

2006

January 2006 Bible Reading Notes

Tuesday, January 24th - Genesis 27: 30-32

Jacob, the liar, has left his father with the blessing that Isaac had pronounced upon him. Now Esau, the son who obeyed rather than deceived his father, returns and speaks the truth. Clearly the blessing of our salvation comes to us not on the basis of our merit or worthiness. Our contribution to it is our sinful corruption issuing in a flood of transgressions, from which our Lord has saved us.

Wednesday, January 25th - Genesis 27: 31, 32

Esau approaches his father, having truly accomplished all that his father had asked of him, and speaks to Isaac in essentially the same words that Jacob had used in v.19. The blessing of our salvation comes upon us due neither to our personal worthiness, nor to our personal works, nor to the words that we speak. Formal accuracy of a man's profession of faith cannot save him. Many in the last day will hail Jesus, saying: *Lord, Lord*. Yet they will be told by Christ that He never knew them and that they who are workers of iniquity must depart from Him to inhabit a cursed eternity. May it truly be that, by sovereign divine grace, we have authority to be called sons of God (Jn. 1:12) and so to be blessed by God.

Thursday, January 26th - Genesis 27: 32, 33

Esau declares himself to be Isaac's first-born son, and Isaac needs no further convincing as to the identity of his elder son. With Esau's words of truth, the light comes to Isaac's dim eyes, and he trembles. The patriarch shakes not in fury over Jacob's deceit, but in fear at the realization that he had been prevented, by God's having sinlessly overruled Jacob's sinful deceit, from disobeying the Lord in a sinfully dotting determination to bestow His blessing upon the man not of the Lord's choosing. Isaac accepts this chastising realization when he declares that his blessing will stick with Jacob, and not be considered void on account of Jacob's deceit. The righteous will tremble with grief, shame, conviction, and gratitude, when they realize that the Lord prevents them from sinning against Him. The wicked do not tremble even when they are riding high in a career of great sins.

Friday, January 27th - Genesis 27: 34, 35

Esau refuses to respect and accept that, despite Jacob's sinful deceit, the blessing of God had been conferred rightly upon Jacob in accordance with the Word of God (Gen. 25:23). He also refuses to accept that whereas God is infinite He is also discriminate in the giving of his blessings. Therefore, Esau begs for another blessing

from Isaac. When Isaac answers that Jacob came deceitfully, he acknowledges that the younger son resorted to sinful measures in obtaining the blessing. When Isaac says that Jacob had taken away Esau's blessing, he acknowledges that he himself had been disposed in defiance of God's Word to give the blessing to Esau, rather than to Jacob. Yet, Isaac does not say that he can and will retract the blessing or give to Esau a similar, still less a superior, blessing. The blessing of salvation is reserved only for those whom the Lord has chosen in redeeming love (Eph. 1:4,5). It is the supreme blessing in comparison with which all other portions are regarded as curses.

Saturday, January 28th - Genesis 27: 36, 37

These verses present the vastly different ways in which Esau and Isaac viewed Jacob. To Esau, his brother was a repeated supplanter who took his birthright; yet in truth Jacob valued the birthright that Esau despised. Esau says that Jacob took away his blessing; yet it was God who reserved the blessing for Jacob (Gen. 25:23). Esau never had a right to it. Esau's sinful conceit prompted him to view Jacob in such bad light. Far differently does Isaac behold his younger son. While the father acknowledges the deception of his son, he also acknowledges him as being confirmed in the blessing of God. The blessing he had conferred upon Jacob was objective and substantial; its giving was irrevocable, for the source of the blessing was the electing and redeeming purpose of the Lord, whose calling and gifts are irrevocable (Rom. 11:29). Here is Isaac's faith, gaining ascendance over his soul-dulling sinfulness, and rightly perceiving that he who was a sinner when he received the blessing of God would be transformed into a righteous soul who would triumph and reign as more than a conqueror (Heb. 11:20).

Sunday, January 29th - Genesis 27: 38

Esau wept over the fact that the blessing of God had been irrevocably given to Jacob. He cries to Isaac for another blessing, but no blessing is to be had apart from the blessing of God. Therefore, Esau continues to weep. His sorrow is not of a godly sort, that leads to repentance, but is rather a manifestation of godless remorse (Heb. 12:16,17). What can Esau do but weep? He seeks blessing from a spent source in Isaac, and despises the Lord, who is the living source of blessing. What are the ungodly to do in the day of judgment except weep, crying out for the earth's rocks and mountains to fall on them and vainly to hide them from the holy wrath of the God whom they have spent their lives despising (Rev. 6:15-17)?

Monday, January 30th - Genesis 27: 38-40

Esau cries for blessing to come upon him through the agency of his father's pronouncement. What he receives are words of veritable cursing from his father. He is doomed to life in desert places and to perpetual fighting. There will be no peace or prosperity for Esau or for his descendants. Yet in all of his marital endeavor, he will not be able to escape being a servant to Jacob and his descendants. Esau should have been

submissively resigned to his lack of blessing, rather than pressing his father into uttering such words of cursing upon him and his people. Yet, between the blessing and the cursing of God no other option exists. He who does not have the blessing must have the cursing.

Tuesday, January 31st - Genesis 27: 39, 40

The blessing of God descending upon all pertaining to Jacob is the blessing Isaac gave to his younger son (vv. 27-29). As God was not in the thoughts or heart of Esau, so the pronouncement his father makes respecting him shows no hand of God at work for him, but the hand of the Lord is clearly set against Esau. He who lives in alienation from God would live in alienation from any blessing from earth or heaven. He who is at war with God will know no peace with his fellow man. He who will not serve his infinitely superior God will be forced to serve his younger brother, whom he deemed inferior to himself. Accordingly, Esau settled in the Arabah region south and east of Canaan, his northern border being the southern part of the Dead Sea. The Edomites, who were Esau's descendants, opposed Moses after Israel's exodus from Egypt (Num. 20:20), fought against Israel in the days of Saul (1 Sam. 14:47), and were by Israel subdued in the days of David (2 Sam. 8:14), rebelled against Judah's yoke in the days of Jehoram (2 Ki. 8:16-20), and aided the enemies of the Lord's people who took the Jews into captivity (Amos 1:11). The best Edom could do was to break free of Israel's yoke and plunge into the judgment and curse of God, as the prophecy of Obadiah details.

Wednesday, February 1st - Genesis 27: 39, 40

Isaac pronounces a divine curse upon Esau and his descendants because Esau was cursing Jacob, who was his brother and the chosen and blessed man of God. Part of the Lord's blessing upon Jacob and his descendants was that those who cursed them would be cursed by God (Gen. 27:29). This blessing belongs to all spiritual children of Jacob. The wicked of the world curse the Lord's anointed and all in Him to their own hurt and destruction (Ps. 2). Haman, a descendant of Esau, cursed the Jews and was hanged on his own gallows for it (Esther 7:10). Herod, a descendant of Esau, cursed the infant Christ and died while the Christ was preserved in Egypt (Mt. 2:1-15). Another Herod cursed the Church and was later eaten by worms for it (Acts 12:1-23). We who are the Lord's surely have nothing to fear from the curses of men or devils.

Thursday, February 2nd - Genesis 27: 41

Esau regarded Jacob not only as a swindler, but also as a man deserving death. Esau, who did not desire but despised his birthright, and who never had a rightful claim to the blessing that Isaac gave to Jacob, however irregularly that blessing had been conferred, had no just cause to be angry with his brother, and still less cause to determine to murder him. Sin makes all men irrationally angry and destructive. Thankfully, God saves us from sin and from the ire of sinners.

Friday, February 3rd - Genesis 27: 42-45

These verses detail Jacob's escape from Esau's murderous determination. Jacob's disguise had served to deceive blind, dotting Isaac into giving him the blessing. However, the blessing of God upon Jacob seemed initially to be more of a curse. It prompted Esau to curse him and determine to kill him. Far from Jacob's brother bowing to serve him, as the blessing foretold, Esau was bent on slaying Jacob. Thus, it appeared that the first thing issuing from the blessing of God upon Jacob was that his life was placed in mortal danger. The blessing of God always evokes the curses of men. All who, by the blessing of God's sanctifying grace, desire to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be persecuted (2 Tim. 3:12).

Saturday, February 4th - Genesis 27: 42-45

Esau's murderous hatred formed Jacob's danger. Yet, the Lord ordained that Jacob should discover his danger and take steps that led to his safety. The chosen instrument of Jacob's discovery was once again his mother, Rebekah. Though Jacob's father's eyes were dim, his mother's ears were keen. As she had overheard Isaac's plans to bless Esau in defiance of the Word and will of God, so here she learns of Esau's threatening words. The Lord saw to it that she who had learned of Isaac's sinful plan and who took action with Jacob to frustrate that plan, would hear of Esau's murderous plan. For the Lord knew she would act on the information, this time in a way to save Jacob's life and to save Esau from sinful murder. Thus, the latter service of Rebekah would be more righteous and redeeming than her former action had been. It is to the glory of God's saving grace that she should have been assigned such service.

Sunday, February 5th - Genesis 27: 42-45

Rebekah, having discovered the threat to Jacob, goes on to disclose it to him. To her disclosure she adds directives as she had done when she orchestrated Jacob's deception of Isaac. Her words appear to partake of the character of the curse that Isaac pronounced upon Esau (vv.39,40). Instead of Esau being the castaway from blessing, Jacob is made a fugitive by his mother's counsel. Such fearful flight, however, is the necessary consequence of the sinful way by which Jacob got his blessing from Isaac. Yet, where sin increases, grace abounds all the more. It will be in the far country that the Lord will humble Jacob and bless him with wives and children, until Jacob would return to Canaan to wrestle with God and prevail so as to be blessed by Him.

Monday, February 6th - Genesis 27: 44, 45

Here we see how greatly Rebekah underestimates the length of time that Jacob would be away from her. It is not necessarily true that she underestimates the duration of Esau's anger, for when Jacob finally does return to Canaan, Esau greets him most cordially (Gen. 33:4). The striking thing about Rebekah's underestimation of the time Jacob would be away is that whereas she thought that she would see him within a few

days, and live to enjoy seeing the blessing of God come upon him, she would not see Jacob for many years. In fact, since Scripture does not record for us when Rebekah died, and since nothing is said of Jacob's ever seeing his mother again, it may have been that Rebekah died before she ever saw her favorite son return to the Promised Land. This long, if not permanent, separation of Jacob from Rebekah is the chastening consequence of their unholy conspiracy against Isaac. Though our God overrules our sins for our good, those sins can beget some bitter and enduring consequences in our lives.

Tuesday, February 7th - Genesis 27: 46

In this verse, Rebekah speaks the truth (Gen. 26:34,35), but she appears to use this truth as a guise for her ploy to help Jacob escape from Esau's murderous hatred. Yet, Rebekah's cry to Jacob surely is not all ploy. She does state a painful truth of which both she and Isaac had painful experience. She further states the godly principle that believers should be equally yoked in the Lord. Finally, she leaves the solution to Isaac, who now sees better spiritually, having placed God's blessing on the right son and having stood by the conferral, however irregularly it had been accomplished. Rebekah appears to trust her husband, who had himself benefited from a godly marriage, to decide rightly regarding Jacob's future. Therefore, this verse apparently marks a turning point for this holy family, where domestic harmony and agreement return to some degree. The blessing of God, having rightly been bestowed upon the man of God's choice, begins to bless those who served to bless Jacob.

Wednesday, February 8th - Genesis 28: 1-5

These verses make clear to us how greatly Isaac recovered from his spiritual blindness and sinful dotage over Esau. The patriarch takes the same care to ensure his son's domestic happiness and spiritual vitality as his own father, Abraham, had taken with him. He then showers on Jacob blessing upon blessing. The son who had been for years overlooked by Isaac has now become his favorite son. The blessing of God had made this son beautiful in his father's eyes, just as the blessing of the Lord does not discover but deposits beauty in us.

Thursday, February 9th - Genesis 28: 1, 2

This is a good and blessed charge that Isaac gives to Jacob. It issues from his own godly and blessed experience and example. The charge contains a negative component: Jacob is not to unite himself with the godless daughters of Canaan. It also contains a positive aspect: Jacob is directed specifically to where Isaac knows he will find a godly wife. In the event, this charge proves more blessedly abundant than either father or son here could ask or think. Our blessing is found in our walking not in the way and company of sinners, but rather in the law and with people of the Lord (Ps. 1).

Friday, February 10th – Genesis 28: 3, 4

In these verses, Isaac adds manifold blessing to the initial blessing he had given to Jacob and to the charge he had given to his blessed son regarding his marriage. This is the way it is with the blessing of sovereign and saving divine grace. Within the one blessing of our redemption we have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3).

Saturday, February 11th - Genesis 28: 3

Isaac invokes a personal blessing upon Jacob. He asks that nothing less than the blessing of the God of all majestic power would be upon him. If such a God would be for Jacob, who could stand prevailingly against him? If such a God is for us in Christ, who can be against us (Rom. 8:31)?

Sunday, February 12th - Genesis 28: 3

Isaac also pronounces a corporate blessing upon Jacob. He who was the younger son of the patriarch, and had been favored throughout his life not by his father, but by his mother; he who was a mild, contemplative man with no wife, while his older brother had two wives, is here by the blessing of the power of Almighty God made not only sure of his finding a wife, but also sure of his fathering a great many children and a vast multitude of descendants. It is the blessing of God that calls into being that which previously did not exist, as we shall see in Jacob's life in Haran and thereafter. The blessing of the Lord upon His people is never void.

Monday, February 13th – Genesis 28: 4

The blessing Isaac invokes upon Jacob traces its source to the covenant of salvation that God established with Abraham. The Abrahamic covenant contains a promise from the Lord not only that those within it would have fruitful and abundant descendants, but supremely that their children would know the Lord to be their God (Gen. 17:7). Therefore, this component of Isaac's blessing conveys to Jacob and his descendants the promise of redemption from their sins, adoption by and communion with the living God, and eternal life in the glory of heaven with the Lord.

Tuesday, February 14th - Genesis 28: 4

The blessing of Isaac represents a ratification of the Abrahamic covenant and a specific application of it to Jacob. As such, Jacob is promised not only numerous living descendants, but also the land of Canaan. As it was with Abraham, so it was with Isaac and Jacob, namely, that they had title to the land from the highest authority, although they were never deemed rightful possessors of the land among men. Thus there was for the patriarchs a tension between their possessing the land of Canaan and their sojourning in it. This tension is resolved when we recall that the land was but a token of the glorious, eternal city of God to which, by divine grace, the patriarchs and all of their true descendants aspired (Heb. 11:9,10), and which they never could or would possess in this life except by faith.

Wednesday, February 15th - Genesis 28: 5

From vv. 1-5 we see how Isaac, the father, is entirely active in charging, directing, blessing, and sending his son, Jacob. We also note that for Jacob's part there was no speaking, asking, or acting in any manner calculated to acquire blessing. Jacob only hears, receives, and obeys the words of direction and blessing pronounced by his father. He whose name meant supplanter certainly is not acting that part any longer. Jacob need not fearfully grasp for his blessing; he has begun to enter into the possession and enjoyment of his true spiritual inheritance. Neither need we be fearful graspers after the things of this world, knowing that we shall inherit the earth (Mt. 5:5).

Thursday, February 16th - Genesis 28: 5, 7

After all of Isaac's words of charging and blessing, Jacob is sent away from the Promised Land. It may seem that this action belies the words of the blessing that Jacob should possess the land. In action, if not in word, it appears that Jacob is the cursed one, while Esau, who remains in Canaan, is the one blessed. Yet, Jacob is sent away with the full and conscious blessing of his father. He does not run away as a fearful fugitive. He is sent away carrying a great cargo of precious divine blessing and promises. Finally, Jacob leaves in obedience to the will of his father and mother, thus showing that he not only here begins to enter into possession of his blessing, but also that his going occasions the beginning of the healing of the domestic discord that had marred his family life from the start. Blessed healing, therefore, comes from the wound of this apparent curse.

Friday, February 17th - Genesis 28: 6-9

In these verses, the reprobate character of Esau is unmistakably manifested. He knows of his Father's charge to Jacob regarding whom he should marry, and he, accordingly, with a determined perversity marries a third wife outside of the covenantal line. Hereby Esau does what is forbidden and multiplies the misery his wives would cause his godly parents. Neither Isaac nor Rebekah made Esau this way. Nor did Jacob or Jacob's God plant or foster this wicked character in Esau. The Lord did sovereignly withhold his saving grace from Esau to the glory of His divine and holy justice. For we see that although Esau was raised in a covenant family, and was allowed to remain in the Promised Land amidst his godly family, while Jacob was sent away from both, still Esau pursued nothing but sinful relationships and goals. The sinner's worst enemy is himself, and rightly do all sinners deserve the just condemnation of God.

Saturday, February 18th - Genesis 28: 5-9

Jacob is sent away while Esau is left with free run of the Promised Land. How can Jacob be expected to possess the land when he has been sent away from it? The answer is two-fold: 1) he already has title to the land by the covenant blessing and promise of God; 2) he will one day, by God's leading and enabling, return to dwell in the land, receiving it as a gift from the Lord and not as a result of his own scheming and grabbing. Read Psalm 73 to see there expressed this same tension in which a believer lives by his having title to all things in Christ (Mt. 5:5), while awaiting his full possession of all things.

Sunday, February 19th – Genesis 28: 10-15

As Jacob obediently left his father, mother, and home in Canaan, he was met and blessed by the Lord Himself. By faith, Jacob heeded the directives of his earthly parents and left them for the promise of a godly wife. In fear, he fled from his angry brother, and no doubt he had anxieties about the land of Haran to which he was headed and about which he knew little, if anything at all. Yet, in his movement that was prompted by mixed motives, and must have seemed desperate and depriving, he is met by his loving heavenly Father. The Lord met Jacob as he was walking in the way of faith, though mixed with fear, so that He might vanquish the fears and strengthen the faith in His chosen man. Even if our faith is little and mixed with unbelief, if we walk by such faith, our Lord will confirm us in it.

Monday, February 20th - Genesis 28: 10, 11

These verses detail the beginning of Jacob's journey. They inform us that he went from Beersheba—the place of his home and family and a locality filled with blessed significance for himself, his father, and his grandfather. We also learn that Jacob was headed to Haran, located in what is now Syria. It was a foreign and strange place to

Jacob. Yet, the Lord was, as his Good Shepherd, leading him to refreshing waters (Ps. 23:2) where he would be sanctified and greatly blessed. Let us not fear new and unknown situations into which we find ourselves moving by the dictates of what is necessary and right. Our Lord knows the plans He has for us and how He will use new places and people in our lives to give us a future and a hope (Jer. 29:11).

Tuesday, February 21st – Genesis 28: 11, 12

The place referred to in these verses later was named Bethel (v.19), and it was more than 100 miles from Beersheba. Therefore, this event took place not on the first night of Jacob's journey, but at least several days into his journey. He was getting farther from his home and still had far to go to reach his appointed destination. He likely felt quite disconnected from all that had significance to him. Yet, at Bethel, in the darkness of night, while Jacob lay his head upon a stone and thereby completed his experience of total deprivation of comforts and encouragements, the Lord revealed to him that He could and would blessedly bridge all distances and compensate for all deprivations that His chosen children would experience in their pilgrimage from this cursed world to the glory of the celestial city.

Wednesday, February 22nd - Genesis 28: 12

Jacob dreamed amidst his weary night of comfortless sleep. We may wonder why God revealed this vision to him in a dream. The Lord usually revealed matters through dreams to men whose waking lives were clouded by weak faith and manifold distractions. To such faithful ones as Moses, for example, the Lord spoke face to face (Ex. 33:11). Jacob's life surely was a blur of many distractions, and his faith was far from pure and strong. Yet, the Lord spoke to him in a manner best suited to convey to him—and through him to us—the encouraging truth that He was richly ministering to His chosen man, even when that man appeared to the eyes of flesh to be cut off from all protection, provision, and comfort, and that He was doing so not while Jacob schemed or supplanted, but while he slept (Ps. 91:4-12).

Thursday, February 23rd - Genesis 28: 12

The vision of the ladder bridging heaven and earth and heavily traveled by ministering angels reveals to Jacob and to us the communication that exists between the believer on earth and the Lord in heaven—a communication apprehended not by waking sight, but by faith, that would have us rely not on our eyes or our own understanding (Prov. 3:5,6). The angels ascending may be considered as messengers to God, conveying our prayers and needs, while those descending may be considered messengers laden with

enabling grace and blessings for us. It is a picture that illustrates the sublime truth that for the believer, greater are those heavenly hosts that are with us, who serve for our good and our Lord's glory, than are any beings or circumstances that may be arrayed against us.

BIBLE READING NOTES

February 2006

Friday, Feb 24th - Genesis 28: 13

Above the ladder, Jacob beheld the Lord standing. The fact that God is pure spirit, invisible, and without a body, as our *Westminster Confession of Faith* rightly teaches (WCF II.1.), does not mean that God cannot represent Himself visually to man, as when the Holy Spirit was seen at the baptism of Jesus to descend like a dove. The fact that the Lord's is standing indicates His readiness to attend to the needs of His chosen man, as when the martyr Stephen, who stood faithfully for Jesus amidst murderous opposition, saw the heavens opened and Jesus standing at the right hand of God to receive his spirit (Acts 7:56,59). If our Lord stands for us as our helping advocate, who or what can stand against us?

Saturday, Feb 25th - Genesis 28: 13

The Lord reveals Himself to Jacob not only in the visionary standing posture—a stance that in itself could signify His standing in opposition against as readily as it could indicate His standing for this son of Isaac. The Lord more clearly reveals Himself to Jacob through His Word of self-designation. He declares Himself to be the Lord, meaning the sole divine and supremely sovereign King of heaven and earth. Implicit in the designation, *Lord*, is also the covenant mercy and lovingkindness of God. This covenantal feature is elaborated in the further divine self-designation in which the Lord declares Himself to be the God of Abraham and Isaac. Thus, the divine One Jacob sees standing, declares Himself to be the One who had promised and proven Himself to be the mighty protector and provider, as well as the merciful redeemer of Jacob's grandfather and father, just as He would be for Jacob and all of his spiritual descendants.

Sunday, Feb 26th - Genesis 28: 13

As He had done with Abraham and Isaac, so the Lord does now with Jacob, promising him the land upon which he was then lying as a sojourner between Beersheba and Haran (Gen. 12:6,7; 26:3). The gracious, sovereign, and almighty determination of the Lord makes His people not to be strangers and exiles in the earth, but rather ones destined to inherit a new earth and a new heaven. This vast and ultimate inheritance of

the children of God is here typified by the land of Canaan that the Lord promises to give to Jacob.

Monday, Feb 27th - Genesis 28: 14

The land God promised to Jacob would not be a lonely place lacking inhabitants or filled with a population inimical to Jacob. The Lord reiterates the covenant promise He had made to Abraham and to Isaac, now telling Jacob as He had told them that he would have a multitude of descendants who would possess the Promised Land and beyond. This divine promise encompasses the tribes of Israel who would descend naturally from Jacob, as well as multitudes of Gentiles who, by their saving faith and spiritual circumcision of heart, would prove to be spiritual descendants of Jacob, dwelling in every nation of the earth as more than conquerors through their apprehension of the love of God in Christ.

Tuesday, Feb 28th - Genesis 28: 14

The Lord's promise of an abundance of children for Jacob implicitly guaranteed the rightness and success of Jacob's mission to Haran to find a wife. The blessedness of Jacob's personal and domestic life are explicitly contained in the divine promise that in Jacob and his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed. Regarding this blessing, Jacob and his spiritual descendants would be conduits of the redemptive blessing of which Christ, the ultimate seed of Abraham, is the source (Gal. 3:16).

Wednesday, March 1st - Genesis 28: 15

The guarantee of the great and precious promises that the Lord gave to Jacob was the person, authority, and power of the Lord Himself. The divine pledge that God would be with Jacob ensured that no one or nothing could prevail against him so as to prevent the fulfillment of these covenant promises. The God of infallible wisdom, infinite power, and immeasurable love would be the guiding shepherd to Jacob, protecting and providing for him wherever he went, causing all things to work together for his blessing. It would not be Jacob's desire or determined effort, but rather would be the Lord's power and timing that would bring Jacob back to the land he for a time was leaving. The promise, no doubt, was a comforting assurance to Jacob as he dwelt and labored for some 20 years in Haran (Gen. 31:38). It should be our supreme comfort that we know that our risen Redeemer will never leave or forsake us (Mt. 28:20).

Thursday, March 2nd - Genesis 28: 15

The holy will, infallible wisdom, and almighty power of the Lord are all committed to the fulfillment of the divine promises given to Jacob and his descendants. Therefore, the patriarch and we who are his spiritual descendants can best discern the Lord's will for our lives by our diligent study and discerning understanding of the great and precious promises given to us by our gracious God.

Friday, March 3rd - Genesis 28: 16

Jacob awoke from his sleep with greater insight and understanding of his waking life than he had before his sleep wherein the Lord appeared to him. By the closing of his physical eyes, the eyes of his heart were opened, so that he knew not only that the Lord was in his sleeping vision, but also had been and continued to be in the place where Jacob had laid himself for a night's rest on his way to Haran. Jacob's waking awareness did not, before his night's vision of the Lord, perceive that the Lord was in the place that had been strange and seemingly without comforting provision for him. After his eye-opening sleep, the sojourning patriarch had the sure and comforting insight and understanding that the Lord was with him in that place and would be with him wherever he went. It is for such an awakening to the knowledge of the promises, provision, and presence of the Lord that we should pray for ourselves (Eph. 1:18ff; Col. 1:9ff).

Saturday, March 4th - Genesis 28: 16, 17

The place that had been strange, dark, and dreary to Jacob before his nocturnal vision was rightly perceived by him to be awesome and sacred and full of blessed significance and promise for him now that he had awakened from the sleep of his spiritual blindness. By this vision, Jacob beheld through the appearance of a desolate place, the glorious house of God and the gate of heaven to which he had been brought near. What made this place to be such as Jacob beheld it to be was the near presence of his covenant God. The fact that the Lord had promised to be with Jacob wherever he went also made him see by faith that every place in which he would ever be was also a glorious divine abode. The same is true for us about every place we go, for our Savior has promised to be with us to the end of the age (Mt. 28:20). This truth is elaborated throughout the Book of Revelation, where the Apostle John, having been banished to the island of Patmos, saw in the Spirit the heavens opened to show him that the sure presence and prevailing power of the Lord would ever be with His people in every age.

Sunday, March 5th - Genesis 28: 18, 19

The Lord awakens people to a new life and a new walk. Such divinely awakened ones perceive and perform all things in a new light and by a new power. Hence, Jacob, who was fleeing from his brother's wrath and lay down upon a comfortless stone in the middle of his journey from Beersheba to Haran, upon seeing the Lord and hearing and believing His words of covenant promise, awakens to walk in a new light. The place that once was strange to him, he now rightly sees and testifies to be the house of God and the gate of heaven. The comfortless stone upon which he had placed his weary head now is made by Jacob into a memorial pillar, a treasured token of the Lord's gracious presence and great promises. When we spiritually awaken, vitally to believe the divine promises that are all yes and amen to us in Christ, we too shall treasure all the things that our God has caused to work together for our good—even the painful thorns in our flesh.

Monday, March 6th - Genesis 28: 18, 19

Jacob pours anointing oil upon the memorial pillar he had erected in gratitude for the Lord's gracious dealings with him. Hereby he marks this common stone as a sacred testimony to divine grace. The oil may also be taken by us to signify healing in Jacob as he now rightly apprehended that his security and blessing were in the Lord and not in the home and family so familiar to him. Nor were his security and blessing threatened, still less destroyed, by the wrath of men such as Esau. Our souls find their deepest and most lasting healing when we by faith find our help in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.

Tuesday, March 7th - Genesis 28: 19

Jacob saw not only his stony pillow in the new and true light of divine blessing, he also saw the place where he had stayed that night in a new and true light. The name of the place was Luz, meaning, *almonds*—a pleasant enough designation. But in an act of authority, whereby one names a thing not in accordance with its appearance, but in accordance with its true essence, Jacob changes the name of the place to Bethel, meaning *house of God*. As God, by His creating Word, called into being things that were not, so, through the exercise of our faith in the Lord, we see and declare to be things that are, but that men in their natural blindness thought were not.

