *her son*, rather than using their names. The Lord refers to them as *the lad* and *your maid*. The things despised by God, we must learn to despise; His enemies, we must count as our enemies (Ps. 139:19-22). Such ones despised by God we can recognize by their despising of the Lord, His ordinances, and His people.

Friday, July 15th - Genesis 21: 10 -12

In order for us to have and to preserve holy joy, we must learn rightly to exercise holy discrimination and holy hatred. If we love the world, love of the Father is not in us (1 Jn. 2:15). At this time, Sarah understood this more deeply than did Abraham. Therefore, the Lord tells the father of faith, who was Sarah's husband and a man ten years her senior, to listen to his wife. Adam sinned when he heeded his wife; and Peter tells women not to preach to their husbands (Gen. 3:17ff; 1 Pet. 3:1). Yet, men of faith should hear and heed their wives when they speak the truth of God. The Scripture that tells a woman to keep silent does not instruct a man to refuse to consider her words when she does speak.

Saturday, July 16th - Genesis 21: 12

Abraham's grief was not a holy sorrow, but a natural fondness for Ishmael. In order to help sever that tie, the Lord refers to Ishmael not as *your son*, but as *the lad*. Then, the Lord reorients the focus of Abraham to fix it upon Isaac, the product of God's gracious

promise, and the living conduit through whom the fullness of the divine promises would be realized. Our natural passions are not safe guides for our affections and actions; the grace and glory of the Lord are.

Sunday, July 17th - Genesis 21: 13

The Lord assures Abraham that although Hagar and Ishmael should be driven from the patriarch's home and family, they would have provision made for them. Abraham's maid and her son would be sustained, no longer by Abraham, but by the Lord's common grace. When people are removed from our care, we should be comforted in the knowledge that they are in the far more competent care of the Lord.

Monday, July 18th - Genesis 21: 13

The Lord promises special grace, but not saving grace, to Ishmael, pledging that He would make of him a great nation due to his being descended from Abraham. This, of course, would not be a welcome development so far as the sons of Israel would be concerned. Ishmael's descendants would be thorns in the sides of the covenant people throughout history. Yet, both peoples issued from Abraham. The sons of God grow great in grace and, alas, can also sin greatly with deep and lasting consequences. That is because the Lord's saving grace redeems us from living lives of insignificance. All that the saints do counts lastingly. Therefore, although it is true that where sin increases, grace abounds all the more, let us by grace learn to die to the sin that can cast a long shadow of painful consequences over our lives, and live unto righteousness.

Tuesday, July 19th - Genesis 21: 14

Abraham acted in obedience to the voice of his wife, who spoke truth that was confirmed by the Lord. Still, this verse that records the patriarch's sending away of Hagar and Ishmael is full of touching pathos. Abraham makes what material provision he can for the mother and her son, tenderly placing the provisions upon Hagar's shoulders and then handing over to her his illegitimate son. With resignation, Hagar departs to wander in the desert. The cost and emotional pain this departure brought to Abraham must have been great, but the alternative of disobeying God and jeopardizing Isaac's inheritance would have been greater. It is right that we should feel the pain of our parting with our sin and its consequences, when those consequences have intertwined themselves with our affections. However, we should never let pain stop us from doing the right thing, clearly indicated to us by the Word of the Lord.

Wednesday, July 20th - Genesis 21: 14 -16

The promise God gave to Abraham to make a great nation of Ishmael's descendants appears soon after its having been given to be in mortal jeopardy. The scant provisions of Abraham were soon exhausted, and Hagar despairs for the life of her son. She gave her son up for dead and desired only that she might be spared the pain of seeing him die. Far different is this natural relation from the spiritual relation that existed between

Abraham and Isaac, where the father was not only willing to see his son die, but was willing to kill his son at the Lord's bidding, rightly reckoning that God could raise him from the dead (Heb. 11:17-19). Hagar's test with her son resulted in her despair; Abraham's test resulted in his deeper devotion to and greater blessing from the Lord. An operative faith in Abraham made him radically different from Hagar in this respect.

Thursday, July 21st – Genesis 21: 16 -18

It might seem that in v.16 Hagar offers prayer. However, from the facts that she does not direct her words to the Lord and that the Lord responds not to her request, but to Ishmael's cries, we should understand that Hagar's words represent her desperate desire merely to be spared watching her son suffer an awful death. Yet, unbidden except by the prompting of common compassion upon Ishmael's suffering, the Lord brings relief. His divine mercy falls upon the just and the unjust. Despite the fact that Ishmael had mocked the promise and provision of the Lord when he mocked Isaac, the Lord does not justly mock Ishmael's suffering in return, but graciously moves to relieve it. The Lord is better to all people than any of them deserve or realize.

Friday, July 22nd - Genesis 21: 17 , 18

That the ministry of divine relief rendered here is a matter of common and not saving grace is indicated by the name of divinity, *God*, being used throughout these verses, instead of the name of covenant mercy, *the Lord*, being used. That it is divine mercy instead of human warranting prompting this relief effort is indicated by the questions the angel of the Lord puts to Hagar. He asks Hagar what was disturbing her. The question seems unfitting for an omniscient and omnipotent God to ask. Was the Lord ignorant of the cause of Hagar's anguish? Was He lacking sympathy and compassion for her in her plight? As callous as this question may appear, it reveals to us the irrationality of the fears of the unregenerate. God is better to them than they know, and it is only their unbelieving fears that blind them to His good provision for them in this life. Therefore, the Lord soothes Hagar's fearful heart first with His word of promise before He makes provision for the bodily thirst of her son. The Lord gives even the unbeliever above what he asks or thinks. Hagar was reduced to desiring only to be spared watching her son die. Instead, she would see him live and grow into a great nation. Surely such divine dealings with the unregenerate should drive from the redeemed children their low expectations of their Lord.

Saturday, July 23rd - Genesis 21: 19

The angel of the Lord did not miraculously produce water for Hagar and Ishmael. Rather, He opened the mother's eyes to see what God had naturally placed in His creation. The provision of our Lord's common grace is more abundant and readily available than men naturally can know or discover. It is men's sins and fears that blind them to this blessed truth. The earth is full of the loving kindness of the Lord (Ps. 119:64), if men had eyes to see it. But God can and does open men's blinding shutters of fear, so that they might see and seize the provision of His grace. Hagar here got a

glimpse, but not a saving possession of the gracious provision of the Lord. We who are believers have an abiding and growing apprehension of both the common and saving grace of our Lord (Eph. 1:18-23).

Sunday, July 24th - Genesis 21: 20 , 21

God kept His word both to Abraham and to Hagar. The common divine grace ministered to Ishmael not only kept him alive in the wilderness, but also enabled him to become proficient living there and to prosper. The unredeemed often prosper in this world, while the redeemed often live in caves and holes of the ground in this life (Heb. 11:37 -40). This is so because this cursed world can easily contain the reward of God's common grace that He confers upon the unregenerate, while only the realm of the infinite and eternal glory of God can contain the weight of glorious reward that is growing each day for the children of God.

July 2005 Bible Reading Notes

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Monday, July 25th - Genesis 21: 22 -24

Abraham finally had his promised, legitimate son. The mocking Ishmael and his servant mother had been sent out of Abraham's house, leaving peace and happiness to reign over the patriarch's little family. Now we find that added to this domestic peace is peace and felicity between Abraham and his neighbors. Showers of divine blessing do come upon the Lord's people sometimes, and they last only for some time. Abraham's greatest trial was yet before him, contained in the divine command that he should offer Isaac as a sacrifice. But at this point, we see the truth in the saying that when a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him (Prov. 16:7). Such peace rightly enjoyed and improved fortifies one for the trials that lie ahead.

Tuesday, July 26th – Genesis 21: 22 , 23

In these verses, Abraham receives a suit for perpetual peace from a king accompanied by his army commander. As king of Gerar, Abimelech had authority, and in company with his commander, Phicol, he had power to bring great good or great harm to Abraham. Furthermore, Abimelech was a man whom Abraham had wronged by his lying about Sarah and thereby occasioning the curse of God to come upon Gerar. Abimelech could naturally have held a grudge against Abraham, but, instead, the king of Gerar seeks grace from the Hebrew sojourner, as though all authority and power were truly vested in the patriarch, which, of course, they were by the grace and blessing of heaven's almighty King. Because Abimelech perceived the blessing of God upon

Abraham, he humbled himself before the one whom the Lord's gentleness, compassion, and grace had made great. It is the blessing of God that not only makes us rich (Prov. 10:22) but that also compels men to respect us as being majestic ones of the earth (Ps. 16:3), and more than conquerors (Rom. 8:37).

Wednesday, July 27th – Genesis 21: 22 , 23

If this pagan king, Abimelech, (if, indeed, he remained unbelieving after God's dealings with him) could perceive the blessing of God on Abraham, and, because of that blessing, treated the patriarch with such respect, should not we who are in Christ regard each other as ones who have been blessed with every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3), and thus treat each other with much more loving respect?

Thursday, July 28th - Genesis 21: 22 -24

What Abimelech sought and received from Abraham was perpetual peace based upon faithful relations. When the king of Gerar, who very likely was younger than aged Abraham, sought from Abraham peace for himself and his descendants, Abimelech was showing respectful regard for Isaac and his sons, in contrast with the contempt Ishmael had demonstrated toward Isaac. Thus, the king of Gerar rightly understood the essence of God's covenant with Abraham, namely that the Lord was not a dispenser of occasional blessing, but was committed to being the perpetual God of Abraham and his descendants, resulting in their eternal life. Should not those now within the covenant have even greater understanding of and grateful respect for its prevailing and perpetual blessing than did the king of Gerar?

Friday, July 29th - Genesis 21: 22 -24

Abraham granted what Abimelech had requested. The patriarch pledged himself as well as his descendants to lasting peace and to faithful dealings with the king of Gerar and his posterity. Abraham rightly could pledge such peace and faithfulness, because he was drawing upon the faithful and peace-establishing covenant mercies of his God, so that he and his children would be enabled to keep this pledge. The source, therefore, for the making and keeping of this pledge was not Abraham, who had demonstrated repeatedly a propensity to lie and deal faithlessly, but rather the Lord God of Abraham, who ever directs and empowers His sons to be peacemakers (Mt. 5: 9).

Saturday, July 30th - Genesis 21: 25 -27

In these verses we are told how the pledge of peace between Abraham and Abimelech was tested soon after it was established. Friction arose over the ownership and use of a well that Abraham had dug in Gerar. Some of Abimelech's servants had seized the well and forbidden Abraham, who was a

sojourner amongst them, to draw water from it. In their zeal, these servants over-stepped the will of their master, who was inclined to be submissive and generously serving with respect to the man upon whom he perceived the hand of God. Abraham rightly reckoned that his pledge of peace with Gerar's king worked both ways. Thus, he deals not with the servants, but with the master who had authority to rectify the situation. The result of this direct and faithful dealing was that Abimelech promised a resolution acceptable to Abraham. Men of mutual good faith can afford to face and resolve their differences and difficulties together, knowing that each party is committed to a unity and bond of peace that transcends mere personal advancement. Certainly, we who are bound together in the unity of the Spirit in Christ should be faithful to go to our brethren with whom we have a grievance, being committed to working with them for resolution, rather than our nursing resentment and indulging in gossip and back-biting.

Sunday, July 31st - Genesis 21: 27

Abraham and Abimelech not only resolved their differences, but they strengthened their resolution by entering together into a binding covenant that each party as well as their respective descendants would honor. When we rightly strive to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, we effectively face the challenges that threaten that unity and peace and devise ways to deepen our unity and strengthen the bonds of peace.

Monday, August 1st - Genesis 21: 27 -34

The covenant that healed the breach that had developed between Abraham and Abimelech was sealed with animal sacrifices (v.27). It was also reinforced with living tokens of seven ewe lambs and a tamarisk tree. These represent the costliness of honoring one's word to do right and keep the peace which one had sworn to keep. The living tokens bespeak the blessed and beneficial fruit issuing from the costly commitment to deal faithfully with others. The pains we bear and the price we pay for our faithful dealings with others are rightly seen as being well worth the investment when precious peace is the return for that investment.

Tuesday, August 2nd - Genesis 21: 28 -30

The covenant between Abraham and Abimelech was not a pledge to maintain peace at any price, but rather one based upon mutually righteous and even gracious dealings. Hence, we find Abraham not with self-satisfaction, being content to enjoy the water of his well within the territory of the king of Gerar, that water having been pledged to him by the king. Instead, Abraham offers Abimelech the seven lambs as token of his appreciation for the King's honoring of the patriarch's claim on the well. It is not a bribe or tribute that Abraham gives, for the lambs were sent to Abimelech after the covenant

between the two men that recognized Abraham's claim was sealed. The lambs represent a gracious gift rendered in gratitude for Abimelech's faithful dealings with Abraham. Believers should never be content merely to claim their rights and take what is theirs, but should ever be responding graciously toward those who deal righteously with them.

Wednesday, August 3rd – Genesis 21: 31

This verse indicates that what would grow to be the city of Beersheba was planted in the soil of Abimelech's agreement that the water from the well dug by Abraham belonged to the patriarch. The name, Beersheba, can be translated *well of oath*. The city became, in due course, the southernmost point of Israel's border. Points of initial contention settled by faithful, righteous, and gracious dealings, can become most significant to us and to our descendants. Much more is gained by our faithful dealings with others than we may at first realize.

Thursday, August 4th – Genesis 21: 32 -24

The men who were potential contenders over a piece of territory settled their dispute with a covenant and parted as stronger friends than they were before their commitment to mutually faithful dealings was tested by this dispute. Both parties benefited from their agreement to peace. For his part, Abraham planted a tree. The tamarisk is a long-lived evergreen, and thus served as a fitting token for Abraham's covenant with Abimelech. If the tree was a sign of that covenant, the renewed prayerful devotion of Abraham to the Lord was the empowering heart of it. It is the Everlasting God who alone enables His people to desire and to do faithful and righteous deeds in lasting confirmation of their holy promises. It is the Everlasting God who also encompasses His people during the time of their earthly pilgrimage, giving them peace and making them secure wherever they may sojourn.

Friday, August 5th – Genesis 22: 1, 2

Some gifts are suitable only for display or adornment, while others are designed for practical purposes. Faith is given by God to His people so that it might be tried and tested, so that it might work, wrestle, and prevail in and grow stronger through the testing (1 Pet. 1:6,7). Accordingly, in these verses we are brought to witness the supreme test of Abraham's faith. We are told that this test followed a number of previous and preparatory tests. It was after such things as Abraham's calling from Ur, his coming to Canaan, the famine and his sojourn in Egypt, his separation from Lot, his entanglements with Hagar and Ishmael, his prayer for Sodom, his trusting the divine promise for Isaac's birth, and his trials in Gerar that this supreme test came. The course of the faithful leads them through many and varied trials, wherein each test prepares them for yet greater tests, while all of them together serve to refine and sanctify those so

tested.

Saturday, August 6th - Genesis 22: 1, 2

This test of faith is imposed upon Abraham by God. The Lord ordains and superintends all of the tests and trails of all of His people. When challenging tests come upon us, it is not as though something has gone wrong or as though God has failed us. Instead, tests are the chosen tools of our Lord to further open the eyes of our hearts so that we might better and with more vital grasp apprehend the riches of His saving grace and love for us, and of His wisdom and power by which He upholds and guides us as more than conquerors through all tribulations.

