

99-07-11a

In our scripture reading this morning in Psalm 107, you may remember that the book of Psalms has been traditionally divided into five volumes, or five sub-books. Psalm 107 is the first psalm in the fifth and final book. It is subtitled in my New King James here, The Song of the Redeemed.

We sang a couple of hymns this morning, both of which made reference to our redemption and the work of Christ on our behalf. And this psalm rehearses the history of Israel in broad and general terms and how God has delivered them from all distress. It's a wonderful reminder to us as we study the life of Abraham and it draws to a close in our study this morning to remember that God has been the redeemer and the sustainer, the one who has promised and the one who has fulfilled those promises by blessing Abraham in every area of his life.

So let's read Psalm 107 this morning. O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he has redeemed from the hand of the enemy, and gathered out of the land from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.

They wandered in the wilderness in a desolate way. They found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.

Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses. And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city for a dwelling place. O that men would give thanks to the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men.

For he satisfies the longing soul and fills the hungry soul with goodness. Those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, bound in affliction and irons, because they rebelled against the words of God and despised the counsel of the Most High, therefore he brought down their hearts with labor. They fell down, and there was none to help.

Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and broke their chains in pieces. O that men would give thanks to the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men.

For he has broken the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron in two. Fools, because of their transgression and because of their iniquities, were afflicted. Their soul abhorred all manner of food, and they drew near to the gates of death.

Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses. He sent his word and healed them and delivered them from their

destructions. O that men would give thanks to the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men.

Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving and declare his works with rejoicing. Those who go down to the sea in ships, who do business on great waters, they see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep. For he commands and raises the stormy winds, lifts up the waves of the sea.

They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths. Their soul melts because of trouble. They reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end.

Then they cry out to the Lord in their trouble, and he brings them out of their distresses. He calms the storm so that its waves are still. Then they are glad because they are quiet, because he guides them to their desired haven.

O that men would give thanks to the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men. Let them exalt him also in the assembly of the people and praise him in the company of the elders. He turns rivers into a wilderness and the water springs into dry ground, a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of those who dwell in it.

He turns a wilderness into pools of water and dry land into water springs. There he makes the hungry dwell that they may establish a city for a dwelling place and sow fields and plant vineyards that they may yield a fruitful harvest. He also blesses them and they multiply greatly, and he does not let their cattle decrease.

When they are diminished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow, he pours contempt on princes and causes them to wander in the wilderness where there is no way. Yet he sets the poor on high, far from affliction, and makes their families like a flock. The righteous see it and rejoice, and all iniquity stops its mouth.

Whoever is wise will observe these things, and they will understand the loving kindness of the Lord." May God add his blessing to the reading of that particular section of his words this morning. It is a wonderful thing to realize that the loving kindness of God, his goodness, and his wonderful works to the children of men includes these phases of discipline where God turns the fruitful land into barrenness. He dries up the pools and turns prosperity to adversity because it is adversity that turns our hearts to the Lord.

The great challenge is to learn these lessons so that when we find ourselves in prosperity, we do not forget and are not required to go through the dry and barren times in order to have our hearts return to the Lord. What a wonderful thing it is to be in prosperity and remember the mighty works of God, to remember his goodness, and to give thanks to the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of

men, to remember to sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving and to declare his works with rejoicing. It is so often the pattern throughout the history of mankind that once the storm has passed and once the adversity has ended, to become complacent, to get our eyes on the gift instead of the giver, to live too much in this world and not enough as children and sojourners in a land that is not our own.

As we return to our study in Genesis this morning, Genesis chapter 24, we are reminded that Abraham learned this lesson. Although God blessed him greatly, he did not forget the covenant promise. He did not forget his calling.

He didn't forget the smoking lamp and the burning torch that passed between the pieces and that sealed in a signed fashion the covenant promises that God had made to him. It is fascinating, we have seen as we take a quick overview of what we have studied in the past few chapters, you will remember that after the sacrifice of Isaac, there is an interesting little segment in verse 20-24 of chapter 22. After the great high point that is in a novel would be called the climax of the story where all the threads of plot have come together and all of the tension has built to a peak.