Wednesday, March 8th - Genesis 28: 20-27

These verses sketch for us the prominent details of Jacob's vow to the Lord, made in response to the eye-opening vision God gave to the patriarch while he slept on a stone in the vicinity of Luz. A vow is a committed promise one makes to God. Whenever the Lord commits Himself graciously to us through His Word of great and precious promise and provision, we respond appropriately only when we gratefully commit ourselves to Him through vows and other forms of holy dedication.

Thursday, March 9th - Genesis 28: 20, 21

The basis of Jacob's vow is the gracious, covenant promise of the Lord. Thus, Jacob begins by taking the Lord at His Word, declaring that if—or it could read since—God would keep His Word and would be with Him and bless him, then Jacob would own the Lord as his God, and would worship and serve Him accordingly. It is not only true that we love because our Lord has first loved us (1 Jn. 4:19), but it is also true that we desire and are enabled to give because He first has given to us. Let us, then, learn better to search the riches of His gracious giving to us, so that we might increase not only our gratitude, but also our giving of ourselves to Him and for His service.

Friday, March 10th – Genesis 28: 20, 21

Jacob rightly reckoned that if God would be with him, as He had promised to be, then divine protection and provision would be his. The Lord would guard and guide him with infallible wisdom and almighty power; the Lord would make provision for his physical necessities from His creating, preserving, governing, and multiplying hand; the Lord would return him to his father's house in safety and peace, having healed all wounds and reconciled all sinfully caused ruptures within his family. Jacob rightly reckoned that if this God were for him, nothing and no one could prevail against him. We should reckon in the same way (Rom. 8:31).

Saturday, March 11th - Genesis 28: 20-22

In response to the divine promises, apprehended and relied upon by Jacob exercising his faith, the patriarch dedicates himself to the Lord. Through his holy vow, Jacob devotes himself to the person of God, receiving and relying upon Him as his highest good and the one thing necessary in his life. Only the most blind, perverse and suicidal of persons would not choose the Lord as his infinitely good portion that would never be taken from or disappoint him.

Sunday, March 12th - Genesis 28: 20-22

Jacob dedicated his own person to the person of the Lord when he declared: *the Lord will be my God*. Jacob then proceeded to dedicate to the Lord the place where he had found his night's rest and so much more to encourage and empower his working endeavors. He who slept as a sojourner awoke conscious that he had title to and authority over the place where he was. Therefore in an act of authority, he changed the name of the place to Bethel, designating it as the house of God. The stone on which he had rested his head he declared to be the cornerstone of the Lord's dwelling place. For Jacob's vision of the ladder was a vision of Christ, the Mediator between God and man, and, as such, the chief cornerstone of the Church (Ps. 118:22; Mt. 21:42; Acts 4:11; Eph 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:6,7).

Monday, March 13th – Genesis 28: 20-22

Jacob's vow wherein he dedicated the place of Bethel to the Lord was accepted by the Lord as an appropriate act of devotion, as we learn from Gen. 31:13, where the Lord again appeared to Jacob and designated Himself as the God of Bethel. Jacob not only vowed to dedicate this place to the Lord, but also vowed a tithe of all his possessions to the Lord. In this consecrating a tenth of his possessions to his God, Jacob was following the holy precedent set by his grandfather, Abraham, when he gave a tenth of his possessions to the Lord's priest, Melchizedek (Gen. 14: 18-20). The grace of the Lord

poured richly upon us should beget in us grateful giving to our Lord guided by the godly examples of those who preceded us in the world of the Lord's saving grace.

Tuesday, March 14th - Genesis 29: 1-5

In chapter 28 the gracious promise of God was given to Jacob, and the son of Isaac responded with a grateful vow dedicating himself, the place of his vision, and a title of his possessions to the Lord. Now, in chapter 29 we have an account of the providence of the Lord in fulfillment of the divine promise to Jacob. We perceive, throughout this chapter, that there was a remarkable efficiency and fruitfulness in Jacob's journey to Haran. Truly, when God is with a man, not only can nothing prevail against him, but also all things work together for his good.

Wednesday, March 15th - Genesis 29: 1-5

We note the remarkable efficiency of Jacob's journey at several points in this passage. First, he headed in the right direction when he aimed for the land of the sons of the east. Surely some directions had been given to Jacob (Gen. 28:2), yet Jacob had never been to Paddan-aram before, and he, being not an outdoor and active man like Esau, but a domestic and contemplative man, could easily have lost his way. Yet, his lack of traveling experience did not prevent him from finding the right place. He walked toward it in obedience to his father's directions and with confidence in the Lord's promise and blessing presence. Our lives will be more simple, satisfying, and successful if we walk and work in obedience to our godly leaders and with confidence in our Lord's precious promises and blessing presence with us.

Thursday, March 16th - Genesis 29: 1-6

The first thing we are told that Jacob saw in Haran was a collection of three flocks lying beside a sealed well. The reason for the flocks waiting near the well is explained in v. 3. Jacob does not pass by this curious gathering without offering the shepherds a gracious salutation and asking them about their homes. Their response indicates that Jacob had been led to the very place of his proper destination. Jacob may have given his greeting and asked about the shepherds because he was thirsty and hoped to get some water, or because he hoped to get some directions, or because he simply was filled with a genuine, gracious care for others as a result of his having been filled by the gracious promises of the Lord. Probably all three things prompted Jacob's conversation. However, the last thing Jacob expected to find at this point was the wife he was seeking. Yet that is the very thing God provides, which is above what Jacob asked or thought. Who would not rely upon, trust, obey, and rejoice in such a giving God?

Friday, March 17th - Genesis 29: 1-6

Jacob not only sees, but he also speaks to the shepherds. They who were strangers he hails as brothers. When the Lord is with a man, that man is graciously reconciled to other men. He who knows God's grace and love shares them with others. The result is that Jacob, who blesses these shepherds by his gracious greeting, is blessed by their being able and willing not only to tell him the way to Laban's house, but also to take them there.

Saturday, March 18th - Genesis 29: 4-6

When the shepherds responded to Jacob's questions, telling him that they were from Haran and knew Laban, things would seem to be most propitious for the son of Isaac who had been directed to the house of Laban (Gen. 28:2). And yet, Jacob was about to meet his future wife at this sealed well, before he ever arrived at Laban's house. When the Lord is with a man, it may seem to him that the best wine has been served, until he finds to his surprise and delight that the very best wine is served with the next course of divine providence. The best is always approaching the believer, who's every step and hour spent take him closer to the marriage feast of the Lamb of God in eternal glory.

Sunday, March 19th – Genesis 29: 6-10

When Jacob first sees Rachel, who would become his wife, she was busy fulfilling her domestic duties. In this regard, she was like Ruth when Boaz first saw her working to glean in his fields (Ruth 2:2-7). Neither of these spiritual women was attending marriage seminars or singles conferences in hopes of their finding husbands. The best way for a man and a woman to find each other and develop their matrimonial prospects is for them to devote themselves in trusting obedience to the Lord, who not only instituted marriage, but also brings those to be equally yoked in and by Him together in the best way and at the best time.

Monday, March 20th - Genesis 29: 6-10

Jacob was where he was in obedience to both his earthly father and his heavenly Father. Rachel was where she was due to her obedience to her earthly father, and, presumably to her heavenly Father as well. When two such people seek first the Lord

and His kingdom and righteousness (that includes honoring one's parents by obeying them in the Lord), then the Lord will add the blessing of holy matrimony to them, if it is according to His will, and crown their fulfillment of duty to their parents with delight in each other.

Tuesday, March 21st – Genesis 29: 7-10

Jacob makes inquiry and learns of the custom of having the flocks gathered at the well so that they all could be watered together. However, when he sees Rachel approach with her father's sheep, he springs into action. For Jacob, it was surely love at first sight that prompted him to transgress the custom and open the well for his beloved. True love has highest regard for its object, and transcends customs of mere habit or convenience to accommodate the welfare of its object. Here is an instance of the erstwhile selfish and sneaky supplanter openly doing a gallant, courageous, and caring thing. It is the first recorded instance of Jacob showing loving concern for others. The enriching promises of God freed him from an insecure self-regard and prompted him to devote himself to the interests of others (Phil. 2:3,4).

Wednesday, March 22nd - Genesis 29: 11, 12

Jacob's kissing of Rachel may seem rash and immodest. Yet, it surely was not so much an erotic expression as it was a gesture of familial love. It also was a pledge of future intimacy. His kiss was accompanied by his tears of weeping. His seeing this relative reminded him of how painful was his separation from his family, while also expressing his joy at meeting other family members. The tears also surely issued over the wonder and profound gratitude that Jacob felt in response to this provision of God. Faith discerns loving divine provision quickly and prompts the one exercising such faith to respond to such provision with bold and resolute love and joyful gratitude.

Thursday, March 23rd - Genesis 29: 12

Rachel responded to Jacob's bold and loving demonstration and declaration by returning to her house to prepare the way for him. Like the woman at the well in Samaria (Jn. 4), who, after she met Jesus, left her water pots and ran back into her city to tell of her encounter with the Savior, so Rachel left her father's flock and ran home excitedly to declare Jacob's coming. She rightly knew that Jacob would care for the sheep while she shifted her care from her father's interests to those of the man she obviously loved at first sight and would one day marry. The love of holy matrimony is one wherein the parties forsake all others and regard most highly the interests of each other. Such love is a reflection and fruit of Christ's love for His Church and the love of the Church for Christ.

Friday, March 24th - Genesis 29: 12

We know that the Lord was with Jacob as He had promised to be (v.15). The union Jacob had with his God was transforming the man who had been a selfish supplanter into the loving, gracious, giving, and serving likeness of the God of Jacob. Such godly character was no doubt what Rachel found most attractive about this man. It was in Jacob the light that also shines from us when we love the Lord with all our hearts because we apprehend His lavish love for us. Such love of God and for God invariably makes us lovers of others and lovingly attractive to others.

Saturday, March 25th - Genesis 29: 11, 12

The threat of murder at his brother's hand painfully compelled Jacob to leave his home and family. Jacob, by his deceitful scheming, had sinfully brought that threat upon himself. Yet, the Lord overruled this thorn in Jacob's flesh, making it to serve as a prod to drive His chosen man to the Lord and to the wife of the Lord's providing. The purposes of the Lord with respect to His chosen people spring from love and lead, through many tribulations, to love.

(The following notes were first published in February and March 1991)

Sunday, March 26th - Proverbs 9: 1-6

When we respond to the effectual calling of Christ, we are most blessedly sustained by the pledge of His glorious provisions (Eph. 1:13,14). But the best is yet to be for us. Jesus patiently is preparing a place (Jn. 14:2), and a feast (Rev. 19:9) for us, the likes of which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor of which any heart could conceive (1 Cor. 2:9). Here is not empty, sinful enticement, leading to impoverishment, misery, and death. In Christ we have fullest, most holy, most glorious provision, which should form in us sound expectation and sanctified resolve to live in a manner worthy of such a high, happy, and glorious calling.

Monday, March 27th - Proverbs 9: 7-9

The servants of wisdom are sent out to issue general invitations, but they are not to cast pearls before swine. Such discrimination accords with the dictates of our Lord (Mt. 7:6). For a scoffer, who has imprisoned himself within his own cynical mentality wherein he esteems nothing but tears down everything, will only perceive an object for destruction in the gospel, rather than the pearl of great price. On the other hand, one who has been effectually called by the Lord, and who has been transformed into a righteous lover of wisdom, profits from the continued instruction of the Lord. To the one who has, more shall be given. Let us see to it that we are such who rightly esteem the manifold gifts of God. Also let us be careful to be His discriminating servants, giving more in

ministry to those who appreciate and profit most from the Christ we are commissioned to proclaim.

Tuesday, March 28th - Proverbs 9: 10-12

Once more true wisdom is defined as our having a reverential attitude toward the Lord, which serves to prevent our offending Him and to excite our desire to please Him. We were created and placed within the created universe not so that we might seek to know about ourselves and this world, but rather so that we might know the Lord. Our chief end is to know and glorify the Holy One of Israel, and when we live in accordance with this end, submitting everything to it, we find our lives growing happy and long, at least in perspective, if not in actual duration here below. The choice is ours either to live lives of true direction and blessed meaning, or to scoff at higher things and fill our hearts and the world with insults, hatred, and all other manner of misery. The choice is ours, and so are the consequences.

Wednesday, March 29th - Proverbs 9: 13-18

There is no comparison between wisdom and folly, and yet that does not prevent folly from competing against wisdom. Folly issues an invitation (v.16) which begins just like that carried abroad by wisdom (v.4). However, since folly cannot completely conceal the illicit nature of her allurements, she boisterously admits that her goods are contraband, but boasts them to be superior precisely because they are so (v.17). There may even be a high degree of sincerity in the claim, since foolish boasters are themselves devoid of that understanding which rightly appraises value (v.13). If we judge simply by the sincerity and appealing aspects of an invitation, we shall go down into death. Truth alone saves.

Thursday, March 30th - Proverbs 10: 1

The first nine chapters of Proverbs have formed an introduction wherein the general characters of wisdom and folly are drawn out and contrasted. Now we come to a more detailed analysis of those contrasts. Solomon gives us a series of antithetical proverbs, wherein diverse facets of wisdom and folly, righteousness and wickedness, are contrasted in brief compass.

The true happiness and holiness produced by wisdom serves as a compelling incentive for young people to seek such wisdom. But children are not the only ones truly, deeply, and lastingly to profit from the application of divine wisdom to their lives. The gladness or grief of their parents is also thereby determined. Our choices affect not only ourselves, but also those around us, especially those nearest to us. When a young one grows up choosing God's wise way, both of his godly parents are glad for him. The father, being most responsible to give spiritual leadership, usually will be the most demonstrative with his humble pride and joy. When folly is embraced and pursued, however, both parents grieve, but the more tender mother most openly shows it.

Friday, March 31st - Proverbs 10: 2, 3

The pragmatist wrongly believes that the acquiring of possessions secures his life. Thus he will seek to profit by hook or crook. He will lie or steal if he thinks he can get away with it, so long as he gains possessions thereby. Yet, what does it profit him to gain the world at the price of his soul? The righteous, with their convictions which bar them from employing by-ways and partaking of ill-gotten gain, may seem to be impoverished thereby. Yet righteousness delivers from eternal death, and calls down upon its possessors spiritual and temporal blessings from the Lord (Lk. 18:28-30). Those who hunger and thirst for the righteousness of God shall be filled with that righteousness and all other blessings (Mt. 5:6; 6:33), while the wicked, who seek things other than and apart from the Lord, remain frustrated and empty, not by chance, but by the blasting of the Lord.

Saturday, April 1st - Proverbs 10: 4, 5

Negligence in any field never pays dividends. It is not enough that we work; we must work diligently if we expect to be enriched. This principle holds true in both the physical and spiritual realm. The precious promises of God's Word do not yield their potencies without our diligent application (2 Pet. 1:5ff). We must work not only diligently, but wisely also. Opportunities for harvesting do not come every day. Let us be alert and appropriately active when the Lord sends seasons of ingathering. To slumber through the ordinances of His grace, as many do on His day, for example, is not only unwise, it is shamefully wrong.

Sunday, April 2nd - Proverbs 10: 6, 7

The righteous are blessed during the whole of their lives by the Lord, and during much of their lives by others. When the righteous die, they are lovingly remembered. Though they be dead, the example of their lives continues to speak, adding blessing to those who remember the righteous, and causing God to be blessed by those so gratefully remembering them. The wicked may boast, as though they are blessed, but their self-promotion is but a poor covering for their destructive and doomed natures. When the wicked die, no one blesses or even curses their memory. Instead, the wicked are simply forgotten.

Monday, April 3rd - Proverbs 10: 8

Wisdom is not something which can be externally applied. It must penetrate into and issue from the heart. The man who is truly wise will have a heart receptive of all truth. In particular, he will receive appropriate commands. Accordingly, he desires to discover and fulfill righteous responsibilities. A fool is not concerned about receiving direction, but delights in spewing forth vacant thoughts issuing from his empty and vile heart. Such a publisher of mere words will not be allowed to vex others indefinitely. In due course he will be thrown down by the hand of God, whose words the fool has failed to hear or heed.

Tuesday, April 4th - Proverbs 10: 9

Integrity is a deep, inner wholeness and consistency of attitude and action. The man who walks in integrity does not lead a fractured life, saying and doing different things to please different people. He practices the truth of God, which is utterly consistent and impartial. He may be considered by the wayward a rigid, unmovable character who is vulnerable to attack because he stands fast. Yet such integrity solidifies a man in himself, and in his walk integrity attaches him to the Lord. Thus he is secure. Those with no moral moorings, with flexible ethics, duplicity of heart, and continually changing tactics, while they think themselves safe from detection or destruction due to their apparently greater maneuverability, will be found out and found wanting. They know this, and so run even when no man is pursuing.

Wednesday, April 5th - Proverbs 10: 10, 11

Communications and their consequences are considered in these verses. A man who uses his eye to pass stealthy messages, misuses an organ given primarily for perception, and causes trouble. Such furtive glances are employed when one seeks to spring trouble on others. The babbling fool misuses his mouth, bringing trouble upon others, but ultimately upon himself. The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) renders the second part of v.10: *But a frank rebuke will make peace*, the supposition being that v.8b was inadvertently repeated in v.10. If so, the contrast is between ambiguous and unequivocal forms of communication, the former being shown to cause pain, the latter to create peace. The wicked cannot speak frankly, for they dare not disclose their evil hearts. On the other hand, the righteous bring forth good things—refreshing, invigorating, comforting truths—from their hearts made good by God's grace.

Thursday, April 6th - Proverbs 10: 12

There is such a thing as righteous hatred. We are to abhor evil (Rom. 12:9), and David speaks of counting the Lord's enemies as his own enemies, which enemies he hates with perfect hatred (Ps. 139:19-22). But this proverb has in mind that wicked hatred which seeks only to vent its own bitterness by attempting to make others similarly miserable. It detects faults in others and seeks to magnify, rather than heal them. Love covers not only frailties and faults in others, but also their sins. Love desires to forgive sin and to heal injury (1 Cor. 13:5-7). Only Christ so loves us and enables us so to love others (Eph. 4:32).

Friday, April 7th - Proverbs 10: 13, 14

The discerning gather knowledge in order to digest it and transmit it to others in the form of wisdom, which wisdom is not the mere recitation of facts, but the giving of their correlation and significance as well. Such discerning souls render themselves fit instruments for the giving of blessing to others. The foolish, however, lack understanding, and thus are fit to give out nothing but trouble. Such foolish ones, lacking a sanctified heart, find themselves most often receiving various forms of discipline, which serves to correct outer behavior, but rarely, if ever, reaches and changes their hearts.

Saturday, April 8th - Proverbs 10: 15, 16

As men assess things outwardly, the possession or lack of material possessions would seem to determine whether a man were safe and secure, or ruined. Yet it is character, not possessions, which determines the true and lasting felicity and secure enjoyment of a soul. The one who has, by saving faith, the righteousness of Christ, has life and health and peace, with or without material wealth (Phil. 4:12,13). The one who has gained the whole world, yet has left his soul in sinful depravity, will find himself not only deprived of real joy, but positively punished by the Lord whom he has spurned (Lk. 12:13-21).

Sunday, April 9th - Proverbs 10: 17

Humble teachability, not with respect to every wind of doctrine but with respect to the truth, is the hallmark of the person who is making progress in the world of saving grace. Stiff-necked refusal to yield to righteous reproofs marks the soul wandering from the Lord, whose Word reproves, rebukes, and exhorts the wayward (2 Tim. 4:2). The former seek instruction, professing their need thereof, so that they may be wise. The latter view instruction, especially in its intense form of reproof, as being needlessly invasive, as though any suggestion that they change were designed not for their benefit, but rather for their injury.

Monday, April 10th - Proverbs 10: 18

Those who employ lying flattery when speaking directly to others, and who spread slander behind the backs of others, reveal through such misuse of their mouths concealed hatred for others. They are fools to attempt to conceal that hatred, and bigger fools to harbor it. The grace of the Lord uproots malice from the heart, replacing it with the peaceable fruit of righteous love.

Tuesday, April 11th - Proverbs 10: 19-21

The wise, righteous man puts a leash on his tongue. He weighs his words so that true and loving communications pass from his heart through his lips. He has foolish and malicious thoughts as do others, for he too is sinful; but such thoughts he seeks to mortify, rather than to multiply their injurious power by giving expression to them. Thus the words of the wise are precious and nourishing to others. Conversely, fools blab all, exposing their worthless, wicked hearts. Their words help no one, and they themselves perish due to the vacuity of their hearts.

Wednesday, April 12th - Proverbs 10: 22

The so-called blessings of the world prove to be at best hollow and at worst deceptive bait enticing us into misery. It is not so with the blessings of the Lord. Even when His blessings look like curses, as in the cross, they are rich and potent, and serve for our highest ultimate good. Our Lord's blessing only gets better over time, for He is a God

who saves the best wine until last. Meanwhile, His blessing causes even our current pain to work for our good (Rom. 8:28).

Thursday, April 13th - Proverbs 10: 22

The Lord adds only blessing to our lives. He adds no sorrow, but rather is the only Comforter able to take sorrow away from us. When it seems that He adds sorrow and removes blessing, we do well to consider the thoughts expressed in Francis Thompson's *The Hound of Heaven*, in which the poet has the Lord saying:

All which I took from thee I did but take,
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home;
Rise, clasp My hand, and come!

Friday, April 14th - Proverbs 10: 23, 24

Fools find a gleeful fascination in wickedness. They delight in perversity and in seeing the damage done to others by evil. But the indulgence of such perverse pleasure renders fools increasingly guilty of great evil. They are transformed into increasingly wicked souls, sensing their guilt, and thus fearing that which they know will rightfully befall them as retribution.

The righteous, possessing a sense of godly understanding, delight in wisdom. Their delight is thorough, encompassing the blessed practical fruits of wisdom, the attitude of wisdom, and the living source of wisdom, the Lord Himself. The desire of the righteous, being set on such a God so intent upon giving true blessing, cannot fail to be fulfilled.

Saturday, April 15th - Proverbs 10: 25

Wickedness, being inherently self-destructive, provides no strength to enable one to withstand the tests of life, let alone the all-consuming fire of the final day (2 Pet. 3:10-12). The world, on which the wicked dote, is destined to pass away; while he who does the will of the Lord will abide forever (1 Jn. 2:17). The righteous can withstand the most ferocious trials. They are made strong in the Lord and by the strength of His might (Eph. 6:10ff).

Sunday, April 16th - Proverbs 10: 26

A slack servant disappoints and aggravates his master, whose name and purposes are dishonored due to the servant's lazy failure fully to carry out his master's assignment. Let us not be slack in our service for those in authority over us, especially in the service of the Lord, whose Holy Spirit is grieved, whose glorious purposes are impeded, whose name may even be blasphemed, when carnal indolence rather than spiritual diligence characterizes the lives and service of those professing His name.

Monday, April 17th - Proverbs 10: 27, 28

The fear of the Lord is no paralyzing, life-spoiling neurosis. A right attitude of holy reverence toward God gives, sustains, and enriches life. It brings healthful peace and joy to the soul, thus frequently prolonging physical life. The righteous, while revering the Lord, also place their hope in Him. That hope, when realized, will remove every tear and produce unspeakable joy. The anticipation of such hope inspires current gladness.

In contrast, the wicked worry. Their anxiety creates health and life destroying stress. Whatever joy they do anticipate never comes, but, instead, the very expectation of joy inexorably dies away.

Tuesday, April 18th - Proverbs 10: 29, 30

The wise and loving way the Lord has in dealing with His children makes them strong and secure. When we walk in the way of the Lord, growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ, striving according to His power which mightily works in us (Col. 1:29), we find our spiritual powers growing with each step. Our progress in His grace serves increasingly to render impotent the workers of iniquity, who would harm us. The ruin they design for us is brought back upon their own heads. Recall how Mordecai's faithful walk in God's way saved him and, at the same time, brought ruin to his enemy, Haman (Esther 7:9). The Lord will never let His children be shaken, nor will He let the wicked abide with them in the stronghold of divine grace, thus spoiling that blessed refuge. In the way of the Lord we find sanctuary from all foes.

Wednesday, April 19th - Proverbs 10: 31, 32

The righteous, who because of their fear of the Lord have wise hearts, issue wise words. Their prudent and practical communications flow forth as a refreshing stream, sharing with others things true and helpful. Their words do not flow forth incessantly, for good and wise men seek constantly to take account of the necessity and aptness of their words, as well as to consider the capacity of their hearers. The wicked, however, gush forth perverted speech from their perverse hearts. Their ability to publish such evil communications will be stopped eventually, if not by their sickened audience, then certainly by the Lord.

Thursday, April 20th - Proverbs 11: 1

Men can and do take unfair advantage of others in their business dealings. By their shrewd inconsistencies and bad-faith exchanges they may delight themselves with profit

in excess of what they deserve. But the Lord, who sees through it all, is not pleased. He hates such corrupt commerce.

The man who is fair in all his dealings will not fail to profit in the long run. Meantime, he enjoys the priceless profit of knowing that his honest dealings please his Lord.

Friday, April 21st - Proverbs 11: 2

Pride precedes a dishonorable fall, for pride draws its guidance and strength from the frail and sinful arm of flesh. The humble renounce self-sufficiency, depending instead upon the Lord, who makes them wise. Such humbly gathered wisdom is satisfying in itself, and moreover leads to deserved and secured promotions and honors.

Saturday, April 22nd - Proverbs 11: 3-6

Wicked men rely on shrewdly told lies, material riches, even treachery as means to promote and secure their lives. Such means, which promise to exalt one at the expense of others, are all deceptive props doomed not only to fail, but also to be the very means of destroying those relying on them. This is so because our world has a moral, not a material basis. Our righteous God governs the world, and He is effectually committed to protecting and promoting the righteous, while frustrating and vanquishing the wicked and their untrue ways. The man who concentrates on who he is before this God, the man who seeks by divine grace to be righteous and to have integrity before Him, will think and live in a way contrary to the treachery of the world, thus exposing himself to the anger and abuse of the wicked; but such a man will be surely guided through every course, safely delivered from dangers great and small, and will find the hills, valleys, and rough places in his way smoothed by the hand of the Lord.

Sunday, April 23rd - Proverbs 11: 7, 8

The righteous reversals the wicked suffer in this life do not form the full portion of their punishment. Whether the wicked be unsuccessful in the employment of their evil devices and thus live as evil idealists, sustained by the delusive expectation that their treachery will one day pay dividends, or whether they be successful in extorting riches and thus appear to live as impregnable strong men, death undeceives them, ushering them into well-deserved judgment (Heb. 9:27). Such judgment should come as no surprise to them. For throughout life the pattern of divine rectitude is evident. God delivers His children from the snares of the wicked, and causes evil men to fall into the pits which they themselves had dug for others (Ps. 9:15; 55:22, 23; 57:6; 94:21-23).

Monday, April 24th - Proverbs 11: 9

The godless man has no blessing in his heart and conveys no blessing through his mouth. Rather, he seeks to promote himself by destroying others. The righteous, in particular, are his targets. Yet the righteous are delivered, not by their directly battling against the malicious liars arrayed against them, but by their close adherence to the Lord,

who gives them knowledge more than sufficient to neutralize godless threats. The psalmist, in the long psalm, repeatedly testifies to this: *Even though princes sit and talk against me, Thy servant meditates on Thy statutes.* (Ps. 119:23). When we make our devotion to the Lord to be our primary business, He makes it His business to deliver us from all destructive designs.

Tuesday, April 25th – Genesis 29: 12, 13

Jacob's meeting with Rachel led quickly to his meeting Rachel's father, Laban, in whom the supplanting son of Isaac would find that he had met his scheming match. Our God is the master craftsman, who sinlessly uses sinful, imperfect tools to perfect his saints. The things Jacob would suffer at the scheming hands of Laban would serve to purge him of his own scheming ways, making him to be fair and even gracious and generous in his dealings with others (Gen. 32: 13-20; 33: 8-11).