Sunday, August 7th - Genesis 22: 1, 2

This test is supremely costly to Abraham. God is demanding not the patriarch's life, but his son. Any father worth the title would rather a thousand times lay down his own life before giving up the life of his own child. The Lord acknowledges this personal cost when He refers to Isaac as *your son* and further as *your only son*, and supremely as the one *whom you love*. Nor is a word uttered from the Lord of encouragement or incentive. No explicit promise of rescue, resurrection, or restoration of Isaac is given to Abraham. All that is apparent to him is that the God who had given him a son was taking that blessed son away, devoting him to death by the hand of his own father. There can be no calculating the cost of the sacrifices our Lord may ask us to make. Nor can any sacrifice on our part be too great, when such sacrifices are offered to the God who delivered up His only begotten and infinitely beloved Son to die for the sins of His people. Though this God should slay us or ours, yet, by faith, we can, must, and will trust Him. (Job 13:15).

Monday, August 8th - Genesis 22: 1, 2

The cost and pain of this test are increased by the test being protracted. Abraham is told by God to take his son Isaac to the land of Moriah , and there offer him as a burnt offering. Things that are painful and costly, but right and necessary, are best done quickly. Yet, Abraham was obliged to travel for three days (v.4) to a mountain God would reveal to him in due course (as the Lord had revealed to him the Promised Land only after he had left Ur). For three days the holy patriarch carried with him the exquisite pain of knowing that his son was to die. Yet, still he carried on to Moriah, sustained by faith in the God who would endure the infinite cost of having His Son delivered to death and laid in the grave for three days.

Tuesday, August 9th - Genesis 22: 1, 2

The Lord gives to Abraham no reason for this extraordinary and

excruciating command. Yet Abraham rightly responded to this divine command by faith (Heb. 11:17 -19). Faith enables us to perceive right reasons for all of the Lord's directives, even when no such reasons are immediately apparent to our senses. Abraham's faith prompted him to look back to the promise of God that had at one point been incredible to the patriarch, but that had been fulfilled in the birth of Isaac. Abraham's faith was focused upon the fact that the magisterial grace and almighty power of the Lord had already brought life out of his aged body and Sarah's dead womb. He further rightly reckoned by an unwavering faith that the God who had promised that through Isaac his descendants would be named (Gen. 21:12), would fulfill that promise, even if He had to raise Isaac from the ashes of his having become a burnt offering (Heb. 11:19). Faith always enables every believer exercising its triumphing power rightly to reckon—even amidst the most painful and perplexing trials—that the precious promises of the Lord are true and that they are greater than all the trials arrayed against him.

Wednesday, August 10th – Genesis 22: 1, 2

By the testing design of the Lord, Abraham was brought into a crisis of affections and loyalties. Would the patriarch adhere decisively to his earthly, human love for his son, or would he cleave to the higher heavenly love for his God? This seeming dilemma is faced and rightly decided not by a man's own hopes, wishes, desires, or dreams, but rather by the right exercise of the precious gift of faith. The true object of faith is ever the Lord and His lavish grace, infallible wisdom, immeasurable love, and almighty power. The exercise of faith leads us to understand that our supreme duty is to love the Lord with all of our faculties, and then, always secondarily, to love others as we love ourselves (Mt. 22:37 -39). The only safe and right way for the saint to pray is not that his will but that the Lord's will would prevail, even if the divine will leads through death.

Thursday, August 11th - Genesis 22: 1, 2

There are no apparent reasons for this difficult divine command. Yet, Abraham's faith, rightly laying hold of the promises and power of his Lord, and submitting to the absolute propriety the Lord had over his life and all that pertained to it, obeyed the command that spelled Isaac's death. There would be, however, many great and blessed reasons for this trial that Abraham would discover in the furnace of affliction and in the cup of his bitter, three day sufferings. We learn that we are inseparable from the love of God not as we try to maneuver around the crosses our Lord calls us to bear, but as we bear those crosses, reckoning that even if He should slay us and ours, yet our trust in Him will be vindicated.

Friday, August 12th - Genesis 22: 1-3

The response of Abraham's faith is seen in his eagerness to know and to obey God's revealed will. When the Lord calls him, Abraham responds immediately, saying: *Here I am*. He has a ready ear to hear and a hearty desire to be at the disposal of God's Word. Then, when the awful command is received by Abraham, his unhesitating commitment to obey is apparent in his rising early to be about his heavenly Father's business, though that business should cost him his own son. This is how faith worked in the father of faith, and this is how faith should work in all of his children.

Saturday, August 13th - Genesis 22: 1-3

At this most critical and costly juncture of his life, Abraham is not guided by his own desires or reasoning, but rather by his unwavering commitment to the will and Word of God. He sets out with all of the provisions for a burnt offering because the Word of God had directed him so to do. His goal was nothing short of, neither to the right nor left of, the place which God had told him. Thus he demonstrates that he trusted in the Lord with all of his heart and did not lean upon his own understanding (Prov. 3:5,6). Such faith is a shield (Eph. 6:16), and instrument of great reward to all who have and use it.

Sunday, August 14th - Genesis 22: 4, 5

It is not grim duty, or loveless dread, or mindless and heartless zeal that prompts Abraham in this course of costly obedience. This righteous man is walking, instead, by faith. The first traces of Abraham's faith in the resurrecting power of God appear in these verses. The patriarch tells the accompanying servants to stay at a distance from Mt. Moriah, and that he and Isaac would go to worship the Lord together. Then Abraham adds: *we will return to you*. It was not that Abraham spoke deceptively to the servants, or disarmingly in the hearing of Isaac, nor is it that he was expressing his own desperate hope when he referred to their return. It was by faith in the resurrecting power of God that Abraham declared that *we* and not that *I* will return.

Monday, August 15th - Genesis 22: 5-8

Although the command from God was for Isaac's death, Abraham obediently proceeded being sustained by his faith in the living and life-giving God (Heb. 11:17-19). By faith, not by a sentimental desire to shield his son from the awful truth of his approaching immolation, Abraham answered Isaac's question regarding the sacrifice by speaking the truth in love, saying: *God will provide Himself the lamb for the burnt offering*. By faith that was galvanized by obedience into profoundly penetrating perception of the grace of God, Abraham saw and spoke the truth about the Lamb of God, by whose substitutionary atonement sin and death would be vanquished for the Lord's people (Jn. 8:56).

Tuesday, August 16th - Genesis 22: 7, 8

True faith does not render a man mindlessly mechanical or heartlessly apathetic and lovelessly insensitive in his obedience. These verses capture the profound love and deep pathos that filled the heart of this man and his son on their way up Mt. Moriah . Isaac strikes the paternal chord in Abraham's heart with the words: *My father*. Abraham, as the father of Isaac, should have done all in his power to preserve his son's life, not to take it from him. Yet, when Abraham answered: *Here I am my son*, he employs the same words he used in his response to the Lord's call to him (v.1), indicating his readiness to hear and respond rightly to the caller. By his use of the designation, *my son*, Abraham asserts that he had not forsaken but rather has remained intimately bound to his son, even as he remained committed to his God. No father could be more faithful and lovingly providing for his son than when he devotes his son to the God of salvation, who leads His people through death to everlasting and glorious life, by the merits of His Son's death for them.

Wednesday, August 17th - Genesis 22: 7, 8

Abraham did not dissemble in his answer to Isaac's question, but spoke the truth apprehended by faith in love. The father's conviction and commitment convince the son, as we are to understand from the notice that the two of them walked on together, the son in trusting obedience to his father, and the father in trusting obedience to his Lord. Nothing better begets faithful obedience in children than the faithful obedience of their parents.

Thursday, August 18th - Genesis 22: 9

At the place God indicated, Abraham made ready the altar and all that was necessary for the sacrifice. Finally, he bound his son and laid him on the altar. This act reveals the holy determination of the father to trust and obey his God. Isaac's submitting to the binding (for he was old and strong enough to overpower and flee from his father had he a mind to do so) reveals his voluntary submission to his father's will, and through that paternal will, his submission to the will of the Lord. Here is a father and his son, who by their faith in the Lord, enact a shadowy prefiguring of the heavenly Father who did not spare His only begotten Son, but gave Him up for the salvation of His people (Rom. 8:32), and of His Son's free and voluntary submission to the graciously redeeming will of His Father (Jn. 10:17,18).

Friday, August 19th – Genesis 22: 10

This verse records the crowning deed that demonstrates the depth and holy determination of Abraham's faith. The father of Isaac was not only committed to taking the steps of preparation for his son's sacrifice, he was also fully committed to delivering up his own son to death in obedience to the command

of God. Abraham was committed to the accomplishment of this awful deed that was so painful and costly to him, not because his love for his son was defective, but rather because his loving reverence for his God was deep, pure, and strong (cf., v.12). We love our children, our neighbors, and even our own lives best when we offer them up as living sacrifices to the God whom we should love supremely (Mt. 22:37-40), for that God has demonstrated His saving love for us by delivering His Son up for us all (Rom. 8:32).

Saturday, August 20th - Genesis 22: 10 -12

It was as Abraham was in the very act of bringing the knife down upon Isaac that the angel of the Lord intervened to stop the patriarch and to save his son from death. Abraham's unwavering faith did not fill him with a blind zeal or an uncontrollable frenzy or obsession as he determined that he would kill Isaac. Instead, the patriarch demonstrates his continued awareness of the features of his circumstances, especially his continued hearing and heeding of the Word of the Lord. Therefore, when the angel called his name, Abraham is not obliviously wrapped up in his sacrificial work. He answers as he had done previously: *Here I am* (vv.1,7), meaning that he was attentive to the word and at the disposal of the righteous directives of the speaker. There was nothing blind or irrational about Abraham's faith, nor should there be anything irrational about our faith.

Sunday, August 21st – Genesis 22: 10 -12

In the path of this most costly obedience, Abraham learns something of why the Lord had ordained this test for him. The Lord Himself was pleased to know, not only from His omniscience and foreknowledge, but also from observation of Abraham's actions in this world of space, matter, and time, that Abraham regarded Him with highest reverence. The Lord was glorified by this pure and unreserved reverence in action. Furthermore, Abraham, by this experience, came to know, too, how deeply and truly he feared the Lord. He came to know, as we also do by his example, how strong, true, and irrepressibly focused saving faith is upon the Word and will of the Lord, who is the true object of such faith. Such knowledge as this serves for the good of all believers.

Monday, August 22nd - Genesis 22: 12

Because Abraham was constantly attuned to the Word of the Lord in this costly course of his obedience to his God, he heard and heeded the blessed words that told him not to kill his son. There is no contradiction between the divine commands first that Abraham should slaughter Isaac, and then that he should spare his son. The truth that even Isaac—a child of God's promise and miraculous provision—was himself a sinner justly deserving death is manifested in the divine command of slaughter. The greater truth that God is gracious and will spare His people what they justly deserve is manifested in the command

that arrested Abraham's death blow to Isaac. The holy justice of God made Isaac's sacrifice not to be murder, but rather a righteous execution; the mercy of God interposed between the divine sentence and its execution. Thus, as Abraham and Isaac—who also would have learned much from this test—faced this death, they found it to be not grim loss but great gain, as they together experienced the merciful deliverance of the Lord.

Tuesday, August 23rd - Genesis 22: 12 -14

The mercy of the Lord is not a mere benevolent attitude but is administered in objective action. Thus we see that whereas the salvation of Isaac was to Abraham a free gift, that gift would cost the Lord. The sacrifice must be made, but God provided for Himself the sacrificial animal as a substitute for Isaac. This provision was but a type and shadow of the infinitely costly price God would pay by giving His only begotten Son to be the sacrificial Lamb to take away the sins of the world. When we rightly understand the great love our God has for us and the costly mercy He has exercised toward us, how could we ever think of withholding ourselves or what is ours from Him?

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Wednesday, August 24th - Genesis 22: 12 -14

The culmination of a series of faithful steps Abraham had taken according to the Word of the Lord is recorded for us in v.10. For the sake of the Lord, Abraham did not spare his only legitimately begotten son. In vv.12-14 Scripture records for us the reward that came to Abraham on account of his faith. The faithful action of the patriarch was rewarded with the merciful intervention of the Lord, whereby Isaac was restored to his father. Moreover, Abraham is commended by the Lord for the purity and power of his demonstrated faith. The mercy and commendation of the Lord are expressed vitally in terms of the Lord's providing a substitutionary sacrifice through which life is restored to Isaac, and the living Isaac is restored to Abraham. Yet the fullness of this divine reward for Abraham's faith is not to be found in these things which are but shadows, but rather in the substance of redemption to which they point. Faith's reward is infinite, eternal, and incalculable.

Thursday, August 25th - Genesis 22: 12 -14

This test of Abraham's faith reveals to us the supreme blessedness of true discipleship. He who will trust and obey the Lord, even when the Lord appears determined to take from him that which is dearer to him than his own life, will never be disappointed, but will rather be richly rewarded. Jesus teaches us this when He says: *Whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it* (Lk. 9:24). Faith

prompts us to bear the cross, and when we act in faith it prompts the Lord to bestow upon us a crown of glory.

Friday, August 26th – Genesis 22: 12 -14

The supreme commendation that the Lord gave to Abraham was that the patriarch did not withhold his son from the excruciatingly painful and perplexing demand of God. As wonderful as this divine commendation is, it is but a shadow—admittedly of very high resolution—cast from the substance of God’s own action of not sparing His own Son, but giving Him as a ransom for many. Read and reflect upon Rom. 5:8; 8:32 for a consideration of the substance of our heavenly Father’s giving that is the prompting and enabling source of all of our giving. If our God so commends the shadowy giving of His servants, we ought ceaselessly to commend with our praises, thanksgivings, and testimonies His substantial and saving giving.

Saturday, August 27th – Genesis 22: 13 , 14

As the Lord arrested the hand of Abraham that was raised and ready to kill Isaac, and as Abraham heard and heeded the arresting voice of the Lord, the life-giving hand of the Lord was beheld by the faithful patriarch. The eyes of Abraham were opened to behold the ram provided by God as a substitute for Isaac. Earlier we learned how the Lord opened the eyes of Hagar, who helplessly was watching her son, Ishmael, die of thirst. The water Hagar beheld served only to sustain the bond woman’s son physically. Abraham’s eyes were opened to behold much more substantial divine provision, that served not only to save his son’s life, but pointed to the Lamb of God that would be given by God to save the souls of this father, his son, and all of his descendants. It is, then, no wonder that Abraham named the place *The Lord Will Provide*.

Sunday, August 28th - Genesis 22: 15 -18

These verses detail further the reward of Abraham’s faith. In v.16 the great and precious divine promise given to Abraham in Gen. 15:5, and reiterated and expanded in Gen. 17:1-7, is reinforced with a divine oath. Nor is this oath issued upon slight grounds. God swears not by heaven or earth, but by Himself, the highest source possible (Heb. 6:13 ,14). The Lord would accordingly cease to be the Lord should He ever fail to provide what He had promised to Abraham and his descendants. We, who are Abraham’s spiritual seed, are on infinitely more solid and secure ground than we know.

Monday, August 29th - Genesis 22: 15 -18

The bountiful descendants promised to Abraham earlier (Gen. 15:5; 17:6) are once again mentioned in v.17. Each one will be a child and reward of the faith of the patriarch. However, the Lord promises not only a great quantity of descendants, but also reveals something of their quality when He says that they shall possess the gate of their enemies. The fruit of the Lord’s covenant promise, claimed by Abraham through the exercise of his faith, would not be a brood of weak and defeated descendants, but rather a

host of majestic ones of the earth (Ps. 16:3) who would live triumphantly as more than conquerors (Rom. 8:37).

