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Our scripture reading this morning is in Psalm 34. This is titled in the New King James, The Happiness of Those Who Trust in God. And we have seen all through our study of Genesis from the very beginning, when we first find Adam and Eve in the garden, that the issue that is explored, and it's like examining a gem, and turning it and looking through the different facets, and exploring it from different perspectives.

Everything that we have seen in Genesis, in one way or another, has to do with man's relationship with God. That's the issue. And it's very easy to become caught up in the details of this life, in circumstances, in relationships, responsibilities, duties, tasks to be performed, and lose sight of the fact that, just as in the book of Genesis, in our lives, the central issue is our relationship with God.

We are going to dwell with God for all eternity. And there is a great gulf between us, as fallen human beings, and God in His divine perfection. And fortunately, we have a transition between our fallen state and our eternal state, where we get the chance to learn and grow, and come to appreciate, not only intellectually, but also experientially, the character of God, the grace of God.

There are things that we can only learn in a fallen world, and struggling against a fallen nature. As Jesus told the assembled gathering in the house, when the lady came and was washing his feet with her hair and her tears, and the religious man is thinking in his heart, well, if he knew who that woman was, he wouldn't let her anywhere near his person. And Jesus, understanding his thoughts, says, He who has been forgiven little, loves little.

He that has been forgiven much, loves much. And it's our experience in this world, even our failures. God works together for good, because we come to appreciate through our experience.

The angels are watching, but the unfallen angels, there's a great hymn that has these words, the angels can never know the joy that our salvation brings. They can watch and they can observe and they can appreciate a lot about God, but we have the experience of having been lost and hopeless, and of having been redeemed by God's grace. And it's our opportunity in this life to learn and to grow in our relationship with God, and what great appreciation and what great joy we're going to have when we're in his presence, if we pursue that calling.

If we get distracted and become caught up in the affairs of this life, as I've mentioned many times, it reminds me of working a story problem in math. Some people, my daughter is one of them, really love a good story and get caught up in a story and just virtually live, it's like being transported to another place in time, another world, you just live the experiences of that story. And that's a good thing when you're in the Word of

God, but if it's a story problem and the point is, can you develop a formula and solve for X in this story problem? But if you get all concerned about, well, so Mary is on a train that left Chicago at 11.14 a.m. and she's trying to get to Boston, and there's a train coming the other way, oh, poor Mary, I wonder if she's going to make it in time.

You get all caught up in the details, and really the story is just a construct to give you the opportunity to apply your mathematical knowledge, to say, well, here's my rate-time-distance formula, which I've memorized, and so I'll multiply and I'll figure out when these are going to meet and whether or not her son is going to be there to pick her up if he leaves in a car from X town and so forth, but not to get wrapped up and miss the point, make a goal out of the problem rather than what the problem is designed to teach, and this happens in our lives because the circumstances in our lives are designed to bring us to a place of application and a place of knowledge and growth, and to miss that and to not grow and to not understand God and to appreciate Him, when we come face-to-face with Him, it isn't going to be the grand, glorious thing that we like to anticipate. There are going to be a lot of us that will be somewhat embarrassed and really don't want to come up, or maybe even fearful. Here the Lord Jesus has just slain 186,000 with the sword from His mouth and the blood's running as high as the horse's bridles.

There's a lot of people who, because they don't understand the plan and the purpose of God, they don't understand the relationship between good and evil and warfare and that there is a time of judgment, and they may think the judgment is harsh, and even as believers coming into the presence of God in the first days of the millennial kingdom are going to have to try to get over their shock, that, is this really the God that saved me? I don't understand. Well, why is that? Wasted time in this life. We want to avoid that problem.

We want to take advantage of the time that God has given us, each day that we buy up because the days are evil. This is what David is talking about here in Psalm 34, and it's what the book of Genesis, as the opening section of the Word of God, teaches us as well. It's our relationship with God.

David says in Psalm 34, I will bless the Lord at all times. You can stop right there and make a whole sermon just on that. You're going to bless the Lord at all times? What about those bad spots? What about those difficulties? What about my frustrations? What about when I have failed and I'm in a hot spot because of my own malfunctions? Can I bless the Lord at that time? Can I bless the Lord when I was really counting on something and it didn't come through? I look at a particular area of life and every time I think about it, it's a pain and a disappointment.

David says, I will bless the Lord at all times. And, of course, we have many passages that parallel that. His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

My soul shall make its boast in the Lord. The humble shall hear of it and be glad. Oh,

magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt His name together.

