

99-11-21a

Let's begin our worship this morning by going to the Lord in prayer. Father, we thank you for the circumstances in which we find ourselves this morning. We live in a free country.

We have the opportunity, without fear, without harassment, without obstacle, to assemble ourselves to worship through fellowship and the study of your word. We thank you for the country in which we live and the government that oversees it. We pray for those who are in leadership and in authority over us, that you will continue to rein them in when they tend toward excess, that you will continue to work in and through our government at all of its levels to provide a place of freedom and a place of opportunity where, first and foremost, we can pursue our calling as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and we can speak the truth to one another in love and we can share the good news of the gospel with others.

We thank you for the opportunity that we have to stand before you through the work of Jesus Christ, to represent ourselves with him as our high priest, to bring before you our praise, our requests, our concerns. We thank you for the opportunity we have to enjoy your personal presence in our souls and that of the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray this morning as we worship, as we study your word, that we will divide it rightly, that we will have a clear and accurate perception of the truth that is contained within it and, as a result, have our souls transformed, have resources available to us to base decisions on, to base our priorities on, and thus to live and walk in a way that is worthy and pleasing in your sight.

We pray that in all things the glory of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, will be reflected in our worship and in our individual lives. We pray these things in his name. Amen.

For our scripture reading this morning, turn with me to Psalm 27. Psalm 27. Our study, of course, this morning is in the first book of the Bible, the first book of the Pentateuch, Genesis.

We will be picking up with the life of Jacob in chapter 31 this morning. As we do so, we see the plan of God working itself out in Jacob's life. We see that God uses the circumstances, uses the people and events that surround Jacob to bring him to decision points and to teach him things, to strengthen weak areas in his soul.

He has been removed from the land of promise. He has been removed from his family, from the influence of his mother, from the hatred of his brother, from the ineptitude and weakness, in some cases, of his father Isaac, to sojourn in a foreign land. God has used that 20-year episode to work on specific things that we saw as weaknesses in Jacob's soul when he was at home.

He is now leaving and returning. He is on his way back. But the circumstances of his

departure from the influence of Laban, going back across the Euphrates, back down south to the promised land, is not without its evidence of where Jacob stands.

One of the things we see is that because he leaves surreptitiously, because he sort of sneaks away, there are remnants of seeking to preserve himself rather than acting in faith. He doesn't go man-to-man, face-to-face with Laban and say, Laban, the Lord, the God of my father Isaac has spoken to me and told me it's time to return home. Therefore, let me depart.

Along the lines of what will happen several hundred years later when Moses will go to Pharaoh. He doesn't sneak the Israelites out of the land when Pharaoh is off shearing the sheep. God says, you go stand before Pharaoh and tell him, let my people go.

Well, we have a similar situation here. This sneaking away is not the honorable thing. Can you imagine God saying, therefore, get thee up by night and sneak away surreptitiously when no one is looking? It just doesn't have the ring, it doesn't have the characteristic of faith in God and trusting in God no matter what the odds.

This is sneaky. And this sneakiness is something God's been working on to eradicate out of Jacob's soul. And we find again, there are so many places where you find the symmetry or the chiasmic structure.

What happened just before Jacob left the land of promise? He had all of this sneakiness going on, sneaking away the birthright from Esau and sneaking the blessing away from Isaac. And now as he's getting ready to go back, you find another instance of subterfuge and underhandedness and theft of something that doesn't rightfully belong when Rachel steals the teraphim. What is the root behind all of this? There is a manifest lack of reliance upon God.

We face a choice. Any believer in any age faces a choice when looking at circumstances. We are either operating in faith or we're operating in fear.

That seems like a strong statement to make that whatever is not of faith is fear. But it is. We know the verse to which I allude there, whatever is not of faith is sin, coming from Paul.

But when we look at a circumstance and we have a concern level and we say I need to take steps, I need to do something, I need to make sure the outcome is favorable to me. The roots of this are fear. We have fear of destitution.

You can go through Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which is I think an accurate observation even though it's in the realm of psychology. It is an observation. What are man's most fundamental fears? What are his basic concerns, his needs? And it starts out with very rudimentary things.

We want security. We want food, clothing, and shelter. We want recognition from others.