Tuesday, August 30th - Genesis 22: 15 -18

Not only will the descendants of Abraham be great in quantity and quality, but they will prove to be a collective conduit for the blessing of God to come upon the nations of the earth. The harlot, Rahab, spoke to the spies about the renown that Israel had attained because of their God (Josh. 2:9), and she became one among the nations blessed by her incorporation into the people of God. Ruth also was similarly blessed. Jesus speaks of His people letting their lights shine so that men might see their good works and glorify God (Mt. 5:16). He also declares that those who believe in Him shall become sources of living water to refresh others as well as sustain themselves (Jn. 7:38). Added to these descriptive sayings is the Lord's decree that His disciples should make disciples of all the nations (Mt. 28:19). Those who are new creatures in Christ, who walk by faith and manifest the blessed fruit of the Spirit, cannot be anything other than sources of blessing to their neighbors and to the nations of the world.

Wednesday, August 31st - Genesis 22: 15 -18

The faith of Abraham was not a dead concept but a living, dynamic power. By its exercise he did not waver but grew strong in the grace of the Lord. By it he attained immeasurably vast, precious, and enduring blessing from the Lord. As James teaches us, faith is shown in its works (Jas. 2:21) and is perfected by its works (Jas. 2:22). Thus we see how God bases this great reward upon what Abraham had done in offering up Isaac (v.16) and in how the patriarch obeyed not his own desires and passions but the voice of the Lord (v.18). True faith works according to the Word of God and receives a reward of such a kind and magnitude as only the Lord can give.

Thursday, September 1st – Genesis 22: 19

Abraham had told his servants that he and Isaac would return to them after the faithful father and his submissive son had worshipped the Lord (v.5). In this verse we are told that Abraham made good his word. He did so not by his trying to shield and save his only and greatly beloved son, but rather by his delivering him up to the God of salvation, resurrection, and glory. The trust Abraham had in his God was fully vindicated. It not only spared him the cost of his son, but also greatly enriched him with divine rewards. Abraham and Isaac both returned home infinitely richer, wiser, and more trusting in and grateful to the Lord. The faith of both no doubt grew greatly as a result of their having sustained this test. Our trust in our Lord grows only by our trusting Him, as we exercise the precious and potent faith He has given to us and attain inconceivable rewards as a result.

Friday, September 2nd - Genesis 22: 16 -19

Through Abraham's faithful obedience we see a foreshadowing and reflection of what the Lord our God has done in Christ. Our God not only offered, but actually gave His only begotten Son, and His own reward for that infinite gift is a glorious inheritance in a countless multitude turned from sinners into saints by His saving grace (Eph. 1:18). By the death of His Son, God has received His Son back again, laden with the honor of a name above every name. By the death of His Son, God has begotten countless sons (Jn. 1:12 ; Heb. 2:10,13; 1 Jn.3:1; Rev. 21:7). We can and should and must trust and obey such a God who has demonstrated His love in His giving His only begotten Son for us, and who has manifested His power to bring such glorious and abundant life out of death.

Saturday, September 3rd – Genesis 22: 20 -24

These verses inform us of the growth of a part of Abraham's natural family. The Bible does not record for us the development of the families of all of Abraham's brothers and sisters in Ur , but rather gives us information respecting one branch in particular, namely that of his brother, Nahor. Whereas Abraham had left Ur and pressed on from the stopping place of Haran (Gen. 11:31ff), news still reached him from the place that he had left at the command of God. The news was that whereas Abraham had but one son, his brother, Nahor, had several sons. This news could have tempted the patriarch to feel deprived of such personal blessing and to be envious of his brother, but it contained the promise of further blessing for Abraham and his descendants. For from one of these distant sons, Bethuel, would be born Rebekah, the future wife of Isaac. Rather than our repining when others rejoice, we should rejoice with them, for by the ordaining and sovereign hand of our God we may find our own blessing contained in the blessing of others.

Sunday, September 4th – Genesis 23: 1, 2

These verses summarize the life and death of Sarah. Her life span reached 127 years. Hers was a long life, and much of it was trying due to her barrenness. Yet, her happiest days were her final days, as our God often saves the best wine for last. As long as her life was, it did come to an end, for the wages of sin is death, and Sarah was a sinner. However, her death and burial took place in Hebron in the land of Canaan , which was not the place of her natural birth. The Lord had graciously made Sarah to be a pilgrim with Abraham, not only leaving her own country to go to another, but being a spiritual pilgrim seeking the city of God that Canaan typified (Heb. 11:11-16). Therefore, death for Sarah was great gain, as it is for all of God's redeemed people (Phil. 1:21).

Monday, September 5th – Genesis 23: 2

Abraham grieved over the death of his wife. He rightly sensed the loss of his helpmeet whom he loved, and he therefore mourned and wept over her. His faith in the resurrecting power of his God did not make him glib over her death, as though it meant nothing to him. Death remains the enemy of the saints. Therefore it inflicts true and deep sorrow upon those whose loved ones have died. Yet, because death is the final

enemy, and one that has been defeated by the death of Christ, believers have their mourning laced with hope.

Tuesday, September 6th - Genesis 23: 3, 4

In these verses, Abraham begins concerning himself with the business of the burial of his wife. We should note the proportions of attention Scripture here devotes to death and burial. Two verses detail Sarah's death, while 18 verses describe the affairs of her burial. By this we should understand that death is not the end of the story for believers. The future hope of the resurrection of the body is far more prominent. Death may be potent, but the resurrection is more potent. Therefore, Abraham rightly arises from his mourning and looks to the future. He is not concerned merely with the practical matter of disposing of a corpse. Rather, he thinks in terms of showing loving respect for the memory of his wife and manifesting his faith in the final resurrection of her body. As Joseph later showed his faith in the resurrection by directing that his bones be taken out of Egypt when Israel departed from there for the Promised Land (Gen. 50:24,25; Heb. 11:22), so Abraham before him sought to glorify God in death as in life (Rom. 14:8).

Wednesday, September 7th - Genesis 23: 3, 4

Abraham manifests his humility as well as his faith in these verses. He acknowledges before his neighbors that he is living as a stranger and sojourner among them. Sarah's death, no doubt, had reminded him that he was but a sojourner in this world. Therefore, he makes humble request of them, asking that they provide him a plot of land for the burial of Sarah. It will become evident from the verses following these that the patriarch is not asking for a gift of land, but rather for the right to purchase legal title to some land. Therefore, his humility is evident in that although he was granted all of Canaan by the promise of God, he takes care to respect what is right in the sight of men and what is according to the unfolding of the providence of the Lord. Abraham knew and accepted the fact that he would live the rest of his life as a sojourner in the land that betokened the city of God wherein was his true citizenship (Heb. 11:9,10). Accordingly, the only bit of land to which he would ever have title in the eyes of men would be a burial site for his wife. With this Abraham would be well content, and in this same site he himself would be buried by his sons Isaac and Ishmael (Gen. 25:9,10).

Thursday, September 8th - Genesis 23: 4-6

Abraham's gracious humility before his neighbors is respected and rewarded by the sons of Heth (the Hittites), who were descendants of Canaan, Noah's grandson (Gen. 9:18; 10:15), and who had long held title to the land. They acknowledge not Abraham's sojourning state but rather the nobility of his character, and accordingly offer themselves and their possessions to his service. Men make far too much of possessions that can rot, be stolen, or be misused (Mt. 6:19). God esteems not a man's position or possessions but his character, and He can open the eyes even of blind unbelievers that they might behold the excellency of the trophies of His redeeming grace, and esteem such trophies as highly as they ought to esteem them.

Friday, September 9th - Genesis 23: 7-9

Abraham with respect and gratitude acknowledges the gracious respect and consideration afforded him by the sons of Heth. Though all the land was his by divine right, Abraham does not demand that men accept his claim, but asks them to give him what he requires as a free will offering. When the sons of Heth do so give freely and sincerely, Abraham acknowledges their gracious respect and even their affectionate consideration. Thus, by his humbly asking, he receives more than a right to purchase land; he receives an outpouring of loving respect that makes him and us to know that the saint and servant of God is always more rich than he knows, with both heavenly and earthly resources. For this the saints should ever show their gratitude to God and to the men who serve as the instruments of His blessing.

Saturday, September 10th – Genesis 23: 7-9

The humility and graciousness of Abraham are not aspects of a spirit of cringing abjection. The patriarch does not appear before the sons of Heth as a beggar or bargain-hunter. As Matthew Henry rightly remarks in his Commentary on these verses: *Honesty, as well as honour, forbids us to sponge upon our neighbours and to impose upon those that are free.* Therefore, Abraham, no doubt having prayerfully considered the matter before he came to ask concerning it, asks the sons of Heth to arrange his purchase of a specific part of a field for Sarah's burial. The title deed for the land Abraham would only accept for the full price of the land. The humble can afford, and are ever honor bound, to deal with others fairly.

Sunday, September 11th - Genesis 23: 10 , 11

The respectfulness and graciousness of Abraham's request, having been backed by the godly living of the patriarch, serves to arouse the exercise of graciousness in the owner of the field named by Abraham. Ephron, who was sitting among the sons of Heth when Abraham made his request, speaks up and openly declares his intention to give to Abraham not only the cave, but the field containing it. If a gentle word turns away anger (Prov. 15:1), then it is also true that gracious speech backed by gracious living begets gracious responses from others.

Monday, September 12th - Genesis 23: 12 , 13

Men cannot out give God. Neither should they be allowed to out give the godly. Therefore, a blessed haggling ensues between Ephron and Abraham, wherein each tries to prefer the other in honor and to outdo the other in generosity. For his part, Abraham, as he had done in v.7, bows in respectful and grateful acknowledgment of the most generous offer made to him by Ephron. However, the patriarch counters with an instance that he should pay the appropriate price for the field. He would neither impose upon nor be indebted to the munificence of a Canaanite. Nor would he allow the pain and cost of Sarah's death to be eased in this respect by one who had neither a long-term claim to the

land nor any claim to eternal life. Such godly principles, and not mere economic gain, should ever guide the believer in his economic negotiations.

Tuesday, September 13th - Genesis 23: 14 , 15

Abraham's gracious and respectful but firm insistence upon his paying the price Ephron should name for his land is vindicated. For Ephron, who professed that he would make a gift of the land, when he was pressed, names a rather high price for it. There is always a hidden agenda and concealed cost in the apparent generosity of the natural man. For the spiritual man it should be the opposite, namely, that the more he is pressed, the more freely and sincerely generous he will prove to be.

Wednesday, September 14th - Genesis 23: 16

Abraham pays the price named by Ephron the Hittite. Why did the patriarch not accept the gift offered to him? Previously, Abraham had received gifts from Pharaoh and from Abimelech (Gen. 12:16,20; 20:14 -16). Yet those gifts were offered to Abraham by men living outside of the Promised Land. Within the Promised Land, although Abraham appeared as a sojourner, he was in fact the true title holder of all the territory (Gen. 12:1,7). Therefore, when the king of Sodom offered gifts to Abraham, he refused them because he would not appear to be enriched by his receiving as a gift something he already owned by his trust in the Lord (Gen. 14:22,23). Accordingly, as Jesus paid the poll tax, though He was actually exempt from it, so as not to give offense (Mt. 17:27), so here Abraham secures, in the sight of men what he already possessed in the sight of God, namely, legal right to the portion of Canaan where he and Sarah would be buried.

Thursday, September 15th - Genesis 23: 17 -20

In and through Sarah's death Abraham secured title—recognized not only by God but also by men—to a portion of the land that served as a token and pledge of his eternal inheritance. In this arrangement we should perceive that for the believer death is the end of his pilgrimage and sojourning and of his being sustained by divine promises, and it is the beginning of his entitled possession of eternal glory.

Friday, September 16th - Genesis 24: 1-9

Abraham turns his attention from his dead wife to his living son. The hope believers have in the resurrection enables them to avoid being blinded to the blessings of the living by their excessive bereavement over the dead. While the faithful retain grateful memories and have a tender care for the burial of their departed loved ones, they also have a care and make appropriate provision for their living loved ones.

Saturday, September 17th - Genesis 24: 1-4

The particular care Abraham has for his son pertains to Isaac's godly marriage. The patriarch, no doubt being prompted by Sarah's death, regards his own advanced years and

approaching death. He also, by Sarah's loss to him, considers the gain of the blessing of a wife that he should seek for his son. In this, Abraham is not driven by pitiful weakness and mere sentimentality. For while he considers his own approaching death he also surveys the rich and manifold blessings that the Lord had showered upon his life. It is from that fullness that Abraham with confident expectation plans and prepares to secure a wife for Isaac.

Sunday, September 18th - Genesis 24: 1-4

In v.1 we are told that the Lord had blessed Abraham in every way. It might seem that the Lord's taking away of Sarah and withholding from Isaac a wife marred the blessing. However, Abraham's faith in the resurrecting power of God apprehended the Lord's blessing in both the giving and in the taking away of Sarah. Regarding provision of a wife for Isaac, the patriarch's faith rested in the Lord's promise that Abraham's descendants through Isaac would be innumerable. The blessing of God that sight cannot perceive is vitally apprehended by faith.

Monday, September 19th – Genesis 24: 1-4

Isaac was at this time at least 37 years old (compare Gen. 17:17 with Gen. 21:5 and Gen. 23:1). The patience and trust that Abraham had in the Lord's promise was tested by this delay in marriage for Isaac, just as the delay in the birth of Isaac had tested the patriarch's faith. At this time, however, when death not only had claimed Isaac's mother, but also was apparently drawing near to his father, Abraham rightly reckoned that the season for his waiting had ended and that of his working was beginning. Yet, Abraham's action in this matter is greatly different from his impatient and faithless production of Ishmael through Hagar. In the case of Ishmael, Abraham abandoned his God-given responsibilities to lead his family, and heeded the faithless and illegitimate counsel of his wife. In this case with Isaac, Abraham was refusing to let patience over-ripen into presumption and procrastination. Instead, he aroused himself to fulfill his fatherly responsibility to provide a wife for his son. Waiting is a virtue until the time for working arrives.

Tuesday, September 20th - Genesis 24: 1-4

Abraham takes the initiative in arranging the marriage for his son. The concept of such an arranged marriage seems foreign and quaint to us, if not repulsive. Yet, who should better know the son than his father? And who has greater wisdom, gathered from the triumphs and failures experienced through years of his own matrimony, so that he better can judge the merits of a potential bride, than does a man's father? What Christian in his right mind would prefer his own choice above that of his heavenly Father, who ultimately arranges all of the marriages of His sons? Only fools would cast off the guiding hand of his superiors in a matter so vital and massively significant as matrimony.

Wednesday, September 21st – Genesis 24: 1-4

Abraham may not have found a godly woman for Isaac within reach in Canaan , but he knew where one could be found. The patriarch may have been too old to fetch his son's bride from afar himself, but he, by the faithful administration of his household (Gen. 18:19) had a son who trusted in his father's godly wisdom and a servant who understood and could be trusted faithfully to do the father's bidding on behalf of his son. How practical and well provided for is the family that is solidly founded on the wisdom, love, and power of the living and sovereign Lord!

Thursday, September 22nd - Genesis 24: 1-4

The servant upon whom Abraham relied in this delicate and critical business was the oldest and most tried and trusted in the patriarch's household. The gesture of Abraham having this servant place his hand in an intimate part of his body indicates how completely the father of the faithful trusted and relied upon this chosen man. Not only by that gesture, but especially by the oath Abraham obliged him to swear, the servant was bound to perform godly service. He is charged not to take one of the readily available Canaanite women, but to return to Haran , where some of Abraham's relatives who had left Ur with him still lived (Gen. 11:31). Those relatives, who had at least set off with Abraham on his pilgrimage of faith, would provide the likeliest pool of godly brides in the world of Abraham's time. It is godliness alone at which Abraham aims. He says nothing about the woman's physical beauty, intellectual wit, or emotional charms. Faith makes us to be concerned with lasting treasure, not with fading trinkets.