Wednesday, April 26th - Genesis 29: 12, 13

Rachel met Jacob with excited anticipation, while Laban received him with warm and enthusiastic affection. Jacob could not have hoped for a more propitious reception. If the Bible were a book of romantic stories, this one would end on this happy note, leaving us to imagine that Jacob and Rachel soon married and lived happily thereafter. However, since the Word of God details reality, we shall soon see how costly and painful to Jacob the kisses of Laban will prove to be. Fair beginnings do not always indicate clear and easy sailing ahead.

Thursday, April 27th - Genesis 29: 14, 15

Laban observes and exclaims over the natural affinity and relation between himself and Jacob. The resemblance between the two men went far deeper than that of skin and bone. For as Jacob had proven himself to be an astute bargainer and deceiver, so, too, Laban would show himself to be a master of those exploitative arts. Jacob would not be further schooled in those arts by Laban's masterful application of them to him, but would, rather, surfeit over them and renounce their practice for the rest of his life. Such purging was the sanctifying purpose the Lord had for the relationship between these two similar men.

Friday, April 28th - Genesis 29: 14, 15

Jacob stayed with Laban for a month, but his time was spent not in freeloading indulgence, but rather in diligent work. As Jacob began his time in Haran by watering Laban's flocks, so he continued to work in and around his uncle's household. By the transforming grace of the Lord, Jacob did not cease to be a contemplative man (Gen. 25:27) but additionally was developing into a man of industrious action. The Lord knows how to call into exercise the full range of gifts He has given to His people.

Saturday, April 29th - Genesis 29: 15

Here is the first manifestation of Laban's shrewd selfishness. He who lavished such a demonstrably warm welcome upon his nephew did not hesitate to let him labor for him for an entire month, instead of his treating Jacob as a truly welcomed and honored guest in his house. Laban seemed content to allow his nephew to work as an unpaid slave. After a month, Laban still valued Jacob's labor above any respect for the dictates of gracious hospitality and so sought to promote the young man from the status of a slave to that of a hired hand. Here Jacob gets a taste of what it is like when a family member regards personal profit above the bonds of family relationships, as Jacob had done when he valued the birthright above his brother. By such tastes, administered to us by our God, we are taught not to be grasping—even after right things—but to be gracious and loving in our dealings with others.

Sunday, April 30th - Genesis 29: 15-18

When Laban brings up the matter of wages, Jacob is quick and decisive in declaring that, instead of money, he had his eye on something vastly more precious. Laban had two daughters, but Jacob had eyes only for one of them. Therefore, he unhesitatingly declares that he would serve Laban for the considerable duration of seven years if Laban would give Rachel to him as his wife. In this way, the erstwhile self-regarding son of Isaac shows his great love for the bride for whom he was willing to perform long and costly labor in order to have her. Our Lord expands our hearts in order to fill them with the love that He Himself has for His bride, the Church.

Monday, May 1st - Genesis 29: 16-18

Laban has two daughters, but Jacob loved only one of them. Laban would show, in due course, that he had plans to profit from both of his daughters through trickery that he would impose upon Jacob. However, the Lord was going to superintend sinlessly over Laban's sinful schemes, making sure that Jacob would be richly blessed with wives and children above what he asked or thought to ask of Laban. When the hand of the Lord is for us, He makes even the devices of the wicked serve for our blessing.

Tuesday, May 2nd - Genesis 29: 18, 19

Jacob sets the terms by which he would continue to work for Laban, and Laban readily agrees to these terms. Yet Laban either at this point has, or soon hereafter develops, a plan whereby he would give away both of his daughters and extract from Jacob more years of labor than he here agreed to give. As the hand of the Lord was sinlessly superintending these matters, we should take note how He repays us in our own currency. Jacob had deceived his father, and now Jacob is deceived by his father-in-law. That which we sow, we shall in due course reap. Let us, then, determine not to sow in the flesh, but rather to the Spirit (Gal. 6:7,8).

Wednesday, May 3rd - Genesis 29: 18, 19

Jacob commits himself to costly service in order to have the bride he loved. Seven years' labor would be a considerable commitment for any person to undertake. However, when we bear in mind that Jacob was not a young man when he made this commitment, the cost appears to be even greater for him. Some time prior to this event, Scripture informed us that Esau, Jacob's twin brother, was 40 years old (Gen. 26:34). Appreciable time had lapsed between that notice and this point in Jacob's life. Matthew Henry reckons in his *Commentary on Genesis* that Jacob was 77 years old when he bound himself to this seven-year course of labor. A man is much better off spending his time waiting and working to have the wife of God's choosing than he would be speeding to have a wife who is not of the Lord's provision.

Thursday, May 4th - Genesis 29: 20

The great price Jacob committed to pay for his having Rachel was not painful to him, but was transformed into pleasure due to the great love that he had for her. As the hymn rightly declares: *Love will make obedience sweet*. If our love for Christ were not so cold, we would find growing delight in His service—even when that service becomes sacrificial—and we would be increasingly freed from resentment and feelings of drudgery.

Friday, May 5th - Genesis 29: 20

Jacob was willing to pay a great price to have Rachel as his wife. He was soon to discover that he would have to pay a greater price to have her (and to have her sister in addition to her). That which Laban sinfully foisted upon and extorted from Jacob, the Lord gives sinlessly as pure reward issuing from His abundant grace. Our Lord will see to it that the schemes of those who would wickedly take advantage of us will ultimately serve for our rich blessing.

Saturday, May 6th - Genesis 29: 21, 22

Jacob has completed his duty of seven years of serving Laban. Therefore, he asks for Rachel to be given to him in marriage, according to his agreement with Laban. In response, Laban made a feast, as though he intended to fulfill his part of the agreement. However, this feast would prove to be but a component in Laban's plan to deceive Jacob and defraud him of his true bride. For all of the injury this would cause Jacob, it would not be damaging to his soul. We are hurt far less when we are sinned against than we are when we ourselves sin. Jacob's days of deceptive dealings are behind him, and though he is sinfully deceived by Laban, the God of truth, grace, and love would see to it that even this would work for Jacob's good.

Sunday, May 7th - Genesis 29: 23-25

Here is the account of how the erstwhile deceiver was himself deceived. Laban's deception contains multiple sins and aggravations of sin. He makes his own daughter to be a party to his deceit, just as Rebekah had done with her son, Jacob. His substitution of Leah for Rachel gave the lie to his words of agreement with Jacob, given seven years previously. His sinful deceit virtually prostituted his older daughter while it deprived his younger daughter of the bridegroom to whom she had been pledged. Finally, his deceit deprived Jacob, his own nephew, of his duly promised bride. Sin, in all of its forms, contains manifold offenses against man, but especially against the Lord. What gain could possibly justify the incurring of such compound guilt?

Monday, May 8th - Genesis 29: 25-30

When Jacob demanded an accounting from Laban for his deception, the old deceiver claimed a custom and added a complication to the broken agreement. The custom he claimed was that an older daughter must be given in marriage before a younger could be given. Of course, Laban had never mentioned this custom to Jacob before, nor does he give any indication that the custom could be disregarded, for such considerations would not have suited his deceptive and exploitative purposes. The complication Laban adds is the giving of Rachel to Jacob in return for seven more years of service. This is a hard

bargain that serves to draw Jacob not only into extended servitude, but also into polygamy. Yet, Jacob pays the price and grows, not in bitterness, but in grace. Our Lord uses graceless tools to work grace into the character of His people.

Tuesday, May 9th - Genesis 29: 28-30

Jacob fulfilled his part of the hard bargain struck by Laban. Though Leah had been deceptively foisted upon Jacob, he devoted himself to her for the week after their marriage. When that week was ended, Jacob finally got his beloved Rachel as his wife. With these two sisters, Jacob also received their maids, so that there were four women in his household. This combination was far from ideal, especially as Jacob loved Rachel above Leah. Yet our perfect God does not require perfect circumstances in order to work His perfect and gracious will for His people. From this unlikely family would descend the 12 sons and tribes of all Israel. Our Lord can draw abundant fruit from the most unpromising soil.

Wednesday, May 10th - Genesis 29: 30-32

Jacob apparently loved Leah, but he loved Rachel more. The impossibility of a man loving two wives equally is but one of the factors that makes polygamy sinfully wrong. Yet, the Lord shows compassion to His people, even in their sinful plights. Therefore, we find Him regarding compassionately the unloved Leah, and blessing her with the conception and birth of a son. Our merciful Lord knows how best to bless those whom the imperfect love of man would leave in a painfully unblessed state.

Thursday, May 11th - Genesis 29: 31, 32

We have seen Jacob growing in grace. We have seen him growing in his matrimonial prospects. Now we see the beginning of the growing of his family. The Lord is determined to bless His servant and to make him fruitful in every way. How rich we all are who belong to God through Christ, seeing that we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (Eph. 1:3).

Friday, May 12th - Genesis 29: 31, 32

The Lord loves the wife despised by His chosen man. The loving heart and providing hand of the Lord balance the crosses and comforts of His providence so that His people are kept from both pride and despair. Leah apparently bore her despised condition with

Jacob in silence, for when she names her son, she chooses a name that from Hebrew translates: *See, a son*, implying that though God heard no cry from her, yet He beheld with loving regard the affliction that her loveless marriage brought upon her. Poor Leah hoped that her son, Reuben, the gift of the Lord's love, would incite Jacob to love her, but it was not to be. Human love requires human merit, but the love of God is lavished upon us freely and mercifully.

Saturday, May 13th - Genesis 29: 33, 34

Leah bore Jacob a second son, naming him Simeon, which is related to the Hebrew verb, *to hear*. She recognized that the Lord not only had seen her affliction, but also that He perceived the cause of it being in her husband's lack of love for her. With her third son, whose name, Levi, comes from a Hebrew verb meaning *to join*, Leah still hoped that her son would serve to draw Jacob closer to her in love. But still, Jacob showed preference for Rachel and neglect for Leah. Even with the blessing of God abundantly upon her, the unloved Leah could not draw to herself Jacob's love.

Sunday, May 14th - Genesis 29: 35

Leah hoped in vain that her bearing Jacob three sons would win his love for her. However, when she bore a fourth son, she named him Judah, meaning *to praise*. With this son, Leah ceased focusing upon her loveless earthly husband and regarded, instead, the love and blessing of her heavenly Lord, determining to praise Him. Our Lord Jesus, who has attained a name above every other name, is descended from one whose name means praise.

Monday, May 15th - Genesis 30: 1, 2

For the first half of this thirtieth chapter of Genesis we have an account of the sinful jealousy that prevailed between Leah and Rachel and the fruit that came of it. Sin increases at every turn of this sordid competition between these sisters. Yet, in the holy providence of God, grace abounds in the enlargement of Jacob's family. All blame is due to Jacob and his wives respecting the matter; all glory is due to God for His persistent love for these unlovely, jostling family members.

Tuesday, May 16th - Genesis 30: 1, 2

These verses record Rachel's envy and Jacob's anger. Rachel demands of her husband what she should have humbly asked from God. She wants children—not just one child. She wants children with an inordinate fixation, declaring that she would die without them. Sadly, she would die giving birth to the second of her sons (Gen. 35:16-19). In response to such impossible demands, Jacob's love for Rachel turns to hot anger. She who demanded of her husband what God withheld, succeeded not in getting a son, but only in drying up the sympathy and alienating the love of her husband. Such proud demands will ever beget only opposition from the Lord and ignite resentment in men.

Wednesday, May 17th - Genesis 30: 3-6

Rachel could not have her way with Jacob or with the Lord. Instead of humbling herself and crying to the Lord and waiting patiently for Him to make His perfect provision in her life, she determines to take matters into her own hands. She who was not heeding her heavenly Master, orders her maid, Bilhah, to act in her stead as a third wife to Jacob. Here we have echoes of the faithless conspiracy of Abraham and Sarah endeavoring to produce a son through Hagar. Sadly, the grandson, Jacob, faithlessly follows the bad and bitter example of his grandfather. We do well, while honoring our earthly fathers, not to follow their sinful examples.

Thursday, May 18th - Genesis 30: 3-6

Jacob heeded the faithless counsel of his wife. From Adam, through Abraham, to Jacob, and beyond these patriarchs, godly men have always shown a propensity to heed their wives' sinful suggestions, rather than to submit themselves in trusting obedience to the Lord. Let us take heed. If such great saints can rely on the frail arm of their own flesh, we, too, can easily fall into the same temptation.

Friday, May 19th - Genesis 30: 3-6

Though Rachel did not pray to God or heed His Word throughout all of this sordid business, still she assumes that the production of a son through her maid indicated divine blessing. Boldly, therefore, does she name her son Dan, meaning *judge*, for she reckoned that the Lord had judged her to be worthy of a son. The reality was that she was quite faithless and therefore unworthy in this matter. Yet, the Lord, being rich in mercy, sinlessly used the sin of Jacob and Rachel to add to Jacob's growing number of sons.

Saturday, May 20th - Genesis 30: 7, 8

With her second son through Bilhah, Rachel declares, by the name she gave to the boy, that she was a wrestler. However, she at best was but a vicarious wrestler, for it was Bilhah who endured the pain of carrying and delivering these sons. Also, Rachel was not like Jacob would become, namely, one who wrestled with God. She was instead one who wrestled with her sister, participating against her in an unholy and unloving competition. How unworthily this chosen family is acting, and yet how kind, gracious, and generous is the Lord to bless them in spite of themselves.

Sunday, May 21st - Genesis 30: 9-13

The faithless action of Rachel prompts Leah to imitate her younger sister's practice of surrogate motherhood. Through her maid, Zilpah, Leah reckons that she had produced two more sons for Jacob. Whereas with her previous sons, Leah acknowledged the blessing of the Lord, with these two through her maid she refers to fortune (Gad) and happiness (Asher). Holiness and the help of the Lord are not considerations for these wives of Jacob who are locked in a carnal competition against each other. It should be increasingly clear to us that the blessing of the Lord came to this family through divine grace and not through the worthy, faithful living of the family members.

Monday, May 22nd - Genesis 30: 14-16

Years have passed and the sons of Leah and Rachel are growing up. In this passage we see the sisters still motivated by sinful competition, rather than loving cooperation. We also see how great sins can hang on small matters. When Reuben brought his mother some fruit, Rachel desired some. Her desire was refused by Leah, but Rachel had such inordinate longing for the mandrakes that she virtually hires out her husband for a night with Leah in return for the fruit. Selfish impulses and faithless desires are driving Jacob and his wives, so that they use each other as pawns for their personal passions, rather than cherishing each other in holy love.

Tuesday, May 23rd - Genesis 30: 17-20

In return for her fruit given to Rachel, Leah bore living fruit to Jacob. In spite of all of the faithless conniving between Rachel, Leah, and Jacob, the Lord did not withhold His blessing from Leah, but heard her prayer and granted her a son. It is suggested by some scholars that Rachel thought the mandrakes would have had medicinal qualities that would enhance her ability to bear children. If so, then she continues to demonstrate her leaning on the arm of flesh, while her sister, Leah, at least was crying out to God in prayer, asking for His enabling power to grant her the conception of a son.

Wednesday, May 24th - Genesis 30: 18-20:

Leah named her fifth son Issachar, meaning *wages*. She states that this son represented God repaying her for her denying herself so that Jacob could continue to produce sons through her maid, Zilpah. It is more likely that the Lord graciously gave Leah this son as a gift of His free grace, and not as payment for her pursuit of the unholy competition in child-bearing with her sister. Leah named her sixth son, Zebulun, expressing her acknowledgment of this son as a gift from God granted to her as an added incentive for Jacob to dwell lovingly with her. The vanity of this hope may be observed when we note that Leah, who with her first four sons used the covenant name of the Lord (Gen. 29: 31-35), now uses the designation for divine power when she refers to God. When we view the love and gifts of the Lord as mere means to help us attain some other end—in Leah's case, the love of her husband—then it should not surprise us when we lose sight of the Lord's covenant mercy, and remain conscious only of His power.

Thursday, May 25th – Genesis 30: 21

Leah bore a daughter named Dinah. It is likely that Jacob's wives bore other daughters, yet Dinah receives special attention due to the events pertaining to her that will be recorded in Genesis 34. Those events would bring pain to Dinah, while the treacherous and deceptive retaliation of her brothers, Simeon and Levi, would destroy the men of Shechem and necessitate Jacob's moving from Shechem to Bethel. Children are a blessing from the Lord, but they do not come to us free of cursed and painful propensities. We must learn to look only to the Lord for pure love and blessing, and not to seek them even from those nearest and dearest to us.

Friday, May 26th - Genesis 30: 22-24

The wife Jacob loved first and most remained barren. Rachel was the only wife he really wanted and should legitimately have had, were it not for Laban's sinful deceit and Jacob's sinful complicity. Nor was Rachel without fault in her having agreed to be Jacob's second wife; in her supplying her maid to Jacob as a concubine; and in her complaints to Jacob and her demands of him, rather than her humbly offering prayers to the Lord and accepting His divine provision. Yet, amidst all of this sinful faithlessness the Lord shows grace to Rachel, saving the best of all Jacob's sons for her to bear. Divine delays do not indicate denials, but rather the Lord's holy and loving determination to save the best wine for last.

Saturday, May 27th - Genesis 30: 22-24

Through the merciful provision of God, Rachel gained something and lost something. What she gained was a son. What she lost was the reproach of her barrenness. The Lord is blessed and blessing in what He gives and what He takes away. His subtractions are blessed and His additions are grace upon grace. When He gave for us His only begotten Son, He took away from us that which is reproach, indeed. The reproach of Rachel's barrenness was pale in comparison with the sinner's black reproach due to the increasing guilt of his sin and his being void of godliness and the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Sunday, May 28th - Genesis 30: 22-24

Although Rachel rejoiced in her God-given son, she displays ingratitude by the name that she gave to him. Joseph means: *add to me*. She named her son that because as soon as she had borne this one son she cries out for another to be added to her. Her ingratitude made her blind to the supreme excellence that Joseph would attain. Our ingratitude for the seemingly small mercies of the Lord similarly blind as to the excellencies of His greater mercies contained in the lesser.

Monday, May 29th - Genesis 30: 22-24

Rachel had demanded of Jacob a son (vv.1,2), but Scripture does not record her praying for one. Despite her faithlessness, the Lord regarded her with pity and gave her a son. Instead of her showing gratitude, she shows her feeling that Joseph was not enough to satisfy her desire. Yet he was to become the instrumental savior of his family, as well as of many Egyptians and others who would come to Egypt for grain during the famine. Her desire for another son was not really a prayer to the Lord, yet the Lord would grant her desire at the cost of her life (Gen. 35:16). Let us learn not ungratefully to regard the Lord's provision as inadequate, for it is our selfish desires, not His merciful deliveries, that kill us (Jas. 4:1-3).

Tuesday, May 30th - Genesis 30: 24

With Joseph's birth, the last of the sons of Jacob to be born in Haran was delivered. Later, Benjamin would be born in the Promised Land, as Jacob and his family traveled for Bethel to Ephrath or Bethlehem (Gen. 35:16-18). These sons of Jacob formed the foundation stones for the Old Testament church. They were sinfully begotten and would, in time, prove themselves to be awful sinners, selling Joseph into slavery, for example. Yet, the Lord sinlessly loved them all and superintended even their evil, pressing it into service for His own glory and their good (Gen. 50:20). When we observe that Jesus was descended from Judah's line, and recall that Judah was a son of Leah, the wife Jacob did not want, we should understand, accept, and rely upon the fact that our God chooses the rejected things of this world for the blessing of His people and the glory of His name. Where the sin of His people increases, His grace abounds all the more.

Wednesday, May 31st - Genesis 30: 25, 26

Jacob has grown in grace under the abuse of Laban. His family has grown in persons. The remainder of this chapter of Genesis informs us how Jacob also increased in possessions. When it suits the wise, loving, and gracious purposes of the Lord, the divine arm does not lack power to provide abundantly for His people.

Thursday, June 1st - Genesis 30: 25, 26

These verses tell us that Jacob did not simply depart from Laban without giving him notice. Instead, the patriarch requests that his father-in-law send him away with his full knowledge and consent. Jacob expresses his desire and determination to return to the land of Canaan, which he refers to as his own country. He had left Canaan under a cloud of his having deceived his father and deprived his brother. Openly and honorably does Jacob now determine to leave his father-in-law and Haran, the land of his sojourning, and return to face whatever consequences he had to face in the Promised Land. Jacob's honorable impulse was of the Lord, who was working in him that he would will and do the Lord's good pleasure (Gen. 31:3). We do well, and we do so in obedience to the Lord, when we desire and determine to be in our own place, which is the Church on earth, and our own country, that is the celestial city.

Friday, June 2nd - Genesis 30: 25, 26

We learn several significant things about Jacob, his family, and his service in these verses. Though he longed to be in his own country, he remained in Haran and served Laban according to the years of his agreement. When he calls his father-in-law to acknowledge his service, he could only do so because he had served diligently and heartily, as serving his holy God above the scheming Laban. Jacob was transformed by divine grace from a schemer to a godly servant. By his reference to his wives and children we are reminded that although Jacob had left Canaan a solitary man under various clouds of familial resentment and anger, he was returning as head of a great company of covenant people. The Lord always blesses those who leave their sinful way to enter into His course (Ps. 1:3).

Saturday, June 3rd - Genesis 30: 27

Laban protests Jacob's determination to return to Canaan. He does so not because he cares about Jacob's welfare or the will of Jacob's God. Rather, Laban is motivated by self-interest. He recognizes that his son-in-law was to him an instrument of divine blessing and temporal prosperity. Thus, he wanted the fruit of godly Jacob's diligence and honesty, without having himself the root of his own deeper consecration to the Lord. The world and also the carnal believer will ever selfishly attempt to hold back those vitally devoted to the Lord and His will. We must never heed their protests or rely on their promises.

Sunday, June 4th - Genesis 30: 28

Laban appears to make Jacob a generous offer in terms of payment for his continued services. However, the wily Laban knew that his son-in-law would produce much more than his services would cost, and further knew that Jacob was inclined to offer much for little gain. Had he not already given fourteen years of labor in order to have Laban's two daughters? It speaks well of our diligence, competence, and equity when men value our services so highly and know us to be self-denying while being generous toward others. The world ever values the fruit of godliness, if not its root.

Monday, June 5th - Genesis 30: 29, 30

Jacob begins to offer his terms to Laban by pointing out the fact upon which Laban was relying, namely, that only Jacob's father-in-law had profited from his years of service, while Jacob had little for himself and his family. Furthermore, Jacob rightly and sincerely acknowledges that the Lord had caused his labors to be so fruitfully blessed to Laban's enrichment. The implication is that Laban was greedy for gain and not truly grateful for the Lord's blessing or for the Lord's servant. For Laban's deceitful and miserly dealings with Jacob demonstrated his ingratitude and greed. Therefore, were Jacob to rely on Laban for his future wages, he and his family would continue in want. We do well to recognize greed and ingratitude in others, and to refuse to have dealings with greedy and ungrateful people.

Tuesday, June 6th - Genesis 30: 31-33

Laban, sensing Jacob's rebuke and refusal to continue in the service of such a defrauding father-in-law, offers Jacob a gift as incentive to renew his labor contract. Jacob wisely refuses Laban's gift, for a greedy and deceitful man is capable of giving nothing except costly disappointment to others. Instead, Jacob requests payment for his continued service not in terms of wages or a gift, but rather in terms of livestock. He would continue shepherding Laban's flocks for payment of the minority and inferior sheep of those flocks. The distinguishing marks upon Jacob's sheep would ensure that Laban would not dispute ownership of the speckled and spotted sheep and goats and the black lambs. The righteous are most secure and most likely to prosper when their welfare instrumentally depends upon their own diligence, competence, and honesty rather than upon the vaunted largesse of corrupt men.

Wednesday, June 7th - Genesis 30: 34-36

These verses reveal to us how Laban continued his deceitful and defrauding ways with his son-in-law, and indicate to us how right Jacob was to desire to be released from Laban's service. In v.34, Laban agrees in word with Jacob's proposal. Then in vv.35,36 we learn how Laban preceded Jacob in passing through his flocks, and removed many of the ones marked for Jacob. Accordingly, Laban stooped to being a veritable sheep rustler, stealing Jacob's sheep, then having his sons drive them three days' journey away from the main flocks so that Jacob would find a greatly reduced number of livestock for his selection. Yet, where unscrupulous men work nefariously to injure the Lord's people, our

sovereign God works to turn events against the scoundrels and for the good of His people.

Thursday, June 8th - Genesis 30: 34-36

As wisely as Jacob constructed his proposal, Laban still was able to find a weakness in it and exploit it. The devil is more wily than this uncle and father-in-law of Jacob. How can we defend ourselves against him? By our faithful and diligent use of godly means, but especially by our faithful trust in and reliance upon the Lord, we shall stand against the devil's wiles and prosper even as he works to impoverish and persecute us.

Friday, June 9th - Genesis 30: 37-43

These verses tell us how Jacob prospered, in spite of Laban's machinations to cheat him. The method Jacob used to increase the size of his flocks is more for our instruction than for our imitation. The peeled rods that Jacob set all about his flocks were a physically unlikely, if not useless, device. Some Bible scholars assert that Jacob was using the power of suggestion when he exposed the mating sheep to striped rods so they would produce striped offspring. If so, we should marvel at Jacob's knowledge of genetics and industry in his use of that knowledge. The Lord is our Master Teacher, who can make us wise and effective masters of our most challenging situations (Ps. 144:1,2).

Saturday, June 10th - Genesis 30: 37-43

Jacob concentrated in his livestock breeding enhancement program especially on the strong sheep. His interest was not in having numbers of frail sheep and goats, but in having an increased number of strong animals. As it turned out, he attained both high quality and vast quantity through his breeding methods. While both quality and quantity may be desirable, we should note that Scripture consistently places the premium upon quality. That is because our salvation is accomplished by the only begotten Son of God, the one pure and perfect Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. Multitudes of impure would-be saviors cannot compare with Him.

Sunday, June 11th - Genesis 30: 37-43

The real reason Jacob's flocks increased beyond those of Laban is not so much that Jacob was employing the power of suggestion in genetically altering the offspring of his flocks. Instead, we are more certain it was by the gracious power of the Lord that Jacob's flocks multiplied prodigiously. Jacob himself acknowledges that the Lord made his feeble instruments of the peeled rods to be sacramentally effective (Gen 31:6-9). Therefore, while we are to use all legitimate means to prosper in our work, we are to trust in and rely only upon the Lord for our success (Josh. 1:7-9).

Monday, June 12th - Genesis 30: 43

Jacob was afflicted by Laban's constant cheating, but he was not injured thereby. The more his carnal and conniving father-in-law sought to take from Jacob, the more the Lord added to him. *It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man.* (Ps. 118:8). Our God is for us, and if that is so, who can prevail against us? Our God can work to bless us abundantly with, without, or counter to the means we employ and the devices employed against us.

Tuesday, June 13th - Genesis 30: 43

The fruitful issue of Jacob's employment of the unlikely instrument of the striped rods was his becoming exceedingly prosperous in sheep. The infinitely fruitful issue of our God's employment of the most unlikely instrument of the cross is the magnifying of His grace and glory in the many sons of God He has redeemed and regenerated through the One who gave His life on that cross.

Wednesday, June 14th - Genesis 31: 1, 2

Jacob had grown in grace, in the size of his family, and in possessions. However, while he lived in Haran he was not in the proper place for the right and full enjoyment of those abundant blessings. Therefore we are informed in this chapter how the Lord called and moved His chosen man back to the Promised Land. These opening verses show us one of the instruments that the Lord employed to prod Jacob on to his truer earthly home. Laban's sons, being envious of Jacob's prosperity, bring a false charge against him. Laban's own attitude fostered and furthered the charge, for Laban regarded Jacob favorably only so long as Laban himself profited through Jacob's labors. No one welcomes the challenges of enemies, but from the blessed results of these afflictions that come upon Jacob we should learn to view our own pains as divinely ordained prods to lead us to greater blessing.

Thursday, June 15th - Genesis 31: 3

Added to the prodding works of divine providence is the clearly directive Word of the Lord. Jacob is not left to wonder about the purpose of his prods; he is rather given the Lord's own interpretation of that purpose when he is told by the Lord to leave Haran. We always rightly interpret the providences of our own situations only in and by the clear, directive, empowering, and comforting Word of God.