Then you have the resolution of that dilemma, the great crux of the story on Mount Moriah with the provision of the ram and the substitution so that Isaac's life is spared and the faith of Abraham is vindicated. Then after that God reaffirms his promise in verse 15, he calls to Abraham a second time out of heaven and says, by myself I have sworn, because you have done this thing. God's blessings are conditional.

How in the world we got the unconditional adjective attached to the Abrahamic covenant, I will never know. God says explicitly, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, blessing I will bless you. The fulfillment is conditioned on obedience.

You remember in the New Testament when Paul reminds us that if we are sons of God we are heirs, heirs according to promise. The promise explicitly states that we must be conformed to the will of God. We must grow, we must advance, we must be in the position to receive the fulfillment of each covenant blessing.

We're not talking about deliverance from the lake of fire, we're talking about fruitfulness, blessing, fulfillment of our calling. We have to know who we are and why we're here and we have to pursue that. If we forget, you have the example, you have the pattern illustrated in Psalm 107.

God will come down on us as any good parent will on a disobedient, apathetic, indifferent, distracted child to bring us back to the path to which we are called. This is the pattern in Abraham's life. And because he responded, it isn't that Abraham never failed, but it is when he received the rebuke of God he responded and he returned to the land and he learns that lesson.

But at the end of chapter 22, after God reiterates the promise that says, in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, in verse 18, because you have obeyed my voice. We have a lot of us as believers running around today thinking that we are in line for blessing, thinking that we are in the center of God's will and God's plan, thinking that we're accomplishing God's purpose, and we're not. Because whatever it is we're obeying, it's not the voice of God.

The voice of God has not called us to worldwide evangelism as a primary mission any more than the Constitution and the laws of the United States call its military to recruiting as a primary mission. The armed forces of the United States are here to support and defend the Constitution and to defend the country against all enemies, foreign and domestic. Of course, I've often wished they would be more explicit in the definition of a domestic enemy.

I've seen some people, I think, qualify. We can't go in and march them out at Bayonet Point, and I think we'd benefit if we could. But our mission is not recruiting.

Our mission is not feeling good. We have, this morning, as we worship together, our fellow believers worldwide, nationwide especially, are gathering together and many of them have as their primary goal feeling good, having a worship experience. It is all about how do I feel? How does this service make me feel? Does it stimulate my emotions? Does it scratch my itching ears? Does it give me a sense of reverence and awe so that I walk away feeling sort of purified or cleansed by contact with something holy? Stained glass windows, robes, pipe organs, choirs, acoustics, praise music and so forth.

This is not the voice of God. This is not obedience to the calling of God. And however you try to dress it up and however you try to gild it and set it up as a wonderful icon and statue painted into a stained glass window, it is not the will and the word of God.

God says, you will be blessed because you have obeyed my voice. We have to find the voice of God. We have to listen to the voice of God wherever it can be found.

And I seriously doubt that the voice of God can be localized to any one communicator or any one church. I think that we have all benefited from different places that we have been, different teachers that we have heard. And it doesn't say because you have obeyed the voice of my angel or because you have obeyed the voice of my messenger.

God says because you have obeyed my voice. God speaks to us today from the resonant word of God in our souls under the ministry of God the Holy Spirit. He does not speak primarily to you through me or through any other single communicator.

God speaks to you from the word of God that's in your soul. God speaks to me through the word of God that is in my soul. It is the manna, it is that spiritual food that is in our soul that we consider, that we meditate on, that God the Holy Spirit uses as his voice to

refine us, to lay open the thoughts and intents of the heart.

We don't want to substitute our time in worship for our time in meditation because they're not the same thing. Eating your food with a knife and fork is not the same as digesting it. It's not the same as going out in the strength of that food and performing tasks.

Eating is not a substitute for metabolism. And we, in our particular tradition of worship, have sometimes gotten those things confused. We figure, well, it's how many notes I take or how closely I listen or how many tapes I hear or how many doctrines I can quote or how often I listen to one teacher or another.