Friday, September 23rd - Genesis 24: 5-7

The servant anticipates a potential challenge in his mission and seeks further specific instructions from Abraham. This question from the servant occasions Abraham's giving fuller requirements for the servant's mission. He is not to select a Canaanite wife, nor is he to take Isaac out of Canaan . The basis for these prohibitions is not Abraham's caprice or his fears or his own reasoning. Rather, he relies upon, trusts in, and seeks to obey the Word of the Lord that called him and his descendants out of Ur and into Canaan , with no mention of turning back. These prohibitions would seem to make the servant's chances for success in his mission to be greatly diminished, yet Abraham reckoned not upon the probabilities grasped by sight, but by the unseen realities apprehended by faith and effected by the angelic servants of the Lord.

Saturday, September 24th - Genesis 24: 7-9

Abraham had confidence in his servant who had proven himself to be responsible in practical affairs (v. 2a). We may ascertain that this servant was a spiritual man from the seriousness with which Abraham expects him to swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and earth (v.3). Such a man who feared the Lord would be wise and have integrity and spiritual discernment. Therefore, he could be safely trusted to perform this critical mission. Yet Abraham had even greater confidence in the Lord, His angelic servant, His great and precious promise, and in His power thus far demonstrated in His having led Abraham to Canaan and in His having provided a descendant in Isaac. Therefore, while

Abraham entrusts His servant with this important duty, the patriarch has supreme reliance upon the promise and providing power of his God, as should we in all things.

Sunday, September 25th - Genesis 24: 7-9

The confidence of Abraham with respect to the mission rested in the Lord's initiative, and not in his own understanding of that divine initiative. Therefore, when his servant raised the possibility that the potential wife for Isaac would not return to Canaan with him (v.5), Abraham admits that although he had confidence in the ultimate fruition of his plans, this particular mission may turn out to be but the initial sortie in what could prove to be a long campaign of the patriarch's asking, seeking, and knocking for a bride for his son. Accordingly, Abraham binds his servant to faithful performance, not fruitful success in this mission, and thereby shows himself to be ready to work further toward, and, if necessary, to wait further upon, the Lord's provision.

Monday, September 26th – Genesis 24: 7, 8

Abraham shows himself to be expectant of ultimate success, but also prepared to accept initial failure. Even if the failure were to materialize, the patriarch displays godly wisdom when he tells his servant that if the woman refused to return with him to Canaan, then he would be obliged to have no further dealings with her. For Abraham rightly reasoned that the wife of the Lord's provision would not be a determined distraction, luring Isaac out of the land of God's promise and provision. He further even more rightly reasoned that no wife for Isaac would be better than the wrong wife. The father of faith knew what one of his famous descendants, namely Solomon, learned the hard way: that even a weaker vessel who is unsubmitive to the Lord will distract her husband from the Lord, if not dominate and drive him into evil pursuits.

Tuesday, September 27th – Genesis 24: 9-11

The servant, being convinced of the propriety of his mission, commits himself with a solemn oath to his faithful fulfilling of it. Once he had so committed himself to this good work, he demonstrates his wise determination to succeed in it. He makes practical provision for himself and the journey, not neglecting to bring choice gifts for the bride he expected to meet as well as for her family. The servant knew that a man making a proposal of marriage to a woman would be making an offer of protection and provision for her. Therefore, he could not expect her to respond favorably to this proposal without his providing on his master's behalf clear tokens of Isaac's commitment and capacity to cherish and care for her.

Wednesday, September 28th - Genesis 24: 10, 11

We see further wise and practical action from Abraham's servant when we observe the country and the place within it to which he went. The servant journeyed to Nahor, which was in Haran, the place to which Abraham had directed him. Upon his arrival, he tended to the needs of his camels, but in such a way and at such a time that while the

animals drank from the pool, he could survey the pool of likely candidates to be Isaac's wife who had gathered there at that time. Whether by coincidence or by the servant's design, the hand of God was leading this man, making use of secondary means to bless the servant's mission with success. True spirituality prompts us to rely on the Lord but also to respect the means He employs for our blessing.

Thursday, September 29th - Genesis 24: 12-14

In addition to all of his practical provision, the servant does not neglect the vital root from which the fruit of true success in his mission would issue. Accordingly, the servant prays to the Lord. No truly practical preparation is complete without prayer. For all of our practical preparation, which is right and necessary in any endeavor, is but the preparation of our hands to receive that which the Lord gives us in answer to our prayers. If we gain through our efforts that for which we have not prayed, we have grasped vanity and vexation rather than anything of edifying value.

Friday, September 30th - Genesis 24: 12-14

The noble godliness of this man in an outward position of lowly servanthood shines through his prayer. The day of judgment, if not days before, will show that many of the men of the world in high positions with great powers and many possessions, are but proud peacocks who produce nothing of enduring value, whereas many of the lowly ones of the earth who pray are as towering cedars of strength and fruitful trees who produce sweet and satisfying wonders that redound to God's glory and provide enduring blessing for men.

Saturday, October 1st – Genesis 24: 12-14

The servant's prayer opens with words that reveal his trusting confidence in the Lord, as well as his deep and sincere humility before Him. He calls upon the Lord for help that only a divine hand could give. Thereby is his confident expectation in the Lord revealed. Yet, the servant addresses the Lord as the God of his master, Abraham. This does not mean that the servant had no personal knowledge of and trust in the Lord, but rather indicates to us that he willingly submitted to the station in life into which the wisdom and holy purposes of the Lord had placed him. The servant, therefore, humbles himself under the mighty hand of God, as well as under the hand of his human master. He rightly sees that he can best serve the Lord by serving his earthly master, who was the father of faith. He also sees that he can best serve Abraham by calling for help from the God who designates Himself the God of Abraham. Appropriate and manifold submission before God, such as this servant demonstrates, will best prevail in the engagement of the Lord's hand to bless our endeavors.

Sunday, October 2nd - Genesis 24: 24: 12

The humble reverence this servant has for God is the source of sincere love that he has for his master, Abraham. The loving regard the servant has for his master prompts

him to cry to the Lord, who is the supreme source of love, asking him that He would show his immeasurable lovingkindness to Abraham. The particular facet of the divine lovingkindness for which the servant cries is the successful procuring of a bride for Isaac. The son of Abraham would be accordingly blessed in the answer to this prayer, but that blessing would come to him on account of the Lord's love for Abraham and in answer to the prayer of this servant of Abraham. The blessing of God binds individuals into a family of holy, mutually serving love.

Monday, October 3rd – Genesis 24: 13, 14

Abraham's servant manifests his godly wisdom when he sets before the Lord the character test devised for the recognition of Isaac's bride. Whether this test originated with the servant or his master is not easy to decide. It appears likely that the servant designed it, although the godliness he had learned from his master (Gen. 18:19) would have contributed to his powers to conceive something like this test. The woman for whom this godly man prays and seeks for his master's son must be kindly, gracious, and diligent if she is to do all required of her by this test. No less or other character would do for Isaac, nor should any less or other character be sought by any believer seeking a spouse.

Tuesday, October 4th – Genesis 24: 13, 14

The servant looks and prays for a woman of godly character, who will reveal that character by her attitude and actions toward this man who will appear to her as a stranger in need. He humbly expects to find such a woman by the hand of the Lord who had prepared and provided her for Abraham's son, as the Lord prepared Eve for Adam and brought her to him. The expectation of the servant issues from his knowing from testimony and observation how greatly the Lord loved Abraham and showered all good blessings upon him that were necessary for his good. We would expect more from our God if we knew better how greatly we are loved by Him (Rom. 8:32).

Wednesday, October 5th – Genesis 24: 15

This verse informs us of the swift response the Lord makes to the cries of the servant's faith that is exercised in accordance with godly wisdom and with a vital consciousness of the lovingkindness of God. When our prayers are similarly offered, our Lord will surely be providing His answers before we have finished our asking.

Thursday, October 6th - Genesis 24: 15, 16

Neither Abraham nor his servant sought anything in Isaac's bride except godly character. There had been no mention from Abraham of physical beauty being a quality which the servant should seek in the prospective bride. Nor did the servant make supplication to God for that quality to be found in the woman he sought for Isaac. Yet, when Rebekah appears, she is both physically attractive and morally pure. Those who

seek the one thing necessary find that one thing coming to them clothed in manifold additional blessings (Mt. 6:33).

Friday, October 7th - Genesis 24: 17

This verse sketches for us the eagerness with which a faithful and expectant soul responds to an apprehension of the possible answer to his prayer. We should neither be surprised to find the Lord answering our prayers more swiftly than we expect and above what we ask or think, nor should we be slow to accept what His gracious and generous hand provides for us.

Saturday, October 8th - Genesis 24: 17-20

The performance of Rebekah in response to the servant's request exceeds what he had asked or thought. She shows herself to be a gracious young lady when she quickly gave the servant a drink from her jar. She reveals her submissive and respectful attitude when she addresses him as *my lord*. She demonstrates her grace and diligence when she speedily made several trips from the well to the trough to water the servant's camels. The physical form of Rebekah was lovely, but her character as revealed in her speech and actions was even more lovely. What man could desire more than the gifts that the Lord prepares and provides for him?

Sunday, October 9th - Genesis 24: 21

The servant beheld in Rebekah more than he had asked of God in prayer. Yet, in this verse we are told that he pondered further to know if she was the Lord's provision for Isaac. Was the servant's initial eagerness (v.17) now checked by doubt and hesitation? It seems rather that he was employing that critical analysis of the situation that is commended by Scripture. If we are told not to believe every spirit, but to test them (1 Jn. 4:1), then it follows that vain credulity is not commended to believers in any situation. It is possible that once the servant had all that he asked and more before him, he realized that he had not asked enough—that his test was inadequate. Revisions of our requests to God are right when doubt remains, for that which is not of faith is sin.

Monday, October 10th – Genesis 24: 22-25

The further test the servant determines to apply to Rebekah is that of her family. This analysis of her familial context is wise and right, for marriage unites not just two individuals, but two entire families. Furthermore, family influence has its effect on all of its members. Therefore, if Rebekah's family were rude, it would put a dark cloud over her gracious character. Would she, in latter years, resort to the default family mode? It is never wrong and always wise for us to seek further information and to place a contemplated matter in its widest context before we decide upon the matter. Not only the jewel, but also its setting should be subjected to our consideration.

Tuesday, October 11th - Genesis 24: 22, 23

The golden items that the servant here produces for Rebekah are practical tokens that show him not to be a frivolous or freeloading vagrant, but rather the servant of a man of substance. With the questions concerning her family connections and the possibility of his finding accommodation with her family, the servant intends to test whether Rebekah were as truly precious as she appeared to be. In serious negotiations, especially when they pertain to marriage, we do right to reveal our earnest intention by wise measure, while we seek to fathom the intention and suitability of the other party by inviting from that party further disclosure.

Wednesday, October 12th - Genesis 24: 24, 25

From Rebekah's answer the servant learns that she is of an eligible family, in terms of their natural relation to Abraham, and that the family is a gracious and hospitable one. Such revelation bodes well for Rebekah's proving to be a suitably godly helpmeet for Isaac. The provision of God when we commit the arrangement of our affairs to Him—especially our most vital affairs—is perfectly suited to us, and is far above what we would be competent to ask or conceive of, let alone procure, for ourselves.

Thursday, October 13th - Genesis 24: 26, 27

With Rebekah and her family more than passing all of the tests devised for them by this godly servant, the matter of divine provision is now apparent. Therefore, the servant rightly reckons that his mission has met with success. However, he does not consider his mission as being completed until he had rendered thanks to the Lord. Accordingly, the servant, whose name we do not know, bows to worship the Lord with gratitude and joy, thereby glorifying the name of the Lord who had so blessed this servant's faithful labors on behalf of Abraham and Isaac. Our work for our Lord should begin with trust and conclude with thanks.

Friday, October 14th - Genesis 24: 26, 27

The reverent praise this servant offers to God is spiritually intelligent, detailed, and specific. First, he blesses the Lord as being the source of all true blessing. He refers to the Lord once more as the God of Abraham, for it was through God's saving covenant with the patriarch that blessing came to Abraham's household that included this servant (Gen. 18:19). He acknowledges that the blessing to Abraham came by divine grace as the Lord was prompted in His giving it by His own lovingkindness and fidelity to His own covenant promise. Finally, the servant expressed gratitude for the guiding hand of the Lord that had led him in his mission and crowned it with success. There are deep roots of manifold divine grace in the Lord's blessing that comes to us, and we do well to learn from this servant how to express our gratitude to God for the fruit of all blessing and for the roots that produced it.

Saturday, October 15th - Genesis 24: 28

In this verse, we are informed that Rebekah herself was joyfully excited at the prospect that was being presented to her. Mere dutiful drudgery is never the proper response to the Lord's dealings in our lives. Nor does the Lord, in His wise and loving providence, determine to bless one of His children at the expense of another, but rather He delights to fit each one for the blessing of the other.

Sunday, October 16th - Genesis 24: 29-32

In these verses, we are introduced to Rebekah's brother, Laban, who later plays a significant role in the life of Isaac's son, Jacob (Gen. 28-31). At this point, Laban seems to exude grace and godliness. He acknowledges Abraham's servant as one blessed of the Lord, and treats him with gracious generosity. Was this treatment Laban afforded the servant sincere, or was it ingratiating affectation exercised in response to his having seen the servant's rich gifts to Rebekah? Years later, we find Laban to be a materialistic swindler (Gen. 29:21-30). Did he sink from his former graciousness, or was that earlier graciousness flawed by a hidden propensity to covetousness that grew stronger over the years? Let us take warning from this lest our latter days reflect less grace and glory than our former days (Heb. 2:1-4).

Monday, October 17th - Genesis 24: 33

With this godly servant it is as it should be with all who know and serve the Lord, namely, that he insists on tending to first things first. This servant was not sent to Abraham's relatives to be entertained by them, but rather to procure a wife for Isaac from them. So it was with this faithful man as it was with Jesus when He said that His food and drink was to do the will of the One who sent Him (Jn. 4:34).

Tuesday, October 18th - Genesis 24: 34-38

The servant begins the statement of his business by testifying about the blessing of God upon his master and his family. He tells of Sarah's miraculous conception and Isaac's inheritance of all of Abraham's blessing. Yet, he goes on to state how Abraham was unable to provide a bride for his son from amongst the Canaanites. In the providence of God, rightly apprehended by Abraham's faith, the Lord would, from Abraham's relatives in Haran, provide a wife through whom He would fulfill His covenant promise to multiply Abraham's descendants. This matter is set out in such a way as to make clear to Rebekah's family that it would be a great privilege for Rebekah to be given to Isaac in marriage. How much more is the privilege offered to those whom Christ's servants seek to engage to Him?

Wednesday, October 19th - Genesis 24: 39-41

Here the servant faithfully relates the question he had raised with Abraham in the event that the woman he chose should not be willing to go with him to meet Isaac. The account of Abraham's reply as related by the servant in v. 40 varies somewhat from the actual words used by Abraham that are recorded in v.7. Abraham's actual words stressed

the Lord's majesty and dominion, His call to Abraham to leave Ur , as well as His covenant promise of land and descendants. What Abraham had earlier declared, his servant now summarizes into testimony that emphasizes the patriarch's walk by faith. This is no contradiction, but complementation of the faithful call by God with the faithful trust and obedience of the man who received that call. By the servant's faithful account, Rebekah's family was learning that he served a faithful master, who himself had faithfully been led, empowered, and blessedly provided for by his heavenly Master for many years. The servant also was letting Rebekah know that this offer placed her under no obligation to accept it. If she were the sort of woman to reject the offer of such godly blessing, the servant was under orders not to press her. The only true and right response to the Lord's gracious overtures is that of free and grateful choice, not begrudging compliance.