Friday, June 16th - Genesis 31: 3

The sovereign hand of the Lord was giving Jacob preparatory prods through the charges of Laban's sons and the changed attitude of Laban. To these painful works of divine providence the Lord adds His express Word. There are clear and concise commands and comforts in this Word of the Lord to His chosen man. The way of the Lord is set out by the Lord with sufficient clarity and incentive for those who sincerely want to know and do His will.

Saturday, June 17th - Genesis 31: 3

There are three facets contained in this divine communication to Jacob. First, it is implied that Jacob should leave Haran. This is what Jacob had previously desired and determined to do (Gen. 30:25). However, he had been delayed by his renegotiated agreement with Laban to continue shepherding his father-in-law's flocks for payment in the form of livestock. By the gracious blessing of the Lord, Jacob prospered under this new arrangement, and yet that rose was attended with the thorns of envy, false charges, and the unfriendly attitude of Laban and his sons toward Jacob. What a blessed relief it must have been for Jacob to receive his marching orders directly from His Lord, and to learn that those orders delivered him from an increasingly painful situation and directed him to pursue the desire of his heart. We should never fear but always delight in laying our plans before the Lord and seeking the light of His Word in the denial or approval of those plans.

Sunday, June 18th - Genesis 31: 3

The second facet of the divine directive is an explicit order that Jacob should return to the Promised Land. The incentive of a reunion with Jacob's father and family is especially highlighted in this directive. Jacob had left his family under the cloud of his father's resentment of his deceit and of his brother's anger and murderous determination. Jacob could not have known whether the attitudes of his relatives at home had favorably changed, but he did know that under the sanctifying hand of God he had been transformed inwardly and blessed outwardly. From this he could rightly reckon that the Lord, having so changed and blessed him, would not be now sending him home to his doom. By their separation from one another, the Lord had been working in all of these estranged members of Jacob's family to accomplish a wonderful reconciliation.

Monday, June 19th - Genesis 31: 3

The final and most significant and comforting facet of this divine directive is the Lord's promise to be with Jacob. If the sovereign Lord and Almighty God is with and for us, who or what can prevail against us? We may at times lack the comforting assurance that our Lord is with us when we walk according to the light of His Word. Jacob himself went through bouts of doubt on his journey home (Gen. 32:6-8). Yet, though we are sometimes faithless or exercise a little, weak faith, our God ever remains faithful to His promise never to leave or forsake us.

Tuesday, June 20th - Genesis 31: 4, 5

We shall observe that there are elements that are wise and right about Jacob's departure as well as elements that are questionable, if not foolish and wrong. The saints of God always walk imperfectly through their earthly pilgrimage, but they do walk in the way of the Lord. Jacob begins wisely by holding a family council to inform his wives of the pending move and the reasons for it. The husband is to be the head of his wife, but he is to be a loving head who will with loving consideration share with her his plans and the

principles that prompt them. Therefore, Jacob informs his wives of Laban's prodding and of the protection of his covenant God. He does this with intention of persuading them with good reasons regarding the necessity of their leaving their father and homeland. Love always seeks to persuade, not to compel.

Wednesday, June 21st - Genesis 31: 6-9

Jacob further reminds his wives of his own faithful, diligent, and fruitful service rendered to their father, and how in return he was repeatedly cheated by Laban. As he did in v.5, so he does again in v.7, namely, whenever he mentions the painful thorns of men he also mentions the shielding protection of his God. The believer not only sees the persecutions of men but also the hidden but abundantly effective help of the Lord. These truths present persuasive reasoning for the plan of action that Jacob has. They also clearly explain to his wives the cause of the prosperity of their husband despite their father's course of cheating him. Our faith is reasonable and should result in reasonable and successful living.

Thursday, June 22nd - Genesis 31: 10-13

In these verses, Jacob gives to his wives a fuller account of the directing Word of the Lord that came to him earlier. We are not to think that Jacob exaggerated the divine Word as recorded so briefly in v.3; rather, we are to understand that v.3 summarizes the communication that will be more fully recorded in these verses. At this point of Jacob's telling we learn that the Lord spoke to Jacob in a dream, and that Jacob readily received His Word. The Lord identified Himself as the God of Bethel, where Jacob had received the vision of the angels' ladder and the covenant promise and comforting assurances of the Lord; where he had also anointed the memorial pillar and vowed to devote himself to the Lord of great and precious promise and provision. Read Genesis 28:10-22 as a refresher to all that this divine self-designation signified to Jacob. Through his declaration of God's Word to his wives, Jacob makes known the divine warrant for their action and the assurance they should have for security and success. Our warrant for action and certainty of success likewise issue from the great and precious promises of the Lord contained in His Word, and backed by His gracious and almighty Person.

Friday, June 23rd - Genesis 31: 14-16

Jacob's wives are sincerely persuaded by Jacob's testimony. Their eyes have been opened to see the integrity, faithfulness, and diligence of their husband in contrast to the cheating and wastefulness of their father. They recognize that their future welfare lay with Jacob and with Jacob's God, rather than with their own natural father. Hence, as godly, submissive helpmeets they support rather than impede their husband's own submission and obedience to the Lord. Nothing on earth could help a husband and father more than to have his wife heartily seconding his motions to follow the Lord fully.

Saturday, June 24th - Genesis 31: 17-21

In this passage that recounts the actual departure of Jacob with his family and possessions, we are told how the patriarch executed his holy determination to obey the Word of the Lord. We learn that his—and by implication our own—performance is not as pure and perfect as his (and our) determination. There are two defects recorded in this departure. First, Rachel stole her father's idols. Jacob did not know of this, but hidden guilt is still guilt, and such resides in us all. Perhaps Rachel feared that Laban would use the idols to detect their departure or to curse them in their way. Perhaps she remained somewhat devoted to them herself. Perhaps she intended to mock Laban and his idols by showing how useless they were. It does not appear, however, that faith and a pure heart prompted her purloining of these idols. Then, Jacob left in secrecy. Perhaps his faith weakened and his fears of Laban and his sons rose. Perhaps he did not trust himself to leave the wily deal-maker, should he provide Laban with an opportunity to offer new terms of service. It appears that Jacob's little faith turned what should have been an open and legitimate departure under the warrant and protection of God into what at least appears to be a fearful fleeing. However, little faith is still faith. Jacob leaves Haran and heads to Canaan as his Lord had directed him to do. Faulty obedience is still obedience, and what other kind can any man but the perfect God/Man offer?

Sunday, June 25th – Genesis 31: 22, 23

These verses begin to describe the pursuit Laban made after Jacob. Laban launched a quick and decisive pursuit after his son-in-law, taking along a company of his kinsmen, apparently to compel Jacob to return or at least to relinquish his livestock. This demonstrates that in Laban's mind, Jacob was his slave, having no true freedom and no right to hold his own possessions. Later, Pharaoh would pursue Moses and Israel in the same way and for the same reasons. Neither do sins, nor Satan, nor the world let the believer make his pilgrimage out of this world to the celestial city without pursuit and molestation. Yet, if the Son of God has set us free, despite these impediments, we shall find ourselves to be free indeed.

Monday, June 26th - Genesis 31: 24

Jacob fled from Laban (v.21), and Laban's pursuit shows that the fears that led to Jacob's flight were well founded. However, between the fleeing son of Isaac and the determined pursuit of Laban stands the Lord, who intervenes with His Word of warning to Laban. The believer has cause to fear his foes if he considers them apart from the Lord who is his shield. But when the believer reckons on the truth that He who is for and with us is greater than those who are against us, comfort and confidence should vanquish all of our fears.

Tuesday, June 27th - Genesis 31: 25-29

Jacob's father-in-law had departed from his home with men, supplies, and determination to overtake Jacob and either compel him to return to that servitude that had so profited

Laban, or to take Jacob's possessions from him. The wily Laban admits that he had power to do Jacob harm. Yet, due to the intervention of the Lord, Laban changed his tune, and simply chided Jacob for his secret departure. Laban claims that he had plans for lavishing farewell blessings upon Jacob that Jacob's abrupt leaving had frustrated. When the Lord is pleased to show his protecting might over His people, even their enemies, who had intended them harm, are compelled to act like their friends who are intent upon blessing them.

Wednesday, June 28th - Genesis 31: 29

The deceitful Laban has become a straight speaker of truth. He repeats to Jacob the very words that the Lord had used to warn him to leave Jacob unmolested (v.24). By his so speaking, we should perceive that Laban was communicating several significant things to Jacob. Laban was confessing unwittingly not only that he had potential to harm Jacob, but also that he had intended to bring such harm upon Jacob, and would have succeeded in doing so, were it not for the intervention of the Lord. Thus, Jacob was to understand that his escape resulted not from Laban's generosity, but from God's grace and power. Laban's words also convey an implicit rebuke for Jacob. For the man whom Jacob had feared had been subdued by the Lord and compelled to acknowledge it so that the fearfully fleeing patriarch would know that he should not have feared man but God in the matter of how he was to depart from Laban. The Lord had expressly promised Jacob that He would be with him (v.3), and Jacob dishonored the Lord and disgraced himself when he sought his security in a swift surprise departure rather than in the sure Word and power of God. If we would fear our Lord only, then we would have no other fear, and would act not according to our own devices, but rather with trusting obedience to the Word of our God.

Thursday, June 29th - Genesis 31: 30-32

Because of the Lord's warning to Laban, the greedy man did not dare touch Jacob's person or goods. However, because of Rachel's sinful theft of her father's idols, Laban was emboldened to make his gods the issue. Even when we unknowingly have sin within us or within the sphere of our responsibility, it provides a toe-hold in our lives for the wicked and for the accusing devil. Let us, therefore, follow with sincere consistency the example of the psalmist who asks God to search him and to show to him any inward sin (Ps. 139:23,24).

Friday, June 30th - Genesis 31: 30-32

Jacob, in v.31, confesses his sinful fears that had prompted him to rely on his own secrecy rather than upon the strength of his God. He denies, however, that he had sinned as Laban charged him with stealing his gods. Jacob strengthens his denial by his inviting Laban to make a thorough search among his party, declaring that any possessions of Laban's discovered thereby would be restored to him, while the one found in possession of Laban's goods would have his life taken from him. Jacob's sense of innocence filled him with such boldness. However, his boldness in fact issued from his ignorance, not his

innocence. How differently he would have responded to Laban's accusations had he known of Rachel's theft. There are more sinful complications to our lives than we know, and we do well ever to suspect ourselves and cast ourselves upon our Lord's mercy and grace, rather than stridently to assume that we are as good as we may feel we are.

Saturday, July 1st - Genesis 31: 33-35

Jacob actually was guilty of having amongst his possessions the idols of Laban. But Laban was unable to prove Jacob's guilt because his thorough search had failed to discover the idols. Thus, the true guilt of Jacob went undetected. This was so due to Rachel's cunning covering of the idols. We, too, are guilty of all of Satan's accusations against us, and, even more importantly, of all of the charges of God's holy Law against us. Yet, our guilt goes undetected by Satan and by God, not because it is covered from their view, but rather because it has been cleansed from our persons by the justifying death of Christ. Accordingly, our holy confidence is infinitely more well-founded than was Jacob's in this matter of the hidden idols.

Sunday, July 2nd - Genesis 31: 33-35

Laban was in sin by his possession of these idols. It was Laban's sin that made him greedy to exploit Jacob and profit from his son-in-law's labors. It was sin that set Laban in pursuit of Jacob. It was sin that prompted Laban, after he had been subdued by the Lord, to charge Jacob and demand of him the restoration of his idols. It was sin that made Laban, the deceiver, to be stupidly deceived by his own daughter, and thus rendered incapable of proving Jacob's guilt and recovering the sought-for idols. Sin filled Laban with unholy anger and bitter disappointment. Meanwhile, his idols, that lay covered by a woman, were mutely incapable of disclosing their whereabouts, and lifelessly unable to help, protect, or provide for Laban. Those idols were unlike Jacob's God, whose Word and power protected Jacob from harm. Sin makes us stupid, and idols are useless helpers and deliverers.

Monday, July 3rd - Genesis 31: 36-42

In these verses, Jacob extensively shows his vindication. With righteous indignation he charges Laban to convict him of sin (v.36). He invites Laban to produce convicting evidence gathered in his search (v.37). He declares his integrity and faithfulness throughout his twenty years of service to Laban (vv.38-41a). He charges Laban with repeated sinful scheming and defrauding dealings (v.41b). Yet, he concludes by rightly maintaining that it was neither his industry nor integrity that preserved him from Laban's injurious treatment, but rather it was the saving grace and sovereign authority of his God that had shielded, prospered, and vindicated him (v.42). Here is an Old Testament type of the triumphant security we have in Christ of which Paul exultingly writes in Rom. 8:31-39. Jacob's vindication before the petty charges of his father-in-law but dimly foreshadows the supreme justification that we have in Christ, and the cosmic vindication that shall be ours before men, angels, and our glorious, heavenly Father on the final day.

Tuesday, July 4th - Genesis 31: 36, 37

Although Jacob's holy boldness here rests more upon his ignorance of Rachel's sinful theft than upon his own actual innocence, still his vindication stands, as the Lord sinlessly used Rachel's sinful prevarication and cunning concealment of her father's idols to frustrate Laban's charges and clear Jacob's person and performance. As Jacob finally and rightly declared in v.42, he was saved by God's gracious vindication, not by his own virtue. We can easily see in Jacob's case (through Scripture informing us of the hidden idols of which he was unaware) that his debt to divine grace was greater than the patriarch himself realized. Can we see that it is similarly true in our own case?

Wednesday, July 5th - Genesis 31: 38-41

In these verses, Jacob declares the main features of the service he had rendered Laban. His service was for a long period (v.38a). For two decades Jacob worked for his uncle with continuous diligence. He was successful and fruitful in his service (v. 38b). Jacob was also honest and self-denying (vv.39,40). The losses he absorbed while the gains he turned over to Laban. He remained at duty's post, rendering industrious service in all weathers. In return for his long-term diligent and profitable competence in Laban's service, he was unappreciated and badly exploited by his uncle (v.41). Despite such treatment, Jacob gained two wives and much livestock through his service. The grace of the Lord vitally working in a man's life makes him faithful and fruitful in all of his service. Even if he is a slave to an ungodly master, he serves for the glory and by the grace of his heavenly Master, knowing that from Him, in due course, he will receive a good and abundantly generous reward (Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:22-25; 1 Pet. 2:18-23).

Thursday, July 6th - Genesis 31: 42

In this verse, Jacob declares the truth that enabled him to prevail as more than a conqueror over all of his adversity. He testifies that God had been for him. The God who had been for Abraham, through all of the trials, troubles, defeats, and triumphs of his life, had been for Jacob throughout all of his 20 years of service and sojourning in Haran. The God who had promised and provided Isaac to Abraham, and whom Isaac was taught to fear his entire life, was for Jacob. With such a gracious, faithful, and almighty God for him, who could prevail against Jacob? If this same God is for us, who can prevail against us?

Friday, July 7th - Genesis 31: 42

Jacob declares that God had been and continued to be for him. In this declaration he not only identifies who this God had demonstrated Himself to be through His gracious dealings with Jacob's father and grandfather, but he also testifies respecting the extent to which God had been for him. Had the Lord not been for Jacob, the son of Isaac admits that Laban surely would have devoured him (Ps. 124:1-5). But God had been for Jacob, and thus the Lord, with omniscient perception and loving regard, saw all of Jacob's affliction and noted well, in view of his faithful and diligent labors, how undeserving he

was of those afflictions administered to him by Laban. Jacob's God mercifully saw all of his efforts, trials, and sorrows, and with covenant love and almighty power preserved him through them all.

Saturday, July 8th - Genesis 31: 38-42

The fact that Jacob knew the Lord was with and for him did not make him presumptuous, lazy, and fruitless. Instead, this wonderful truth encouraged and energized him to perform such long-term and fruitful labors for Laban. When we rightly apprehend the grace of the Lord and His merciful and almighty commitment to us, we should not grow indolent, but rather industrious, knowing that our God is at work not only for us but also in and through us, prompting and empowering us to do His good pleasure.

Sunday, July 9th - Genesis 31: 43, 44

In response to Jacob's manifest vindication and to the testimony that he had been not only preserved but also prospered by God, Laban concedes the matter and proposes that he and his son-in-law effect a covenant. Laban admits that he had been driven by a wrong sense of propriety that he had toward his daughters, their children, and all of Jacob's possessions. Yet, the intervention of the Lord and the testimony of Jacob had sobered him from such driving intoxication. In order to ratify and confirm his repentance, Laban calls for a binding covenant to be effected between himself and Jacob. When we repent, we do well to confirm our repentance by such things as holy resolutions, promises, and even vows. We strengthen the roots of our repentance when we nourish them by such public commitments.

Monday, July 10th - Genesis 31: 45-47

Jacob heartily agrees to enter into this covenant proposed by Laban. He does not make little of Laban's professed repentance, while magnifying his repeated past sins. Rather, he demonstrates his own gracious determination to be reconciled with his erstwhile offending father-in-law, and to assist him in confirming his new repentance. We who have tasted the grace and mercy of our Lord should be eager to extend grace to those asking it of us. We should not be like the unforgiving slave in Jesus' parable (Mt. 18:23ff). We should be ever ready to forgive our brother's sin and sincerely desirous to be reconciled with him.

Tuesday, July 11th - Genesis 31: 45-47

The kinsmen upon whom Jacob calls in v.46 are the same kinsman of Laban in v.23. They had accompanied Laban to assist him in his angry pursuit of Jacob. However, through the intervention of the Lord as well as Jacob's vindication and testimony, they who had been hostile servants of Jacob's enemy were repentant, along with Laban. Accordingly, these men were transformed into ones upon whom Jacob calls as brethren, and they happily serve to carry out his order to erect the memorial heap of stones. Let us

learn from this to cry to our Lord for His reconciling intervention between ourselves and any of our estranged brethren.

Wednesday, July 12th - Genesis 31: 45-47

Jacob, who here erects a pillar, had good experience with setting up a commemorative pillar previously. At Bethel, after his night's vision of the Lord's angels ascending and descending the ladder between heaven and earth, he had set up such a pillar (Gen. 28:18). More recently, the Lord had approvingly acknowledged the true piety within Jacob that had prompted him to erect that pillar (Gen. 31:13). This pattern shows Jacob to be a man committed to solid and lasting devotion to God and to man between whom godly covenants are made. Laban referred to the accompanying memorial heap of stones with a Chaldean word, while Jacob referred to it with a Hebrew word, taken from the language spoken at the time by the covenant people of the Lord. Our deeds and our diction should identify us as a people strongly and particularly devoted to the Lord.

Thursday, July 13th - Genesis 31: 48-50

The witness contained in the substance of these solid, enduring rocks serves as a token of the more enduring faithfulness of the eternal, living God. The solid and enduring rocks also betoken the strong and lasting mutual commitment that Jacob and Laban intended by their making and fulfilling of this covenant. Special notice is given of Laban's binding Jacob by a prohibition against his ever mistreating his wives, who were still Laban's daughters. In fact, it had been Laban, not Jacob, who in the past had mistreated his daughters as well as his son-in-law. Men suspect and fear in others that which is worst and most strongly active in themselves.

Friday, July 14th - Genesis 31: 51, 52

Laban further stipulated that the memorial pillar and stone heap were to serve as firm and lasting testimony to the covenantal agreement between Jacob and his uncle that neither one would pass the monuments in order to harm the other. Again, it is to be noted that Jacob had never done anything to harm, but rather everything to help Laban. On the other hand, Laban had done nothing for more than twenty years but seek to harm Jacob's earthly (but not heavenly) interests. Here we see once more how Laban reads his own abuses into Jacob and seeks to protect himself against these imagined threats that his nephew (now turned son-in-law) supposedly harbored against him. By these terms, Laban would be no more secure from harm that would come through Jacob, because Jacob never threatened such harm. Yet, Jacob would at last be free from the injurious abuses of Laban. The godly have nothing to lose and everything to gain by their entering into godly commitments, especially with former enemies turned friends by the grace of God.

Saturday, July 15th - Genesis 31: 53

Laban sealed himself to the provisions of this covenant by his swearing by the God of Abraham and his fathers. Jacob, however, *swore by the fear* of his father Isaac. The

difference is this: whereas Abraham's fathers and even Abraham himself knew the one true God, they also had known, in Ur of the Chaldeans, false gods at least for part of their lives. Isaac, however, from his birth had only known and served the Lord. Thus, where Laban seeks to solemnize his oath by an appeal, at least to a degree, to antiquity and natural generation, Jacob appeals only to the one true and living God, who had entered into covenant with Abraham, and had promised and provided Isaac to him. This God alone, Jacob rightly declares, is to be revered and served.

Sunday, July 16th - Genesis 31: 54, 55

Laban's heated pursuit of Jacob concluded with his happy reconciliation with and affectionate departure from his son-in-law. Laban set out after Jacob determined at least to take people and possessions from him, if not force him to return to his servitude in Haran. Yet, Laban departed from Jacob having shared a peace offering with him, and giving kisses and blessings to Jacob, his wives, and his children. The intervening conviction of the Lord and the godly and gracious character of Jacob wrought this great change. May the Lord work in similar fashion for all who are His chosen people and faith-filled servants in our day.

Monday, July 17th - Genesis 31: 53-55

This chapter began with Laban and his sons serving as threatening prods to drive Jacob from Haran to Canaan. Though Jacob left with weak faith, he grew stronger and, when confronted by Laban who had pursued him, Jacob took his firm stand on the promises and Person of his God. Jacob not only covered territory in his journey, but he also made great progress in his practical grasp of theology. He had entered Haran alone, having only the promises of the Lord. He left Haran blessedly burdened with a large family and many possessions. He entered Haran to begin a course of his being deceived and exploited by his uncle, only to leave Haran initially pursued hotly by Laban, but finally enjoying holy and strongly witnessed peace with him. Truly the Lord caused all of these unlikely things that were wrought against Jacob by Laban to work only for Jacob's good. The same is true of all of Jacob's spiritual descendants (Rom. 8:28). May our Lord open our eyes to see it and our mouths to thank Him that it is so.

Tuesday, July 18th - Genesis 32: 1, 2

Jacob has escaped potential death at the hands of Laban, his uncle, but now he is returning to Canaan to face probable death at the hands of Esau, his brother. Yet, as Jacob did not have to face Laban alone, but had the Lord with him to intervene for him (Gen. 31:24,42), so he learns that he is not returning to Canaan alone, but rather in company of the holy and majestic angels of the Lord. It is always true of every believer that greater are those with us than are those with our foes.

Wednesday, July 19th - Genesis 32: 1, 2

It is notable that Jacob received fortification from these angels as he *went on his way*. That way had been determined by the Lord (Gen. 31: 3), yet Jacob was no Jonah, seeking to evade it, but rather adopted the way of his God as his own way. It is when we are in the path of godly duty that we shall be most aware of the riches of godly resources provided for us by our Lord.

Thursday, July 20th - Genesis 32: 1, 2

While Jacob was on his way, the angels met him, thus confirming him in the way of the Lord. No words of comfort are delivered by the angels—the mere sight of them is sufficient to fortify Jacob with the truth that these glorious servants of God are with him to minister to him (Heb. 1:14). Accordingly, Jacob named the place a Hebrew word meaning *double camps* or *double companies*. Such designation of the angels implies that they are a host camping with Jacob as he camps along the way of his return to Canaan.

Friday, July 21st - Genesis 32: 1, 3

This was the second vision Jacob had received of the angels of the Lord. He at first beheld them at Bethel, ascending and descending the ladder between heaven and earth. There the Lord had declared to Jacob that He would keep him wherever he went, and that He would bring him back to Canaan (Gen. 28:15). This second glimpse of the angels is sufficient to remind Jacob of that truth and to fortify him accordingly. The man who grows in the faith, grace, and knowledge of the Lord, will ever more clearly apprehend and be on increasingly familiar terms with the Lord and His holy angels.

Saturday, July 22nd - Genesis 32: 3-5

From seeing the angels Jacob carries on to seek his brother. We are told that Esau had settled in Seir, which lay south and east of Canaan and so was not directly in Jacob's way back to Canaan. Jacob knew this and did not avoid encountering Esau. There are at least two obvious reasons for this apparent detour. First, Esau lived close enough to attack Jacob in Canaan, and so by faith Jacob turned to confront his fears. Yet, on a higher level, Jacob was taking initiative to be reconciled with his brother whom he had offended. Thus, this apparent detour from the Lord's way that Jacob had adopted and the angels had helped confirm is really no detour from God's way at all. Jacob is following the way Jesus centuries later commanded when he told us that if we are on our way to worship and recall that our brother has something against us, we should be reconciled to our brother before we return to worship God (Mt. 5:23,24). The straight and narrow way of the Lord is full of apparent detours that are really essential parts of that way.

Sunday, July 23rd - Genesis 32: 3-5

Jacob sends to Esau a humble greeting, referring to Esau as *lord* and to himself as *servant*. Humility is one of the strongest shields to protect the believer from harm. It keeps a soul prostrated so that he need fear no fall, and it disarms mighty opponents. Nor is this a mere groveling ploy used by Jacob to assuage his brother. For Jacob had truly

become humble and gracious through the Lord's dealings with him, and therein lay the true greatness of this man who became strong in his weakness. As David declared: *Thy gentleness makes me great* (Ps. 18:35), and as Solomon testified: *A gentle answer turns away wrath* (Prov. 15:1), so Jacob's humility gave him a towering moral advantage over Esau, while also sweetly disarming him. Humility is a virtue ever, only, and always commended to us in Scripture. May it more vitally reside in our hearts and be practiced in our lives.

Monday, July 24th - Genesis 32: 3-5

While Jacob's servants were instructed to convey a humble greeting to Esau, they were also instructed to make a proclamation of Jacob's great prosperity. This announcement of Jacob's wealth is no contradiction of but rather a complement to his humility. For it is the meek who inherit the earth. Furthermore, Jacob no doubt sought to testify to his brother Esau that he was no longer a scheming, grasping threat to him, but was now transformed into a man full of the grace and goods of the Lord, so that he would be able generously to share with his brother, rather than take from him as he had done previously. The Lord's grace makes us to be full of riches, so that we are not snatchers from men, but self-sufficient sharers of the abundant blessings of our God (Phil. 4:11-13).

Tuesday, July 25th – Genesis 32: 6

This verse records the abrupt response that Esau made to Jacob's humble and gracious words of greeting. Esau sends no word of welcome back to his younger brother, but rather responds with impressive action. As Laban had pursued Jacob with his kinsman, intent on doing him harm (Gen. 31:23,29), so now Esau gathered 400 men to be at his service when he met his returning brother. What did this action signify? Was Esau intent upon killing Jacob as he had previously declared that he would do (Gen. 27:41)? We cannot tell, nor could Jacob tell at this point, with what intention Esau came to meet the man who had taken his birthright and blessing. The Lord surely ordained this ambiguity further to test and strengthen Jacob's faith. Let us determine always to keep in mind that whatever men may intend for us, our heavenly Father intends only our good, and will cause all things to work to that end.

Wednesday, July 26th - Genesis 32: 7, 8

Jacob responded to the news of Esau's approach by fearing and preparing for the worst. Scripture plainly tells us that Jacob feared greatly and was in distress. He no doubt believed that Esau was coming with an army to kill him and his family and destroy his livestock and servants. Therefore, Jacob decided to divide his family, servants, and livestock into two companies with the hope that some of his family and fortune would survive Esau's attack. The best man can do, when he takes counsel of his fears and relies on the arm of flesh, is to try to reduce his losses in this ever-challenging world. The counsel of faith is much more certain than the counsel of our fears.

Thursday, July 27th - Genesis 32: 9-12

Jacob may have initially been seized with fears, but in these verses we find his faith rising to a victorious height. With his resorting to prayer, he shows how he discarded his reliance upon the pitiful arm of flesh in favor of his trusting in the mercy and power of his Almighty God. Consequently, Jacob was soon to discover the wondrous power of prayer, and how a man who relies on the Lord will ever be safe and never be disappointed (1 Pet. 2:6).