We want the necessities of life that make for security. And we want ultimately a sense of accomplishment and of fulfillment, a feeling that we can raise our heads in society. It's very fascinating to see in the scriptures the way that God meets these needs completely, pressed down, shaken together, and spilling over for those who operate in faith.

Because through faith we know that God supplies all of our needs according to his riches in glory. We know that what time I am afraid I will trust in him. Fear thou not for I am with thee and so forth.

All of the scriptures, the promises of God, the provisions of God, go directly to the fundamental needs and desires of the human soul. Well, this is not acting in faith. He doesn't have boldness to stand before Laban and claim what is rightfully his and to declare what God has spoken to him.

Laban is well aware of who God is. Laban is in the same family from which Abraham and with his father Nahor came out from Ur. The whole reason they are up there in Pat and Aram is because they left at the word of God.

Not all of them had the faith to go down into the land with Abraham, but they left Ur and got that far. So, Nahor is well aware of the God of Abraham and the God of his father, Nahor. He mentions him by name.

He knows about Isaac marrying Rebekah and the words of the servant who spoke to this very same Laban and explained that it was God who had sent him, had accompanied him on the mission that he was sent on by Abraham to find a wife for Isaac and that this was of God that Rebekah should leave and go down and marry Isaac. This is her brother Laban. So, he is not unaware of these things, and for Jacob to go and declare that God has spoken would be a completely legitimate thing.

But instead, he doesn't trust that God can work that out. He is going to play the odds here and sneak away. After all of the blessing that God has bestowed on him when Laban changes his wages and so forth, he still hasn't quite shaken the need to sneak, to deceive, to manipulate, to work his own salvation out in fear and trembling in a bad sense.

He is in fear and trembling and he is going to find his own way out. And that's what he does. So, all of this reminds us of the contrast and the choice that we make on a daily basis.

Fear is not always a quaking terror. Sometimes it is an overweening concern. We are looking out to make sure that something undesirable does not happen.

We do not want to lack. We don't want to be without. We don't want to be disadvantaged

or slip in someone's estimation.

That is a fear. Fear of failure. Fear of criticism.

Fear of that critical eye. Fear of what people will say. Fear of how it will look will lead us in directions that don't reflect faith, that don't reflect confidence that God is at work, that God will preserve, that God will accomplish his promises in our lives.

Psalms 27 is a wonderful hymn from the ancient Israelite hymnal. And the words of this psalm make a great statement about the contrast between fear and faith. This is a psalm of David.

In Psalm 27, one says, The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? Keep in mind, in the Old Testament as in the New, when you see the word salvation, don't immediately jump to the conclusion that this is eternal salvation from the lake of fire. This is deliverance.

This is daily deliverance. When things get rough, what is my solution? Where do I turn? The word salvation has gotten such a connotation in modern Christian circles that we have difficulty getting the real sense of it from Scripture. The Lord is my light.

What does light do? A lamp unto my feet, a light unto my path. This lets you see the way things are, lets you navigate, find out where you're going to go without stumbling, without injury. The Lord is my light and my deliverance.

Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life. Of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, my enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell. Though an army may encamp against me, my heart shall not fear.

Though war may rise against me, in this I will be confident. One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek. That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.

For in the time of trouble, he shall hide me in his pavilion. In the secret place of his tabernacle, he shall hide me. He shall set me high upon a rock.

And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me. Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in his tabernacle. I will sing.

Yes, I will sing praises to the Lord. Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice. Have mercy also upon me and answer me.

When you said, Seek my face, my heart said to you, Your face, Lord, I will seek. Do not hide your face from me. Do not turn your servant away in anger.

You have been my help. Do not leave me or forsake me, O God of my deliverance. When

my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take care of me.

Teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me in a smooth path because of my enemies. Do not deliver me to the will of my adversaries, for false witnesses have risen against me, and such as breathe out violence. I would have lost heart unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord. Let's return now to our study over in Genesis chapter 31.

This is the place of challenge for Jacob. He has spent the last six years working under the agreement that we saw back in chapter 30 where Jacob had the need to acquire property of his own, and Laban said, fine. Jacob said, let me just have the spotted, the streaked animals, the dark ones of the sheep, the multicolored ones of the goats, and apparently during this period Laban changed the terms of the agreement and said, well, I just meant you could have the spotted ones, not the streaked ones, and he would take all the streaked ones.