Thursday, October 20th - Genesis 24: 42-47

The servant leads Laban through each step of his own experience on this mission in order to make as clear to Rebekah's family as it was to the servant himself that the Lord was superintending this whole affair, and that Rebekah was His choice and prepared provision for Isaac's blessing. Her privilege and pleasure would be found not only in Isaac, but also supremely in the knowledge that the Lord had forged the loving tie between them for His gracious purposes of salvation for all of His people through the most significant descendant who would come from this match, namely, Jesus. The provision our God makes for us and His preparation of us and His calling us to be the blessed provision for the blessing of others always is within the vast and deep context of His infallible wisdom and redeeming love.

Friday, October 21st – Genesis 24: 48, 49

The servant does not neglect to tell of his grateful worship offered to the Lord, who had guided him to His perfect choice of a wife for Isaac. From this testimony, the servant turns to the matter of personal application for Laban and for all of Rebekah's family, including Rebekah herself. Would they agree to this proposal of marriage so clearly arranged by the Lord? They should see that the beauty of Rebekah's face, form, and especially character, her family's relation to Abraham, their knowing the Lord, and their being discovered by the servant was for such a time and purpose as was now being proposed. Yet, if she would not come or be allowed to come with him, the servant declares that he would continue to seek another from and through whom the blessing of Abraham, Isaac, and all their descendants would proceed. For the servant rightly reckons (as did Mordecai in a similar situation in Esther 4:13 ,14), that the saving purposes of God cannot be thwarted.

Saturday, October 22nd - Genesis 24: 50, 51

As soon as Rebekah's father and brother heard the faithful testimony of Abraham's servant, they rightly declared his mission and the interpretation that he placed upon his meeting with Rebekah to be of the Lord. Accordingly, they gave their consent to the

proposal, as they, too, were men who knew and served the Lord. For those desiring to know the Lord's will so that they might do it, the will of God will be revealed clearly to them (Jn. 7:17).

Sunday, October 23rd - Genesis 24: 52

Once again the servant of Abraham bowed with thankful reverence. He is clearly appreciative that Rebekah's father and brother gave their consent to the marriage proposal, but the ultimate object of this gratitude is the Lord, who wisely, lovingly, and powerfully superintended this entire blessed matter. The faith of the servant enables him to recognize this, and the love of the servant for his master, as well as the sense of privilege that has been his in the growing accomplishment of his mission, prompt him to rejoice in this further step toward the fruitful consummation of his mission as though he himself were the object of the blessing. For all who seek to glorify their heavenly Lord and honor their earthly superiors, all blessing, glory, and honor that accrue to the Lord and to such superiors is savored by their servants with gratitude and satisfaction of soul that could not be exceeded, or even equaled, if that blessing, glory, and honor were to accrue only to themselves.

Monday, October 24th - Genesis 24: 53-56

From his worship, Abraham's servant turns to his work. First, the servant distributes gifts as pledges and tokens of the enriching blessing that Rebekah and her family could expect to receive from their closer union through marriage to the son of Abraham and his covenant family. Next, the servant partakes of fellowship, nourishment, and rest that would be necessary to refresh and strengthen him for his return journey to Abraham. Finally, the servant, when faced with delay, presses for the completion of his mission with dispatch. When one knows the right thing to do, why should there be delay in the performance of that right thing? The wisdom, faithfulness, diligence, and efficiency of this servant are exemplary. But let us note carefully that his marvelous works issue as fruits from the root of his worship.

Tuesday, October 25th – Genesis 24: 57,58

Laban and his mother counter the servant's insistence upon an immediate departure with a proposal that appears to be fair. They will put the matter directly to Rebekah, letting her decide. Yet, from the way they put the proposal to her, it seems likely that they expect her to agree with them that a delay would be in order. For they ask Rebekah in blunt terms that hint at contempt for the servant when they inquire: *Will you go with this man?* They who are her mother and brother are thus arrayed in contrast to *this man*. Why would they seek such a delay? Very likely they had an eye set on further gifts, even though they show a degree of contempt for the giver in their proposal. However, Rebekah surprises her natural family by expressing her readiness for an immediate departure to meet the bridegroom who was master of such an excellent servant. In this case, spiritual considerations appear to take priority over natural considerations, as they always should for all of the Lord's people.

Wednesday, October 26th – Genesis 24: 57, 58

Rebekah had nothing except the tokenary gifts of this servant and his wise, faithful, and reverent actions from which to form her estimation of Isaac's character and desirability as a husband. Yet, these data were enough for her decisively to commit to the marriage. It speaks well of her faith that she could rightly decide a matter so important with so few indicating factors. It speaks well, also, of the servant's faithfulness that he could so winsomely present his master's proposal. May we be more like this servant as we represent the invitation of our heavenly Master to sinners in need of salvation.

Thursday, October 27th - Genesis 24: 59, 60

Rebekah's family may have desired and attempted to delay her departure for somewhat selfish reasons. However, when they observed the strong resolve of their daughter and sister, they agreed unreservedly to the servant's determination to depart with Isaac's bride without further delay. The confidence inspired by holy resolve, even in a weaker vessel, will often sweep away falsely based objections and reservations that can arise against a right decision.

Friday, October 28th - Genesis 24: 59, 60

Rebekah's family may have sought to receive more gifts by their attempt to detain the giving servant of Abraham. Yet, once the servant's insistence and Rebekah's resolve overcame their delaying intention, the father and brother give their hearty family blessing to the bride of Isaac. Their blessing would prove to be effectual. For it not only bore a remarkable similarity to the blessing the Lord pronounced upon Abraham in Gen. 22:17, but it also issued from the same ultimate source. Those who cease their opposition to the plans of the Lord and submit heartily to the divine purposes soon become instruments of divine blessing.

Saturday, October 29th – Genesis 24: 60

They who gave a daughter and sister away in marriage pronounce the same blessing upon her and her husband that the Lord had pronounced upon Abraham when he offered his only son in sacrifice (Gen. 22:17). That is because the Lord, who is the source of all true blessing, intends and determines to deliver to His people nothing but abundant, fruitful living, and power that will make them to be more than conquerors over all of their enemies (Rom. 8:37).

Sunday, October 30th - Genesis 24: 61-63

The scene here shifts from Abraham's servant returning with a bride for Isaac, to the son of Abraham in Canaan. Scripture records for us two significant details regarding Isaac at this time. First, he had been visiting the site of the well where Hagar had been encountered by the angel of the Lord and told to return to Sarah and Abraham from whom she had fled (Gen. 16:7-14). Perhaps Isaac had visited that particular site where he

knew the Lord had appeared to and directed Hagar, so that he, too, might find direction for his own life from the Lord. Secondly, we are told that Isaac was mediating upon his return from the site of the theophany. It was as the son of Abraham was praying to the Lord for His provision and pondering how and when the Lord would grant it to him, that Isaac lifted up his eyes to behold the Lord's answer to his prayers. As we wait upon the Lord we shall ever find Him working for our blessing.

Monday, October 31st – Genesis 24: 64, 65

Upon the first sight of Isaac, Rebekah inquires of the servant regarding his identity. When she was told that he was Abraham's son, her intended bridegroom, she modestly veiled herself, rightly knowing that it was Isaac's prerogative to take the initiative, approaching her and winning her trust and affection until he gained holy intimacy with her. Neither of these two, who would find bonds of deep love forming between them, shows any signs of rashness to join themselves together. They are prayerfully eager for the right provision of the Lord in their lives, but do not rush ahead of the divine giving in order to take for themselves what He might not have determined to give to them. No one ever loses anything of true value who waits upon and trusts in the Lord.

Tuesday, November 1st – Genesis 24: 66, 67

Sarah was 90 years old when Isaac was born (Gen. 17:17; 21:5). She died at the age of 127 (Gen. 23:1,2). Therefore, Isaac was approaching 40 when Abraham began to seek a wife for him (Gen. 25:20). Very likely Isaac longed for a wife, perhaps for years prior to when the quest for Rebekah began. But added to his longing, Scripture indicates that the death of his mother was especially grievous to Isaac. Yet in His provision of Rebekah for Isaac, the Lord shows how perfect is His timing and how sufficient is His gift. For it was Rebekah whom Isaac loved more deeply than he had loved any other person, including his mother. It was Rebekah who drew out the exercise of Isaac's love, and that giving of love, as well as his receiving of love from Rebekah, comforted Isaac after his mother's death. The Lord always makes the healing bandages to be larger than the painful wounds of His providence.

Wednesday, November 2nd - Genesis 25: 1-6

These verses summarize the last years of Abraham's life. We learn that Abraham took another wife. He may have done this prior to Sarah's death, and, if so, this wife would have been one of the patriarch's concubines (v.6). However, that fact that Scripture notes Abraham's marrying Keturah subsequent to the account of Sarah's death, leads us to conclude that the patriarch took this wife when he was at least 137 years old. More remarkably, we learn that he produced six sons through her. In this, Augustine sees the miracle power of Isaac's conception carrying over into Abraham's later years. The Word of God does speak of those planted by divine grace in the house of the Lord as bearing fruit in old age (Ps. 92:14). Abundant and remarkable are all of our God's mercies.

Thursday, November 3rd – Genesis 25: 1-6

The focus of this passage is set more upon the sons Abraham begot through Keturah than upon the marriage of the patriarch to her. Of the six sons named in v.2, Scripture tells us nothing except their names. The same is true of their descendants listed in vv.3,4. It appears that these six sons of Abraham amounted to little or no good. Mere quantity is no substitute for, still less superior to, high, godly quality. One Isaac far outweighs all of these insignificant sons. One Jesus infinitely outweighs all of the people and products of the world.

Friday, November 4th – Genesis 25: 1-6

Although Abraham grew old and frail he never grew blind to the relative worthlessness of his sons other than Isaac. In this the father was better even than the son of promise, whose physical blindness was indicative of a spiritual blindness that prompted him to prefer his son Esau over his other son Jacob (Gen. 25:28;27:1). Abraham's vision rightly was fixed upon not only the worthlessness of his sons through Keturah, but also and especially upon the Word of God that declared that through Isaac his true descendants would be reckoned (Gen. 21:12). The sovereign election of God does not discover worthiness in men, but deposits worthiness in them by saving grace. All of the sons of men would be worthless apart from such redeeming grace.

Saturday, November 5th – Genesis 25: 1-6

Abraham's legacy to his sons shows how the father of the faithful rightly discriminated with respect to his sons. To the sons of Keturah, he gave a gracious and generous portion of his possessions. These gifts were conferred upon them while Abraham lived, so that the patriarch's living presence could enforce the intention and design of his gifts. To Isaac, Abraham gave all that he had, the supreme jewel of this endowment being the faith of the patriarch. In fact, so precious was the living and saving faith that Isaac received from the effectual calling of God and through the instrumentality of Abraham, that the patriarch took steps to preserve Isaac's faith from the contaminating influence of his worthless half-brothers. Thus, we read that Abraham sent his other sons to the East, away from Isaac, such a subtraction serving as an addition to Isaac's blessing in his father's legacy.

Sunday, November 6th – Genesis 25: 7-10

These verses record the death and burial of Abraham. The father of the faithful lived a life abundant in quantity and quality. The quantity of his years was great, as he lived for 175 years. The quality was high, as we read of him having attained a good old age. As it was with Moses so it was with Abraham that after so many years of life his eyes were not dim nor was his strength abated (Dt. 34:7). The patriarch drew satisfaction from his life throughout its entire course, unlike his grandson, Jacob, whom he would have known for the first 15 years of his life (Gen. 21:5;25:7,26), for Jacob spoke to Pharaoh of

his 130 years as having been few and unpleasant (Gen. 47:9). May our God so bless our lives as He blessed the life of our faithful father, Abraham.

Monday, November 7th - Genesis 25: 7-10

The life of Abraham was long and satisfyingly full, but his end came at last. Ever since the first man brought sin into the world, death has claimed all men. The day came when Abraham breathed his last. Our years, days, and even our moments are numbered. With each breath we take we are that much closer to our final draw of the atmosphere of this world. Let us, therefore, follow the example of the psalmist who asks that the Lord would teach us to number our days, so that our days would count for the glory of our God (Ps. 90:12).

Tuesday, November 8th - Genesis 25: 7-10

Death comes to all sinners as the grievous wages of sin. But the redeemed of the Lord die in hope and in the certain assurance of eternal, glorious life in the celestial city whose architect and builder is God (Heb. 11:10). Accordingly, we do not read that at death Abraham ceased to exist, but rather that he was *gathered to his people*. The patriarch's death was the portal through which he entered into a blessed reunion with all of the generations that issued from Noah's son, Shem, after the flood. Indeed, Abraham knew in his life not only the nine post-deluvial generations of fathers that had preceded him, but for 58 years of his life Abraham would have known Noah himself (cf. Gen. 9:28,29; 11:12-26). The death of all of these ancestors had separated them from Abraham. Now his death reunited him with them. The sweetest reunion for Abraham, however, was that with his beloved wife, Sarah, with whom he was respectfully and lovingly reunited in burial by his sons, Ishmael and Isaac. For the believer, death is an enemy, but it is the last enemy that our Lord presses into service for our good and for our gain that is greater than we can now know (Phil. 1:21).

Wednesday, November 9th - Genesis 25: 9, 10

Isaac and Ishmael, who had been separated for most of their lives, are here seen to be reunited, if not reconciled, at the death and burial of their father. Death sobers men, and silences their mockings, such as Ishmael had delivered to Isaac in earlier years (Gen. 21:9). This reunion of these estranged brothers by their father's death is a shadow of the lasting reconciliation that the death of Christ works in those who were alienated from each other by their sin, but who have been made brethren by their regeneration (Eph. 2:11-22).

Thursday, November 10th – Genesis 25: 11

The father who had been so greatly blessed by God was dead, but the blessing of God lived on in his son. Isaac lived in the south of Canaan , near the site of the well where the Lord had appeared to Hagar when she first fled from Sarah's abuse (Gen. 16:6-14). The name, *Beer-lahai-roi*, was given to the site by Hagar and means, *well of the living one*

who sees me. The Lord not only saw Isaac there, but showered His blessing upon him there as well. It is the blessing of the Lord that makes us to be content wherever we dwell (Phil. 4:11 -13).

Friday, November 11th - Genesis 25: 12-18

The sons of Abraham through Hagar are listed in this passage. From the single seed of Ishmael, many branches grew. The fact that they all issued from Abraham's sin is emphasized by the reference in v.12 that Hagar was an Egyptian and a slave. The lives of the saints contain sinful as well as righteous deeds; their legacies are a mixture of good and evil. Let us strive not to let sin have dominion over us, and through us, over our future descendants.

Saturday, November 12th - Genesis 25: 12-18

The generations of Ishmael contained 12 princes (v.16). These descendants of Abraham's illegitimate son were blessed by the common grace of the Lord. Not only did Abraham's six sons through Keturah fail to become princes, but Isaac was throughout his life reckoned as a tent-dwelling sojourner in Canaan (Heb. 11:9). Men of the world can rise to eminent heights and prosper greatly in this life, while the righteous can be afflicted and dwell in caves and holes in the ground. So great can this difference appear to be that the blessing of God may be called into question, if not considered a curse (Ps. 73). However, the wicked have their reward in this life. Their apparent peace and prosperity are ill-founded, being based on divine patience, not upon the redeeming love and discipline of the Lord. Their settled condition (vv.16,18) is really a slippery slope to death and hell (Ps. 73:18-20). Meanwhile, the steps of the righteous result from the leading of their heavenly Shepherd, who guides and provides for them throughout their earthly pilgrimage, leading them safely to their heavenly inheritance that is too great to be contained in this world.