We want to be sure that we understand what it means to hear and obey the voice of God. That voice speaks from within our souls. It's the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

This is the power and the presence of God in our lives, not the communicator, not any aura or any experience that we have in worship. The fellowship and the good feeling that we have when we worship is a wonderful thing. It's like food that's been well prepared and is appetizing and pleasing to the palate.

Taking nothing away from that, we just want to understand that that alone is not sufficient. You have today these eating disorders, bulimia and anorexia and so forth, where people have a wonderful eating experience and then they binge and enjoy all that and they go off somewhere by themselves and purge. And it doesn't become nutritious.

It doesn't become beneficial and they waste away. They've had a wonderful taste sensation and enjoyed a big banquet of food, but they're unwilling to let it go in there and be a source of nourishment. Abraham is blessed because Abraham hears the voice of God and heeds it.

Sometimes it's the voice of discipline. Sometimes it's the voice of rebuke. But he heeds it.

He pays attention. It is not the magnitude of our failures. It is the magnitude of the recovery that God can affect in our lives by hearing and heeding his voice.

Once again, though, in chapter 22, when you get to verse 20, we have this odd little interjection in the story of Abraham it came to pass after these things that it was told Abraham saying indeed Milcah also has born children to your brother Nahor. Uz, Buz, Chemuel, Chesed, Hazel, Tildash, Jidlath, and Bethuel. And Bethuel begot Rebekah.

These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother. His concubine, whose name was Leuma, also bore Teba, Gaham, Tahash, and Ma'aka. As I pointed out when we went through this and somebody's listening on tape, they may think they got their cassettes out of order.

We are in fact finishing chapter 24, but I want to review this because we are in a section that is reminiscent and it harks back to this portion of Genesis. Genesis 22. Because after the sacrifice experience on Mount Moriah, when Abraham and his servants return, sometime thereafter, it came to pass after these things.

This could have been a period of months, it could have been a period of years, but a passing caravan, a traveler, in some way, shape, or form, Abraham receives word that there are subsequent generations in his family up in the city of Nahor from the family of his brother Nahor. And Milcah, of course, is descended from Abraham's other brothers. So in effect, the granddaughter Rebecca, who is Abraham's niece, she is descended from both of Abraham's brothers.

And so Abraham is now aware that there are generations of his family up there that are parallel to his own son Isaac. This is a piece of information that comes to Abraham in advance of the death of Sarah, but it lays the foundation for what we have seen in Genesis 24. When he commissions his servant to go, Abraham is not without knowledge.

He's not just shooting in the dark here. He knows there are descendants. And whether or not he has the specific information about Rebecca is not provable one way or the other from what we have here.

But we know that it was told Abraham that his brother Nahor had sons and grandsons, and Abraham can surmise that there are also daughters that extend to that lot. But there is potential there, and Abraham has a plan when he sends his servant back out of the land to the family of his father. And sure enough, it is to this family, and to Rebecca specifically, that God guides Abraham's servant.

Rebecca's name is first mentioned there at the end of verse 22, and we've seen the significance of names. It's fascinating to spend some time on Rebecca's name because it's a little bit hard to figure out. These names are not always easy to even decipher because this is such an ancient period in the history of the Semitic language.

And this is before this split between Hebrew and Arabic, that we learn a lot when we find a Hebrew word that we can't figure out by going to Arabic because they are two branches of the same ancient Semitic language that I think goes all the way back to the garden. I think that the confusion of languages, God certainly didn't confuse his own people's language. I think he confused everybody else.

And so the Semitic roots, and you will find these roots even coming over into Greek and Roman and so forth. You can trace these back, and many of their words can be traced back to Semitic cognates, even the alphabet. Our letter A, if you trace it back, most good dictionaries will have an alphabet and show you the signs of earlier alphabets.

You'll see the A turning on its side and turning into an A-head and so forth. Well, this

goes back to the Aleph in Hebrew. And of course, that itself is an Aramaic script.

It goes back to the ancient proto-Semitic script. It goes all the way back through Abraham into Akkadian and Ugaritic, and way, way back, I think, all the way to the pre-flood days. Be that as it may, Rebecca is a fascinating name because there is a general ancient Semitic root Rabak, R-A-B-A-Q, which means to tie or to bind with a cord.