Well, then all of the flocks would start producing spotted, and then Laban would say, I don't think you understood me clearly. I said you could have the streaked. The spotted are mine, and he would take away the spotted, and all of a sudden the flocks would start producing streaked, and this, of course, was God at work, and we talked about the sticks that the bark was peeled from and that this wasn't mysticism on Jacob's part.

This was wisdom from observation over his lifetime, and especially in the 14 years that he had served with Laban. He had seen the ways of the sheep and the goats when it was time to mate. When they came together at the watering troughs there at the well, the well that he had first removed the cover from when he met Rachel, and we saw how the flocks and herds congregated together there, this is the place where they are most likely, the he goats and the rams are going to find those who are at the time of conception and are going to seek them out and mate with them, so he can influence which ones the rams and the he goats are going to mate with.

Because of the weakness of their eyes, he can create a camouflage backdrop out of these peeled sticks, and the spotted ones are going to blend into the background, and the monochrome ones are going to be more visible, and so the he goats and the rams are going to see them and choose them to mate with. Through the laws of genetics, when you have that recessive gene floating around, you are going to get more spotted and streaked animals when you mix a spotted and streaked he goat with a monochrome. If you mix spotted and spotted, you are going to match those two genes and start getting monochrome again.

This is wisdom on Jacob's part. It's not mysticism. He's not thinking that he's accomplishing this, but he's using wisdom, and of course God is blessing his efforts in

this regard.

On the other side of the coin, when you have the dark ones of the sheep, the white sheep are the ones that were preferred. He set them facing the goats. Goats are all dark.

This type of goat, they're all dark. The goats of Laban over there make a nice dark background, and it's going to be the white sheep that are going to show up against that. When you get your spotted or dark ram of the sheep, he's going to see the white ones against this dark backdrop.

They're going to show up more clearly. The others are going to be sort of camouflaged and not show up as clear. In each case, this is the visual effect of their coloring, and Jacob is working that.

He's using principles of camouflage and principles of contrast to influence the way the mating takes place. We also saw that the hybrids who have this spotted coloring are going to be the stronger. They're more virile.

They're more productive. They also mate and reproduce earlier in the season, and so the timing of this comes into play as well. Jacob, as an experienced herdsman, knows how to... He's had a chance to watch generation after generation and learn on his own just what Gregor Mendel learned by breeding and playing around with peas and rats and things, the rudimentary principles of genetics there.

So Jacob knows something about this and works it to his advantage. But, of course, it is God who is with him. It is God who blesses.

This is what Jacob expresses to his wives in talking with them and communicating to them that God has spoken to him, that it's time to leave. He says that God has taken away, in verse 9 of chapter 31, the livestock of your father and given them to me. God gave him the wisdom.

God blessed his efforts. And so he has amassed these great flocks and herds. So it is interesting to me that when you look at the appearances of God to Jacob, Jacob, in speaking to Rachel and Leah, in the first part of chapter 31 that we looked at last time, he says, I have served your father these 20 years.

Your father has deceived me, in verse 7, and changed my wages ten times, but God did not allow him to hurt me. Jacob recognizes that God is at work and that God has been with him. If he said the speckle shall be your wages, all the flocks bore speckle.

If he said the streak shall be your wages, then all the flocks bore streak. And this is something over which Jacob couldn't have control, peeling the sticks and so on, because there's only so much he can do. But God saw to it.

And there is a distinction between streaked and spotted. It's difficult. These words are so ancient to know exactly.

I can't show you a picture of the difference between a spotted and a streaked. But they knew what it was, and it was a distinguishing mark. Some have thought that this was a solid colored animal with, for example, a sheep that would have dark ankles or a goat that would have white rings around its ankles.

There's a lot I could tell you about that as far as cognate words that mean fetters on the ankles and that this streak seemed to indicate that there were bands around the lower legs that looked like fetters. And this would be a distinction to something that might look more like an Appaloosa horse or one of these spotty-looking cats. Somebody was telling me something interesting about those patchwork-looking cats, about the number of colors that you have in a cat.

I don't remember quite what that was now, but I didn't realize that apparently the three-colored cats with the brown, black, and white, there's something about that. Do you remember? They're always female? Yeah, the calico are always female. I never did know that.

But this is another principle of observation. When people see this kind of thing, you figure, well, how can I get some more calico cats? You have to know through observation how these things work. Anyway, there was a distinction.