Friday, July 28th - Genesis 32: 9

Jacob begins his prayer by addressing his God in a specific way. He does not call upon the God of power or justice, but rather upon the God of covenant mercy. It is not that Jacob was unaware of the Lord's power and holy justice, but rather he recognized that the only standing he had before this God was that of a sinner in crying need of saving divine mercy. Jacob therefore called upon the God of Abraham, the One who had graciously called Jacob's grandfather from Ur and preserved him through his travels to and sojourning in Canaan and in Egypt. This God graciously enabled Abraham to have a son when his own body was as good as dead (Rom. 4:19). This God had given Isaac to Abraham, and had preserved both father and son even when they sinfully lied to save themselves, rather than trust in their Lord. Now the brother whom Jacob had offended was approaching with a host of men. Jacob could not stand upon claims of justice; nor did he have the power to withstand Esau's feared assault. Jacob needed an almighty hand moving on his behalf due to divine compassion and covenant mercy. We do well to know how to address the God upon whom we call to meet our greatest needs.

Saturday, July 29th - Genesis 32: 9

Jacob addresses not only the person of his God, but also makes mention of the divine promise given to him that the Lord would prosper him when he returned to the Promised Land and to the relatives whom he had offended. Jacob had already greatly prospered in Haran. His return to Canaan was fraught with mortal danger for him as he put himself, by God's Word, in proximity to his brother who had determined to kill him and was approaching with all appearance to do just that. Yet, Jacob, while regarding these threatening circumstances, demonstrates his higher regard for the promise and power of the Lord. With such regard he would be more than a conqueror over whatever came upon him, whether death or life, peril or sword (Rom. 8:35-39). Such is the character of the true prospering that the Lord bestows upon His people.

Sunday, July 30th - Genesis 32: 10

In this verse, Jacob expresses his recognition and grateful remembrance of the great and numerous mercies he had received from the Lord. He also acknowledges his utter unworthiness to receive the least of the mercies of God. Along with his unworthiness, he confesses his inability to save himself. He had fled from his home having no companionship and no possessions except his staff. His sin had propelled him into that

wretched flight. While he was at his worst, the Lord came to him and began lavishing upon him manifold divine blessings issuing from His divine love. Finally, Jacob testifies that all of his great prosperity resulted from the Lord's hand moving faithfully and more than fully to provide what He had promised to Jacob. We do well in our prayers to recall these facets of our relationship with our God and not come to our Lord as though we were strangers to his love and asking His merciful help for the first time (Ps. 103:1-5).

Monday, July 31st - Genesis 32: 11

We should note how specific Jacob is in his supplication to his gracious Lord. He asks for deliverance from the hand (meaning from the power) of his brother, whom he designates by name as well as by natural relation. This supplication does not indicate that Jacob conceives of his God as being ignorant of and therefore needing enlightening with respect to the issue at hand. Rather, it indicates Jacob's great care to make his petition quite clear and specific. Vague and indefinite supplications offered to God rarely, if ever, are heard, because they indicate a casual disrespect for the Lord and His intimate interest in all details of our lives.

Tuesday, August 1st - Genesis 32: 11

Jacob makes an honest confession to the Lord when he admits frankly that he was in fear of Esau. The fear had a reasonable basis, for he had wronged his brother and Esau had consequently threatened to kill Jacob (Gen. 27:41). Time had not necessarily changed Esau's murderous determination, and his approach with so many men could have indicated his bringing along plenty of help to get the killing done. Moreover, the consequences of Jacob's sins were now potentially multiplied, as he had wives and children who were vulnerable to Esau's deadly ire due to their relation to Jacob. The fearful and far-reaching consequences of our sins are far greater than we could ever face, let alone rectify. We must cry to our gracious God regarding such things, and trustingly rely on His answers to secure us and ours.

Wednesday, August 2nd - Genesis 32: 12

Jacob bases his supplication on a clear divine promise. By this we should understand that Jacob is putting no reliance upon Esau's good intention, nor upon his own cunning ability that he had used so often in the past. Rather, Jacob was relying entirely upon the providing power of the Lord, whose provision is always given in accordance with His great and precious promises.

Thursday, August 3rd - Genesis 32: 11, 12

We may draw a vital lesson about prayer when we consider the several aspects of Jacob's supplication in light of the answer to his prayer that unfolds in Genesis 33:4ff. By the loving way that Esau embraces his brother, Jacob, we may misjudge the necessity of Jacob's prayer. Is it likely that Esau with miraculous quickness radically changed his disposition toward his brother while he and his band of men were on their way to kill

Jacob? Such a change, of course, is possible. We saw something akin to it in Laban's pursuit of Jacob, where the Lord's intervention subdued Laban (Gen. 31:22ff). Yet, it seems more likely in the case of Esau that his change from hating Jacob to warmly welcoming him was a matter of gradual transformation over the course of years. If so, this does not mean that Jacob's prayer was superfluous, for the Lord plainly tells us that before we ask, He knows our needs (Mt. 6:8). However, the Lord also plainly tells us that we should pray (Mt. 6:9-13). Our Lord moves in answer to our prayers, even before we make those prayers, and not in response to His omniscient knowing of our needs. We have not because we ask not; we have not because we ask not specifically enough; and we have not because we ask not due to our reckoning that our Lord cannot answer if we cry out to Him at a time we wrongly judge to be too late.

Friday, August 4th - Genesis 32: 13

This verse notes that a dark night followed Jacob's prayer. Yet, the Lord does some of His best work for His servants in the valley of the shadow of death. Jacob's only light in his darkened circumstances was the covenant promise of the Lord. Jacob did not see the multitude of descendants he prayerfully acknowledged in the divine promise (v.12). What he saw was the mere seed of such a multitude, and even they were covered by the darkness not only of that night, but also of Esau's apparent threat. Yet Jacob's prayer would lead to his own further preparation, and to his prevailing wrestling with the Lord, whereby this praying and prevailing man would have no need to fear the infinitely weaker strivings of men.

Saturday, August 5th - Genesis 32: 13-15

Jacob's prayer is followed by his preparation of a present for Esau. Faith in and prayer to the Lord do not exclude, but include, the right use of legitimate means. As wise Solomon testifies: *A man's gift makes room for him...* (Prov. 18:16). Thus, Jacob prays for peaceful security from Esau and according to his prayers he prepares an offering of peace and friendship to the brother he had offended. We must learn ever to walk and act in accordance with and not in negligence of or contrary to our prayers.

Sunday, August 6th - Genesis 32: 16-18

These verses describe how Jacob wisely arranged his gift for Esau. The gift was not merely offered, but was conveyed with careful and considerate thought, so that successive waves of rich presents would make clear to Esau the good and peaceful intention of his brother, Jacob. How we offer is no less critical than what we offer, whether the offering be to man or to God.

Monday, August 7th - Genesis 32: 19, 20

These verses indicate the intention Jacob had in his conveying this gift of livestock to Esau. He was not offering a bribe or tribute to his brother, but rather a gracious and generous gift. Such giving should characterize the dealings of all the spiritual

descendants of Jacob and redeemed children of God. A stingy or cheap Christian is an anomaly. We who have received the lavish and gracious giving of our heavenly Father should manifest our gratitude and likeness to Him by our gracious generosity toward others.

Tuesday, August 8th - Genesis 32: 19, 20

It was good and right that Jacob, who had been so richly blessed by his heavenly Father, should determine richly to bless his brother. The gift Jacob was offering should have appeased Esau—whether or not it actually would appease him, it was certainly more than sufficient to do so. But when Jacob uses the word, *perhaps*, in connection with the appeasing power of his gift, he acknowledges that while he had done everything, so far as it depended upon him, to be at peace with his brother (Rom. 12:18), his reliance for security was not upon his gift but rather upon his God, whose wise and holy purposes can use even the evil men intend toward us for our good (Gen. 50:20).

Wednesday, August 9th - Genesis 32: 21

Jacob orders it so that the gift precedes the giver. That is certainly the proper way for a sinner to appease one whom he has offended. We cannot come to one against whom we have sinned with a bare confession and request for forgiveness. We must bring fruits of our repentance to facilitate our reconciliation. It is certainly vital that the gift of God to us in Christ must precede us when we come to God, lest we encounter the consuming wrath of the Lord without a prevailing Advocate to stand for us.

Thursday, August 10th - Genesis 32: 22, 23

The people belonging to Jacob are sent by the patriarch across the Jabbok, which is a branch of the Jordan River. They follow the waves of gifts that Jacob had already sent ahead to Esau. Jacob, in fact, sent all he had across the Jabbok, while he remained alone behind those who crossed. In this way, Jacob reduced himself to solitude. Fellowship is a blessed and essential part of the Christian life, but no less essential are times of solitude and personal devotion to the Lord. This time of solitude that Jacob has wisely arranged for himself will prove to be of critical significance for himself and for all of his descendants.

Friday, August 11th - Genesis 32: 24

In his time of solitude on this critical night, Jacob finds that he is not alone. The brother whom he feared was not the only impediment to his entrance of Canaan. A man appears to Jacob as an opponent against whom he is obliged to wrestle. We are given no introduction to or explanation of this man, his purpose, and how his conflict with Jacob was initiated. The character of the conflict, as well as the identity and purpose of the man engaging Jacob all become clear in the fight. What is most clear at this point is that Jacob's solitude was not a serene time, as perhaps he had hoped it would be. Instead, he

is obliged to strive to enter into the rest for which he longed in Canaan. So must we learn to strive to enter into the Lord's rest (Heb. 4:11).

Saturday, August 12th - Genesis 32: 24-26

With few words we are told of a long contest between Jacob and his wrestling opponent. The match lasted all night. Neither man would surrender; neither one could prevail against the other. Are we to understand that this was a spiritual or a physical contest? The dislocated hip indicates a physical fight, while the blessing Jacob ultimately obtains speaks of a spiritual dimension. Thus, we should understand that Jacob was engaged in this match with all of his being and faculties. Our Lord at times ordains that we be tested body and soul for His glory and our blessing.

Sunday, August 13th - Genesis 32: 24-26

We do not know how this mysterious wrestling began. Nor are we told at first what the stakes of the match are. What we are told is that Jacob fought this man all night and would not be overcome by him or let him escape. It appears that in the course of his wrestling, however, Jacob came to perceive that the man was the angel of the Lord. That is why Jacob held onto the Lord with adamant determination, for he rightly perceived that the Lord was the only One who could bless him, and he would not lose that blessing for anything.

Monday, August 14th - Genesis 32: 24-26

We do not know why the angel of the Lord pleaded with Jacob to let him go at dawn. What does the rising of the sun have to do with the necessity of this wrestler being let go? In answer to this we, at this point, should understand that the reference to dawn was merely a time marker, signaling to Jacob and to us that the wrestling had gone on all night. Prior to this dawn, the angel had disabled Jacob by dislocating his hip. Yet, Jacob held on and reduced the angel to requesting his release. It is a strange and marvelous testimony to the persevering power of faith that enabled Jacob in his wrestling through the Lord's apparent opposition in order to receive the divine blessing.

Tuesday, August 15th - Genesis 32: 24-26

Through his long wrestling match with this mysterious man, Jacob came to recognize his opponent as the source of supreme blessing, namely, the Lord. Jacob confesses this in v.30, while Hosea mentions it in his prophecy as well (Hos. 12:2-5). Joshua also encountered the Lord in similar human form (Josh. 5:13-6:2). It is not so much the human likeness that is significant, however, but rather that in these instances the Lord appeared initially as an opponent. Though He did not appear to Job as a man, the Lord did appear to be that righteous man's enemy for a time, and Job, too, held fast to the Lord, declaring that though God should slay him, yet would he trust Him (Job 13:15). The Canaanite woman encountered the Lord in the person of the God/Man, Jesus Christ (Mt. 15:21-28), and she also was engaged in a wrestling match with the Lord who appeared as her

opponent. All of these biblical characters wrestled with God and prevailed by faith and received great blessing. These things are written to prepare us to expect and engage in divine wrestlings through which we, too, by faith shall emerge as more than conquerors.

Wednesday, August 16th - Genesis 32: 24-26

Jacob was wrestling with Almighty God, for whom he was absolutely no match. The Lord could have thrown Jacob off as a toy or consumed him with the fire of His glory. Yet, we read that the Lord could not prevail against Jacob. This was so not because God lacked power to overcome the man who had feared Esau. The mere touch that dislocated Jacob's hip was a taste of the divine power. Yet, God had graciously equipped Jacob with faith by which the patriarch prevailed with the Lord. If we are spiritual descendants of Jacob, we, too, possess such prevailing faith. May we not neglect this potent gift, but exercise it for God's glory and our own blessing.

Thursday, August 17th - Genesis 32: 26-28

Jacob wrestled perseveringly and prevailingly, even after he had been badly wounded. With a determination that could not be vanquished he held onto the angel of the Lord until he received His blessing. The character of the blessing was that Jacob received a new name. The giving of that name was a demonstration of divine authority over Jacob, indicating that he did not prevail with God in his own strength, but rather by the Lord's graciously having given him the gift of faith. Put another way, God graciously allowed Himself to be prevailed upon to give a blessing to Jacob. From Jacob, a name that meant *supplanter*, God changed the name to Israel, a name that means *he who strives with God*. The difference is that a supplanter prevails by cheating, while one who strives prevails justly. We who are in Christ are the true Israel of God (Gal. 6:16), who is just and the justifier of those who have faith. As such we are ones who strive with our God's darker providence—His apparent opposition to us, His wounding us, His seeming forsaking of us—and we prevail as our faith vitally grasps the Lord's great and precious promises (1 Pet. 1:5; 2 Pet. 1:4) fairly to apply them to ourselves.

Friday, August 18th - Genesis 32: 29

Jacob had his name changed to Israel. This emboldened him to ask the name of the angel of the Lord. His request was denied as an indication of the truth that the Lord ever is to His creatures ultimately incomprehensible. This is not to say that the Lord does not reveal Himself truly and savingly to His people. It is, however, to say that the Lord has not revealed Himself exhaustively to us. He has many more things about Himself to disclose to us, but we cannot bear them now.

Saturday, August 19th - Genesis 32: 29, 30

Jacob could not receive the Lord's exhaustive revelation of Himself, but he knew that he had wrestled with the living God of heaven and earth. Accordingly, he named the place Peniel, meaning *face of God*, for he saw God in the face of the man with whom he had

wrestled. He rightly was amazed that he was not consumed by the glory of the Lord. Yet, the Lord had clothed His majesty in the likeness of human flesh, as a prelude to the incarnation of the Son of God in the likeness of sinful flesh, which He assumed not to condemn sinners, but to save and exalt them to reign with Him in glory forever (Rev. 22:5).

Sunday, August 20th - Genesis 32: 31, 32

A new day dawned upon a man with a new name and a renewed nature. Jacob, now Israel, crossed the river gratefully burdened with the rich blessing of God. He who had wrestled and prevailed with God need never again fear any man. Yet, Jacob's blessing came to him with wounding. He limped ever thereafter, and even his natural descendants commemorated the divine dislocating of his hip. With every step he would take for the rest of his days, Jacob would be reminded of the blessed touch of the angel of the Lord that ruined his standing and walking in this world but had assured him of his standing in the glorious world to come.

Monday, August 21st - Genesis 33: 1-3

Jacob had prevailed with God. What did his victory bring him? He was blessed with a new name indicating his sure standing with the Lord. He also would find himself well equipped by God's grace and enabling power to prevail with men. We see this unfolding as Jacob and Esau finally meet. Jacob sees Esau approaching with his 400 men. Yet, now Jacob, who sees Esau through eyes that have seen God, no longer fears his brother. Jacob still arranges his family prudently, shielding his most precious wife and child with those who were less precious to him. But Jacob himself passed on ahead of them all, and bowed a perfect number of times out of respect for Esau, being mindless of the physical vulnerability in which such a prostrate posture put him. The man who is truly at peace with God enjoys peace with all men, even if he does find himself in face of his enemies (Ps. 23:5).

Tuesday, August 22nd - Genesis 33: 3, 4

These verses record the touching reunion of these twin brothers who had been estranged by distance and, more significantly, by their mutual sin, for more than 20 years. Jacob humbly bows seven times, while Esau discarded the dignity of his advanced adulthood and ran like a youth to embrace and kiss his brother. Both men wept in repentance over past wrongs and in joy over their reconciliation. This is all the Lord's doing, as He veritably resurrected a dead relationship between two brothers. Our Lord did so with that relationship then, and he can do so with our poor relationships now.

Wednesday, August 23rd - Genesis 33: 4

Jacob had prayed to be delivered from Esau's hand (Gen. 32:11). The answer to that prayer came in the form of Jacob delivering himself into the embracing arms of his brother, Esau. This was an answer above what Jacob had asked or thought, as all answers

to our prayers exceed our asking or expecting. The Lord had wrought a change in Esau's heart, so that his hands were no longer a threat to Jacob, but were rather enfolding instruments of love to him.

Thursday, August 24th - Genesis 33: 5

In this verse, the family of Jacob is introduced to Esau. The older brother sees and inquires about the many people accompanying his younger brother. Esau inquires with surprise and delight, but without a trace of the menace that Jacob feared and accordingly had prompted him to divide his family in a desperate attempt to save some from a dreaded slaughter by Esau's hand. Now Jacob realizes that his wives and children are as safe with Esau as he himself had been when enwrapped in his loving arms. Jacob rightly responds to Esau's question by identifying his children as gracious gifts from God, and as such gifts, they had all along been as safe in God's care as Jacob sees them to be now before a loving Esau. The gifts and callings of our God are irrevocably conveyed to us, and so are precious in themselves and preserved by the Almighty hand that gave them.

Friday, August 25th – Genesis 33: 6, 7

Jacob had arranged his wives and children in order to preserve them from the attack he feared from Esau (Gen. 32:7,8). Those most precious to Jacob were placed behind all others (Gen. 33:1,2). Now that a joyful reconciliation had taken place between these brothers, Jacob presents his family to Esau in the same order they had been in as preservation from him. Jacob's most beloved wife, Rachel, and her son, Joseph, who had been placed last in the file to save them from Esau, are now presented as the best wine that Jacob saved as the last for Esau. The peace that God graciously establishes between men is a beautiful fruit of that justifying peace that He establishes between Himself and men. Even the common grace which Esau had as his only taste of divine grace transformed him from a hunting brute to an honored brother. When grace prevails, we do not shield our best from others, but seek to share our best with them.

Saturday, August 26th - Genesis 33: 33: 8, 9

Esau's attention now shifts from the persons in Jacob's family to the presents that Jacob had sent in waves to him. By God's common grace, Esau had prospered, and therefore he graciously tells Jacob to keep his gifts. Nor were those gifts necessary in order for Jacob to procure Esau's favor. So wonderfully had the Lord been working to shower temporal blessing upon Esau—giving him the only reward he sought—that Esau's heart could not have been more favorable and generously inclined toward Jacob. When a man's ways please the Lord, as Jacob's way of faithful obedience had done, He makes even that man's enemies to be at sincere and pleasant peace with him. Thus, we see how the Lord had answered Jacob's prayer (Gen. 32: 9-12) far above what he had asked or thought.

Sunday, August 27th - Genesis 33: 10, 11

Esau had shown nothing but sincere lovingkindness and a gracious and generous consideration to Jacob. The favor Jacob so earnestly sought from Esau would not cost Jacob to acquire, but, by the Lord's doing, was freely and lavishly given by Esau to his brother. Yet, Esau was a profane man, whose soul the Lord hated, notwithstanding the Lord's lavishing upon Esau His common grace. Now, as Jacob insists and persists in urging his gifts upon Esau, we perceive the superior value of saving grace, which Jacob possessed. Jacob was intent upon honoring his brother as a sweet fruit of his reverence for God. While Esau boasted: *I have plenty* (v.9), Jacob testifies to his having received God's grace. Indeed, so focused was Jacob upon the Lord, that he sees the lifted countenance of God in the favorable face of Esau. Saving grace makes a man to be a cheerful giver to his God and to his fellow man. A cheap, stingy Christian is a contradiction in being and doing.

Monday, August 28th - Genesis 33: 10, 11

At Jacob's urging, Esau finally accepts his brother's gifts. The reason Esau initially declined the offered gifts was because as he said in v.9: *I have plenty*. Jacob also claims to have plenty in v.11. However, the Hebrew word used in v.11 is literally *all*. Whatever prosperity the worldly man may gather in his life, the godly man possesses all things through his inheritance in Christ (1 Cor. 3:21,22). Our knowing this is the secret of our contentment in all circumstances (Phil. 4:11-13), and the treasury from which we give to others cheerfully and bountifully.

Tuesday, August 29th - Genesis 33: 12

Esau had not come to meet Jacob in order to drive him out of the land of the living, as Jacob had feared, but rather to take his brother to his home. Somewhere over the years Esau's attitude toward Jacob had changed from one of warfare (Gen. 27:41), to one of welcome. Esau, having met and been joyfully reconciled with his brother, was desirous of traveling with him and dwelling with him. This is the work of the Lord and it is marvelous and should encourage us to pray for and expect wonderful reconciliations in our own strained or severed family relationships.

Wednesday, August 30th - Genesis 33: 12-14

Esau was equipped to travel quickly with his 400 men. However, Jacob was blessedly burdened with children and flocks and herds that required a slower pace. While Jacob was rightly filled with joyful gratitude at this reunion with his brother, he did not forget his primary loves and responsibilities. Therefore, with humble respect for Esau, he requests permission to follow his brother while tending to the needs of his family and estate. Jacob would not hold Esau back, nor would he drive his little ones harshly or leave them to make their own way. Jacob rightly loved and cared for his immediate family and did not let his enthusiasm for his wider family injure them. Too many fathers in our day allow their careers, their hobbies, their friends, or their wider families to take priority over their wives, in whom they should rejoice above all others (Prov. 5:18), and over their children, who are their blessed gifts from the Lord (Ps. 127:3-5).

Thursday, August 31st - Genesis 33: 15, 16

Once again we find an exchange between common and special grace taking place between Esau and Jacob. With gracious care and consideration, Esau agrees to let Jacob follow him to Seir, pacing himself according to the capacity of his little ones. Yet, Esau also shows concern for his brother and his family, as they were traveling without armed protectors. Therefore, Esau offers Jacob an escort from his 400 men. Jacob, however, thinks, feels, speaks, and acts from the springs of saving grace and confident reliance upon the Lord. Accordingly, he declares that he has no need for such an escort. He who is humble does not need the pomp of a retinue; he who trusts in the arm of Almighty God does not need the arms of frail men to guard him.

Friday, September 1st - Genesis 33: 15, 16

Jacob took care not to give offense to Esau when he declined the offered escort. All that Jacob asked to receive from Esau was his favor, and that Esau had given and continued to give to Jacob. It was the favor of Esau, not his forces, and certainly not his fortune that Jacob desired. This was so because Jacob had received the blessed favor of the Lord of heaven, who had promised to be with him and bless him (Gen. 31:3). He who has the promise of God needs not the provision of man, although it should be with respectful appreciation for the offer that he acknowledges his lack of need for the latter (Phil. 4:10-13).

Saturday, September 2nd - Genesis 33: 17

This verse informs us that Jacob stopped and apparently sojourned in Succoth on his way to Seir. Succoth was on the east side of the Jordan River, about 20 miles east of Shechem and about 100 miles north of Seir. It is unclear what significance there was to Jacob's stopping at this place. It appears that his sojourn was significant enough to have founded a place named after his having dwelt there for a time in booths (the Hebrew word, *Succoth*, means *booths*). Wherever the righteous stay, however briefly, becomes significant because of their having been there. Also, we note how Jacob sojourned, namely, in booths. He manifests his humility when he declined to hurry to Esau's houses and stayed, instead, in booths so that his children and livestock might rest.

Sunday, September 3rd - Genesis 33: 18

After more than 20 years from the time of his departure from Canaan, Jacob returned to the Promised Land. He did not settle in or near Beersheba, where his father and mother had their home in their latter years (Gen. 23:23), and from where he had fled from Esau (Gen. 28:10). Instead Jacob settled in Shechem, located in central Canaan. It was at Shechem that the Lord first revealed to Abraham that he was in the midst of the Promised Land (Gen. 12:6,7). It was a mark of Jacob's godly obedience that when the Lord told him to return to the land of his fathers (Gen. 31:3), he settled in the very midst of the land, and not in the southern extremity where his parents lived and to where he had previously hoped to return (Gen. 28: 20,21). In our walk by faith, we should aim to stay

well within the boundaries of our Lord's revealed will, and not drift or perversely wander to the verge of disobedience.

Monday, September 4th - Genesis 33: 19

Although the Lord had given Jacob title to all the land of Canaan, the patriarch purchased a part of the land from Hamor, Shechem's father. The deed whereby believers inherit the earth is recorded in heaven. While we are on pilgrimage in this life, we must respect and responsibly use the provisional modes of procuring and legally holding property that are recognized among men. That is why Paul teaches us to respect what is right in the sight of all men (Rom. 12:17), even through we may not agree with some of the social and economic systems in which we must have dealings. Jesus paid the tax money at Capernaum, even though as a son of Israel and the Son of God He was exempt from such payment (Mt. 17:24-27). Many things the Christian should do in this life, he does not from obligation, but so that he will not give offense to others.

Tuesday, September 5th - Genesis 33: 19

Although Jacob was buying land in the heart of Canaan in obedience to divine guidance (Gen. 31:3), the mention of Shechem in this verse sounds a note of warning that in this life there are thorns amidst all roses. In Chapter 34 we shall learn what grief Shechem brought upon Jacob and his children. Even in Shechem, therefore, Jacob dwelt in tents, for he was looking for and was prodded toward the city whose architect and builder is God (Heb. 11:9,10,16).

Wednesday, September 6th - Genesis 33: 20

Jacob built an altar on the property he bought in Shechem. By his doing this, he followed the holy example of his fathers: Noah (Gen. 8:20); Abraham (Gen. 12:7; 13:18; 26:25); and Isaac (Gen. 26:25). Like them, he erected this altar in grateful recognition of the Lord's mercies to him. Upon that altar, he offered sacrifices that pointed to the Lord's supreme mercy in Christ, through whom he and we are redeemed from all sin, delivered from all enemies, led by infallible wisdom, loved with everlasting love, and given access by faith to the throne of God's grace and ushered ultimately into the glory of the Lord. We do well to follow Jacob's example, not by our building altars—for since Christ's sacrifice there should be no altars—but by our presenting ourselves to the Lord gratefully as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1,2).

Thursday, September 7th - Genesis 33: 20

The altar Jacob erects is a tangible expression of the fulfillment of his vow that the Lord would be his personal God if the Lord would bring him safely back to Canaan (Gen. 28:20-22). The name Jacob gave to the altar is: *God is the God of Israel*. The God of Abraham and Isaac had proven Himself to be Jacob's own God, by His preservation, guidance, protection, and prospering of Jacob over the course of more than 20 years. By the grace, wisdom, love and power of this God, Jacob's course and character had been

blessedly changed. The altar and its name would also serve as a testimony to Jacob's descendants that they, too, should trust and obey the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel.

Friday, September 8th - Genesis 34: 1, 2

Jacob is home from Haran, with wives and children and land and livestock. He has been happily reunited with Esau. He has trusted, obeyed, and worshiped the Lord. Yet even the most faithful sons of God's saving grace must endure many afflictions in this life. Hence, we are told of the rape of Dinah, one of Jacob's daughters, by Shechem, the son of Hamor from whom Jacob had purchased his land (Gen. 33:19). We do well to take very seriously the words of Jesus when He tells us that in the world we shall have tribulation. Yet even amidst such thorns we shall find our peace and joy in Christ (Jn. 16:33), not in pleasing circumstances.

Saturday, September 9th - Genesis 34: 1

In this verse we are given a brief note respecting Dinah's excursion. The Bible is not telling us that Jacob's daughter was minding her own business when she was victimized by Shechem. Rather, we are given words that the wise will take to heart. For example, we are told that Dinah *went out*. This does not mean that she fled from home as Jacob had earlier done, nor that she left her family in conscious rebellion. But it alerts us that we are more vulnerable to attacks from the wicked when we are away from our homes and family, even if we are away on innocent excursions or legitimate business. Home is not only where the heart is, but also where our greatest security and happiness can be found.