I sought the Lord and He heard me and delivered me from all my fears. They looked to Him and were radiant and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried out and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.

The angel of the Lord encamps around all those who fear Him and delivers them. Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man who trusts in Him.

Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints. There is no want to those who fear Him. The young lions lack and suffer hunger.

But those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing. Come, you children, listen to me. I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

Who is the man who desires life and loves many days that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it.

The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are open to their cry. The face of the Lord is against those who do evil to cut off remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cry out and the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.

The Lord is near to whom? To those who have a broken heart and saves such as have a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers Him out of them all. Isn't it amazing to lay that verse alongside the ones above? The afflictions of the righteous are many, and yet look at all of the other blessings of the righteous that are in this passage.

The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are open to their cry. God is watching and God is hearing in the case of the righteous, but He lets those afflictions come in and delivers Him out of them all. It is the Lord's deliverance that we should be watching for and waiting for and enjoying when it comes and looking back on.

He guards all His bones. Not one of them is broken. Evil shall slay the wicked and those who hate the righteous shall be condemned.

The Lord redeems the soul of His servants and none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned. It's a wonderful psalm. It's a wonderful reminder of who we are and why we're here and what God is up to, especially when we seem to be facing challenges and difficulties.

And that, of course, is the lot in life of the people that we have studied thus far in Genesis. We're coming rapidly to the close of the Jacob section of Genesis and anticipating, beginning in chapter 37, the story of Joseph. And we're at a transitional

point, and we see Jacob at a transitional point because he's sojourned up in Haran.

He has returned to the land. He got stopped short there in Shechem and had the Dinah incident and the slaughter by Simeon and Levi in particular. And now he is moving on, and God speaks to him and reminds him that he has a destination.

God had promised him when he left the land that he should return and worship him at Bethel. So God reminds him at the beginning of chapter 35, Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there, and make an altar there to God. There are three imperatives in that verse.

Arise. Why does he have to say arise? Because Jacob has more or less sat down in Shechem. He got stalled, and he's been doing many, he's learned a lot during his sojourn, but just at the point of pushing that last, it's like I used to have the physical fitness test in the Marine Corps.

Every year you have to pass what they call the PFT, physical fitness test. It has three parts, sit-ups, pull-ups, and a three-mile run. To max your score, each of those contributes about a third to the score.

And so if you can do as many as, I believe it's 80 sit-ups in two minutes, that gives you the maximum score for sit-ups. If you can do 20 pull-ups without leaving the bar and without doing strange contortions, just a dead-hang pull-up, you do 20 of those, that's a maximum score. And then if you can run the three-mile run in 18 minutes, that's a perfect score.

That's basically three six-minute miles. And, of course, if you don't get quite that far, you get a percentage of the maximum, and that constitutes your score. And there are minimums that are set so that everyone is found to be in good shape.

Well, the three-mile run in particular is something that you can't just wait and do once a year. You have to keep yourself in some kind of shape. Some people have a natural physical strength.

They can do sit-ups. They can do pull-ups. But when it gets to the run, you can't run three miles without some training, not in 18 minutes.

So a lot of times your training doesn't quite bring you up to where you need to be. And so you run. You do very well.

You just kind of blow the carbon out of your pipes. You're feeling good on the first mile. And usually the course is a mile and a half out and a mile and a half back.

So as you're running out there, those people who got ahead of you, they'll be passing you as you're still getting to the halfway mark. And then as you turn around, hopefully there are people behind you that are in worse shape than you are, and you see them

coming. And, you know, during that second mile, you get this air of smugness as you see these other people that haven't run as fast as you, and you're doing fine.

But if you don't pace, I'm talking from my own experience. I'm sure there are people who do this better than I do. But it's that third mile.

It's the last mile. And as you run, and now pretty much all the people that left are gone. And in that last mile, you're not passing anybody.

You don't get that little arrogance motivation going anymore. You've used up all of the resident sugar in your system and the resident energy that was stored in your muscles. The lactic acid is kicking in.

Of course, you can tell that I was never a real ace at this. And your cardiovascular fitness begins to manifest itself in that last bit, especially when you get to the last half mile. I was at Fort Sill for four years and ran this same course year after year.

And the last half mile was a straight stretch. The rest of it wound through the east area of the artillery range and so forth. But you would come back, and then there's this long, straight stretch.