Some earlier commentaries thought that Rebecca meant heifer, and how they got that is there is a Hebrew word found in the scripture for a stall. There's a phrase that talks about a stall-fed calf that you find over in the Prophets, in the later parts of scripture, that is Marveq, M-A-R-V-E-Q. Well, the M is the preposition that means from, and then Rabak means to tie.

And this, when you put a name in front of a verb like that, it turns a verb into a noun, and it makes it the place of tying. The word stall in Hebrew is literally the place of tying. This is where you would tie an animal up.

And so Rabak, to tie, or to bind fast, is the idea here. But the fascinating thing is, there's also an ancient Semitic language called Akkadian, which was current in the time of Abraham and in these pre-Hebrew days. And in Akkadian, there's a word Rabaku, R-A-B-A-K-U, which means to be soft or springy, something that is supple, something that is flexible.

And you can see the relationship between these two meanings of the root, because typically when you tie something, you've probably seen either in real life or in a movie or something, an animal that's tied with a cord, and if they resist against that rope, it's going to give, it's going to stretch. It's strong, and yet it's flexible. If it's too brittle, anything that's too brittle will snap under the strain.

Pilots have often talked about the fact that, whereas a passenger in a plane will look out and see the plane's wings moving around when there's turbulence, and passengers will look and say, ah, wing is moving, I wonder if the plane is falling apart. The pilot wants to look out and see those wings moving, because the flexibility of the wings, that means it's not going to break apart. And I've noticed this even using glue.

I seem to wind up fixing a lot of toys and things around the house, and there are different properties to glue. There's a big difference between super glue, which is a very brittle bond, and epoxy or hot glue or even Elmer's, which has varying, each of those has a different degree of flexibility. I have, there's a rubber cement that I have that's actually an auto-trim adhesive, and I like to use that because it's real strong, but it is flexible.

It's not brittle like super glue. Super glue, about the only thing I found that that's good for is porcelain, because porcelain is also real brittle. But anything that's going to come under stress, if you make a bond out of something that's flexible, it actually increases its

strength.

So Rebecca, in her name, signifies something that ties, a cord that binds together. And if you think about her place in the patriarchal history, there's not a lot said about Isaac. We're going to see as we go in the next few chapters of Genesis that Isaac is almost a two-dimensional figure.

He has one or two episodes, and even those seem to hark back to his father's mistakes when he says his wife is his sister and so forth. But we don't learn a lot about Isaac. He seems to be passive in the area of his matrimony.

He seems to be passive when it comes to Jacob and Esau. Things seem to happen around Isaac. He's not really active.

But Rebecca is the active agent. She is the one who draws the water. She's the one who speaks and says, I will go.

She is the one who ensures that her son, Jacob, is going to receive the blessing. And she is the link between Abraham's generation and Jacob's generation. And she is strong.

She binds those things together. She seems to be the cord bound around Isaac to hold him together and keep him from unraveling. And yet she is flexible.

It takes flexibility to be willing to uproot yourself and go to the land. It takes ingenuity and flexibility to accomplish the things that we're going to see her be a part of in the next few chapters of Genesis. And she is a wonderful example of the faith of Abraham.

You get the idea that the faith that characterizes the patriarchal generation really finds its line going from Abraham through Rebecca to Jacob. She seems to be the tie that binds here in a literal sense the line of faith. She seems far more prominent as we will see as we go through.

So I think her name is very significant. As we move back now to Genesis chapter 24, we've seen that the servant convinces the family of Rebecca's brother Laban to allow her to depart. He tells the story and phrases things in such a way that he has to choose.

Will you act in grace and truth toward my master? He doesn't see this as a personal mission. He sees it as a part of the plan of God, as a part of his service. His example as a servant is something that is echoed and built upon in the Christ.

When Jesus Christ himself says the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many. The selflessness of this servant in chapter 24 is a wonderful example. His name is not even mentioned and yet his service here is a key part of God's plan in the generations forward.