Sunday, September 10th - Genesis 34: 1

This verse not only informs us that Dinah went out from her home, but also tells us what prompted her excursion. She left home literally *to see the daughters of the land*. In other words, an unsettled curiosity led her away from her home. She was not on an errand for her family, but she sought to make contact with the Canaanite women. We are not told that her motivation for such contact was her desire to evangelize them. When we seek diversion from familial duties and family devotions, we open ourselves to sinister exploitation to a degree that we can hardly expect.

Monday, September 11th - Genesis 34: 1, 2

Dinah left home intending to see the daughters of Canaan. Instead, she encountered the son of Hamor who sinned grievously against her. Shechem was responsible for his sin; Dinah was responsible for her curious wandering. As a wise pastor once said: *The sheep may not have meant to get lost, but it did mean to wander.*

Tuesday, September 12th - Genesis 34: 2, 3

In these verses, we are told that Shechem was the son of Hamor, king of the Hivites. His nobility, however, is shown to be a mere veneer covering his base and ignoble heart. He was in no way like the King of kings, who is a shepherd that protects, provides for, and tenderly loves His sheep. This son of Hamor, instead, takes what he sees to satisfy himself. It is true that v.3 informs us that he loved Dinah. However, his lust and abusive domination of the daughter of Jacob preceded and spoiled whatever love he might have had for her. The Apostle Paul speaks of Christian men possessing their wives in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion (1 Thess. 4:4,5). For the believer, holy love leads to commitment and intimate communion that is right in the sight of God, and mutually satisfying to a man and his wife. Lust leads not to love, but to sinful brute force, pain, misery, corruption, guilt, and shame. Let us then learn how to love not from the rapacious kings of the earth, but from our God who is love.

Wednesday, September 13th - Genesis 34: 4, 5

Hamor is told only part of the story by his son. Shechem declared his desire to have Dinah, and said nothing about his having raped her. Jacob, on the other hand, heard a fuller, more truthful account, presumably from Dinah herself. He learned the grievous truth that his daughter had been wrested from him and defiled by lustful Shechem. While Jacob was having his daughter trustingly confide in him the painful news of her violation, Hamor was being enlisted by his sinful son to do his bidding for him. The pleasures, joys, and seeming innocence of the wicked do but form a veneer that covers the depths of their shameful sins and guilt. The sorrows of the righteous are unspeakably deep, yet they can be taken to the godly, who love us, and to the Lord, who will one day wipe away all of their tears.

Thursday, September 14th - Genesis 34: 6, 7

It was while Hamor set off in ignorance to do his sinful son's bidding, that Jacob shared with his sons a full disclosure of the awful truth. It is acknowledged by them all to be a painful, ugly truth. Shechem had done something he ought not to have done, yet we live in a world where men in rebellion from the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth do all sorts of things they ought not to do. This is a truth that the wicked themselves suppress, as they delude themselves into thinking that the bad things they do are simply accidents, mistakes, inconveniences, and not violations of God's holy law. The righteous can face this truth and fortify and protect themselves by their donning the full armor of God.

Friday, September 15th - Genesis 34: 8

Hamor makes his request on behalf of Shechem. It may be that Hamor remained in ignorance of his son's sin against Dinah when he asked for her hand in marriage for Shechem. If so, we see how often things can be very much worse than we may at times suspect when we request something from others. Yet because this verse begins with the word, *But*, the indication is that Hamor, too, received the report given to Jacob's sons in the previous verse, and passed it off as a trifling thing that should be understood and

accepted by all on account of the strength of Shechem's love for Dinah. The godless will always regard practically any sinful action as being justified if the action was prompted by strong passion. In fact, the only way a sinner is justified is not by his own sinful passions, but by the holy, saving passion of Christ.

Saturday, September 16th - Genesis 34: 8, 9

From the sin of the son springs the temptation from the father to greater sin. Hamor proposes a social solution to the matter of Shechem's sin and Dinah's wounding. He would have Jacob and his sons cast a fig leaf of inter-marriage with the idolatrous Hivites over Shechem's sin, seeing such inter-marrying as a solution to any future friction and frustration between the children of Jacob and the children of Canaan. Compromise with the godless is never a solution to any problem the godly may have, but only an invitation to greater problems. Union with the godless necessarily results in disunion from the Lord.

Sunday, September 17th - Genesis 34: 9, 10

Hamor adds incentives to his proposal that the children of Jacob intermarry with the children of Canaan. Rights, privileges, and opportunities for economic prosperity are offered to Jacob and his descendants. Hamor is offering citizenship to a man and his family who have been living all their lives as strangers and sojourners. It is, however, an enticement to forsake their high status as God's covenant people and as citizens of heaven. Jacob is being tempted to form an unholy union with a people who, although seemingly well-situated in this world, in reality had their feet set in slippery places by the hand of the Lord (Ps. 73:17-20). Godless enticements always come to us with terrible hidden costs.

Monday, September 18th - Genesis 34: 9, 10

The enticement Hamor offered to Jacob was an appeal to immediate gratification and personal pleasure. The intention behind this offer was that the appeal of personal pleasure would serve as a blinder to Jacob's commitment to godly principle and as a cover for the wounding of Dinah personally and of Jacob in terms of the family dishonor he had suffered. Yet, despite the seeming fairness and pleasing prospect of this offer, it remained true that such a thing as Shechem had done *ought not to be done* (v.7) at any price. Shechem had sinned against Dinah, Jacob and his whole family, but above all against God. Such sin can only be cleansed—and the wounds it causes healed—not by man's trinkets but by the precious blood of the Lamb of God. Men are experts at wounding but the Lord is the Great Physician who alone can heal.

Tuesday, September 19th - Genesis 34: 11, 12

Here Shechem adds his own personal offer and appeal. He will pay any price to have Dinah as his wife. No doubt, Shechem was sincere in this offer. Yet he was sincerely misguided by his own godless passion and blinded by his pride. His sinful conceit was

leading him to add insult to injury, as he urged a proposal that he thought should so please Jacob that he would come to consider Dinah's rape as the spark that ignited great prosperity for him. How woefully do the godless underestimate their sins and overestimate their capabilities to rectify their sins!

Wednesday, September 20th - Genesis 34: 13

There was a snare, hidden even to Hamor, in the temptation offered to Jacob of having his children intermarry with the Canaanites. The snare was that of the temptation to sinful vengeance, and it was one that Jacob and his sons failed to resist. The sons of Jacob took their sister's defilement very hard and personally. They did not seek from the Lord their healing for these grievous wounds, but determined instead, to vent their sinful retaliatory passion against Shechem. Thus, they went from being sinned against to sinning. While the sins of others against us may injure us, it is our own sins that ruin us. It is far better to be sinned against than to sin.

Thursday, September 21st - Genesis 34: 13

Shechem took an unholy initiative against the daughter of Jacob. It was followed up by his father's unholy initiative toward Jacob and all of his children. The result was an escalation of sin and misery. Jacob should have himself seized the initiative. Instead of his waiting for Hamor to approach with his godless and insulting enticements, Jacob should have confronted Shechem directly with his sin, setting out for him clearly the way for godly reconciliation. Failing that, Jacob should have maintained a principled separation from Hamor and Shechem, exercising forbearance until the day of Shechem's repentance or of God's judgment. By Jacob's passive endurance of the insulting enticements of these Hivites, he and his sons, in spite of their revulsion at the proposal of intermarriage with Hamor's people, become very much like them. As Shechem's lust for pleasure drove him to ravish Dinah, so the lust to inflict retaliatory pain upon Shechem drove the sons of Jacob to become deceivers and destroyers. Deceit had always been a family trait for the sons of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When their vital union with the Lord grew weak, they reverted to the sinful default mode of their family. We, too, shall revert to our besetting sin when we fail to cleave vitally to the Lord and adhere zealously to His ways.

Friday, September 22nd - Genesis 34: 14

A deceptive guise is employed by the sons of Jacob. They do not state the true impediment to Dinah's marriage to Shechem as being their refusal to give her to a godless, lustful abuser of women, and thus condemn her to a life of misery at the hands of his sinful passions. Instead, they state the issue as being merely a matter of Shechem lacking the ritual externals, but not the essence, of true religion. This is, of course, a lure that is part of the cunning plan to have Shechem and the men of his father's kingdom submit to something as easy as circumcision. Deception is sinful, but especially is it so when matters of the true faith are used to deceive others. God will not hold guiltless those so abusing His holy ordinances.

Saturday, September 23rd - Genesis 34: 15-17

The sinful deception and guilt of Jacob's sons deepen. They require Shechem and his countrymen to submit to circumcision, ostensibly so that Shechem could rightly marry Dinah. In fact, they were abusing the Lord's holy ordinance, leading their prey into accepting the sacramental wound of circumcision, not as a sign and seal of the Lord's covenant promise and of their saving faith, but rather to make them tender and vulnerable before the mortal blows the sons of Jacob were planning to rain upon them. In this way, the sons of light sin worse than did Shechem, a son of darkness. If we do not go to Christ for our healing, we will eventually find ourselves driven by a hellish, murderous ire.

Sunday, September 24th - Genesis 34: 15-17

The sons of Jacob require that every male of Shechem receive circumcision. Theirs was not a passion to extend the saving gospel to all of these men for their highest good and for the glory of God, but rather was a passion to exact an unholy, unloving, ungracious revenge on an excessive scale, pressing the ordinances of the Lord into such sinful service. The Apostle Paul speaks of men proclaiming the gospel out of selfish ambition (Phil. 1:17). It is a terrible temptation against which we all must be on guard, that we can turn the blessed ordinances of God's grace into tools for our own selfish and impure motives.

Monday, September 25th – Genesis 34: 18, 19

The wicked, who lack the discernment that the Lord gives to the righteous, are easily led by deceit. Hamor and his son, Shechem, perceive no snare in the seemingly good words of Jacob's sons. They considered the shedding of a small amount of their blood to be a negligible price to pay for the gains they sought. Shechem's motivation was evident, as he declared his strong desire for Jacob's daughter, Dinah. Hamor's motivation was more hidden but also stronger, for he desired to absorb for himself all of Jacob's family and fortune (v.23). The wicked judge all things by outward appearance. The wicked practice deceit, which is the casting of a disguising appearance over the true character of things. Their superficial judgment and deceitful practice make them not more able to detect the deceit of others, but less able to do so. Only those attuned to the truth of the Lord are equipped to detect lies.

Tuesday, September 26th - Genesis 34: 18, 19

Hamor and Shechem not only accept the words of Jacob's sons, but they also hasten to act upon them. It is remarkable how quickly the godless act upon words deceitfully given. It should be convicting to believers who withhold their trust in and delay their obedience to the Word of God that is true, infallible, and sure.

Wednesday, September 27th - Genesis 34: 20, 21

The deceived Hamor and Shechem become themselves deceivers of the men of Shechem. Jacob and his sons are represented by Hamor as being peaceful and posing no threat to the Hivites of the land. The truth was far different, as Jacob's sons were plotting a massive and murderous retaliation for the sin that Shechem had committed against their sister. Men who deceive and are deceived are in far greater jeopardy than they know, not only from other wicked men, who sinfully disguise their threatening intentions, but especially from the holy God of heaven, who calls men to repentance who ever busy themselves suppressing the truth of their rebellion against and accountability to the divine Judge of all the earth.

Thursday, September 28th - Genesis 34: 21-23

Although Hamor and Shechem were deceived by Jacob's sons, they were not themselves dealing with honesty and integrity when they sought to persuade the men of Shechem to accept and intermarry with Jacob's children. In v.21 they appeal for a peaceful and mutually beneficial co-existence with the covenant people of God. Yet, when they mention the price of circumcision that the Shechemites would have to bear, they appeal not to mutually respectful and beneficial co-existence, but rather to the Hivites' selfish absorption of the people and possessions of Jacob. Sinners are essentially selfish and will do nothing that is gracious, generous, or even fair, but will, instead, employ the cunning of their deceiving and destroying father, the devil, to gain for themselves at the expense of others. Thanks be to God that we who are in Christ are no longer like self-centered and that we have wise discernment to protect ourselves from those in the world whose god is still themselves.

Friday, September 29th - Genesis 34: 22-24

The men of Shechem show themselves willing to undergo momentary submission to pain in order to have lasting profit at the expense of Jacob and his children. Theirs is not a proper investment mentality, such as the believer would have when he considers his bearing of momentary, light afflictions in prospect of his receiving an eternal weight of glory (2 Cor. 4:17). Rather, the Shechemites have the same spirit of carnal grasping and self-gratification at the expense of others as motivated Shechem when he raped Dinah to satisfy his own passion. The men of Shechem are not innocent victims about to suffer at the hands of Jacob's sons, but instead are ones about to be judged by the God of heaven, who sinlessly will use the sins, even of His own people, to accomplish His just and holy will.

Saturday, September 30th - Genesis 34: 25, 26

The attitude of sinful anger and the determination of sinful and excessive retaliation that Jacob's sons disguised beneath a religious pretext now come to bear their bitter fruit. While the men of Shechem are disabled due to the pain of their circumcision, Simeon and Levi kill Hamor, his son, and all the men of Shechem. We have these two sons of Jacob, as Matthew Henry remarks *cutting the throats of the Shechemites, and thereby breaking the heart of their father*. Simeon and Levi were the second and third sons born to Jacob

through Leah, the wife Jacob did not love or want and the one he never should have had, but did have by his uncle's deception and his own weakness to discern and refuse the deception. The roots of some sins can grow deep and long. But while Jacob was himself a deceiver, it was his brother, Esau, who was murderous and largely lived by his sword (Gen. 27:40,41). Thus, Jacob's sons here resemble their godless and profane uncle more than their redeemed father. Sin destroys all things and distorts all relationships.

Sunday, October 1st - Genesis 34: 25, 26

The men of Shechem were tender because of their circumcision. They who had received the sacrament of initiation into the covenant people of God should have been strengthened and protected by this sign and seal of the covenant of salvation. Yet, they are slaughtered instead. It was the sin of Jacob's sons that they did the slaughtering. Yet, let us not fail to note the uselessness and even danger into which those people put themselves by their receiving only the outward sign of the covenant and of church membership, while they are void of the inner essence of a saving faith. God does not allow men to mock His holy ordinances.

Monday, October 2nd - Genesis 34: 25, 26

From v.26 we learn that Dinah had been in the house of Shechem until Levi and Simeon took her from it. Perhaps she had been held in Shechem's house after her rape, and perhaps the sons of Jacob meant to deceive the men of Shechem and impose circumcision on them only to disable them so that they could better effect her rescue. The wording of Scripture could imply this, and, if this were the case, it would be the best light in which the actions of Jacob's sons could be seen. It is still a poor light, clouded by unbelieving fears and sinful devices. The inescapable conclusion is that there is the blackness of most heinous sin in the actions of Simeon and Levi. They exacted treacherous and excessive payment for the sin that had wounded their sister. Dinah was raped, but not killed. Simeon and Levi in return killed Shechem, murdered Shechem's father, who may not have known about his son's sin, and they murdered all the men of Shechem, who had little, if any, responsibility for this sin. It is awful when the children of the God of justice and mercy show neither mercy nor justice to their enemies. The wrath of man does not, in itself, achieve the righteousness of God, although God can and often does overrule it to that end.

Tuesday, October 3rd - Genesis 34: 26, 27

Why were Simeon and Levi filled with such excessive rage against the men of Shechem? One reason is that they were more sore over their own wounded family pride than over the wounds their sister had received. We are incompetent rightly to judge a matter when we either are the offended party or are nearly associated with the offended party in a matter of sinful injury. Furthermore, and most critically in this instance, Simeon and Levi did not rely on the Lord for the healing of their family's wounds. Thus they sinned (as we all sin) by not seeking healing from the great Physician. They seek relief in the spilling of their enemies' blood, and not in the reconciling and restoring shed blood of the Lamb of

God who takes away sin and, ultimately, all of its sore consequences. The shedding of the blood, even of an excessive number of sinners, cannot heal what only the precious blood of the holy Son of God shed for the salvation of His people can do.

Wednesday, October 4th - Genesis 34: 27-29

The sinning of Jacob's sons expands beyond their deceit, treachery, and murder. In these verses we learn that they steal all of the possessions and enslave all of the persons remaining alive in Shechem. In v.27 we are given insight into what they thought justified their rapacious action: the defilement of their sister. Yet, how can a retribution that kills all of Shechem's men, enslaves all of Shechem's women and children, and steals all of the Shechemites' possessions be considered by any right thinking person to be justified by the defilement of one woman? Surely Jacob's sons, who had practiced deception upon the men of Shechem, had also deceived themselves into thinking that a sin against their sister had as infinite consequences as a sin against the eternal and infinite God. Such reckoning is sinfully flawed.

Thursday, October 5th - Genesis 34: 27-29

It is unclear from v.27 whether it was only Simeon and Levi who looted Shechem. The reference, *Jacob's sons*, could include the two ring-leaders as well as their other brothers who may have joined them in their sinful material profiting under the guise of holy zeal. In fact, some scholars suggest that the mention of Simeon and Levi in v.25 as those who carried out the Shechemite slaughter, indicates that Jacob's second and third sons led all the others even in this mass murder. We cannot decide with certainty whether the brothers of Simeon and Levi were complicit in this terrible crime. From the prophecy of Israel in Gen. 49:5-7 we may be inclined to conclude that the two named sons acted without the rest. Yet, the closeness of family ties causes suspicions to fall on all family members, even when only one or two commit some great sin. It should be one of several impediments to our sinning when we consider the cloud of shame and suspicion that our sinful personal actions can bring upon our families.

Friday, October 6th - Genesis 34: 27-29

Shechem raped one daughter of Jacob, while the sons of Jacob killed all the men of Shechem and enslaved the remaining women and children. Shechem and Hamor proposed as restoration for this injury to Dinah and her family that an alliance and union be effected between the Hivites and the family of Jacob. They did this with an eye to their absorbing all of the Israelites' possessions (v.23). The sons of Jacob actually looted the town of Shechem, taking for themselves all of the Shechemites' possessions. Undeniably, these covenant sons of Jacob, who wore the sign of the covenant in their bodies and had the name and promise of God upon them, sinned far more greatly against the Shechemites than had Shechem sinned against them. It is a shameful disgrace that the people of the Lord of mercy and love should, at times, be lavish in their punishing of others, and ruthlessly devoid of pity for them. If we are to err, let us do so by our

lavishing grace on our enemies, returning good for evil, and reckoning that our heavenly Father will set all accounts right in His perfect timing (Rom. 12:17-21).

Saturday, October 7th - Genesis 34: 30

This verse records the rebuke that Jacob gave to his sons. The mention of Simeon and Levi would seem to indicate that they were the only perpetrators of the awful crime, and yet it could be that they were singled out as the leaders of something in which more of their brothers shared the guilt with them. Whatever we can make of the parties, it is clear that Jacob's rebuke is weak, inadequate, and ineffective. The heart of his rebuke is self-regarding. Jacob mentions nothing about his sons having committed heinous sin on a massive scale, nor does he direct them to repent and endeavor to make some kind of restitution. He says nothing about how their action was a sinful offense against and a dishonor to the Lord. All that Jacob is concerned about is how the actions of Simeon and Levi would arouse opposition from the surrounding Canaanites against him. It reveals an inadequate understanding of our sin when we are more concerned about the miserable, personal consequences of it than with the grief it causes our God and the injury it causes our neighbor.

Sunday, October 8th - Genesis 34: 30

Jacob's reaction to his discovery of what his sons had done to the Shechemites is full of fear and utterly lacking in faith. His fear is not without some foundation. His moral understanding rightly informed him that those who live by the sword die by the sword. Therefore, he feared retaliation from the Canaanites against his retaliating family. While the news of his daughter's suffering from the sin of Shechem threw Jacob into grief and despondency, the news of his sons' sin against the Shechemites threw him into fearful despair. It is shocking and should be sobering to us when we note that this man who had so recently wrestled and prevailed with God Almighty should now be in fearful dread of man. Let us take heed, lest we likewise be tempted and fall.

Monday, October 9th - Genesis 34: 30, 31

Jacob did not so much rebuke his sons for their sin as he complained to them of the anticipated suffering their actions would bring upon him. Such a self-regarding complaint was devoid of moral authority. Accordingly, Simeon and Levi respond with a rhetorical question contemptuously thrown at their father. Implied in their question is a charge that Jacob's passivity in response to his daughter's rape was tantamount to his accepting Shechem's treating Dinah like a harlot. Thus, in response to Jacob's feeble charge, his sons issue a contemptuous counter-charge. The members of this holy, covenant family, by their having sinfully responded to a sin they had suffered, are accordingly turned sinfully against one another. Sinful anger is a raging fire which no one can control. If we harbor it, thinking that we can direct it only against our enemies, we shall find it burning our friends, our family members, and ourselves in the end.

Tuesday, October 10th - Genesis 34: 30, 31

In addition to the contempt displayed in this response of Jacob's sons to their father's complaint, we should note the faulty reasoning upon which this response rests. The

question contemptuously hurled at Jacob does not speak to the issue. Should Shechem treat Dinah like a harlot? Of course not! But the word translated *treat* in this verse could also be translated *make*. Should Shechem *make* Dinah a harlot? That would be impossible so long as she took her wounds, sinfully inflicted upon her by another, to the Lord, who is the loving, gracious, and Great Physician. If Dinah were in danger of being made a harlot, the sinful wrath of her brothers would not restore her. It was that sinful anger, with its ineffectual aid and its aggravating and escalating of sin's guilt and misery that was the true point and issue of Jacob's complaint. Even to Jacob's feeble raising of that issue, Simeon and Levi could give no acceptable account. How much less could they justify their actions before the divine Judge of all the earth?

Wednesday, October 11th - Genesis 34: 30, 31

The complications, confusion, mutual recriminations, magnified guilt, and increased misery that result from the response of Jacob and his sons to Shechem's sin against Dinah, all have their bitter root in the faithless selfishness of Jacob and his sons. Jacob concentrates more upon his fears than upon the sinfulness of his son's actions or upon the suffering of his daughter. Simeon and Levi concentrate more upon the wounding of their inflated pride than upon the wounds of their sister, the death and destruction of the Shechemites, and their own guilt before God. Had Jacob and his sons run to the Lord and trustingly believed in their God, who has power to heal all wounds, wipe away all tears, even raise dashed hopes and dead men, they would not have been disappointed (1 Pet. 2:6).

Thursday, October 12th - Genesis 34: 30, 31

This whole chapter teaches us that things can and do go badly and painfully wrong for God's people. In the kingdom of saving grace that is wrought out in a fallen world, disasters can quickly follow delights such as the one Jacob had enjoyed when he saw the face of God at Peniel (Gen. 33:30). In Jacob's current case, we have hints as to the cause these disasters. Jacob's passivity was an indication that he had lapsed from being the man who would not let his God go. The easing of a man's grip upon his heavenly Father tends to prompt wanderings and godless actions in his children. If we believe that without the Lord we can do nothing, why would we ever ease the vital grasp we have upon Him by faith?

Friday, October 13th - Genesis 35: 1-3

From their wallowing in their victimized sufferings and sinful miseries, Jacob and his family arise to walk with the Lord. Such revival, repentance, and restoration do not result from Jacob's efforts but from the initiative, grace, and enabling of the Lord. These things in God's Word are written for our instruction, so that we might profit from our rightly considering the failings of those like Jacob, and so avoid such sinning. However, when we do sin, the Word of the Lord plainly teaches us that our merciful Father is the only One who can and will effectively deliver us from our sins and consequent sufferings.

Saturday, October 14th - Genesis 35: 1-3

The timing of God's call to Jacob is significant and instructive. After Jacob and his sons had exchanged loveless and mutually recriminating words, the Lord spoke to Jacob

words of loving mercy, clear direction, and enabling power. After the bitter consequences of the spiritual laxness and sinful actions of Jacob and his sons had come to full fruition, the Lord revived and nurtured the sweet fruit of His Spirit in them. When we are faithless, God remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself the fulfilling of His great and precious promises in our lives (2 Tim. 2:13).

Sunday, October 15th - Genesis 35: 1

In this verse, the Lord gives to Jacob graciously commanding words of direction. The patriarch is told to arise, not just physically, but also from his emotional depression, and especially from his spiritual torpor. Even when we have cast ourselves down into the miserable pit of sin, the Lord comes to us not to condemn and confirm us in our painful prostration, but to comfort and exalt us, as He lifts us out of the miry clay of our own making.

Monday, October 16th - Genesis 35: 1

The Lord tells Jacob neither to stay in Shechem nor to launch a pre-emptive strike against the Canaanites whom he feared. Instead, the Lord directs Jacob to return to Bethel, to the house of God (Gen. 28:17,19). The divine directive is not that Jacob merely visit Bethel to indulge in sentimental nostalgia or to be refreshed by a spiritual retreat. Rather, Jacob is told to *live* in Bethel. It would be only at the house of God that Jacob would be preserved from death. Furthermore, Jacob was instructed by these words that he should remain at Bethel, making it his dwelling place. We always see more truly and live more securely when we repair regularly to the earthly sanctuary of the Lord (Ps. 73:17ff), and direct our thoughts and affections constantly to dwell in the heavenly house of our God (Col. 3:2-4).

Tuesday, October 17th - Genesis 35: 1

Jacob is told by God not only to go to Bethel, but also what he should do when he arrived there. The Lord directs the patriarch neither to build a fortress as protection from his enemies nor to erect a house for the protection of his family from the elements, but rather to make an altar to his God. The way out of our sin is never by the works of our flesh or by the natural reasoning of our fallen and fallible minds, but always by the worship of our holy God. It is only through the sacrifice that God has provided in Christ that we are rescued from all of our enemies.

Wednesday, October 18th - Genesis 35: 1

The concluding words of this divine directive remind Jacob (and us) of truths about the faithful help of the Lord and the utter need man has for that help. When Jacob had previously been in Bethel, he had been fearfully fleeing from the threats of his brother against whom he had sinned. There, in all of his helpless and self-caused misery, the Lord graciously appeared to him and gave him gracious and powerful words of comfort and promise (Gen. 28:13-15). Now, as Jacob feared the threats of many Canaanites, he was being clearly directed by God to the place of previously demonstrated divine care. All who are weary and heavy laden with their sins and the bitter consequences of those sins,

are ever directed to Jesus, in whom the fullness of the God of salvation dwells (Mt. 11:28, 29; Col. 1:19; 2:9).

Thursday, October 19th - Genesis 35: 2, 3

As when Jesus called for Lazarus to arise and exit his tomb, so here we see that when the Lord speaks to Jacob in his spiritual paralysis, the patriarch arises and acts according to God's Word. The faith of a believer may at times burn so low as to appear extinguished. However, when the Lord calls to the believer through His Word and Spirit, even weak faith hears, heeds, and grows strong.

Friday, October 20th - Genesis 35: 2, 3

A lapse in Jacob's faith was hinted at in chapter 34. In these verses it is made clear that Jacob and his family had, indeed, neglected their saving God and drifted from Him and toward false gods. The language of v.2 indicates that while Jacob himself was not devoted to false gods, he knew that the members of his household were. His toleration of such sin made him share in its guilt. The false gods here mentioned were likely multiplied from the seeds of Laban's household idols that Rachel had stolen from him as Jacob and his family were leaving Haran (Gen. 31:19). That sin which Jacob had failed to nip in the bud apparently grew to extensive sin that infected all of his household, alienated them from the Lord, and caused them to rely on the arm of flesh to deal with their problems—all to disastrous ends. Let us ever be careful to rely only on the Lord, the one thing necessary, and allow nothing to compete with Him in our trusting affections.

Saturday, October 21st - Genesis 35: 2, 3

After God spoke to Jacob, the patriarch then spoke to his household. From a comparison of v.1 with vv.2,3, it would appear that Jacob added his own words to God's Word. However, although in v.1 the Lord said nothing about putting away of false gods, what Jacob said regarding the removal from his household of such foreign deities issues as a good and necessary consequence from what the Lord said in v.1. The gracious words of the Lord, no doubt, served to bring searching conviction upon Jacob, who, in turn, rightly repented and called upon his family to repent of their sin of reliance upon such false gods in addition to their supposed reliance upon the Lord. When we are summoned by God's Word to worship and serve the Lord, we do well to cleanse and purify ourselves of all that displeases the holy Lord we endeavor to trust and obey.