Laban would try to change the agreement, but no matter what he changed it to, God would see to it that Jacob came out on top. This is in accordance with the promise that God gave Jacob on the occasion of the vision of the ladder and the angels ascending and descending. It probably wasn't actually a ladder like we think of with two uprights and rungs.

This was a stairway, a step. Perhaps the same word is used for the steps that go in a spiral fashion up to the top of a ziggurat. Of course, we know they had ziggurats in Ur, and it's likely that this was actually some sort of a spiral stairway or certainly at least a slanting stairway where these angels weren't clambering up and down like firemen on a ladder.

They're walking up and down steps. But at that time, during and after that vision, God promised Jacob that he would be with him, that he would bless him, that he would bring him back to the land. That was the last time that we have any record of God speaking to Jacob.

For the next 20 years, God is with him, God blesses him, God preserves him. Jacob recognizes that, but God doesn't speak to him. God doesn't appear to him until it's time to return.

I find this interesting in the light of the later history of Israel. Israel, Jacob, whose later name will be Israel, God is with him. He's in the land.

He obtains the inheritance and the birthright and so forth. God affirms the promise to him. But then he has to leave and sojourn, and he is away for 20 years.

No word from God. God's with him and blesses him, but there's no word until it's time to leave, and then God speaks. You think about the later history of Israel.

When Jacob himself descends down into Egypt to be with Joseph and to be preserved during the famine, he's outside the land of his heritage once again. Two times in Jacob's life, he's outside the land because of something being amiss in the land. Toward the beginning of his career, he leaves and goes north.

Toward the end of his career, he leaves and goes south. He winds up dying in Egypt. Joseph makes a big procession, goes back up, and buries him in Macapela with Abraham and Isaac.

But his descendants remain down in Egypt, and the Pharaoh, who knew not Joseph, and they wind up going into bondage for a period measured in hundreds of years. The best estimate is that there's some discussion as to whether it was 200 years or 400 years or 430 years. We'll address that when the time comes.

But outside the land, and no word from God during that time. There's no mention of any speaking. There's no prophet that rises up to comfort the Israelites in their heavy bondage until Moses.

And that oracle that God delivers through Jacob for the future of the tribes that we saw in chapter 48 and 49 of Genesis is the last word that God speaks for the next 400 years. You don't hear anything from him. Then there's Moses.

And God speaks, let my people go, and they eventually return back to the land. Not without some incidents along the way. You can look even at the larger picture of human history and think about this.

Israel was in the land. You had the united monarchy. You had the divided monarchy.

You had the eventual going out of the nation under the cycles of discipline. First the Assyrian crisis circa 721 B.C. when the northern kingdom is carried away. And then later in 586 when the Babylonian captivity takes place for the southern kingdom of Judah.

And then they're brought back and they live there for a time. But pretty soon they come under the Roman Empire. And you have oppression.

You have the whole period of the Maccabees and so forth. But you come down to Jesus' day and eventually you have the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. And from that

point, Israel as a nation ceases to exist even in the time of the apostles. They are scattered.

You look at Peter. We looked at 1 Peter and his greeting not long ago. And he's writing to the scattered ones in Galatia and Cappadocia and Asia Minor and all these far off places.

Outside the land. No word from God. God is with them.

God doesn't abandon them. But they're outside the land. And then God will speak at a certain point and call his people back to the land.

And that regathering of Israel is one of the first episodes in the last times. So there is foreshadowing here. Keep in mind that Genesis, the beginning of all things, we have a lot of archetypes.

We have a lot of symbols that are going to foreshadow the later history. And God is at work. God is orchestrating these things and they all have a meaning and a significance.

But what does it signify to us? It's one thing to understand history. It's one thing to observe these things. But we have lives to live.

We have decisions to make. We have days through which we navigate and we want to do it in a way that's pleasing to God. We want to take these things and have them make a difference in our thinking.

How can God's glory be reflected in our lives as a result of learning these things? Well, God has spoken. God has given Jacob the word. Get up and go home.

The time has come. We found this in chapter 31, verse 13. I am the God of Bethel where you anointed the pillar and where you made a vow to me.

Now arise, get out of this land and return to the land of your family. Well, that's it. This is the divine mandate.