Sunday, November 13th – Genesis 25: 12-18

Ishmael lived a long life of 137 years. In this way, the prayer of Abraham was answered when he had asked God that Ishmael might live before Him (Gen. 17:18). Yet, there is no note of satisfaction given with respect to Ishmael's life, as there had been given with respect to Abraham's life (v.8). We are told that Ishmael was, after his death, gathered to his people (v.17). But who are those people? All men die, and whether they die justified before God or not, death is not the end. After death comes the divine judgment (Heb. 9:27), where the righteous stand by the grace of their justifying Advocate and the wicked are condemned and cast into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his fallen angels (Mt. 25:41). There is no glorious and joyful reunion after death for those gathered to a people condemned to hell. For them, such condemnation is the second death where there is no gain, but only eternal torments. Thanks be to God that we are, by His grace, spiritual descendants of Abraham.

Monday, November 14th - Genesis 25: 19-21

Abraham, the father of Isaac, was dead and buried, but the blessing of God upon his life carries on through Isaac's life. Part of that divine blessing included divine tests. As Abraham was tested by God in his marriage, so was Isaac tested. The father of Isaac had to wait many years before his barren wife bore him a son. Similarly, we learn that Isaac's wife was initially barren. Isaac had to wait until he was 40 to have Rebekah as his bride, then he had to wait many more years for his son. Isaac's life had been one of testing even before his marriage to Rebekah. He was tested by Ishmael's mocking; tested by his father's offering him as a sacrifice to the Lord; tested in his waiting for his wife; tested by his waiting in Canaan for a wife, where his being in the Promised Land deprived him of readily available prospects for marriage in the Lord. The yoke of God's blessing was borne by Isaac from his youth. That is, no doubt, why we find him rightly viewing these tests as prods for him to pray to the Lord, as we find him doing in v.21. Whatever drives us to prayer will ultimately be seen by us to be a blessing that leads us to the divine source of all blessing.

Tuesday, November 15th - Genesis 25: 21, 26

The patience of Isaac was crowned with his receiving a bride whom he loved (Gen. 24:67). However, the thorn that came with that rose was Rebekah's being barren. We learn from v.26 that Isaac had to wait for 20 years to have children. For two decades it must have seemed to him that the Lord had abandoned His covenant promise that through Isaac the descendants of Abraham would be reckoned (Gen. 17:19; 21:12). Yet, unlike his father, Isaac did not faithlessly avail himself of the sinful expedient of producing a son through his wife's slave. Instead, Isaac invested his energy in praying to the Lord for the merciful exercise of His omnipotence. If we prayed more and fretted less, we would find our supplications abundantly and sweetly answered by the God of all blessing.

Wednesday, November 16th - Genesis 25: 21-23

The delay in God granting children to Isaac and Rebekah was more than compensated for by the Lord's answer to Isaac's praying. Not only did his wife conceive, but she soon learned that there was a double occupancy within her womb. Our God always answers above what His people ask or think.

Thursday, November 17th - Genesis 25: 21-23

To Isaac's prayers on behalf of his wife, Rebekah adds her own prayers. The discomfort of her pregnancy served as a prod for her to pray to her omniscient Lord for understanding with respect to her tumultuous condition. She did not indulge, and thus foster, fears that she was miscarrying, but appealed to the Lord to know why her pregnancy appeared to be difficult, if not in danger. The answer she received from the Lord assured her not only that all was well within her, but that all was, in fact, better than she had expected. God had given to Isaac and Rebekah more than either of them had asked or thought. Let us learn from this never to fear asking our Lord to help us understand His troubling providences in our lives.

Friday, November 18th - Genesis 25: 23

Not only was Rebekah carrying twins, but the Lord informed her that each of the boys would be significant men who would found dynasties and nations. Although they would, as twins, be naturally similar to each other, a great distinction would be made between them by the electing grace of the Lord (Mal. 1:2,3). What was joined together in Rebekah's womb, God would separate and reverse the prevailing order of nature so that the younger would be master over the older. In fact, the future and fortunes of this little family and of the actions of the world in all generations to follow would depend upon the answer to this prayer. For the source of all blessing for men and nations would descend from Jacob, not from Esau. Divine delays in answer to our prayers almost always betoken answers of great significance when they do come.

Saturday, November 19th – Genesis 25: 24-26

The twins were not born nations, but were born babies who would grow into nations, as the Lord, who knows the end from the beginning, said they would do. Yet, even their birth was attended by significant features that indicated their futures. Esau was born first, covered with red hair. He was thus regarded according to how he looked outwardly, and he would grow to be a man who cared only about outward, physical things, even to the point of his trading his birthright for a meal (vv.29-34). Jacob was born holding his brother's heel, and thus was named according to his deed that demonstrated his character. The name, *Jacob*, means *heel holder*. He who started his life clinging to the heel of his brother, would become one who would take strong hold of his God, not releasing Him until he had been blessed by the Lord (Gen. 32:24-30). Such wrestling and prevailing with the Lord by faith is ever the hallmark of those belonging to the kingdom of grace.

Sunday, November 20th - Genesis 25: 25, 26

Esau and Jacob were born when their father, Isaac, was 60 years old. Isaac was 40 when he married Rebekah. Therefore, the son of Abraham had to endure a test of two decades wherein his wife was barren, the same way that his own father had to endure the test of Sarah's barrenness. Yet, Isaac spent his testing time wrestling with God in prayer, just as his son, Jacob, would wrestle and prevail with God, and through the blessing of God would be exalted above his brother, Esau. Thus, the line of faith, by God's sovereign election, ran through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Monday, November 21st – Genesis 25: 27, 28

Esau and Jacob were twins. They shared the same parents and even shared the same womb at the same time. They were born together into the same household. Yet, they were very different characters having very different destinies. What made the difference between them was not parental nurture, with each parent doting on his own favorite child, as v.28 indicates. The sovereign grace of God made the difference between these two sons of Jacob (Mal. 1:1-3; Rom. 9:10 -18). Both Esau and Jacob were sinners who

deserved hell, and both would have shared divine condemnation had it not been for the divine election of Jacob to inherit salvation. In these twins, we see the eternal divine election and predestination of the Lord working out in human experience.

Tuesday, November 22nd - Genesis 25: 27, 28

These verses show us two natural advantages that Esau had in addition to the natural advantage of his being the first-born son. Esau was an active, practical man, while Jacob was more introverted and retiring. Esau also had the favor of his father, who was himself a quiet, contemplative man like his son Jacob, but who apparently preferred the son who displayed practical qualities that he lacked. Jacob, on the other hand, was the favorite of his mother, the weaker parental vessel. Outwardly we would tend to like Esau more than Jacob, and naturally we would think that this younger son, who had three strikes of strength against him, would never prevail over his older brother. Yet, our God chooses the weak things of this world to confound the strong.

Wednesday, November 23rd - Genesis 25: 29-34

This passage records for us a most significant event in the lives of Jacob and Esau when they had grown to be young men. In it we are led to understand that Esau's drive was for immediate gratification. His god was his belly, and he had no care for lasting blessings and honorable responsibilities. This first-born son of Isaac shows by his actions that he is a lover of the world and of the things of the world, and accordingly demonstrates that the love of the heavenly Father is not in him (1 Jn. 2:15). Rightly is Esau designated by Scripture a godless or profane person (Heb. 12:16). Let us, unlike him, set our minds on heavenly and eternal things (Col. 3:1-4).

Thursday, November 24th - Genesis 25: 29

We find in this typical and highly significant incident that the contemplative Jacob is competent in procuring and preparing food. On the other hand, the more active Esau, though he was a skillful hunter, was not always successful in bringing home the game. Already the marks of the Lord's election are casting shadows of the substance of salvation and damnation in the lives of these two brothers. It is the heavenly-minded one who is of most earthly good, while the worldly-minded man goes hungry.

Friday, November 25th - Genesis 25: 29, 30

Esau makes what appears to be a reasonable and polite request of his brother, Jacob. Yet the elder brother is driven to ask by his pressing appetite for physical food. Any food will do for this unspiritual man, as we understand from his referring to what Jacob was preparing merely as *the red*. For Esau, his god was his belly, and he was a devoted slave to that god so much that he would feed on something he could not even identify so long as his belly would be filled. But Esau became what he ate, as his name and nature

became Edom , a word meaning *red*, in consequence of his demand for the red contents of Jacob's pot that would fill his stomach. It is not for nothing that our Lord likens the unregenerate to goats, that will eat anything, whether it be food or trash.

Saturday, November 26th – Genesis 25: 30, 31

Although some of the shadows of the substance of divine election are evident in Jacob at this time, he was not yet the man he would become when he wrestled with God, was blessed by God, and had his name changed to Israel by God. Here we see Jacob acting in accordance with the name of his natural birth. The supplanter thus takes sinful advantage of his brother's need and vulnerability. Yet, it is even here the sinless hand of the Lord that prompts Jacob to regard things of truer, higher, and more lasting value, such as the birthright that was Esau's. What Jacob does here sinfully, though sinlessly superintended by the Lord, all true children of Jacob do righteously and with grateful rejoicing—namely, they will give up all they have to possess the Pearl of greatest price, which is Christ clothed in all of His blessings.

Sunday, November 27th – Genesis 25: 31, 32

The birthright that Jacob prized and Esau despised came to include, and perhaps at this time already included, a double portion of the father's estate (Dt. 21:17). With this double portion of material possessions came higher honor and greater responsibility to provide for the deceased father's surviving family. But there was more to it than that, as Genesis 27, 28 teach us when Isaac confers the blessing of the birthright upon Jacob (whom he there supposes to be Esau). It involved authority to rule over one's brothers (Gen. 27:29), and it gave title to the blessing of God's promise (Gen. 27:27-29), including the possession of Canaan and covenant fellowship with God (Gen. 28:1-4). Esau shows himself to be a reprobate when he scoffs at such high and choice honors, blessings, and responsibilities, trading them for a single meal. Let us not regard heavenly treasures so lightly, for our attitude toward the ordinances of the Lord reveal whether we are righteous or reprobate (Heb. 12:15 -17).

Monday, November 28th - Genesis 25: 32-34

From these verses, we perceive how Esau despised his birthright. So obsessed was he with present gratification that in view of his having it he considered the future honors and blessings of the birthright to be of no account. However, Jacob considered the birthright of such great value that he insists on Esau's sealing with an oath the exchange of it for a meal. Esau readily agrees and thereby enjoyed his bread and stew that would, within hours, leave him hungry again. Esau thought that he made the better bargain, not because

he actually had done so, but because he convinced himself that his birthright was of no value. The eye of Jacob's seminal faith, however, rightly saw the birthright as a lasting treasure. We should never trade eternal jewels for temporal junk (Jn. 6:27).

Tuesday, November 29th – Genesis 25: 30-34

Esau asked only for a swallow of stew, yet he received from his brother more than he had asked. Jacob gave his brother both stew and bread. They who feed upon spiritual fare can afford to be generous with those whose god is their belly and whose only rewards are sought and received in this life. No doubt Esau thought that he fared well with his receiving above what he had asked. Yet, in contrast to the petty appetites of the natural man, who hungers and thirsts for the red stew of this world, the spiritual man possesses an audacious appetite for righteousness that can and will only be satisfied when he, by faith, feeds upon the justifying blood of the Son of God and is satisfied with eternal life.

Wednesday, November 30th - Genesis 25: 29-34

In stark contrast to Esau's carnal appetite we have Jacob's holy ambition. The brother who was destined to wrestle with God and prevail shows even at this early point in his life that his was no victim mentality. The natural advantages may have all been Esau's, but Jacob was blessed in that he hungered and thirsted for the blessing that only the Lord could give, which was betokened in the birthright. Jacob also demonstrates the sort of alacrity that faith inspires, turning his natural disadvantages to his own profit. Like small Zaccheus climbing up a tree to see Jesus, and like the Canaanite woman lowering herself to the status of a dog, so Jacob shows that where he lacked the physical vigor of his brother, he more than surpassed Esau in spiritual life and energy. Hence, at this early point in the lives of these brothers, we find Jacob acting as more than a conqueror. It is all due to the Lord's sovereign and saving election, which election is not a paralyzing philosophical puzzle, but a life-transforming and empowering principle to all who are so chosen by God.

Thursday, December 1st – Genesis 26: 1

At the end of chapter 25 we found Esau filling his belly at the cost of his birthright. He reckoned that his physical hunger justified the action, and that his assessment of the situation—wherein he declared himself at the point of death simply because he had missed a meal or two—was right and accurate. Of course, the worldling is ever a weakling in the face of all that would threaten his immediate gratification. As chapter 26 opens, we find Esau's father facing a similar but much more serious test. Isaac and his

family were forced with true starvation, not because he had failed in a hunting expedition, but because the Promised Land was caught in the grip of famine. The natural man faces and falls amidst mere petty trials, while the spiritual man wrestles and prevails with matters of life and death, heaven and hell.

Friday, December 2nd - Genesis 26: 1

We must understand that divine sovereignty is the cause and context of Isaac's suffering. We are told that this famine was subsequent to the famine in Abraham's day (Gen. 12:10ff). The Promised Land appears to have been full of painful problems. Natural reasoning would lead a man to conclude that he should leave such defective territory and seek his sustenance elsewhere. But the spiritual man considers that his God could as easily send feasting to Canaan as famine and that if the Lord chose to give famine, such a grim gift issued from the wisdom, power, and love of God as surely as do issue all other divine blessings.

Saturday, December 3rd – Genesis 26: 1, 2

Not only does the Lord deprive Isaac and his family of food in the Promised Land, but the Word of the Lord prohibits Isaac from seeking his sustenance outside of Canaan. Natural reasoning would cause those relying upon it to conclude that God hated this man and his family and was determined to subject them to a slow, painful death. Faith, however, enables one to see a divine test, not torture, in this arrangement. Isaac was being taught by God the lesson that Abraham before him had learned, namely, that he should live not by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeded from the mouth of the Lord. The believer's life, health, peace, and blessing do not depend upon salubrious circumstances, but rather upon Christ crucified, resurrected, and ascended.

Sunday, December 4th – Genesis 26: 1, 2

The famine had prompted Isaac to be on the move from where he dwelt in the Promised Land. He did not immediately leave the Land, but probed within it, probably to find how extensive the famine might be. Accordingly, he left his home in Beer-lahai-roi, that was southwest of Beersheba in southern Canaan (Gen. 16:14;25:11), and traveled north and west to Gerar, that was populated by Philistines, but was considered by God to be within the boundaries of the Promised Land. Although this expedition seemed reasonable and at first glance showed no indications of Isaac turning south from Gerar in order to head into fertile Egypt, the Lord foreknew and forestalled such a move into a place of worldly provision and out of the place that typified the church, the spiritual commonwealth, that contains the saving and sustaining blessing of God. Whenever the

Lord indicates that we should stay in a certain place, it is always so that we might lie down in green pastures, however desert-like the place might at first appear to be.

Monday, December 5th – Genesis 26: 2-4

The divine command that Isaac should abide within famine-afflicted Canaan was accompanied by divine compensation. The Lord pledges Himself to provide for Isaac and his family, enabling them to flourish and multiply rather than suffer starvation. Here was the test for Isaac: would he regard the promise of God to be more substantial than the physical food for which he and his family were hungering and seeking, if not in Gerar, then perhaps in Egypt? It is the same test that faces all believers at various times throughout their pilgrimage through this world. Do we really believe that man does not live by bread alone, but by every Word of the Lord?