You can see the guys in their camouflage utilities down there with their clipboards and their stopwatches and so forth. And you've just got this long, level stretch. And you think, oh, I can see the goal.

And you start trying to sprint. You find that you don't have much gas left in the tank. And I would actually see, especially if you had enlisted Marines that you needed to pass the test because it reflects on your unit and your leadership and everything else.

You want everybody to do well as a unit. Guys would just not think that they could finish. They would get to that stretch, and they would see that long half a mile, and they would think, I'll never make it.

And they would just slow down to a dog trot or even stop and begin to walk. And we'd find fellow Marines would sort of sacrifice their score to pick this person up and get him on in, to run with him, pace him, help him make it the whole three miles. But that last half mile, sometimes you look at it, and you just kind of think, well, I'm just not ready.

I don't have what it takes. You almost get that feeling with Jacob. And it happens a lot in our lives where we can experience a time of growth and increase of wisdom and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we're just on the verge of cresting the hill and getting to that last few yards, and we can hit a discouragement or a distraction or begin to feel the weight of pressures that are on us. And it is as though everything is conspiring to keep us from making it that last

few yards, that last half mile of the run. And you get the idea that this is sort of what happened to Jacob.

Here he's been sojourning for all of this time in Haran, and he's come back. He's resolved the issues with Laban. He's resolved the issues with Esau.

He's learned a lot about the rights of the firstborn and about humility and about God's provision and everything else. And the Shechem, if he could just get past Shechem and make it to Bethel, he would be where he's supposed to be. And he stalls out and all these bad things happen.

So we want to take a bookmark and put in our minds here that sometimes after we've learned a lot and we've had a series of victories, there's another little patch of the journey to cross that we want to get through. And Jacob kind of has a mixed experience there. He doesn't do too well.

You can see that his father authority hasn't been well exercised. And he hasn't overseen the care of his daughter. He doesn't take responsibility when bad things happen.

And we've seen the parallels to David. But to Jacob's credit, he picks himself up and dusts himself off. And when God speaks to him in 35.1, it says, Arise.

He gives him these three imperatives. Arise. Pick yourself up.

Get back on your feet. Get back into mobile mode and let's get moving. Arise.

Go up to Bethel and dwell there. That's the place where you're supposed to strong back your tents and stay a while is Bethel. And make an altar there to God who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau, your brother.

So he has a total of four imperatives there. Arise. Go to Bethel.

Dwell there. And then make an altar. He's got to get there and then make his altar.

It's very interesting because if you recall back in chapter 33 at the end, when Jacob came here to Shechem in verse 18, which is in the land of Canaan. He came from Paddan Aram. He pitched his tent before that city.

He bought a parcel of land where he pitched his tent from the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for 100 pieces of money. You find out at the end of the book of Joshua, it says it was 100 pieces of silver because this is eventually where Joseph is going to be buried. When they bring up Joseph's bones from Egypt and after they conquer the land and come back after all these hundreds of years, Joseph, his mummified body is going to be interred on this plot of ground.

But look at what it says in verse 20. He erected an altar there and called it El Elohe

Yisrael. God had given him that name in the wrestling match.

Your name will be called Israel. So he says, God, the God of Israel. This is God, my God.

And that's the altar that he erects there. But God says, don't stick around that altar. I want you to go to Bethel and build an altar.

It's the first time that God gives a command in no previous patriarch all the way back to Adam. We don't have any explicit command from God that says go build an altar. This is the first time.

Why is that? Well, Jacob built this altar outside of Shechem and he called it El Elohe Yisrael. God, the God of Israel, which is him. God says, no, you go to Bethel and build an altar there.

Jacob is going to do so. And as we saw last time, verse 6, Jacob came to Luz, that is Bethel, which is in the land of Canaan. He and all the people who were with him.

And he built an altar there and he called the place El Bethel. Because God had appeared to him there when he fled from the face of his brother. It's interesting to compare the names of these altars.

Because in Shechem, God is the God of Israel. He's my God. Here, God is the God of his own revelation.

God chose to appear to him there. God picked the place. God said build the altar.

Now there's no reference to Jacob in the name. It's God's name that's repeated twice. God, the God of the house of God, if you will.

Bethel means house of God, dwelling place of God. And that's the place where Jacob is supposed to go dwell, is where God dwells. And that's at Bethel.

So you get the idea that Jacob's got his eyes a lot more on himself back there at Shechem. He says, well, I've got God, but he's the God for me. He's the God that's going to enable me to do what I want to do.