There's no ifs, ands, or buts. Jacob is ready to go. He's been getting fed up with the whole situation there anyway.

He's got Laban changing his wages ten times, giving him grief. The sons, in verse 1 of chapter 31, the sons saying, Jacob has taken away all that was our father's. There's hate and discontent starting to boil under the surface here.

All things are kind of coming to a head. And God speaks and says, Pack your trash and CSMO. Let's head back to the land.

So, he checks with Rachel and Leah and they're all for it. They answer him in verse 14. There's no portion or inheritance for us in our father's house.

We're considered strangers by him. He's sold us and completely consumed the money. All these riches which God has taken from our father are really ours and our children's.

So, whatever God has said to you, do it. The stage is set. All he has to do is march in there and say, Laban, it's clear to me your sons hate my guts.

Your daughters don't have any desire to remain here. And most of all, God has spoken and told me it's time to return. So, let's say our farewells.

Kiss your grandkids and we're bugging out. But of course, at the point of committing to this action, at the point of stepping out on faith based on the word of God, Jacob waffles. His heart flutters.

And he says, You know, I can see this confrontation with Laban turning ugly. I can see him saying, If you want to leave, fine, but you're not taking my daughters. You're not taking my grandchildren.

I'm still the head of this household. I'm the patriarch of this clan. And what I say goes, I'm the judge and jury.

I'm the priest. I'm this, that, and the other. And the stuff that's under my roof stays under my roof.

You can leave the way you came. And Jacob says, I just can't see me surviving that with all of my stuff intact. Well, let's just avoid the whole scene.

The sheep shearing is coming up here in a couple of weeks. If you look at the ancient sources, shearing the sheep takes a minimum of five to ten days. And in some cases longer depending on the weather, depending on the number of men, the size of the flocks.

But it is a minimum of five to ten days if you have a flock of any size just to gather them, shear them, what are you going to do with the wool, and so forth. So he says, You know, Laban's going to be away. He's got that bunch of animals that he led three days' journey away to try to keep me from getting my wages.

And that flock has grown and he's kept them separate all these past six years. He's going to be a three days' journey away. What an opportune moment to just slip out the back door without so much as a note.

So that's what he does. And then verse 19, Laban had gone to shear his sheep. Rachel stole the household idols that were her father's.

These are the teraphim. I gave you a little bit of a background on that last time. I wasn't really happy with my understanding of the teraphim.

So we're going to take a little bit closer look at the teraphim again this morning. So on the third day, you get the fact that you remember Laban has gone north to his flocks. They're up there with his sons.

Apparently the sons rotated through. They'd spend some time out and then they would come back. You see this pattern later on with Jacob's sons where his sons are out with the flocks and Joseph is back at the ranch.

They would rotate this duty. So you have some of the sons back there grousing about Jacob and you have the others up there tending the flocks. So he's three days journey to the north.

Jacob bugs out. He leaves. And at the point that he leaves, heading south, servants in the household say, Oh, Laban's not going to like this.

And they head north. So you've got a three day journey of people heading north and south. The messengers reach Laban three days later.

Jacob is three days journey to the south already. Laban hears it. He says, I won't stand for this.

So he starts heading south. And over the course of the next seven days, it takes him a week to make up the three days journey back to his home, the three days journey that Jacob had already gotten a head start on, and then go further south and catch him. We know from looking at the map and from ancient accounts and so forth that the distance from Paddan Aram down to Gilead, which is where they're going to finally meet, is 350 to 400 miles.

And Laban overtakes them after a total elapse of about 10 days. So the pace that Jacob has been keeping up is 35 to 40 miles per day. And you think about the size of his retinue there and all of his flocks and herds, and this is pushing them to the limit.

Plus, if this is sheep shearing time, apparently Jacob has not sheared his sheep. And so they're carrying a full load of wool, and these animals don't travel as fast. But what does this tell us? What is Jacob's attitude? Is he just taking a leisurely... He is pushing.

There are people who really think that this must be figurative language, that seven days just means a pretty good period of time because they don't see how they could cover this greater distance in this amount of time. What it tells me is Jacob is pushing from early, early dark until late, late at night. And he's getting a lot of his traveling done after the sun goes down when it's cooler and the animals... But he's pushing to the limit to make this kind of time.