After he makes this presentation and says in verse 49 of chapter 24, now if you will deal

kindly and truly, if you will deal in grace and truth with my master, tell me. If not, tell me so that I may turn to the right hand or to the left. He basically puts them on the spot.

Are you going to be people characterized by grace and truth or not? This is one of the reasons that our church has the name that it has, because both in the Old Testament where you have Kesed and Emmet, grace and truth, and in the New Testament where you have Chorus and you have Alepheia. In the Old Testament and in the New, as we saw in the study last Sunday, grace and truth are the hallmarks. These are the bedrock and the foundation of faith and through that faith love is built and love is exercised.

It's God's grace and it's God's truth. It's our faith in those things, our reliance upon them that makes us a conduit for the love of God. So are you going to deal kindly and truly with my master or not? This is the question the servant asks.

This is the question we can ask ourselves. Are we going to respond positively to the grace of God and to the truth of God or is it going to require discipline? Is it going to require a jump start from the side of God's character that we find in Psalm 107? So Laban, and it says in verse 50, Bethuel, this is the house of Laban, Laban and his household, answered and said, the thing comes from the Lord. Bethuel has apparently already passed away.

Laban is the functioning head of the house. Laban and his household answered and says, the thing comes from the Lord. We cannot speak to you either bad or good.

This is typical. You remember that the servant has gone back to the people of Abraham, to the place where faith may be found, but these are the people, Laban and Bethuel, his father before him, were the people who did not have redemption, who were not willing to step out in faith with Abraham and go to the land. They stalled out.

They left the Ur of the Chaldees, they left the land of Burt and got halfway there and stalled out. And even here, Laban doesn't say, go with God, this thing is from God, blessed be the name of the Lord. He doesn't fall down and worship as the servant does.

He says, well, you know, we can't say anything bad or good. We'll leave it up to her. They can't commit.

They can't see the hand of God. They can't appreciate it. They don't have the thanksgiving.

They don't have the recognition and that warm glow of recognition of the grace of God and the glory of God and the forward progress of God. They say, well, you know, we're just kind of going to sit on the fence here. We can't really say anything good or bad.

This is the lukewarmness that God spews out of his mouth. Well, we can't say yay and we can't say nay. You'll have to ask her.

This is why they're stalled out in Nahor, why they didn't come on down to the land. They're believers. They recognize God.

They know who he is. We'll meet them in eternity. But when it comes to stepping out by faith, being obedient, hearing the voice of God, recognizing the hand of God, they just haven't got the starch in their soul to commit.

And this is a terrible legacy. This is a, what an awful thing to be said. Well, you take advantage of the grace of God, but you're not going to step out based on the truth of God.

You're going to enjoy the benefit. You're going to receive the deliverance, but you're not going to move out. You're not going to hear and obey.

This is why Abraham receives the blessing. Nahor, Laban, Betharel do not. Isn't it a fascinating thing? Turn back just one more time.

I keep coming back to chapter 22, but there's a contrast that is set up for us here. When you look at that last section of chapter 22, Abraham is told that his brother Nahor has had descendants. How many descendants does Nahor have here? If you count the sons, how many are there? When you get Huz and Buz and Kemuel and so forth, he's got a son named Kesed.

There are 12 sons here. When you count the ones by Milcah and the ones by the concubine Reuma, there are four by the concubine, eight by the wife, 12 sons. There's a pale echo of what could have been in the line of Nahor because Israel is going to be composed of 12 tribes when Jacob comes along and his sons are going to come through wives and concubines in roughly the same proportion.

But you find that this is the case of what might have been. These are little known and little heard of in the subsequent history of the human race. You come over to chapter 24 and you find out why.

There's just this sense sitting, well, we can't speak bad or good. We can't say tov. We can't say rah.

We can't speak good or evil about this. You'll have to go ask her. Here is Rebekah.

Take and go. Let her be your master's son's wife as the Lord has spoken. There's this grudging sort of recognition, but they don't join the servant in worshiping God.

They don't say, they don't bow down in thanksgiving. You remember what the psalmist said in our reading this morning. Why don't the people of God give thanks? Why don't they recognize what he's doing? So it came to pass when the servant heard these words, he falls down in worship.