When he gets to Bethel, he says, well, God is the God that's going to do what he wants to do. And there's a little bit, you can see a shift in perspective just in the naming of these two altars. Then we have this interesting note in verse 8, that Deborah, Rebecca's nurse, died and she was buried below Bethel under the terebinth tree.

And there are so many things I wish we could take time to explore. It would take the rest of our lives to get through Genesis. But just remember that when he told his household to pack up and go back in verse 2, he said, put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, change your garments, let us arise and go up.

So in verse 4, they gave him all the foreign gods that were in their hands and the jewelry that was in their ears, the rings, these were marks of idol worship. It's sort of like, not exactly like, but it's sort of like the fashion today of people wearing crosses. 20, 30 years ago they used to wear this little funny ankh thing that came from Egypt.

It looks like a cross, but it has a loop in the top. Then for a while they had this thing that looked like a withering carrot. I don't know what that is.

It's just kind of a wiggly looking carrot, wider at the top, smaller at the bottom. I don't know what that is. But people will adopt this as kind of a symbol and it's sort of a fashion statement.

And it implies that they have some kind of a mystical or religious thought in their head from time to time. Well, there were these jewelry items that were somehow associated with these teraphim and these idols. And he says, not only the teraphim themselves, but anything that reminds you of them.

Gather all of this stuff together. And what does he do? He buries it under the terebinth tree that is by Shechem. So you have these idols being buried under a tree.

And then a few verses later you have Deborah, Rebecca's nurse, dying and being buried under a tree. And it's just an odd juxtaposition. In the whole book of Genesis, how often do you have something being buried under a tree? And yet these are only a couple of verses apart.

Why is that? Well, I will tell you that I did not dwell on this extensively. But it is a reminder of a couple of different things. First of all, you remember the closeness of Rebecca and Jacob.

Esau was Isaac's favorite. Jacob was Rebecca's favorite. And in the same way that there was this fixation on the idols and the teraphim, and Jacob had sort of tolerated this within his household, and then he says, well, we're going to Bethel.

He didn't make anybody get rid of the teraphim at Shechem when he built his altar and said, God, the God of Israel. But now that he's going to Bethel and building the altar at God's command, in God's place, he says, we've got to be pure. We're even going to change our clothes.

We're going to purify ourselves and put on fresh garments before we go there. He's casting off the old baggage, purging out the old leaven, if you will. And you think, well, now why this strange notice about Rebecca's nurse of all things? But what does this tell us? There is no notice anywhere in Genesis of the death of Rebecca.

We have the death of Sarah. We have the death of Rachel, the death of Leah. A lot of these others are noted, but there's no mention made of Rebecca and when she died.

We're going to be looking at this more a little bit in a moment in terms of what happens when. But Rebecca's nurse, her closest handmaid, her lifelong servant and companion and friend and mentor probably, is with Jacob. What does that tell us? At some previous time, during his sojourn in Haran, most likely, Rebecca passed away.

How did Jacob get the news? Well, the nurse traveled to the favorite son and said, Jacob, here I am. And Jacob probably, when he saw her afar off, knew what this had to mean. This lady would never be apart from Rebecca unless Rebecca was gone.

So this was probably the means by which Jacob knew that his mother had passed away. And Deborah, it would be analogous to the earring that's associated with the worship of something. She's the reminder.

And when she passes away and she's buried under a tree, this in a way is Jacob's release, his putting aside symbolically of this fixation that he had with his mother. He's heading back into the land. When he goes to Bethel, he's going to be back in the actual land of promise.

Is he going to fall back into this modern psychologist would probably say that they were codependent. They had an unhealthy relationship with one another. This is what got Jacob in trouble to begin with and Rebecca with him.

She's the one that participated and even encouraged and suggested a lot of the deceit. And God has removed that stumbling block. And when Deborah is buried under the tree, it's like burying the earrings and the idols under the other tree.

This is going to be the sin that so easily besets. And Jacob tells his household, we're going to put these things aside. And before Jacob gets to Bethel to renew his momentum and his relationship with God, this lady, just symbolically, I'm sure she was a wonderful lady or she wouldn't have been with Rebecca all those years.

But the Bible notes the fact that she's laid to rest under the tree. And you can think in our own lives there are things that we have to discard. Jesus talked about this in the plucking out of the eye and the cutting off of the hand.

Even things that are precious to us. There comes a time if it is a stumbling block, if it's going to prevent us from enjoying the blessings and rewards of the kingdom, it is something that has to be severed and set aside. So that would be my suggestion to you as to why we have verse 8 in Genesis at all.