And when he gets there, we also know that after this 10 days, in the meantime, of course, during this journey, God appears to somebody and speaks. Who does He appear

to in verse 24? God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night and said to him, Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad. In Hebrew, this is literally from good to evil.

And we pointed out that this has been used before. We look back at Abimelech and we look back even at Laban himself when the messenger came to take his sister Rebecca back to be Isaac's wife. And he said, well, we can speak to you neither good nor bad.

You have to ask Rebecca. The evidence of God's handedness was so overwhelming. They said, well, we can't say yea or nay.

And so God says, you be balanced. You be objective when you reach Jacob. You don't go there with a predisposition one way or the other.

Then in verse 25, Laban overtook Jacob. And it says, Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mountains, and Laban with his brother had pitched in the mountains of Gilead. It's interesting that the word here for pitched the tent is unusual.

Normally in Hebrew, it will use the word nata, N-A-T-A. This is the verb for pitching a tent. And it's replete throughout the Old Testament.

There's all kinds of times when people are pitching their tents. But that's not the word that is used here. This is the word taka, T-A-Q-A.

And there's a guttural at the end of that. This doesn't mean to unfold your tent and pull the ropes and put the sticks underneath and just take your leisurely time putting up a tent. Taka is a word that means to drive or thrust.

In fact, this word, keep your finger on Genesis 31 and turn over to Judges chapter 3, verse 21. Judges chapter 3, verse 21. We've looked at this story a time or two before about Ehud, the Benjamite.

And the irony, the Benjamite, Benjamin, son of the right hand. A lot of the Benjamites were left-handed, seemed to run in the clan. And you have old Ehud and he straps a dagger, in verse 21, he's got it strapped to his thigh.

With his left hand, he takes the dagger from his right thigh and thrusts it into the king's belly there. And the hilt went in after the blade and the fat closed over the blade. In verse 22, he did not draw the dagger out of his belly and his entrails came out.

Well, when it says he thrust that dagger into his belly all the way up to the hilt, that's Taka. This has a violent connotation, a warlike connotation. And this literally says Jacob drove his tents in the mountains.

Has the idea of hammering the tent pegs down in this rocky soil and it connotes warfare, violence, preparation for this. You drive them in a hurry, he's up in the mountains, he's

trying not to be flanked, he's got his back to the rocks and he's watching out. He has the idea that he may be pursued with warlike intent.

And so he's backed himself up to the rocks and cliffs in the mountains of Gilead there and has driven them in in a hurry. He's thrust his tents into the mountains. This same word is used also, if you enjoy looking at this word, turn a few pages over in Judges 26-25.

Oh, I'm sorry, that's 421 is what I meant to say. 421 of Judges. Jael, Heber's wife, took a tent peg and took a hammer in her hand and went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple.

Remember this, Deborah and Barak? And you have old Sisera escaping the battle and he's all tired out. He comes in, she gives him a glass of milk, knocks him out and then drives the tent peg through his skull. Well, the word is taka.

Drive that thing, hammer it down into the skull bone there. And it went down into the ground for he was fast asleep and weary. As we're not surprised, it says, so he died.

Nail his head to the ground, it seems likely. Anyway, this tells us something about Jacob's attitude. The speed of his southward journey, this thrusting of his tents up into the mountains, his back against the cliffs, watching out.

What do you think? Is this fear or faith? It's fear. He's being driven by fear. Even in the midst of acknowledging that God has blessed him, that God has been with him, that God has preserved him from the efforts of Laban to defraud him.

When it comes time to commit, when it comes time to stand tall and say, this is the will of God, to be bold and confront. You can just see the contrast between Jacob sneaking out and Moses standing before Pharaoh at the risk of his life to deliver the word of the Lord. It's time for the people to leave.

Jacob just wasn't up to it. He's learned a lot up there in Laban's presence, but he's still learning even as he returns to the land. And here is a failure on Jacob's part.

He is fleeing in fear. He doesn't have that Psalm 27 attitude. He doesn't have that what time I am afraid I will trust.

Fear thou not for I am with thee. Be not dismayed for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee.

I will help thee. I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. It hasn't quite sunk in to Jacob the reality of God's presence and God's provision.

He says, well, God can bless and God can provide, but I don't know about the situations of danger. I've got to look out for myself. I'm going to high knee down south as fast as

the legs of my sheep and goats will travel.