Tuesday, December 6th – Genesis 26: 3-6

The promise that the Lord gives to Isaac is that of the covenant He had established with Abraham when He commanded him to leave his native Ur (Gen. 12:1-3), and which He enlarged thereafter (Gen. 13:14-17;17:1-7). The Lord emphasized not only His oath, but also the faithful obedience of Abraham as an example and encouragement for Isaac. The result of this promise of God and faithful performance of Abraham led Isaac to imitate the faith of his father. Isaac stayed in Gerar to feed upon the promise of the Lord, if not upon fine and abundant physical food. All true children of Abraham, when faced with similar tests, will make the same choice. Though our Lord, at times, might seem determined to slay us, let us trust and obey Him.

Wednesday, December 7th - Genesis 26: 7

Isaac not only imitated his father's faith, but also his father's folly. The prevalence of the right operation of faith in the lives of all believers rises and falls throughout the course of their lives. When the operative strength of one's faith fades, fears begin to grow in one's life. Therefore, when we see Isaac beginning to consider that his beloved wife was a liability who placed his own life in jeopardy, we can trace the effect of this fearful apprehension back to the cause of Isaac's weakened faith. It may seem incredible that Isaac's faith should fail to shield him from imagined fears after it had enabled him to scoff at the real threat of starvation from famine. Yet, we should learn from this that we must constantly exercise the precious and potent gift of faith in our Lord at all times. We should always hold up this shield of the full armor of God, being especially on guard against a fall from a minor test just after we have sustained a greater test of our faith.

Thursday, December 8th - Genesis 26: 7

Faith in the promises of God can seem irrelevant to the mundane pressures of our lives. We can often find it easier to trust the Lord with our immortal souls than to trust Him with situations where our immediate comforts appear to be in jeopardy. Yet, what is the alternative to our exercising faith in such situations? Isaac shows us the alternative when he refuses to rely on the Lord and resorts, instead, to the twice tried and failed device of his father. If we cannot rely on God's truth, what in all the world makes us think we can rely on man's lie? How irrational is unbelief!

Friday, December 9th - Genesis 26: 7, 8

Though Isaac spoke lying words that declared to the men of Gerar that Rebekah was his sister, he neither believed the lie himself nor acted according to it. If our own sin will find us out, even more so will the light of our righteous and holy love refuse to be hidden from the world. Therefore, Isaac treats Rebekah as his wife and the Philistine king observed the treatment. If our true lights and loves cannot be hidden, why should we ever try to conceal them?

Saturday, December 10th – Genesis 26: 9, 10

Abimelech's challenge to Isaac's duplicity is like the challenge a former Egyptian Pharaoh and a former king of Gerar brought against Isaac's father, Abraham, for the same sort of sin. (Gen. 12:18-20; 20:9-11). As is had been with the father then, so it is with the son now: the Lord uses a pagan king to preach to Isaac about his sin. Abimelech inquires into the cause of Isaac's lying and elicits from him the confession that fear had replaced his faith. Abimelech then drives Isaac's conviction deeper when he declares in v.10 that far from Isaac being self-absorbed in his imagined fears, he should have realized that his lying not only would fail to save him, but that it actually put all the men in Gerar, including Isaac, in jeopardy of the sin of adultery. When Abimelech expresses this concern, he demonstrates that he remembered the fearful experience his father had with the God of Abraham better than Abraham's son remembered that incident (Gen. 20:2-7,17,18). The king of Gerar teaches Isaac convictingly that he should fear the Lord rather than men. Let us lay such a lesson to heart.

Sunday, December 11th - Genesis 26: 11

The pagan king, Abimelech, strips off the fig leaf of Isaac's lie and replaces it with a protective covering of his own making. By Abimelech's declaration, not by Isaac's flimsy deceit, the Hebrew sojourners would be shielded from harm for so long as they dwelt in Gerar. Not merely discipline but death is declared to be the sanction against any in Gerar who would dare lay a finger on either Isaac or his wife, Rebekah. Surely the king of Gerar dreaded the thought of his offending the God of this Hebrew sojourner. He must have known from God's dealings with Abraham and a previous Abimelech that the Lord outlived those men to be the avenger of any man throughout all time who would touch His anointed, covenant people. When our faith lapses, the covenant of salvation can mean less to us than it does to the wicked who would stand against us.

Monday, December 12th - Genesis 26: 12-14

These verses detail the reward of Isaac's faith, even though that faith had been unevenly exercised. The blessing made him rich, with no sorrow being added to it (Prov. 10:22). Of course, the greatest treasure that Isaac had was his faith in the Lord. That faith had been tested and purified of its impurities of petty fears, so that the patriarch was more properly reliant upon the Person and promise of the Lord, and less dependent upon the material blessings that the Lord showered upon him, as well as being less distracted by his petty fears.

Tuesday, December 13th – Genesis 26: 16, 17

Added to Isaac's prosperity was power that was recognized and feared by the king and men of Gerar. When the hand of the Lord's blessing is upon His people, the arm of His power is evident for all to see as being engaged for His people. The Philistines did not welcome, but rather feared this powerful man of God dwelling in their midst. Accordingly, the king of Gerar asks Isaac to depart from his domain. Those made mighty by the grace of the Lord are often made to move away from the unregenerate weaklings of this world. The Lord is in this, preserving His people from further corruption by their contact with the carnal. This world and all it contains is too small for the Lord's people, who are the majestic ones of the earth destined by their meekness to inherit it (Ps. 16:3; Mt. 5:5).

Wednesday, December 14th - Genesis 26: 16-18

Isaac was not compelled to leave Gerar, but rather took up the cross of Abimelech's request that he depart. It is commendable that Isaac left Gerar and headed not south, toward godless but prosperous Egypt, but east, back into the south-central part of the Promised Land. His bearing of the cross of his departing from Gerar was compensated

by his settling into a region where his father, Abraham, had sojourned. In that region, Isaac found wells that Abraham had dug, and his finding them would have refreshed and confirmed his faith, as they would have been rightly seen as tokens of the Lord's guidance of his father through similar circumstances and places in which Isaac now found himself. If we but have eyes to see, we shall always perceive that a great cloud of witnesses has preceded us in every step of our earthly pilgrimage to the city of God .

Thursday, December 15th - Genesis 26: 18

The monuments of Abraham's earlier sojourn in the valley of Gerar were not maintained by the indigenous Philistines, but rather had been stopped up by them. By such action, they had peevishly deprived others—including themselves—of the benefit of the waters of those wells. No doubt they did this in an attempt to smother the testimony of Abraham and of his saving God in that region where men devoted themselves to false gods. Isaac labored not only to uncover the wells, thus making their waters again available to bless himself and others, but also he restored the names given to each well by Abraham. We do not know those names, but it is certain that they bore testimony to the gracious provision of the living waters of the Lord (Gen. 21:25ff). It was those living waters that refreshed Isaac more than the waters within the wells.

Friday, December 16th - Genesis 26: 19-21

The digging of Isaac did not go unopposed. When one of Isaac's own wells were dug that contained flowing, or, literally, living water, especially then did the men of Gerar oppose this project of well revival and expansion. Thus, Isaac experienced contention and enmity as thorns amidst the roses of the life-sustaining wells that he was both uncovering and digging anew. He let the names of the contested wells bear testimony to this painful opposition. From the direction into which these contentions were moving Isaac we perceive that his persecutions were prods in the hand of the Lord, driving Isaac from the contested outskirts of the Promised Land more deeply into its heart.

Saturday, December 17th - Genesis 26: 22

As the prodded steps of Isaac led him ever more deeply into the Promised Land, the Lord confirmed His servant's movements by leading him, at last, to an uncontested region near Beersheba . There Isaac dug a well that provoked no contention from others, and he rightly recognized from this a token and pledge of God's giving him a place broad enough to accommodate him and all of the possessions he had received from divine blessing. Though prods of famine may test our faith, and prods of contention may be found in our way, we should know that even these afflictions serve to lead us to the place

where God has made abundant provision for us, and where we shall testify that the lines have fallen to us in pleasant and broad places (Ps. 16:5,6,11).

Sunday, December 18th - Genesis 26: 23

The famine drove Isaac from the midst of the Promised Land. The Word of God and works of God through the opposition of the men of Gerar led and prodded Isaac back into the land. Isaac heeded the Word of God and trusted and obeyed it by faith. The crowning triumph of his faith is seen in this verse where he went to dwell in Beersheba, the place of Abraham's tranquil dwelling after the supreme test of his faith wherein he had offered up Isaac as a sacrifice in obedience to God's Word (Gen. 22:19). The saints of God are never more refreshed, secure, and triumphant than when they are in the place where the Lord would have them to be.

Monday, December 19th – Genesis 26: 23, 24

It was when Isaac was in the right place that the Lord appeared to him. The divine appearance took place at night as though the Lord intended to show that the darkness of Isaac's having experienced famine, then contention with the man of Gerar, and even the gloom of his own sin could not overcome the light and loving consolation of the Lord. Believers never need fear the darkness of the valley of death, because the Lord is with them in it to guide, comfort, and enable them through it.

Tuesday, December 20th - Genesis 26: 23, 24

Amidst the darkness of night, the Lord appeared to Isaac and spoke words that vanquished the clouds of his spiritual doubts and fears. The Lord introduces Himself as the God of Abraham, so that Isaac would know that his life was being supported and blessed by the God who had blessed his father with long and full life here (Gen. 25:8) and eternal life in glory hereafter. Then the Lord commands Isaac to stop fearing, for the Lord proclaims Himself to be with the son of Abraham to bless him just as He had blessed the father. The grace of the Lord and the consequent security of Isaac is stressed when the Lord says that He would bless Isaac for the sake of His servant, Abraham. That truth would remind Isaac that not even his recent poor personal performance in Gerar, where he had lied about his true relation to Rebekah, would frustrate the loving blessing of the Lord. We are even more secure in the promise of God's blessing for the sake of His Servant and Son, even our Lord Jesus Christ.

Wednesday, December 21st – Genesis 26: 23, 24

John Calvin writes of this divine appearance to Isaac at Beersheba: *In the tranquil enjoyment of the well, he acknowledges the favor which God had shown him: but forasmuch as one word of God weighs more with the faithful than the accumulated mass of all good things, we cannot doubt that Isaac received this oracle more joyfully than if a thousand rivers of nectar had flowed into him.* (Genesis vol. 2, p.68) So should we treasure not the transient blessings of our Lord's common grace as much as we treasure every Word that proceeds from His mouth—all of which tell us of the blessing of salvation through Christ.

Thursday, December 22nd - Genesis 26: 24

What Isaac's faith feebly grasped and proclaimed in v.22 is confirmed and expanded by the Lord's Word in this verse. The place the Lord would give to Isaac and his descendants would be as broad as the whole earth (Mt. 28:18-20). The fruitfulness the Lord would grant to Isaac would be that of a countless number of spiritual descendants. Neither would Isaac nor his family starve from famine or die of thirst or be forever hounded by the contentions of men. The Lord ever gives to His people more, never less, than what they, even by faith, can apprehend.

Friday, December 23rd - Genesis 26: 25

Isaac's response to this confirming and consoling Word of God was that he built an altar as a place of sacrificial thanksgiving and praise. He also devoted himself in prayer to the Lord of such magnificent and gracious giving. These acts of worship were performed first, and then there followed the work of digging another well. We who are the true spiritual descendants of Isaac should adopt and maintain his priority of devoted worship before daily work.

Saturday, December 24th - Genesis 26: 26-29

Following the vision of the Lord, wherein Isaac was told by God not to fear but rather to anticipate gracious divine blessing, we find Abimelech and his army commander coming to Isaac to sue for peace. When a man is right with God, walking in faithful obedience to Him, the Lord makes ever his enemies to be at peace with him (Prov. 16:7). Thus we find the Lord graciously restoring peace on this vertical plane between Himself

and Isaac, and on the horizontal plane between Isaac and the King of Gerar, against whom he had sinned when he deceitfully declared that Rebekah was his sister.

Sunday, December 25th - Genesis 26: 26, 27

The king of Gerar and the general of his army came to Isaac. These two represent worldly authority (the king) and power (the general). Isaac had offended these powerful men and the nation they ruled and protected. He also had been driven from Gerar by the king's command (v.16). Had this king and his general pursued Isaac to punish him by enslavement or death? Isaac cannot be sure at this point what was motivating these powerful men. If the herdsmen of Gerar had afflicted Isaac, forcing him to flee (vv.20-22), surely the king of Gerar accompanied by the commander of his army could represent a much more formidable threat to the son of Abraham. Yet, Isaac, having been commanded by his God not to fear (v.24), shows no dread of these great men, but confidently confronts them, demanding that they declare their intentions. The great and precious promises of the Lord fortify the righteous and make them to be as bold as lions. Therefore, even in what could be the valley of the shadow of death, Isaac fears no evil, knowing that his Lord is with and for him.

Monday, December 26th – Genesis 26: 28, 29

In response to Isaac's challenging question, Abimelech and Phicol declare what their eyes had been by God opened to see with respect to Isaac. They did not see a man who was afflicted by contention and driven from well to well on his exodus from Gerar. Instead, they perceived at least as clearly, if not moreso than did Isaac himself, that the Lord had been and continued to be with Isaac in all of his travail and travels. This king of Gerar and his army commander were thus made to see in Isaac what the fathers of Abimelech and Pichol had seen in Abraham (Gen. 21:22), namely, that God was with those patriarchs. If God is with a man, who can be against him?

Tuesday, December 27th – Genesis 26: 28, 29

The king of Gerar and his general do not merely see, as passive spectators, the Lord's blessing upon Isaac. They desire to partake of that blessing, if not fully in terms of their own saving conversion to the Lord, then at least partially in terms of common grace. Those who had hated the man blessed by the Lord are therefore sobered and subdued by the evident divine blessing upon Isaac and they sue for a peaceful reconciliation with him. They ask for a covenantal agreement, sealed with an oath, wherein Isaac would swear not to use the power and provision of the almighty God who was with and blessedly for him in a way that would harm them. When the Lord drives fear from us, He

makes those fears to come upon our enemies, as Jesus drove the legion of demons from the Gerasene man into the swine.

Wednesday, December 28th - Genesis 26: 30, 31

In these verses, we see Isaac manifesting the gracious actions that flow from a soul enriched by the Lord's blessing. He not only gives Abimelech and Phicol what they asked, but also gives them more than they had asked or thought. For in addition to the covenant of peace, Isaac feasts his covenanting friends, lavishing refreshment and nourishment upon those who had merely asked that he cause them no harm. If we truly serve the God of grace, we, too, should be gracious and generous in our dealings with others, not only refraining from doing them harm, but serving for their happiness.

Thursday, December 29th – Genesis 26: 32, 33

Isaac gave an oath and a feast. These verses tell us what Isaac got immediately thereafter. On the very day that Isaac was busy graciously giving to the king of Gerar, his servants informed him that they had struck water in the well they had been digging. These events Isaac rightly perceived to have not a coincidental but a causative connection. That is why he named the place Shibah. Abraham had already named it Beersheba, meaning well of the sevenfold oath (Gen. 21:31). Isaac's name put the emphasis on the oath, rather than on the well, which issued as a reward from the oath. When we busy ourselves giving graciously to others in the name of our God, we shall find that our God busies Himself giving us grace upon grace.

Friday, December 30th - Genesis 26: 34, 35

These verses inform us that one of Isaac's sons became a thorn in his flesh. For 40 years Esau had not brought the degree of misery into the lives of his parents that he did thereafter. This first-born of Isaac's twin sons married two women, which was a sinful violation of the divinely instituted form of one man and one wife being united in holy matrimony. Hence, Esau is later designated in Scripture an immoral man (Heb. 12:16). To make matters worse, Esau married unbelieving Hittite women. Isaac should have taken prayerful care to arrange a proper marriage for his son as his own father, Abraham, had taken for him. Where faith does not direct one's focus, the sights will be set on carnal, godless things that will cause misery in the one grasping for the carnal object, as well as in those nearest to him. Nothing can produce more deep and extensive misery than a godless marriage.