Then in verse 9, God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan Arim and blessed him. And God said, your name is Jacob, your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name. So he called his name Israel.

He told him, he predicted it during the wrestling match, but this is where it actually takes

place. This is analogous to, recently it was in the news that some actors and actresses have received honors from the Queen. I think the lady that was Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman, I don't remember her name, but she's from England.

And she's been made a dame. Sean Connery has been knighted, he's Sir Sean now, recently. And they notify people that this is coming weeks and even months ahead of time.

They say, well, you're on the final list, you're going to be knighted come February or March or whatever. And then at some point you actually go down there and they whack you on the shoulder and say you're a knight of the bath or whatever. You're a KBE.

And so you have the promise of it and the certainty of it and then there's a gap and then you have the fulfillment. Samuel went and anointed David when he was a lad. It was many years before he actually took the throne of Israel, but the anointing oil was poured on his head in advance.

And he had that expectation for a good while previous. In the same way, God told Jacob, your name will be Israel. Well, here he gets the whack on the shoulder with the sword and now he is Israel.

That's what God is going to call him. I had a very good question submitted to me after we studied the wrestling match. Which was, well, Abraham, he was Abram up to a certain point and God renamed him and said you will no longer be Abram, you'll be Abraham.

Your wife will no longer be Sarai, she will be Sarah. From that point on in Genesis, that's the only name that is used of Abraham and Sarah. It's very definite.

They're Abram and Sarai up to their renaming and then they're Abraham and Sarah. Jacob, however, even after this point, look at verse 14. Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked.

Verse 20, Jacob set a pillar on her grave. Verse 22, the sons of Jacob were. And he's obviously called Jacob all the way down through the rest of scripture.

It is mainly in poetic passages and in later passages where he is put as the house of Jacob or the house of Israel. These terms seem to be interchangeable. The question is, why doesn't the same thing happen with Jacob that happened with Abraham? How come he's just not Israel from now on? I am aware of that question.

I have an answer for that question. It's not the subject of our study this morning as much as you might think it would be because of this verse. But I will tell you that we'll cover it before we get much further.

But we have something else we need to cover first. I will not leave you just twisting slowly in the wind though. Jacob is this man's name from birth and through his early days.

He has the promise of being called Israel. There's a point at which he is named Israel. But in a lot of ways he is still Jacob.

Because Israel is his fulfillment name. It's his national name. The nation is not called Jacob except poetically.

It's called Israel. And Israel is the potential. Israel is the fulfillment of all of God's promises.

And I would suggest to you, and we will document this when we study it directly. But you can see this even in the prophets. If you go to passages where both terms are used, when God says, House of Jacob, often, not always, but often it is their potential.

Or it is the nation of Israel even in failure. House of Jacob is used a lot in the major prophets when God is pointing out the fact that they have failed. And Israel is, Jacob is more the beginning.

It would be like an ingressive heiress. Emphasis on the beginning. Israel is like a culminative heiress.

It's emphasis on the end or the result. And it's fascinating. We'll go look at these passages when we study this directly.

Where even when they are used in the same verse and in the same breath, God will say, I have redeemed Jacob. And I have given Israel my inheritance. Well, just think about that phrase.

That's a paraphrase of an actual verse from Isaiah. I have redeemed Jacob. I have given Israel my inheritance.

Well, redemption is what's common for all believers. That's all of the saved. That's our beginning point.

Inheritance is the remnant. The seed. The Israel that is truly Israel.

The ones who are sons indeed. Who fulfill the potential. So, redemption emphasizes the beginning.

Inheritance emphasizes the goal or the end. Unfortunately, not all of us get from point A to point B as we should. But this is the emphasis of those names.

And the fact that he's continued to be called Jacob. And that the nation which comes

from his loins is often called the house of Jacob. Is a reminder that we need to get from that point A to point B. As we saw in our scripture reading this morning in Psalm 34.

It's one thing to belong to God. It's something else to be the righteous. And to have God's eyes and God's ears on us.

So, that's as much as I'm going to say about that right now. He goes on in verse 11. God said to him, I am God Almighty.

Be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you. And kings shall come from your body.

The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, I give to you. And to your descendants after you, I give this land. Then God went up from him in the place where he talked with him.

So, Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him. A pillar of stone. And he poured a drink offering on it.

And he poured oil on it. Trivia note. This is the first mention of a drink offering anywhere in scripture.