There's a great pattern here that you can observe right there on the surface. He prays beforehand. He sees the action of God and he worships afterwards.

He falls down on his face in thanksgiving. What a contrast. This is a servant.

This is a hired hand in contrast with someone who is a brother and a nephew of Abraham. He's the landowner. He's the property owner.

He's the big cheese in the family here. If anybody ought to be the spiritual leader, if anyone ought to be falling down on their face and worshiping God, it ought to be Laban, but he's not. He's just got great equanimity here.

Well, okay, it looks like this is the way the dice are falling. Take her and go. We can't really say anything good or bad about it.

It's obvious we're not going to be able to say no here, but we're not going to say yes either. You do what you need to do. This apathy, this misdirected attention, he's focused on the riches.

He's focused on the gifts and things. So the servant, after his worship, brings out jewelry of silver, jewelry of gold and clothing, gives them to Rebecca, also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother. Obviously not to the father.

He's not on the scene. Blessing by association with Abraham. Even at this distance, Abraham's brother's son and household receives blessing.

The men who were with him ate and drank and stayed all night. They rose in the morning and said, send me away to my master. Her brother and mother said, let the young woman stay with us.

And then the new King James, it says a few days, at least 10. This is real obscure in Hebrew. It says literally, let the young woman stay with us days or 10.

An undetermined number of days. And this is actually Yamin, which is the dual of days. And it's often used in the scripture for years.

And there are times when this is, you may recall, some people have argued, well, the days of creation may have actually been years or epochs. The reason for this is that in later Hebrew, the dual of days or the term days can actually mean years or some indefinite period of time. So the best English translation of this might be, let the young woman stay with us for 10 times.

Some indefinite period of time. Let her stay a while or longer. What's your hurry? What's your rush? Where's the fire? Let her stay with us.

And the temptation, the challenge to the servant here is where has he gone? He's gone

to the place of apathy. He's gone to the people who didn't have the faith to move forward. He finds Rebecca who does have that faith to step out as Abraham does.

She says, I will go. I'm ready. Well, there's no tarrying.

There's no lengthy stay here. The servant stays one night in this household. He finds the person of faith and he skedaddles.

He gets back, heads back to the land of promise, heads back to the people of promise, heads back to Abraham and to Isaac. This is something we have to remember. We don't necessarily cut ourselves off from all fellowship with believers that don't really seem to be motivated, who don't seem to have the energy of the spirit and the nourishment of the Word of God in their souls to propel them forward in God's plan.

They don't seem to be a tree planted by the rivers of water. We know they're believers. They may have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

And it's not a bad thing to have contact and to have fellowship and to look among our fellow believers for people who have that spark of hunger, that spark of desire. You remember in Psalm 107, it says, God fills the hungry. He gives water to those who thirst.

We want to be watching. We want to be looking for believers. All of us at one time or another were believers who didn't have the opportunity to learn or to know much.

Many of us have come out of places of stagnation. We felt a hunger. We felt a thirst.

And it caused us to look around and to find the Word of God and the Spirit of God and the plan of God and the purpose of God so that we could fulfill the calling on our lives. Well, there are other believers just like us, and we want to be alert and be able to speak the truth in love and not ostracize or look down our nose or be constantly of a negative frame of mind. At the same time, look at the example of the servant.

He does not tarry. He finds Rebecca, who is a young woman of great faith and great promise, and that's where he's going to spend his time. He's going to fulfill his mission.

He doesn't get distracted with the idea that, well, you know, if I stay here, maybe I can influence these people for good. Maybe I can spark in them the same faith that Abraham has. Maybe with me and Rebecca here, they'll all catch on.

We could stay here a while. We could proselytize. We could evangelize.

We could try to light a fire under these people. Maybe the whole family will come down to the land. The servant doesn't forget his primary mission, and his primary mission is not recruiting fellow believers into the covenant promises of God.

His mission is specific. His mission is to find a wife for Isaac, and he doesn't forget it. To

move forward in the plan of God, to see that progress move forward.