Sunday, October 22nd - Genesis 35: 2, 3

Another thing that Jacob adds to the words spoken to him by God is a reference to the Lord as the One who answered him in his distress and had been with him wherever he went. This addition, too, flows as good and necessary consequence from what the Lord declared in v.1. God not only appeared to Jacob at Bethel, but came to Jacob as the answer to all of his needs. Furthermore, the Lord had been with Jacob, as He pledged He would be (Gen. 28:15; 31:3). This truth Jacob now recalls and realizes that the Lord was

with him even then, in Shechem, and was with him even in the sinful mess he and his sons had created in Shechem, and would be with him on his way to Bethel. Even in our spiritual dullness, the Lord is with us and will never leave or forsake us.

Monday, October 23rd - Genesis 35: 4

The convicting call of Jacob was right and necessary. This verse informs us that foreign gods were plentiful among the members of his household. Yet, we see also that repentance swiftly and thoroughly takes place. The family of Jacob gave up all they were commanded to remove from their midst and more besides. Items of innocent adornment were also given up, as being, most likely, the materials from which these false gods were fashioned, as they would be with the golden calf Aaron was later to fashion (Ex. 32). The removal of such golden rings also manifested repentance from the fashions of the neighboring Canaanites, and a humbling of the family of Jacob, as they sought rightly to mortify human vanity within themselves. Those who are truly and deeply repentant will do more than a call for their repentance may require.

Tuesday, October 24th - Genesis 35: 5

Those who had weakened themselves by their sinful drifting from the Lord, now find themselves strengthened and shielded on their journey that is undertaken in obedience to God's Word. The Lord sinlessly overruled the terrible sin of His people, so that the massacre wrought sinfully by Jacob's sons would strike fear in the Canaanites and prohibit them from attacking Jacob and his family. This doctrine of God's sinless use even of our sins, like wine, must be responsibly used to encourage and fortify our repentance, and not to intoxicate us with presumption.

Wednesday, October 25th – Genesis 35: 6

This verse informs us of Jacob's safe arrival in Bethel. We learn also that all of his family members, servants, livestock, and possessions arrived with him. That which we entrust to the Lord is in the security of almighty hands that hold, direct, protect, and provide with holy, unchangeable love and infallible wisdom. The good ways in which the Lord wisely directs His people are traveled by those trustingly obeying Him and are completed by the arm of the Lord's power. Jacob and his family did well so to trust and obey the voice of the Lord. We do well likewise to trust and obey the Word of our redeeming Lord.

Thursday, October 26th - Genesis 35: 7

When Jacob arrived at Bethel with his family, he built an altar for his worship of God before he built a house for his family. Thus, he seeks first the Lord and His kingdom and His glory, rightly knowing that thereafter all necessary things would be added to him (Mt. 6:33). He does not place his family above his heavenly Father, neglecting His worship for their welfare, as centuries later the prophet Haggai charged the children of Israel with doing (Hag. 1:2-11). Nor did Jacob allow his work to take priority over his worship. It was after he had built the altar to God that he exercised his authority and dominion over

his living and working situation by his naming the altar after the God of Bethel. When we devote ourselves to worship first, all of our work, whether religious or civil, follows a right and fruitful course.

Friday, October 27th - Genesis 35: 7

Jacob surely built the altar to offer sacrifices upon it. Very likely it was at this time and on this altar that he fulfilled his vow to render to his God a tenth of all he had, if the Lord would bring him safely home (Gen. 28:22). There would have been accordingly a great many animals slain on that altar. Jacob would not have considered their sacrifice a waste. Rather, he would gratefully have seen them as rich and tangible tokens of and pointers to the sacrifice of the coming Savior, who would pour out His life to bring His people not into the shadowy suburbs, but into the substantial heart of the glorious and eternal house of God.

Saturday, October 28th - Genesis 35: 7

That Jacob had the eyes of faith fixed on the Lord, to whom he devoted these sacrifices in gratitude for the Lord's preserving power and redeeming sacrifice to come, is evident from the name that he gave to the altar: *the God of Bethel*. By that name, Jacob acknowledged his concern more with the God of the heavenly abode than with the heavenly abode of God. For it had not been the place that had promised Jacob salvation, but rather the God who had graciously revealed Himself to Jacob when all earthly family and fortunes had turned against him. We do well to love the gatherings of the living stones of the house of God, not because they save us, but because there the Lord reveals Himself to us as our Savior.

Sunday, October 29th - Genesis 35: 8

Although Jacob was precisely where the Lord wanted him to be, and was worshipping the Lord there, the fact that the patriarch was still a pilgrim in the Church militant was soon made evident by the death of an honorable, faithful, and, no doubt, beloved servant. Scripture itself honors this servant, by recording for us her name, Deborah. Her beloved status is evident not only by her reverent burial, but also due to the fact that she was likely one of the last living ties to Jacob's deceased and beloved mother. Hence, Jacob gave her burial place a name that means *oak of weeping*. Her death was a painful thorn in his flesh, but was also another prod to remind him that although he was settling in Bethel, he had there no continuing city, but rather had his citizenship and source of lasting joy in heaven.

Monday, October 30th - Genesis 35: 9

When the Lord afflicts His people with one hand, He embraces, comforts, and reassures them with the other hand. Therefore, amidst the grief Jacob was experiencing over Deborah's death, the Lord appeared to him as He had done more than 20 years before this time at this same place. The God of salvation and eternal life came to Jacob, when the curse of death was prominent in his life, in order to bless him with the promise of glory that would outshine and overwhelmingly compensate him for all of his sorrows and sufferings. Even in the valley of the shadow of death, we need fear no evil, because our divine Shepherd is ever with us.

Tuesday, October 31st - Genesis 35: 9

The fact that Scripture notes the appearance of God to Jacob when he came from Paddan-aram, indicates an important causal connection to us. It was when Jacob was away from where the Lord had called him and settling into the place to which He had directed him that divine blessing came to him. As we have seen, even Bethel was not without its thorns of affliction. However, when we in trusting obedience turn away from lesser things to be where the Lord calls us to be, we can with humble and yet sure expectation look for great blessing from the Lord.

Wednesday, November 1st - Genesis 35: 10-12

These verses contain an articulation of the blessing with which the Lord blessed Jacob upon his settling into Bethel. It is a full, expansive, majestic, and glorious blessing. The Lord may at times minister to us His blessing in crumbs that appear to fall from His heavenly table, while at other times He solemnly bestows upon us blessings of greatest magnitude and most glorious character. The wondrous truth is that if we are His people in Christ, we have in Christ every spiritual blessing—the greatest as well as the smallest—reserved in heaven for our fullest enjoyment.

Thursday, November 2nd - Genesis 35: 10

The Lord commences His blessing of Jacob by changing his name to Israel. That which had been done earlier by the angel of the Lord, after a dark night of Jacob's wrestling at the ford of the Jabbok (Gen. 32:22-28), is here ratified at Bethel by the Lord appearing to Jacob in majestic glory. By this second witness of divine visitation and blessing, the name change was confirmed by the graciously transforming power of the Lord. Jacob was a new man, with a new status, new powers, and new hope. No longer was he the scheming supplanter, cunningly seeking to better himself. As Israel, he was a prince of God, who, by his relation to the heavenly King, was exalted to triumphant heights here and glorious heights hereafter. We, too, have been so exalted by the loving redemption and consequent adoption we have received from our heavenly Father (Jn. 1:12; 1 Jn. 3:1-3).

Friday, November 3rd - Genesis 35: 11

In this verse, the Lord reveals to Jacob something about the source of the divine blessing he was receiving and the fruit that would issue from it. The source was nothing less or other than the God of all power. Earlier, at the Jabbok's ford, Jacob had asked the name of the angel of the Lord who had blessed him and fortified him for his meeting with Esau, of whom Jacob had been afraid (Gen. 32:11). The angel told him then no more than that he had prevailed with God. Now that Jacob had left Shechem, being in fear of the Canaanites, and had settled at Bethel in the land of Canaan, the Lord reveals to him that his blessing was conferred upon him by nothing less than His almighty hand. If this God was for His Israel, who or what could stand against him? If this same almighty God is for us in Christ, who can stand prevailingly against us, and what can we expect but to reign as more than conquerors over all people and powers that rise up against us?

Saturday, November 4th - Genesis 35: 11

In this verse, the Lord reiterates His covenant promise to bless Jacob with numerous

descendants. Not only would their quantity be great, including nations of the earth, but their quality would be majestic, as denoted by the promise of kings that would descend from Jacob. This blessing, originally given by the Lord to Abraham (Gen. 17:1-6), is now confirmed to Jacob, who recently had departed from Shechem in disgraceful fear and shame. That the Lord promises that Jacob would be blessed in his children, is a remarkable promise, since the wounds from Dinah's suffering and the worse wounds of the murderous vengeance of Simeon and Levi would have indicated to Jacob that he was cursed, rather than blessed, in his children. Yet, with these comforting divine words, Jacob is reminded that salvation is of God's grace and power, not of man's natural endeavors or merits.

Sunday, November 5th - Genesis 35: 12

The final component of this divine blessing upon Jacob is the Lord's promise to confer the land of Canaan upon him and his descendants. The gracious divine gift that Jacob and all of his spiritual descendants would inherit was more than Bethel, more than Shechem, more than all of Canaan. Their inheritance and ours will be eternal life in the glory of a new heaven and earth in which we shall reign with Christ forever (Rev. 22:5). Canaan merely typified this great and glorious gift.

Monday, November 6th - Genesis 35: 13, 14

The vision Jacob had received from the Lord concluded with an appearance of divine departure. Jacob saw the Lord ascending from Bethel to His high and glorious heavenly throne. The divine departure did not leave Jacob despondent, but prompted him, instead, to acts of worship and devotion. For Jacob, being a man of faith, rightly focused upon the Word of the Lord he had just received, which contained great and precious promises. He also rightly viewed the Lord's ascension not as a divine parting from him, but rather as a token of his own sure exaltation one day by the Lord to be with the Lord in His glory forever. Similarly should we view and consider the ascension of our Redeemer.

Tuesday, November 7th - Genesis 35: 15

When Jacob named the place of this divine vision and visitation Bethel, he did so as an act of authority under God and for the glory of God, as well as for his own edification and that of his descendants. It was also a recognition on Jacob's part of the Lord's grace, as the glorious God of heaven had condescended not only to come down from His high heaven in a vision, but also to dwell by His Spirit amongst His people, who could apprehend Him through faith. Furthermore, this God had made His dwelling among His people in order to lead them through their earthly pilgrimage and finally exalt them to His heavenly glory.

Wednesday, November 8th - Genesis 35: 16-18

The painful thorn in Jacob's flesh of the death of Deborah, Rebekah's nurse (v.8) is now followed by an excruciating spear thrust into his side by the death of his beloved wife, Rachel. We might expect the blessing of God, pronounced upon Jacob in vv.10-12, to have vanquished all suffering in Jacob's life. In reality, that blessing was graciously planted by the Lord amidst what would have been without it a course of continual misery

and death as the wages of sin. The promise of God would progressively overcome the power of sin and death for Jacob and for all of his spiritual descendants.

Thursday, November 9th - Genesis 35: 16-18

Jacob and his family were journeying south from Bethel to Hebron, where his father, Isaac, was living (v.27). It was when they were in the midst of that journey of approximately 30 miles, that Rachel went into a difficult labor that produced the birth of Benjamin and resulted in her own death. The city nearest to them at the time of Rachel's birth-pangs was Ephrath, or Bethlehem. Yet, they were not near enough to it to receive help from any of its people or facilities. Centuries later, another pregnant mother actually made it into Bethlehem, but there received no consideration or provision from its citizens as she gave birth to the Savior of God's people, including Jacob and Rachel and all of their children.

Friday, November 10th - Genesis 35: 16-18

Rachel had demanded of Jacob children, saying that without them she would die (Gen. 30:1). The Lord graciously gave her one son—the best of all of Jacob's children—but she was not content with one child, whom she named Joseph, a name meaning *add to me*, implying that she desired at least another child despite the cost. Now Rachel has her desired second son, and his life proves to be her death. The attending midwife underestimated the cost that discontented Rachel was in process of bearing in this birth. The words of the midwife, and even the birth of her second son were no consolation to Rachel as she perceived her own life coming to its end. We gather this by the name she gave to this son, Ben-oni, meaning, *son of my sorrow*. Rachel was too much focused upon her children and not focused enough upon her heavenly Father. Let all Christian parents note well this warning, as well as the strong words of Jesus, that tell all who would be His disciples, that they must hate their natural relations in comparison with their love for Him (Lk. 14:26).

Saturday, November 11th - Genesis 35: 18

Rachel died, not as she peevishly had said she would without children, but rather with children, and, instrumentally, by the birth of her second son. Yet, hers was a fruitful death. Although it was mortally painful for her and mightily painful for Jacob, the blessing of God would triumph over the curse of death and sorrow. Jacob's faith rightly perceived a living memorial to the Lord's grace and power in this second son born of Rachel. Therefore, he changes the boy's name from Ben-oni (*son of my sorrow*) to Benjamin (*son of my right hand*). The afflictions and sorrows of the faithful always serve fruitfully for their strengthening.

Sunday, November 12th - Genesis 35: 19, 20

Rachel died and Jacob not only buried her, but also he erected a memorial pillar over her grave, just as he had before erected a pillar at the place in Bethel where the Lord had appeared to him and spoken words of blessing to him (v.14). The former pillar commemorated his comfort, this latter, his grief. Yet, both contained an element of gratitude to the Lord who is blessed whether He gives or takes away. Jacob was grateful to God for the years he had with his beloved Rachel, and was even more grateful to the

Lord for his covenant promise of blessing that would result in life from the dead and a triumphal and eternal reign in glory for all who, like Jacob and his departed Rachel, possess faith in the Lord.

Monday, November 13th - Genesis 35: 21

After Rachel's death, burial, and the erection of a memorial pillar for her, Jacob pressed on with his journey to Hebron. Rachel had run her race and finished her earthly course. Jacob was still on his pilgrimage, being led by the Lord. Therefore, Jacob presses on to what lies ahead of him, and Scripture commends him for this by using his new, God-given name, Israel. Those who continue to walk with God after His dark, afflicting providence has removed from them a beloved one are truly royal sons of the living and eternal God.

Tuesday, November 14th - Genesis 35: 21, 22

It was soon after Jacob left Rachel's grave that another affliction came upon him. The tower of Eder, where he went one day, was near Bethlehem, and so Jacob had not traveled far before his living son added pain and grief to the man who was still sore over the death of his wife. Jacob's first-born son, Reuben, sinned against his father in a way worse than pagans tend to do. Reuben's sin was precisely like the one that the Apostle Paul so strongly condemns in 1 Corinthians 5:1ff. The first naturally-born child is not always the best. It was Jesse's last-born son, David, that proved to be his best son (1 Sam. 16:11-13). Reuben, no doubt, sought to indulge his unholy passion in secret, but Jacob heard of it. Our sins will always find us out. Furthermore, Reuben must have thought that he had committed this sin without having to face punishment for it, as we are told his father heard of it, but did nothing about it. However, years later, the silence of Jacob was broken, and he cursed his eldest son and removed from him his birthright (Gen. 49:3,4). There is a day of reckoning for all sin, even that which was committed secretly and seemed for years to be indulged by God and man.

Wednesday, November 15th - Genesis 35: 21, 22

Jacob was blessed by God, yet he seems from all of the painful afflictions that come upon him to be cursed. Although he is disgraced and dishonored by his son, still he is honored by the Lord, for through all of his troubles and trials the Word of God designates him by his new name, Israel. We must not judge a man by the rude treatment he receives from others, but rather by the royal treatment he receives from God. If we desire to live a godly life, we will be persecuted (2 Tim. 3:12), but our heavenly Father will use all such afflictions only to promote our highest good (Rom. 8:28).

Thursday, November 16th - Genesis 35: 22b-26

These verses give a tabulation of the 12 sons of Israel from whom the 12 tribes of Israel would issue. The mothers of these sons are listed, too. Though some in the list are notorious sinners—such as Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Bilhah—their names are not erased from this place of honor. All of the 12 sons of Israel were sinners, but by God's graciously redeeming them they were made vital, lasting, and significant members of the Church for all ages (Rev. 21:12).

Friday, November 17th - Genesis 35: 27

The terminus of Jacob's journey was Hebron. That city was the goal and chosen domicile of this man because it was in Hebron that his father, Isaac, lived and died. The aim and end of our pilgrimage is heaven, where our divine Father dwells, and where our divine Redeemer has ascended to prepare a place for us (Jn. 14:3; 17:24-26; Col. 3:1-4). We should determine to settle for nothing other and less than such eternal, glorious communion with our heavenly Father.

Saturday, November 18th - Genesis 35: 28, 29

Scripture records immediately after Jacob's return to his father's home the death of Isaac, through which Jacob's father was promoted to his true home in the presence of the Lord. Isaac lived for 180 years—longer than his father, Abraham (175 years), and longer than his son, Jacob (147 years). His quiet and peaceful living may have contributed to his longevity. Isaac was 60 years old when Jacob was born (Gen. 25:26), and, as Jacob died when he was 147 years old, having spent his last seventeen years in Egypt (Gen. 47:28), Isaac, in fact, died many years after Jacob returned to live in Hebron. Isaac lived long enough after Jacob's return to learn of Joseph's supposed death, when his brothers fabricated the story of his demise to cover the sin of their having sold him into slavery. Isaac never learned the truth about Joseph before his death, but surely knows that truth now in their reunion in the light of God's presence. Many blessed surprises await us after we cross the Jordan from this land of shadows and sorrows, mysteries and miseries.

Sunday, November 19th - Genesis 35: 28, 29

We know that death was no more the end of Isaac than it had been for Abraham, for of both patriarchs it is recorded in Scripture that each was *gathered to his people*. It is also recorded that a sweet reconciliation between the once estranged twin sons of Isaac was in effect at his death and burial. When God receives a dying saint into heaven, it often is the case that heavenly peace, graciousness, and love are poured upon the surviving loved ones of that saint, making them to be, at least for a time, better in their attitude toward one another in the valley of the shadow of death than ever they were while their departed loved one lived. This sweetness of common grace should quicken men's hunger for God's special, saving grace.

Monday, November 20th - Genesis 36: 1

While righteous Jacob is shown by the record of Scripture to be a man suffering many afflictions, his unrighteous brother, Esau, is shown to be a man enjoying affluence and growth into a nation named Edom. The term, Edom, is translated *red*, and was a nickname for Esau after he had traded his birthright for a bowl of red stew (Gen. 25:30). That trade seemed to pay off for Esau better in this world than did Jacob's choice of the Lord. Yet, what does it profit a man to gain the world and lose his soul?

Tuesday, November 21st - Genesis 36: 2-5

From these verses we learn that Esau had three wives who bore him five sons. Jacob's wives and concubines bore him 12 sons. Thus, we observe that the pious son of Isaac was more fruitful in matters of familial and lasting significance than was the profane son. In addition, Esau's wives were Canaanites, whereas all of Jacob's wives at least came from

those related to the covenant people, if not personally to the covenant God of those people. Thus, the man of faith, for all of the evident faults and failings of the women in his life, had helpmeets who acknowledged and sought to obey the Lord. This was a great blessing that Jacob possessed and that Esau lacked, as Esau's wives were godless and troublesome (Gen. 26:34,35).

Wednesday, November 22nd - Genesis 36: 2-5

When we compare the names of Esau's wives as given in these verses with other passages of Scripture that name them (Gen. 26:34,35; 28:9), we discover variations. These variant names likely result from the fact that people in the ancient, as well as in the modern world, are known by several names (e.g., William, Will, and Bill). The significant thing to note is that there is no reference to the Lord in any of the names of these Canaanite women, nor was there godliness in their natures. Thanks be to God that we who believe in Jesus are called by the name that is above every other name in heaven or on earth.

Thursday, November 23rd - Genesis 36: 6-9

These verses tell us of Esau's move from Canaan. He departed from the land he wanted, but could not have, as the Lord had promised it to Jacob and his descendants. Esau moved from Canaan, not because he respected the Lord's promise of the land to his brother, but because he valued his growing material fortune over all things and moved to allow its continued and unimpeded growth. All who choose cold cash over the warm love and blessed fellowship of a living relative are most to be pitied.

Friday, November 24th - Genesis 36: 6-9

Esau not only moved from the promised land, he also departed from his pious brother. By this move, Esau distanced himself from the place of God's blessing, as well as from the living person whose life was a testimony to the blessing of the Lord that makes rich with no sorrow being added to it. While it is true that Jacob and Esau were together at their father's funeral, it is also true that soon thereafter they parted for time and eternity. Esau's choice was ever for the things of this world. He demonstrated that profane choice when he gave up his birthright for a bowl of red stew, and the name of his nation, Edom (i.e., *red*), ever memorialized the folly of his choice and of his misguiding priorities.

(The following Notes were first published in March 1991)

Saturday, November 25 th - Proverbs 11: 10,11

The world, though it does not love God, loves the fruit of godliness. Despite the animosity secular society harbors against the Lord and His people, most men confess that the wicked are noxious blights without which society could well do, while the righteous serve as pillars of strength and blessing. I recall being told years ago during a visit to Bratislava, Czechoslovakia, that the local Communist Party head complained that if he wanted a building built or maintained properly, he dared not trust the Marxists, but had to rely instead upon the Christians. The city of Susa was in confusion over Haman's decree to exterminate the Jews (Esth. 3:15), whereas the city rejoiced when Mordecai, the

faithful Jew, was honored (Esth. 8:15). Thus even godless citizens testify to the blessing of the Lord and against their own ingratitude.

Sunday, November 26 th - Proverbs 11: 12,13

The word *despises* in v.12 entails not only a loveless, disrespectful attitude, but also words and actions by which that attitude is made public. A small, envious heart, if not mortified, will impel one to become invasively curious as to the affairs and attitudes of others, not so that others may be known, loved, respected, and supported, but so that their frailties and failings may be discovered and published. The one who has a spirit faithful to the Lord, on the other hand, will be faithfully loving and supportively trustworthy in his dealings with others. Such a man of understanding and respectful sympathy will disclose confidences to no one who has no business knowing. Rather he will lay delicate matters only before the Lord, and perhaps before others whose godliness renders them caring, healing instruments in His service.

Monday, November 27 th - Proverbs 11: 14

Individuals and nations need eyes to see things, not as they appear to be, but as they truly are. Life is full of hidden hazards and without sure vision people will fall. No single person can possibly foresee every pitfall. Thus, those who are most consistently delivered from trouble and lifted to triumph are humble enough to recognize their visual deficiency. They also cultivate relationships with wise and faithful souls, whose counsel they respect and invite. The more of such counselors we have, the better we see the true picture.

Tuesday, November 28 th - Proverbs 11: 15

Perhaps this verse is a word of balance to humble and sober the counselors referred to in v.14. For to give our counsel as a portion of the data which will help enable a friend to make his own wise decision is one thing; to commit ourselves and our families to the cause of one whom we may barely know, and whose circumstances and true responsibilities may be concealed from us, is something else. We must lovingly give to others, but only what we legitimately can give without unduly impoverishing others who are dependent upon us.

Wednesday, November 29 th - Proverbs 11: 16

A woman who is touched by and filled with the grace of the Lord will be admired and honored. Her character, not her outward appearance, attracts the undying esteem of God and man (1 Pet. 3:3,4). She, though being a weaker vessel, attains that which is infinitely more precious and enduring than what many graceless men, who employ ruthless force, could ever hope to attain.

Thursday, November 30 th - Proverbs 11: 17

Mercy is more than condolence, for it does not only pity a person in need, but offers practical assistance to lift a soul out of his misery. Thus mercy would seem to be a costly virtue. In reality, however, it enriches both recipient and giver. This is so because its source is not found in the natural, fallen, finite heart, but rather in the perfect and infinite bosom of the eternal God. When we draw on Him to help others, He sees to it that we too are blessed in the process (Mt. 5:7). Whereas the cruel man, who selfishly ignores the plight of others, or exploits their plight, thinking that he shall gain thereby, always finds himself hurt most of all in the end.

Friday, December 1 st - Proverbs 11: 18,19

Wicked men are motivated by hopes of self-advancement. The evil tactics to which they resort hold out promises of success. However, since the author of evil is a liar and murderer, all he can provide is death. Satan promises god-like status, but delivers only the grave. Thus those resorting to the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21) allow themselves to be deceived, earning death as the wages of sin.

The righteous do not so much labor as they allow to grow, quietly and gradually, seeds of the very righteousness of Christ, yielding the blessed fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22,23). Such fruit enables them to sow seeds of righteous deeds to the glory of God, the good of man, and their own reward.

Saturday, December 2 nd - Proverbs 11: 20,21

A man may be outwardly conformed to godliness, but inwardly perverse. Such a one is an abomination to the Lord, Who sees and weighs our hearts. Although such perverse ones join hands with others in their mutual hypocrisy, they will not escape the just punishment of God. Those who are blameless in attitude and action inspire delight in the heart of the Lord. They also secure manifold deliverances for themselves and their families, because our God maintains integrity of attitude and action Himself. Those in whom He delights He acts with omnipotence to defend.

Sunday, December 3 rd - Proverbs 11: 22

The world prizes outward beauty above all. The graces of a godly character are despised in comparison with physical attractiveness. But such adulation of beautiful appearance bespeaks a delusion which fails to assess true value. For in truth, a beautiful woman who lacks a gracious character, and thus acts and speaks with indiscretion, is as a gross, unclean beast. Her beauty serves only as an incongruous attachment which comes nowhere near covering or compensating for her vileness. Read 1 Pet. 3:3,4 for a description of real beauty.

Monday, December 4 th - Proverbs 11: 23-27

These verses remind us of the saying of our Lord about the one seeking to save his life losing it, and the one losing his life for the Lord's sake saving it. The godly soul desires

good things, meaning things good in themselves and good for others. Such a soul finds joy in generously sharing with others. He truly delights in such giving because he has received and rejoices in the munificent provisions of God in Christ, which can never be exhausted, but only serve to enrich the one most committed to sharing them with others. As the grace of God unlocks our lives so that we give lovingly and lavishly to others, we receive in return the gratitude of others, and above all the good favor and blessing of the Lord. In contrast, selfishness is suicidal. Far from enriching, it impoverishes, adding the curses of men and the wrath of God to the deprivations in which it results.

Tuesday, December 5 th - Proverbs 11: 28

Riches form no basis for lasting trust. Material things are lifeless objects unable to sustain a living soul. Thus the one relying on riches leans on a dead and decaying reed which eventually will collapse, letting him fall. But righteousness is a living force derived from the living Lord. It is imputed to us, then sanctifyingly imparted to us, as the very likeness of Christ is formed in our characters. Thus the righteous partake of increasing vitality and flourish everlastingly. Psalm 1 is a good commentary on this proverb.

Wednesday, December 6 th - Proverbs 11: 29

This verse warns us not to indulge in psychological projection, whereby we take out on members of our own family the frustrations which have accumulated in our lives due to our own cowardice, indolence, and irresponsibility. We should avoid abusing or neglecting our families, lest we exhaust the bonds even of familial love, finding our household empty, except for the windy rages of our own bitterness. Nor should we slip into foolishness, lest we find ourselves destined for servitude. Our calling is to serve responsibly and lovingly by God's grace, thus establishing liberty and security in ourselves and in our homes, which will then be full of loving, supportive family members and blessed delight.

Thursday, December 7 th - Proverbs 11: 30

Righteousness is not only a living force within a soul (cf. note on v.28), it spreads through our lives to become a source of blessing for others. The fruits of a righteous life, such as loving deeds, believing prayers, and godly conversation, serve to impart abundant and eternal life to others, as others are led to partake of the Savior who sustains the righteous, with the fruit of His Spirit being produced within them. But in addition to their being like fruitful trees, the righteous are rational, mobile sources of life, who wisely and winsomely reach out to others, inviting them to taste and see that the Lord is good.

Friday, December 8 th - Proverbs 11: 31

If the righteous receive at least initial fulfillments of God's promises in this life, we should not be surprised to see the wicked beginning to taste divine threats. God is not mocked here or hereafter. For the faithful, the best is yet to be; for the sinner, the worst.