When you look at the five major offerings that are detailed in Leviticus. None of them is a drink offering. It is not a commanded offering.

And yet it was very significant in Israel. It's described and mentioned several places. The most famous passage is probably Paul in the New Testament.

Saying, I, toward the close of his ministry. He says, even now I'm being poured out as a drink offering. But this was something that was poured over the main offering.

And the oil or the wine or whatever this drink offering was. Would ascend in the smoke and the steam of the fire that consumed the burnt offering. Or the sin offering.

And it was an addition. It was a free will over and above idea. And you get the idea that Jacob has really reclaimed his direction and his momentum here.

When he comes to Bethel. He's purged out these old things. He's free from the last remnants of some of the problems that plagued him in his earlier life.

He sets up the pillar and he pours out a drink offering. And he pours oil on it. And oil of course is dedication.

It's a consecration. It is a designation as something holy and set apart to God. Jacob called the place, the name of the place where God spoke with him.

Bethel. It's actually El Bethel. That he names the altar there.

Then in verse 16. They journeyed from Bethel. And when there was but a little distance to go in Ephrath.

Rachel labored in childbirth and she had hard labor. Now it came to pass when she was in hard labor. That the midwife said to her.

Do not fear. You will have this son also. So it was as her soul was departing.

For she died. That she called his name Ben-Oni. Oni is pain.

So this would literally be son of my sorrow. Or son of my pain. But his father called him Ben-Yamin.

Yamin is the right hand. So Jacob says he's not the son of sorrow. He's the son of the right hand.

So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath. That is Bethlehem. And Jacob set a pillar on her grave.

Which is the pillar of Rachel's grave to this day. Now what is this day? It's always interesting when you find these notices in scripture. And it says it is so you can find it even to this day.

You'll go out there and you'll still see the rock where the Philistines. Where they found the Ark of the Covenant when it came back from the Philistines. And they set it on a stone in someone's field.

And he says that stone is there to this day. Well you have to ask yourself. Well what is this day? I mean it's not the present.

It's when the writer or the editor added this comment. And of course since Genesis comes from the hand of Moses. And was handed to Joshua who also apparently made some editorial comments.

Such as the death of Moses and so forth. This would have been in the very early days of the occupation of the land by Israel. At the latest.

So even those hundreds of years later when they returned to the land. That pillar was still standing in Ephrath or near Bethlehem. It happened when Israel dwelt in that land that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine.

And Israel heard about it. And this is where we're going to need to stop. We're going to pause here and take our break.

And when we come back we've got to resolve a little bit of chronology here. And I'll explain more about that when we return. But we've got to rethink something that we've

already covered.

In terms of how long things took and how old people are and so forth. If you think about this. How can Reuben be old enough to commit this act at this time? That's the key that is going to open up an entire line of investigation that we'll pursue when we come back from our break.

But as we close this lesson. As we've seen from beginning to end here. Beginning with our scripture reading in Psalm 34.

And looking at the life of Jacob. Everything that happens. And Jacob can number many failures in his experience up to this point.

But the promise of Israel. The promise of inheritance. The promise of God's blessing.

And the fulfillment of God's purpose in his life. Is always there because that depends on God. All Jacob has to do is continue to return.

To not get to that last half mile of the race and say, you know, I'm just never going to get there. To come back and claim the grace of God no matter what. God works all of these things together for good.

And the afflictions of the righteous are before the eyes of the Lord. It doesn't say the outside afflictions. It doesn't say except for the self-induced afflictions.

God doesn't make any provision for those. All of our afflictions. All of our trials.

Are there as an occasion for us to learn the grace of God. To come to appreciate the mercy and the character of God. And it is nowhere more clear than it is in the life of Jacob.

Where God is going to take him and make a great nation. God is going to reveal and reflect his glory in this nation. That comes from this man.

Who is flawed. Who does make mistakes. But the outstanding characteristic of Jacob is.

He knows the value of a relationship with God. And he never stops coming back. He never says, I've really done it this time.

Look at this mess and check them. Lord, there's no point in me going to Bethel. I'm just not worthy.

He says, regardless of the baggage we've picked up here. Let's bury it under the tree. Let's get on down there to Bethel.

Let's raise the rock. Let's anoint it with oil. And it's a wonderful reminder of what's possible in God's plan.

If we just come back to his grace. Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back.

I'm going to surprise you with something. That you may not have realized in the chronology of Genesis.