I'm going to back myself up against the rock and be ready for anything. You just get the idea that he's wide-eyed and nervous about this whole thing. So Laban comes down, and when they finally meet in verse 26, Laban says to Jacob, What have you done that you have stolen away unknown to me and carried away my daughters like captives with the sword? And he's accusing Jacob of kidnapping his daughters.

He can't believe that his daughters... Obviously, he's making out like, Oh, my daughters would have never left of their own free will. He obviously is either unaware or is making out like he doesn't know their attitude that was expressed back in verses 15 and 16. Our father doesn't care anything about us.

He sold us and spent the money, and we have neither partner parcel in his household and so forth. Now he's saying, Oh, you've kidnapped them and taken them away from me. Why did you flee secretly and steal away from me and not tell me? I might have sent you away with joy and songs with timbrel and harp.

We would have thrown a big going-away party for you and bon voyage and so forth. This is obviously pomp and bluster on Laban's part because he can't come out and say, I can't believe you. I really had high hopes of big dealing you back out of all these flocks and herds, and now that you're leaving, how am I ever going to get them back? Even though he's done very well.

He is prosperous in his own right, but the greed and the materialism that characterizes him, he's not going to come out and say, Well, I'm a greedy so-and-so, and you're departing with what I really had designs on getting back. So he puts on this bluster of, Oh, you kidnapped my daughters. You've stolen away.

But the legitimate part of it is he has sneaked away. He has stolen away secretly, and Laban capitalizes on this. You did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters.

Sons and daughters, once again, sons means my near kinsmen. Obviously, his sons didn't leave. It's his grandsons, his eleven grandsons that he's referring to here when he says sons.

This is important in some of the later study or study of the later scriptures in the Old Testament. When someone is a son of someone else, you get into some of the genealogies where generations are skipped. Well, you can look at this and understand the use of ben or bene in Hebrew is not as technical as our word son.

When we say son, we mean the father, son. There's no intervening generations. But in Hebrew usage, Jesus is David's greater son.

You've got scads of generations separating them. But son means my direct descendants,

my sons, my grandsons, my seed. So you did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters.

Now you have done foolishly in so doing. And this is very powerful language. I could take you other places where this hyphial of you have done foolishly, it's used.

Saul uses it of himself when he's trying to repent. And he says I've been foolish over when he offers the sacrifices. And he's talking to Samuel.

It's a very powerful word. And this is a very powerful accusation because this was a foolish thing for Jacob to have done. He says in verse 29, It is in my power to do you harm.

And this is the collective you, to do you all harm. I could do my will. Why? He's claiming his authority as the pater familia, as the family patriarch, as the head of the clan.

He's the judge and jury. He's the final authority. He's the court of last resort.

He says I could pronounce a judicial sentence and apportion this stuff out any way I want. He wouldn't of course get away with it if he just claimed the material goods. But he says he has a weave here.

He's got a court case he could bring. But the God of your father, notice, spoke to me last night saying be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad. Now you have surely gone because you greatly long for your father's house.

He says I understand you being homesick. But why did you steal my gods? So this is where we are here. We've got Laban standing before him.

And we went through this last time. But why did you steal my gods? This is the ultimate insult. Not only have you done all this other stuff, but you've added injury to insult here.

You've stolen my teraphine. What is this all about? Well, this confrontation comes about and Jacob is in fear. And not for the last time.

We're going to see him confront his brother Esau. And once again, he's going to be in the grip of fear. This is something God is going to work on to convert him from fear to faith.

Think about Psalm 27. We can't let circumstances back us into a corner. Cause us to drive our tents up into the mountains.

And lose sight of God's presence. God's promise. God's preserving power.

This has to be real to us or we are going to fail in this way. And it can be in small areas of life where we're hedging our bets. Where we're trying to preserve and be our own salvation and our own deliverance.

And these things are written for our instruction. What are the areas in our life where we haven't really placed our confidence in God? We're not willing to stand up in the midst of that situation and say, God is my strength and my help. I will hide myself in the cleft of that rock.

This is a powerful illustration of what fear can do to us. Even after God is blessed. Even after God is provided.

Even after God has spoken. We can still fail in the area of fear. We're going to pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we're going to take a little closer look at this confrontation. And in particular, at the role of the terapheme in it. We're going to pause here and take our break.