Saturday, December 31st – Genesis 26: 34, 35

This thorn in the flesh of Isaac and Rebekah began its painful growth just after they had experienced the gracious blessing of the Lord described in vv.22-33. We are faithless and foolish to expect in our lives to find no thorns of affliction amidst the roses of God's gracious giving (Job 2:10). Whether we receive good or evil in our lives, we should know that it all comes to us by our Lord's ordaining hand, and we have cause to bless Him for it all. In this case, a defective son serves as a prod for Isaac and Rebekah to look to their God for His perfect Son and for the perfect marriage, home, and family in Him.

Sunday, January 1st – Genesis 27: 1-4

The so-called dysfunctional family is not a modern phenomenon. This chapter of Genesis shows us a family that practices lying, cheating, and deceiving. Yet, except for Esau, this is a family of faith. Fault and faith form the mixture that comprises all of the redeemed throughout their earthly pilgrimage. In these verses, we find Isaac, the head of this godly and faithful family, leading the way in faithless folly. He does so as an old man, teaching us that if we fail to exercise our faith, the old sinful remnants of our nature will reassert themselves, no matter for how many years they previously had been subdued.

Monday, January 2nd - Genesis 27: 1-4

Isaac was old. There is no fault in that. A long life should be considered a blessing from the Lord. Isaac's eyes, we are told, were dim. Such physical diminishment is to be expected in the aged. Yet, Isaac's impaired visual power was not his fault or problem so much as was the wrongly-focused eyes of his heart. Though he was near death, he had known God's blessing in life, and, by faith, knew that he had blessing to pass on to his descendants. Yet, when he determined to bless Esau, he allowed himself to be blinded to the proper recipient of his blessing. Before his sons were born, Isaac was told by the Lord that His divine favor was with the younger (Gen. 25:23). Thus, in his dotage, we find Isaac preparing to disobey the Word of the Lord. Let us beware, lest our greatest faults overtake us at the end of our earthly race.

Tuesday, January 3rd – Genesis 27: 1-4

Isaac had a natural love and preference for Esau (Gen. 25: 28). His refusal to mortify this natural love led him to defy the Word of God. Had Isaac not been physically blind, he would have seen Jacob in Esau's guise and refused to bless him. Thus, we should

understand that the Lord's afflictions serve the end of effecting His holy will. If we have powers that we will abuse in defying, rather than use in serving our God, He will remove such powers from us.

Wednesday, January 4th – Genesis 27: 1-4

Aged Isaac shows more affinity in this passage with Esau, whom the Lord hated, than with Jacob, whom the Lord loved (Mal. 1:2,3). As Esau gave away his birthright for a meal, so we find Isaac hungering for a savory meal prepared for him by Esau, while despising the soul-nourishing Word of God in his determination to confer upon Esau the blessing God designed for Jacob. Natural, sinful loves do not die with the passage of time; they must be mortified by the faithful.

Thursday, January 5th – Genesis 27: 1-4

Because Isaac thought that he was near the end of his life, he determined to bless Esau. He determined this despite the fact that Esau and his godless wives had made his life miserable. Such action would appear gracious, and we know from his dealings with Abimelech recorded at the end of the previous chapter that Isaac was a gracious man. Yet, the light of God's Word (Gen. 25:23) shows his action not to issue from grace but to issue from dotage and a faithless defiance of the Word of the Lord. Fathers should never love their children more than they love their Heavenly Father (Lk. 14:26).

Friday, January 6th – Genesis 27: 1-4

Because he thought that he was near his own death, Isaac prepared to bless Esau. Undeniably, Isaac was an old man at the time of this event. He had been 60 years old when Esau and Jacob were born (Gen. 25:26). He was 100 when Esau married at the age of 40 (Gen. 26:34). Yet, Isaac died at the age of 180 (Gen. 35:28). Prior to his death, and subsequent to Isaac's folly in his trying to defy God and bless Esau, Jacob lived for 14 years in Haran, serving Laban for seven years before he was given Leah as his wife. Leah bore him six sons and at least one daughter, so Jacob likely dwelt in Haran for some time beyond 14 years. Then, after Jacob's return from Haran, Shechem, the son of Hamar loved and violated Jacob's daughter, Dinah (Gen. 34), whom Leah bore after her having borne six sons. Dinah must have been 15-20 years old at this time. Then Jacob was reunited with his father, Isaac (Gen. 35:27), after which Isaac died. Therefore, Isaac was at least 35 years from his death when he thought that his death was imminent, and he, propelled by that thought, determined to bless Esau. Thus, fearful and vain presumption, not faithful preparation, was motivating Isaac. Our fears always make sorry counselors.

Saturday, January 7th - Genesis 27: 5-10

As we see in this passage a mixture of faith and fault in the father of Esau and Jacob, so we see the same kind of mixture in the mother of those twins. Rebekah demonstrates her operative faith in her determination to respect the Lord's express will that Jacob should receive the blessing over Esau. Her fault, however, was in her counsel of deceit to be practiced upon Isaac. Like her husband, Rebekah's fault was the fruit of her natural love for Jacob, as Isaac's fault issued from his natural love for Esau (Gen. 25: 28). Like Isaac, too, her fault issued from her fear and impatience. Natural loves that can seem so right always lead us into very wrong courses. The way to love our children best is for us to love God first and foremost, as the most concentrated summary of the moral law, declared by Jesus, makes clear (Lk. 10:27).

Sunday, January 8th - Genesis 27: 5-8

Rebekah's listening and care for Jacob's attaining the blessing in accordance with the Word of the Lord reveal her faith. But her lack of trust in, love for, and obedience to the Lord shows when she tells her son to listen to her and to obey her command. She should have honored and lovingly sought to help her husband by appealing directly to him to hear and heed the Word of the Lord. In the same manner, she should have called her son to join her in prayer, and together they should have asked that the Lord's will be done, and waited with confident expectation to see it done. Our sinful devices are not necessary to work the righteousness of God (Jas. 1:20), although our God graciously loves sinners and sinlessly uses even their sin to accomplish His wise, loving, and holy will.

Monday, January 9th - Genesis 27: 8-10

Rebekah's counsel and command are that Jacob should agree to substitute his provision and person for that of Esau. At this point, Rebekah seems to rely for her plan's success upon the blindness of her husband. Therefore, nothing is said about Jacob's donning a disguise. But Rebekah would have served both her husband and her sons better had she, by her prayers and lovingly submissive appeals, endeavored to open the eyes of Isaac's heart to the truth of God's Word and will, instead of her scheming to use his blindness against his intention, foolish and sinful though that intention may have been. When parents rightly regard the Word of God above all, then their children will find no cause to cry foul against them, as Esau will come to do in this case. Rather, children will know that their dispute is with the Lord, not with their parents or their siblings.

Tuesday, January 10th – Genesis 27: 11, 12

Jacob's mixture of faith and fault begins to show here. His faith prompts him to have high regard for the blessing of God to be given to him through his father. His fault shows in his submission to and practice of deceit. We find, then, these three believing, regenerate, and sanctified saints—Isaac, Rebekah, and Jacob—all manifesting great sin while Esau is away in obedience to his father's directions. Yet, Esau's fault was in his seeking the blessing that was not to be his, while his faith is non-existent. It is better for one to be among the corrupt contentions of the truly righteous than to be in company with those whose righteousness is but a faithless, self-regarding veneer.

Wednesday, January 11th - Genesis 27: 11, 12

Jacob's fault here is glaring. He is not concerned with truth or integrity guiding his actions. He seems unaware of the absurdity and contradiction of his thinking that he can have and enjoy the blessing of a holy God by his practice of a sinful device. Jacob's objection to his mother's command is therefore not on the basis of righteous principle, but is totally pragmatic. He rightly reckons that though his father is blind, yet he has other senses whereby to detect a deception. This realization makes Jacob fear receiving a curse, rather than a blessing, from his father. Jacob appears not to know or fear that his sinful deception would place him in jeopardy of the curse of God. In this, Jacob shows that he is spiritually as blind, if not moreso, than his father at this point. The pragmatist is ever blind to the contours of truth that alone sets a man free.

Thursday, January 12th - Genesis 27: 13-17

It is shocking to see how cunning Rebekah is in this matter. She grants the practical force of Jacob's objection, but improvises such elaborations to complete the deception that she stands unshakably confident in the success of her ploy. That, surely, is why she calls the curse that Jacob feared upon herself. These things are written not for our imitation, but for our admonition. It is sobering for us to witness how easily and gravely even mature saints can sin. It is a fearful thing for us to behold how easily a cunningly complex plan can be adopted by one who has determined to enter into the deceptive ply and trade of the evil one, who is a deceiver and the father of deceit.

Friday, January 13th – Genesis 27: 13-17

While we can and should frankly acknowledge the grievous sins of Isaac, Rebekah, and Jacob in this matter, we must and should also acknowledge the wonderful truth that God loves these sinners, and that He is even here, sinlessly through their sinful complications, working out His purposes for their salvation, as He is ever doing for our salvation. Nor should we fail to see beyond these sinful ploys the gracious and glorious way that God saves sinners. By what these people do feebly and foolishly to attain blessing, we should be reminded of what our Lord has done sinlessly and gloriously to accomplish His people's redemption and to apply that blessing to them. For our God has clothed us in no clumsy costume to facilitate the deception of a blind old man, but rather in the perfect righteousness of His Son, the Lamb of God who takes away our sin, so that we can stand before our holy God, who sees and knows all things, and be found blameless and blessed with great joy (Jude 24).

Saturday, January 14th - Genesis 27: 18

Jacob begins his deception by speaking words that are true. He greets his father in lovingly respectful fashion, knowing well that this disarming prelude will be followed by a cunning course of deception that will dishonor his father. Yet, immediately Isaac's suspicion is aroused when he hears Jacob's voice, although he was expecting to have his next dealings with Esau. This surprise for Isaac provides the first of a course of opportunities for both father and son to repent of their sins. Isaac, being surprised by Jacob, should have perceived the ordaining hand of the Lord calling him to respect the divine determination to exalt Jacob over Esau. Jacob, for his part, should have realized by Isaac's question that the Lord was giving him an opportunity to honor his father with a declaration of his true identity. The Lord graciously places many checks in the way of our wandering.

Sunday, January 15th - Genesis 27: 18, 19

It is shocking to see how quickly and whole-heartedly Jacob becomes an accomplished deceiver. He hits his father with manifold arrows of deceit: 1) He declares that he is Esau, the immoral man rejected by God, though doted on by Isaac; 2) he says that he is the first-born, despite God's Word that the younger would be exalted over the older; 3) he says he had done as his father had told him, when, in fact, he had done and was doing what his mother commanded him; 4) he offers food from the flock rather than game from the field, yet declares that his lamb disguised by Rebekah's seasoning is the game for which Isaac hungered. Jacob aggravates greatly his sin of lying in order to get Isaac's blessing. Can he really expect to receive the blessing of the God of truth through such deceptive steps? How irrational is sin!

Monday, January 16th - Genesis 27: 20

This second question posed by Isaac presents another opportunity for Jacob to repent. Instead, the schemer's deception deepens as he brings the name of the Lord into the deceptive charm he is working on his father. Yet, there is a sense in which by God's grace, not through Jacob's cunning, the blessing of the Lord would be showered upon Jacob in all of his endeavors. Why is Jacob, then, trying to extort what his God intended freely to give him? Why do we do the same?

Tuesday, January 17th - Genesis 27: 21-23

Isaac's suspicion persists, and Jacob perseveres in his deception. We cannot easily determine who is less faithful here. The son continues to mislead his father, and yet the father demonstrates a willingness to be misled. Isaac relies upon sensual things, such as his touching the disguised Jacob, in order to determine the question he had at first asked: *Who are you, my son?* A man walking by faith has discernment and wisdom to shield him from deception. A man walking by faith would not resort to the cunning ploys used by Jacob.

Wednesday, January 18th - Genesis 27: 24

Isaac offered a general and preliminary blessing to Jacob, whom he supposed to be Esau, after he had felt the hairy hands of his son. Yet, prior to his giving the full blessing, he offers a final check to Jacob's deception, asking him whether he were really his son Esau. It is surely foolish for Isaac to rely on the word of a deceiver, and yet the question would once more bring conviction to Jacob's conscience, and appeal to him to speak the truth in love. Alas, a man far gone in a course of sin makes shipwreck of his conscience.

Thursday, January 19th – Genesis 27: 25-27

These verses detail the completion of Isaac's deception. Rebekah read rightly her husband's vulnerability, and Jacob played his part masterfully in this sinful plot against the patriarch. Yet Isaac is culpable for his spiritual blindness caused by his natural preference for Esau over Jacob. That spiritual blindness is more determinative in this event than his physical blindness, and is evident by the manner in which he decides his doubt as to the true identity of the son before him. It is the hairy feel, the savory food, and the outdoor smell covering Jacob that decided the matter for Isaac. No spiritual

considerations enter into his thinking at all. Let us be duly warned by his faithless example not to judge matters by mere appearance.

Friday, January 20th - Genesis 27: 27-29

Despite all of the sinfulness at work among all parties in this situation, Isaac pronounces a blessing from God upon Jacob that has truly blessed effectiveness. The worthiness of those administering the Lord's ordinances can enhance the application of the ordinances, while the unworthiness of those so administering the ordinances can impede their effectiveness, but nothing in the administering instrument can prohibit the blessing of the Lord being communicated through the ordinances of His grace.

Saturday, January 21st – Genesis 27: 27-29

This blessing begins with a vertical dimension. In v.27 it is God's blessing upon the earth that is pronounced upon Jacob, while in v.28 it is the Lord's blessing from heaven that is pronounced upon Isaac's younger son. That heavenly blessing will make all of Jacob's endeavors to be successful and abundantly fruitful. Jacob will have not only food (the grain) but also an abundance of it (the fatness of earth). He will also have not merely water for his drink, but joy-inspiring wine. Years later, when Jacob and all of his sons except Joseph were nearly starving in Canaan, this blessing would still be operative through the preparations of Joseph in Egypt. Here is grace upon grace for an undeserving sinner indeed!

Sunday, January 22nd - Genesis 27: 27-29

There is also a horizontal dimension to this blessing. Jacob will not only experience dominion over the earth, but he shall also have mastery as more than a conqueror over the people of the earth. He is exalted above his brother and wider brethren, and his sons will offer to him respectfully loving regard. Any who curse him will find their curses rebounding upon them with the curse of God added to it, while those blessing him will find themselves blessed by him and by his God. This blessing confers upon Jacob the security of a super-conqueror and the prosperity of one who has every blessing heaven could afford. This magnificent blessing belonged not only to Jacob, but also is upon all of his spiritual descendants.

Monday, January 23rd - Genesis 27: 27-29

The highest blessings of heaven and earth are pronounced by Isaac and conveyed to Jacob, a man hidden under the appearance of Esau, who was cursed by God.

The grace of God abounds where the sinful machinations of the parties in this matter increase. Our Lord sinlessly superintends all these proceedings—including the unworthy faithlessness of His people—in order that He might bring such high blessing upon the man of His, not Isaac's, choice. In this arrangement is shadowed forth the more deeply wonderful and mysterious workings of our redemption. In that transaction, it is God Himself who hid Jacob, and all of his spiritual fathers and children, in the blessedness of His holy Son, while He hid His Son in the wretchedness of our sin and guilt. He did this so that His only begotten Son would take upon Himself our curse, while we, the rebellious sons of Adam, would be clothed in the Son's blessing. Rightly does the Apostle Paul marvel over the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God, declaring the unsearchableness of His judgments and the unfathomableness of His ways (Rom.11:33).