He finds her, and he doesn't delay. He doesn't tarry. There are great examples we don't have time to go to.

I wish we did, but as it is, we're going to have trouble finishing Genesis. But if you look over in Kings, you will find the prophet who starts on a mission from God. A man of God comes to him and says, you need to go do this and so on.

He says, okay. He says, now, don't tarry. Don't stop and delay.

But somebody wheedles him into delaying, wheedles him into tarrying, and bad things happen as a result. You can find those examples. We've covered them in the past.

Just remember, we've got to keep a focus on a primary mission. I was very encouraged when I visited my brother in New Orleans, and I went to work with him for half a day. I was talking with a staff sergeant.

They've got a training mechanism in the Marine Corps now. It's a technology-based thing, and since I was a computer guy, he knew I would appreciate this. But it's an advance over what we used to use in the artillery, where you take someone indoors, put a picture up on a large screen of a battlefield, and then you have them give an artillery call for fire, and projectors and things will simulate what would actually happen on the battlefield.

If he gives a wrong call for fire, if he makes a mistake, he'll see the results up there. The idea is, use this technology to teach people to think and to prioritize the proper targets. What if you have two different targets on the screen? Which one are you going to attack? How are you going to attack them? Try to teach people to think.

The Marine Corps now has a new thing for infantry leaders, whether they're squad leaders, fireteam leaders, platoon leaders, whatever it may be, to teach them to think and to give them a scenario and to encourage them to think in terms of the mission. Don't just think about your immediate objective, which is to take this hill or to accomplish this, but to be aware of the larger picture, and when things go wrong, or after you've accomplished your first mission, what now? Think in terms of the larger mission. Prioritize.

Be aware of what's happening, and keep first things first. Do the important things. What if the officers get wiped out? They're up there drinking coffee, and smoking and joking, and a mortar round lands there and blows away all the officers.

Now it's up to the enlisted, it's up to the squad leaders and the fireteam leaders to step up and to be aware of the larger picture, and this is something that we've failed to do, that we've failed to train, and so the Marine Corps, I think, admirably, is trying to correct

this, and to make sure everybody knows the overall plan, from the highest to the lowest, so anybody can step up and accomplish the primary mission. This is what the servant does. He remembers his primary mission.

He's not distracted. He doesn't think, oh, I could evangelize. I could wheedle these people along.

I could teach them the way of faith. I can see they've got some problems here. I see the teraphene in the household.

Maybe I can stop, and he doesn't get distracted. He says, I'm not going to wait two days or ten. I'm not going to wait two years or ten.

We're leaving right now, and he says, do not hinder me, in verse 56. He doesn't even say, please don't hinder me. That little nah particle that we studied earlier with what God says to Abraham and what the servant says to Rebecca, that's not in this phrase.

He demands, he says, do not delay me. The Lord has prospered my way. Send me away so that I may go to my master.

This is a demand. It's not a request. He says, I'm not going to get entangled here.

I'm not going to touch the tar baby and never get away. So they say, well, let's ask the young woman. Maybe Rebecca will be willing to stay, but she is of like mind with the servant, and this is what distinguishes Abraham and his servant and Rebecca from these that can't get out of the city.

This was their problem. Not only are they stuck in the city of Nahor, they don't want to let anybody else leave either. And this is the careful distinction we have to draw when we engage in fellowship with other believers.

Don't get enmeshed. Don't get sidetracked. Don't get sucked into Scylla and Charybdis.

You remember when you go in there and you've got the sirens calling on both sides, and you've got the guy that lashed himself to the mast so that the siren song would not pull him away from getting through the straits and getting back home. Well, there are great similarities in the church today. There are attractive and seductive things in the church today that draw us away from the primary mission.

There's a wonderful example here. Remember the mission. Stick to the mission.

Don't get delayed. You can interact. You can have fellowship, but don't forget who you are and why you're here.

Don't be sucked into the apathetic, the distracted, the misinformed, the misguided lifestyle and priorities of fellow members of the household of God. Well, this is where we

need to stop and take our break. When we come back, we are actually going to move forward and get into chapter 25.

But let's pause here and take our break.