Eternal life begins here and now, as does eternal punishment. Let us choose and cultivate life and righteousness, and enjoy the blessed rewards of divine grace.

Saturday, December 9 th - Proverbs 12: 1-3

Right and wrong loves, characters, and ways are contrasted in these three proverbs. For one who loves knowledge, the discipline and correction of the Lord will also be loved as the means of obtaining knowledge. The proud man mistakes such necessary means of enlightenment as harmful threats which he hates. His pride blinds him and binds him in stupidity. The Lord loves and favors good characters, made good by His grace, while He condemns those who are and do evil. Wicked ways may seem most effectual, but it is only the one who dies to self and lives submissively before the Lord who stands in unshakably grounded security. Never are these patterns mixed, so that a lover of knowledge hates discipline, or a deviser of evil obtains divine favor, or a worker of wickedness enjoys a firmly rooted stand.

Sunday, December 10 th - Proverbs 12: 4

A virtuous wife is excellent in character and deeds because she is a trophy of divine grace. Her loving support and competent fulfillment of responsibilities render her a precious treasure for her husband. Her virtues often supply that which is lacking in her man, thus crowning him with a nobility he would otherwise lack (Prov. 31:10-31). However, a wife riddled with vices, such as folly, indolence, vanity, boisterousness, carnal curiosity and indiscretion, not only shames her husband in public, but also weakens him in himself. Here is a call for wives to nurture godly virtues, and for their husbands to esteem and love them accordingly.

Monday, December 11 th - Proverbs 12: 5,6

Not only the words and actions, but also the very inner thoughts of the righteous are just. Thus when they speak, there is wisdom, integrity, and a weight of authority in their words which serve to deliver them and those who rely on their counsel from all manner of threats. In contrast, the counsels of the wicked may seem plausible, but their words are false and untrustworthy. Their hearts desire to hurt others so that they themselves may attain supremacy. Hence let us learn to listen to godly souls, rather than to those who simply say what we may wish to hear. Just deliverance is always better than deceitful devouring.

Tuesday, December 12 th - Proverbs 12: 7

The wicked may lie in wait for blood (v.6), but in the end it is they who are slaughtered. When they are cast down by the just and powerful hand of the Lord, they rise no more. But the righteous stand, and what they build with their lives stands as well. They and their works last forever, enduring the final conflagration at Christ's glorious return (2 Pet. 3:10-12; 1 Cor. 3:10-15), and all shocks and stormy tests prior to that great day. This

enduring quality is found only in lives which are built by vital faith and obedience on the rock of Christ (Lk. 6:46-49).

Wednesday, December 13 th - Proverbs 12: 8,9

The wisdom of the Lord gives us true insight into the workings of the world and the people in it. Such insight bears practical fruit which others tend to see and appreciate. Yet, even if men do not highly esteem insightful souls, the wise tend to acquire means sufficient to give full exercise to their abilities. Such means include material and men, whose loyal appreciation for the wise motivates them to be loving servants of the wise. The perverse are despised. Their actions bear the bitter fruit of their rotten hearts. They usually will be proud, but such hollow self-honoring impresses few and provides ever diminishing returns in all areas of life.

Thursday, December 14 th - Proverbs 12: 10-12

The wicked, driven by empty, evil hearts, pursue empty things and trust in evil machinations to provide for them. When they must work, they remain utterly selfish, expecting others, including their own beasts of burden, to take up their slack. At their kindest they are cruel; at their cruelest they are monstrous. But the righteous are kind and considerate, even of lowly animals. The fact that they have been touched by divine grace shows in the most mundane affairs of their lives. They realize that they have been entrusted by their loving heavenly Father with a stewardship. Hence, they work hard, but compassionately. The result is a sweet and natural felicity leading to the production and enjoyment of much fruit.

Friday, December 15 th - Proverbs 12: 13,14

Evil consequences return to their source. Wicked words always come back to haunt and ensnare their speakers. The righteous encounter trouble as well. Yet theirs is not a self-generated misery. In fact, because they trust in the Lord, who causes all things to work together for their good (Rom. 8:28), they escape trouble and are led continually in the triumph of Christ (1 Cor. 15:57). Thus their words and deeds serve for their advancement and reward, not for their being cast down in shame and defeat.

Saturday, December 16 th - Proverbs 12: 15

The peevishness and pride of a fool close his mind to all counsel, all correction, and to consequent success in his endeavors. He consults only his vain and vacuous heart for intelligence, and is led blindly into many blunders. The wise man, however, is humble enough to realize that he has only a limited perspective on any given question. Thus, he seeks to see and consider matters through the numerous eyes of many counselors, correcting his course as necessary in order to achieve aims higher and better than at first even he had conceived.

Sunday, December 17 th - Proverbs 12: 16-18

A fool lacks discretion and the restraint of courtesy. If he is offended, he cries out for all to hear. Yet the prudent man lovingly and considerately bears with the infirmities of others. Unintended misdemeanors he endures quietly, for he loves their perpetrators more than he hates their failings. When such a prudent one does speak, however, his communications are true and right. Meanwhile, the bawling fool deceives, exaggerating offenses committed against him. Such loveless and rash speech wounds deeply in retaliation for superficial and relatively innocent annoyances received. In contrast, the quiet and loving bearing of all things (1 Cor. 13:7), and the faithful declaring of the truth in love, serve to heal both wounding and wounded parties.

Monday, December 18 th - Proverbs 12: 19,20

Men may hate those who speak the truth of God, but that truth and its proclaimers endure forever. Nor are the publishers of truth without present consolations. The truth of God invites men to make peace with God through the Redeemer. Those who declare such tidings of peace are filled with a sense of joyful privilege in their sharing, and exultation when others respond positively to their testimonies. In contrast, the lying tongue, though its subtlety or boisterous intimidation may win the day, enjoys short-lived triumphs. Even such brief victories are hollow. Those devising evil and employing a lying tongue to effect their aims know in their hearts that they stand on a sham, a pretense, a deception destined to be exposed and vanquished in the light of the truth. What kind of joy would this knowledge inspire within such liars?

Tuesday, December 19 th - Proverbs 12: 21

The righteous need not fear any circumstantial calamity. Even the darkest and most painful providences which come to them are ordained by God (Job. 1:8-12; 2:1-6) for their ultimate good (Rom. 8:28). The redeemed may even face death, the final enemy, with an eye steadied by the assurance that Christ has removed the sting of that great foe (1 Cor. 15:55-57; Heb. 2:14,15). The righteous may be confronted by threats, but threats have no power to harm them, or even, when threats are prayerfully and trustingly encountered, to disturb their inner peace (Phil. 4:6,7). But the wicked fall victim to circumstantial troubles which penetrate their souls, rendering them misery incarnate. Indeed, the worst troubles which afflict the wicked arise from within themselves.

Wednesday, December 20 th - Proverbs 12: 22,23

Untrue words spoken, even if they are uttered carelessly and never are acted upon, arouse the ire of Almighty God. Yet notice that the Lord directs His condemnation towards the speaker more so than towards what is spoken. That is because a foolish, perverse, and evil heart is a living source which conceives and proclaims lies and folly without any consideration of the injury such communications cause others, not to mention the God of truth Himself. The regenerate speak faithful words, and follow through consistently with faithful deeds. This incarnation of truthful integrity delights God, who sees the image of His own dear Son in such faithful souls. This is not to say, however, that faithful ones incessantly or indiscriminately disclose all that they know. Prudence takes account of

information possessed, the capacity of those to whom disclosure is being contemplated, the right and need others may have to know, and the personal motive for making declarations—all *before* speaking. These factors are weighed, and what one knows is then communicated or concealed accordingly.

Thursday, December 21 st - Proverbs 12: 23

A prudent person seeks to speak truth in love. Thus if he knows something, but realizes that his motive for declaring it is pride or vindictiveness, he will conceal the matter in silence. Likewise, if he knows something which is perhaps true, yet which if spoken would prove unnecessarily painful to another, his love will dictate that he keep such knowledge to himself. Only a fool uses his words to brag, or to hurt others. Even truth coming through fools is perverted into folly. Thus let us test our hearts and weigh our words.

Friday, December 22 nd - Proverbs 12: 24

The indolent attempt little, achieve less, and thus advance only in the realm of misery and bondage. Having little, if any, inner drive, they can be trusted to do nothing except render eye-service which is most ruthlessly supervised. But the diligent attempt and achieve great things, receiving promotion and honor in consequence of their accomplishments. These rule themselves, and especially their sinful tendencies, thus making themselves fit to have responsibility over others. The advancement of the diligent and demotion of the indolent extend beyond this life; for sloth is sin, diligence a godly virtue, each to be rewarded accordingly by the Lord (Mt. 25:14-30).

Saturday, December 23 rd - Proverbs 12: 25,26

Anxious cares, which not only come upon a man but which enter his heart so that they grow therein due to his unceasing ruminations upon them, form heavy burdens grievous to be borne. Yet sympathetic, affirming words often help to lighten the load and transform drudgery into delight. There is a right and wrong way to express sympathy and affirmation, however. The sympathy of the wicked is really only commiseration, their affirmation usually some form of cynical charge against God, His providence, and His people. Thus men are led to indulge their anxieties with bitter resentment, or to cast them off in a spirit of irresponsible rebellion. In this they are led astray by the counsel of sorry comforters. The righteous point the way to Christ, who not only sympathizes, but who also offers effective help (Heb. 4:15,16). By casting their burdens on Him, men are acting most responsibly, finding in the event that He who cares for them takes the burdens, replacing anxiety with His true and lasting peace (1 Pet. 5:7; Phil 4:6,7). May we be such righteous guides, gladdening the heart of an anxious soul this day.

Sunday, December 24 th - Proverbs 12: 27

The lazy soul never roasts his prey, because due to his self-indulgent sloth he never bestirs himself to the degree required to catch his prey. He lives on foolish and vain

hopes that things in life will come to him. Diligence, in contrast, is a precious possession enabling one to conceive and achieve ever higher aims. A man possessing diligence has the key to possessing all things.

Monday, December 25 th – Genesis 36: 10-14

These verses list the sons and grandsons of Esau. The names of the various sons are distributed in connection with the names of their mothers. We learn from this list and its arrangement that Esau had three wives who bore to him six sons. He also had nine grandsons. Jacob had two wives and two concubines who bore to him 12 sons. Jacob also had 57 grandsons and many granddaughters (Gen. 46:8-27). Esau, who made this world to be his aim, had less and less lastingly significant living fruit from his life than did Jacob, who sought first the kingdom of God, and was blessed with abundant and lastingly significant living fruit. To those who seek first the Lord, all true treasures are added to them (Mt. 6:33).

Tuesday, December 26 th – Genesis 36: 15-19

These verses list the chiefs of Esau's family. Such chiefs would have been civil and military leaders. They were comprised of all the sons of Eliphaz (Esau's grandsons) with three additional chiefs (presumably Esau's great grandsons), one of whom was the notorious Amalek, from whom the Amalekite enemies of Israel were descended. Renel's sons also were chiefs, and, as none of Oholibamah's four sons produced sons themselves, three of them served as chiefs. These chiefs were men of worldly rank and might. In comparison, Jacob's sons were humble shepherds. Yet, what does it profit a man to gain the world and lose his soul, while the meek inherit the earth?

Wednesday, December 27 th - Genesis 36: 20-30

The sons of Seir, with whom Esau mixed and whom he finally supplanted, are listed in those verses. The Bible introduced us to the people of Seir the Horite in Gen. 14:6, where they are listed as rebels against Chedorlaomer, whose confederacy subdued the Horites and defeated the alliance of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. That war of the kings resulted in Lot's having been taken, which, in turn, prompted Abraham's rescue of his nephew. The people of Seir could withstand neither Chedorlaomer nor Esau who came after him. The people of God can stand against all powers arrayed against them, for they are strong in the Lord and the strength of His might.

Thursday, December 28 th - Genesis 36: 31-39

These verses catalogue the kings of Edom and their cities. The people of Seir had many kings and impressive cities while the sons of Jacob lived as shepherds who sojourned in the land the Lord had promised to them as an everlasting possession. The people of the world receive their reward first and fully in this life; the people of the Lord learn trust in

their Lord and patience as they await a glorious and eternal inheritance that far exceeds anything in this earthly life.

Friday, December 29 th - Genesis 36: 31-39

It is repeatedly noted in this passage that all of these kings in the land of Edom died. Their reigns all came to an end when their lives expired. In contrast, those who are made to be more than conquerors through Christ will find that their reigning and triumphs in this life are but tiny tokens of the glorious and eternal reign they will share with Christ forever (Rev. 22:5).

Saturday, December 30 th - Genesis 36: 31-39

It is further to be noted regarding these kings that in no case did a king's son succeed him to his throne that was vacated by his death. This fact has led some to conclude that the ancient kings in the land of Edom were elevated by the people's choice, rather than by lineal descent. Perhaps a less likely but still possible explanation would be that none of these kings had sons to inherit their thrones. Whatever the case was, it is clear that no lasting kingdom obtained from the household of any of these kings, in stark contrast to the eternally enduring throne of the Son of God, whom the Father has established on His throne until all of His enemies are made a footstool for His feet (Ps. 2:6-9; 110:1).

Sunday, December 31 st - Genesis 36: 31-39

Some scholars believe that the kings here listed were Edomites descended from Esau. If so, as Matthew Henry writes: *Esau's blood becomes royal long before any of Jacob's did...the children of the covenant are often cast behind, and those that are out of the covenant get the start.* Yet, even though this may be the case, he also rightly remarks that the wicked are: *soon ripe, and as soon rotten.*

Monday, January 1 st - Genesis 36: 31-39

Other scholars assert that because none of the names of these kings are recognizably associated with the descendants of Esau, they were, in fact, Horonite kings that were displaced by Esau's descendants. If this was the case, it resulted not from Esau's power, but in fulfillment of the Lord's promise to Abraham, that He would make nations, such as Edom as well as Israel, come of him (Gen. 17:6).

Tuesday, January 2 nd - Genesis 36: 40-43

Here some of Esau's chiefs are again named in connection with the cities over which they ruled. These unregenerate ones had their possessions and high positions firmly established in this world, while Jacob and his sons lived in tents as sojourners in Canaan. It was by the common grace of the Lord that Esau and his descendants inhabited their possessions. It was by the saving grace of the Lord that Jacob and his descendants lived

not by possession but by promise. Their sojourning possession of Canaan was a token of the glorious substance of their heavenly inheritance.

Wednesday, January 3rd - Genesis 37: 1

In contrast to the earthly progress and prosperity of Esau and his sons, Jacob and his sons sojourned in Canaan. Esau's sons rose to worldly prominence, while Jacob's sons served their father as humble shepherds. Yet Esau's sons, as all men of the world, have their reward in this life. Jacob's sons, as all who are in Christ, endure afflictions here that produce for them an incomparable eternal weight of glory hereafter (2 Cor. 4:16-18). It is infinitely better that we possess a pledge of heavenly glory, wherein perfect righteousness and love prevail forever, than it would be were we to have full possession of a portion of this cursed world inhabited by sinful, fallen, loveless men.

Thursday, January 4th - Genesis 37: 1-4

From Esau came sons of material prosperity; from Jacob issued sons of divine mercy. What follows from this point to the end of Genesis is no mere catalogue of names and places and positions held among men, as was the case with Esau's descendants in the previous chapter. Rather, we are given a full account of how great was the need that Jacob's sons had for divine mercy, and how abundantly the Lord provided that mercy for them. We know of Reuben's sin (Gen. 35:22), and of the sins of Simeon and Levi (Gen. 34). We shall from this point onward in Genesis read an account of the jealousy, the near murder, and the selling into slavery, of Joseph by his brothers, and their lying to their father about their deeds. It is not the righteous, but sinners whom Jesus came into the world to call to salvation.

Friday, January 5th - Genesis 37: 1, 2

Jacob dwelt in Canaan as a sojourner with his sons. We learn from v.2 that their employment was that of shepherds. From this notice, we could gather that they had little hope of great success in this world. Furthermore, we shall learn that their family life was far from being characterized by grace and love. They also would endure great afflictions. What benefit, then, did they derive above that which Esau and his sons had? Their blessing was begun in their sufferings, which served as thorns and prods to drive sin out of them and to drive them away from complacency in this world. If it is only in this world that we have hope, we are of all men most to be pitied.

Saturday, January 6th - Genesis 37: 1-4

In this final main section of the Book of Genesis we find the focus to be upon one man. That man is neither Jacob, nor Jacob's first-born son, but rather it is Joseph. In comparison with all of the patriarchs, Joseph's character is the godliest. We can detect little, if any, sin in the Bible's account of his life. It is Joseph who proves to be the instrumental man of God's salvation for Jacob's family as well as many others in Egypt and beyond Egypt. Yet, the exaltation of Joseph does not precede but follows his

sufferings. John Calvin remarks that from the history of Joseph we learn that God, *...brings forth salvation for His Church not from magnificent splendor, but from death and the grave.* Joseph lived the early part of his life in the grave of his brothers' envy and rejection. He lived his middle years in the tomb of Egyptian slavery and prison. But through it all, the Lord brought salvation and exaltation to Joseph and to his family. We see the substance of Christ and His cross in the shadow of this most remarkable son of Jacob.

Sunday, January 7 th - Genesis 37: 2

We are introduced in this verse to Joseph when he was approaching adulthood. We are told of his occupation, and through this information we learn that he was not a spoiled youth, but rather one who worked along with his older brothers according to his father's direction and for his father's prosperity. We are also told in this verse that Joseph brought a bad report about his brothers to his father. It is critical at this point, which is foundational to our right understanding of Joseph, that we interpret his report to his father rightly. Joseph was not manufacturing this report, nor was he tale-bearing. His telling does not manifest the sinful defect of his youthful character. Rather, he is speaking the truth to his father, whose name, honor, and welfare were all being adversely affected by how Joseph's brothers were failing responsibly to care for their father's interests. Joseph was a man of truth, in stark contrast to his father Jacob's deceptiveness. The truth begins by condemning Joseph's brothers; it shall end by saving them. Naturally, we deserve nothing but a bad report of our characters and actions. By the grace of our Savior, we are a changed people, and shall one day stand before our heavenly Father blameless and with great joy (Jude 24).

Monday, January 8 th - Genesis 37: 3, 4

In these verses we are informed that Joseph was the special object of his father's love. That this father's love is not the capricious doting of an old man is indicated by Scripture referring to Jacob by his new name, Israel. That name, meaning prince of God, was conferred upon Jacob by God, and its use tends to indicate the new man, who had by faith wrestled and prevailed with God. Also, we are told why Joseph was greatly loved by Israel when we read that Joseph was literally a *son of ages*, namely a son who was wise beyond his years. Israel delighted in the godly character of his son in a way that he could not do with his other sons who had already manifested their ungodliness (recall Reuben and Jacob's concubine; Levi and Simeon and the men of Shechem), and would do so again in relation to Joseph. Israel and Joseph were more than father and son: they were soul-mates as are those who love and serve the Lord above all.

Tuesday, January 9 th - Genesis 37: 3, 4

Israel did not only love Joseph, but he expressed his love by giving to Joseph a garment that indicated a special exaltation above his brothers. It was not Joseph's fault that he was especially beloved of his father, neither was Jacob wrong to love his godly son and express affectionate approbation for him. Yet, Joseph's brothers hated him precisely

because of his father's special love for him. The wicked will always hate the righteous who are manifestly beloved of their heavenly Father.

Wednesday, January 10 th - Genesis 37: 4

The envy and hatred of his older brothers was the first cross Joseph would have to bear. It would not be the last. It surely was a grievous cross for a young man of 17 to be subjected to the rejection and ire of so many brothers who were so much older and more experienced and powerful in the ways of the world than he was. Here is a recipe for the development of psychological damage due to Joseph's being so abused within his own family. Yet, not a trace of psychological damage ever appears in Joseph. The reason, surely, is in part because the love of his father countered the hatred of his brothers. However, above Israel's love, it was the love of Joseph's heavenly Father that protected and healed him and was the singular focus that meant far more to Joseph than the hatred of his siblings.

Thursday, January 11 th - Genesis 37: 5-8

These verses recount Joseph's first dream, his telling of it, and the reaction of his brothers to it. There is a curious tendency among some Bible scholars and students to fault Joseph for telling his dream. Such fault-finders would do well to consider that the dream was given to Joseph by God, and it included a representation of his brothers. Joseph was faithfully declaring God's Word to his brothers. Let us beware of becoming allies with Joseph's godless brothers and joining them in hating the son whom Israel and the Lord especially loved.

Friday, January 12 th - Genesis 37: 5

As Israel had a special love for Joseph and expressed it by providing distinguishing clothing for him, so the Lord had a special love for Joseph and expressed it by filling his mind with divine revelation. When Joseph shared his dream with his brothers, he was sharing with them the treasure of God's truth that would save their lives. Yet, his brothers did not receive this treasure, but rejected it and grew in their rage toward the one who set it before them. Joseph's brothers would come to accept the truth in time, when by their bowing before Joseph in Egypt their lives would be saved.

Saturday, January 13 th - Genesis 37: 5

Joseph's brothers hated him because their father loved him. They hated him even more when they perceived that God had a special love for their younger brother. Nothing angers the wicked more than when they see that the righteous are the special objects of electing divine love. Hence, the world hated Jesus precisely because He was the beloved Son of God. Jesus tells us that if the world hated Him, it will hate those of us who are accepted by God in His beloved Son (Jn. 15:18).

Sunday, January 14 th - Genesis 37: 6-8

Joseph faithfully declares to his brothers what had been revealed to him by God. So faithful is Joseph in the report of this divine revelation that he does not represent himself as being favored by direct divine communication, but, more humbly, he acknowledges the frail means of the dream by which the Lord had spoken to him. A lowly dream is far different from a ruler's decree. Yet, Joseph's brothers are deeply offended by his telling of this dream. That is because although the world regards the proclamation of God's Word to be weak and foolish, that Word is in fact the sword of the Spirit that pierces men's hearts.

Monday, January 15 th - Genesis 37: 6-8

The content of this dream is simply that while the sons of Israel were binding sheaves, Joseph's sheaf was exalted while those of his brothers fell prostrate before it. There is some significance to the sheaves. They are a sign of food that sustains life. They are also for Israel's sons a sign of change, for they were shepherds, not farmers. Years after this time, a vital difference would be evident between Joseph and his brothers: he would have food in Egypt, and they would have it only by their coming to him and humbly requesting it from him. There is always more to God's Word and works and servants than at first occur to the casual observer. There is food that is of vital importance for the body and soul in the most obscure passage of Scripture, and men can grasp it only by their humble exercise of faith.

Tuesday, January 16 th - Genesis 37: 6-8

The sheaves were in association with Israel's sons, and thus representative of them, in particular, as sources of life-sustaining sustenance. As such, Joseph's life, as represented by his sheaf, was one of exalted nature in itself and nourishment as it pertained to others. Joseph's brothers are represented as being less exalted in themselves, and nourishing to others only to the extent that they bowed themselves before the man of the Lord's choosing, namely, the brother they hated, but by whose grace their lives would in due course be saved. Our lives are saved only as we submit ourselves to and honor Jesus, our heavenly Joseph, and we bring blessing to others only as we humbly receive blessing from Him.

Wednesday, January 17 th - Genesis 37: 6-8

The sheaves are also a sign of divine sovereignty in the way of their arrangement in Joseph's dream. One is exalted, the others are brought low. Joseph does not say that he raised up his own sheaf, causing it to prevail over his brothers' sheaves. Rather, his sheaf was made to rise up by the power of a hand invisible in the dream. Faith enables us to perceive that hand that exalts and humbles to be the hand of the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth. Our highest good is maintained not when we hate the Man of God's exaltation, as the rulers and people of the earth do in Psalm 2, and as Joseph's brothers were doing here, but rather when we reverently kiss the Son of divine exaltation and consequently live (Ps. 2:12).

Thursday, January 18 th - Genesis 37: 6-8

The sheaves were a sign of divine grace, as well as of divine sovereignty. It would be precisely because of Joseph's exaltation in Egypt that his sinful and unworthy brothers would be saved from death by starvation. When we are told that our Redeemer must increase and that we must decrease, we do well to remember that His sufferings and exaltation issue from divine grace and serve for our greatest good. Our highest and happiest position is that we lie at His feet.

Friday, January 19 th - Genesis 37: 6-8

The true significance of this divine revelation to Joseph was to prove an encouragement and a sustaining comfort to him amidst his suffering the hatred and rejection of his brothers as well as through his prolonged afflictions in Egypt. Though men despise, reject, and persecute the godly, the Lord comforts the righteous through His Word and Spirit with the truth that they are precious to Him and will be preserved and promoted by Him.

Saturday, January 20 th - Genesis 37: 6-8

Some see Joseph's telling his dream to his brothers as being a manifestation of immature and insensitive boasting, if not carnal bragging. Such constructions upon the motives that prompted Joseph's action appear to issue more from secular psychological analysis than from theological reflection. The fact is that the Lord revealed Himself and something of His sovereign and gracious plan and purpose to Joseph through his dream. Since Joseph's brothers were included in that divine revelation, it was reasonable and faithful for Joseph to share what the Lord had shown to him, thereby making prophetic declaration that proved to be true and that Joseph's brothers would have done well to receive with reverence and to ponder for their edification. Their guilt and misery would not have been controlling features of their lives had they esteemed Joseph highly instead of sticking him in a hole and consigning him to slavery and prison in Egypt. We always do well to honor those whom the Lord honors (1 Sam. 2:30).

Sunday, January 21 st - Genesis 37: 6-8

It is significant that Joseph merely proclaimed his dream but did not expound upon it. His brothers are the ones who perceive and express the right interpretation of the dream. The Word of God, even in its mysterious aspects, is more clearly understood by those who hear it than we may realize. Yet, while Joseph's brothers rightly understand the meaning of this dream, they reject both the message that was given for their admonition and the man who was the focus of this divine revelation and who would be the savior of their lives. Sinners do not have intellectual difficulties with the Word of God so much as they have moral difficulties with it. They know what Scripture says, but they resist accepting the Savior and salvation that the Word of God declares.

Monday, January 22 nd - Genesis 37: 9-11

Joseph has another dream, given to him by the Lord so that by the testimony of these two witnesses to the saving purpose of God the matter might be confirmed. The Lord hereby enabled Joseph to possess a strong and unshakeable confidence in the divine promise, so that he would be sustained through all of the trials, afflictions, and deaths through which he had to pass before he experienced his resurrection and exaltation.

Tuesday, January 23 rd - Genesis 37: 9-11

In this second dream, the exaltation of Joseph becomes clearer. The magnitude of his exaltation is seen to be greater through the vision of celestial bodies, not mere earthly sheaves, giving homage to him. From the correct interpretation of this dream, declared this time by Joseph's father (v.10), we see that it is Joseph's whole family, not just his brothers, bowing to him with deepest respect. Also, they bow not to Joseph's sheaf, representing his provision, but to the person of Joseph himself. The exalting effect that those who bow to Joseph would experience is seen in the representation of the members of Joseph's family as celestial bodies. Where men would revile and seek to tear down the Lord's servants, the Lord lifts His servants to ever greater heights. Though men would crucify the Christ whom Joseph foreshadows, the Lord exalts Him to highest glory, and glorifies all who bow to Him in loving worship and grateful service.

Wednesday, January 24 th - Genesis 37: 9-11

This dream is told to a wider audience because the elements in it represent more than Joseph's brothers. The sun is, as Jacob rightly interprets it to be in v.10, Joseph's father; the moon is his mother; the eleven stars are his brothers. Joseph was therefore right to declare God's prophetic word to his whole family. However, whereas his father expressed a right interpretation of this dream, he offers his son not homage but a rebuke. The brothers continue in their hatred, but grow in jealousy due very likely to their begrudging realization that the dreams may indeed be prophetic indicators of the future exaltation of their brother, Joseph. Although Jacob issued an initial rebuke to Joseph for his believing and declaring this dream, the faith of Joseph's father must have prompted him to a reconsideration of and reflection upon the probability that the God who had exalted him above his older brother was, in fact, declaring His intention to exalt Joseph above his whole family. Jealousy, rebukes, hatred, and rejection are not fitting responses to the message of the Servant of God who would graciously save all who submit themselves to Him.