

# Wrestling With God

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Preacher: Jonathan Chancey

[0:00] We're continuing our series in the book of Genesis this morning. If this is your first time with us or first time in a while, we've been walking through the book of Genesis, and we've made our way here this morning to chapters 32 and 33.

You notice we're kind of taking some bigger chunks at a time now as we get into the later portions of Genesis. These narratives kind of expand a little bit. And so it's our practice that as we read the Word of God, we stand in honor and in reverence of the Word of the Lord.

If you are physically unable or hindered in any way from standing, that's okay. You can take a seat. But if you would, when you found Genesis 32 and chapter 33, let's stand this morning in honor of the reading of God's Word.

Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's camp. So he called the name of that place Mahanaim. And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau, his brother, in the land of Seir, the country of Edom, instructing them, Thus you shall say to my lord Esau.

Thus says your servant Jacob, I have sojourned with Laban and stayed until now. I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, male servants and female servants. I have sent to tell my lord in order that I may find favor in your sight.

[1:21] And the messengers returned to Jacob and said, We came to your brother Esau, and he is coming to meet you. And there are 400 men with him. Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed.

He divided the people who were with him and the flocks and the herds and the camels into two camps, thinking, If Esau comes to the one camp and attacks it, then the camp that is left will escape. And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Lord, who said to me, Return to your country and to your kindred, that I may do you good.

I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant. For with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps.

Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau. For I fear him, that he may come and attack me, the mothers, but the children. But you said, I will surely do you good and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.

So he stayed there that night, and from what he had with him, he took a present for his brother Esau. 200 female goats and 20 male goats and 200 ewes and 20 rams, 30 milking camels and their calves, 40 cows and 10 bulls, 20 female donkeys and 10 male donkeys.

[2:41] These he handed over to his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, Pass on ahead of me and put a space between drove and drove. He instructed the first, When Esau my brother meets you and asks you, To whom do you belong? Where are you going?

And whose are these ahead of you? Then you shall say, They belong to your servant Jacob. They are a present, sent to my lord Esau. And moreover, he is behind us. He likewise instructed the second and the third and all who followed the droves, You shall say the same thing to Esau when you find him.

And you shall say, Moreover, your servant Jacob is behind us. For he thought, I may appease him with a present that goes ahead of me. And afterward I shall see his face. Perhaps he will accept me.

So the present passed on ahead of him, and he himself stayed that night in the camp. The same night he arose and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven children, And crossed the ford of the Jabbok.

He took them and sent them across the stream and everything else that he had, And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, He touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him.

[3:55] Then he said, Let me go, for the day has broken. But Jacob said, I will not let you go unless you bless me. And he said to him, What is your name? And he said, Jacob.

Then he said, Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, For you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed. Then Jacob asked him, Please tell me your name.

But he said, Why is it that you ask my name? And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered.

The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip. Therefore to this day the people of Israel do not eat the sinew of the thigh that is on the hip socket, because he touched the socket of Jacob's hip on the sinew of the thigh.

And Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel into two female servants.

[4:55] And he put the servants with their children in front, then Leah with her children, and Rachel and Joseph last of all. He himself went on before them, bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him, and they wept. And when Esau lifted up his eyes and saw the women and children, he said, Who are these with you?

Jacob said, The children whom God has graciously given your servant. Then the servants drew near, they and their children, and bowed down. Likewise, Leah and her children drew near, and bowed down.

And last, Joseph and Rachel drew near, and they bowed down. Esau said, What do you mean by all this company that I met? Jacob answered, To find favor in the sight of my Lord.

But Esau said, I have enough, my brother. Keep what you have for yourself. Jacob said, No, please. If I have found favor in your sight, then accept my present from my hand. For I have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of God, and you have accepted me.

[5:58] Please accept my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough. Thus he urged him, and he took it. Then Esau said, Let us journey on our way, and I will go ahead of you.

But Jacob said to him, My Lord knows that the children are frail, and that the nursing flocks and herds are a care to me. If they are driven hard for one day, all the flocks will die. Let my Lord pass on ahead of his servant, and I will lead on slowly, at the pace of the livestock that are ahead of me, and at the pace of the children, until I come to my Lord and see her.

So Esau said, Let me leave you with some of the people who are with me. But he said, What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my Lord. So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir, but Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built himself a house and made booths for his livestock.

Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth. And Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, on his way from Paddan Aram, and he camped before the city.

And from the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, he bought for a hundred pieces of money the piece of land on which he had pitched his tent. There he erected an altar and called it El Elohe Israel.

[7:14] The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of the Lord endures forever. Father, we pray once more as we sit under the preaching of your word.

God, would you empower the preaching of your word for the good of your people and the glory of your name. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. Are you a confident Christian?

If so, what is the source of your confidence? It's been a long time since I watched the movie *The Lion King*, but I remember it well.

Maybe you do as well. It was one of my favorite movies to watch as a kid, and you probably remember that it follows the story of this young lion named Simba, who is full of confidence. He knows that one day soon he will inherit all of Pride Rock. He's going to be king of the animal kingdom. He has these promises ahead of him, so he's very confident.

[8:16] But unfortunately, what we learn about Simba is that his confidence is misplaced, and it makes him reckless. He goes headstrong into the elephant graveyard, and right before the hyenas come and they come for him, he utters that famous line.

You remember what it is? I laughed in the face of danger. Ha, ha, ha. Of course, what he didn't understand, and what he realized quickly when the danger came, was that he was not, in fact, prepared for the danger around him, although he thought he was.

He was not, in fact, strong enough to handle it on his own, although he thought he was. The only reason why he was safe and secure out there up to this point was that Mufasa, his father, had watched over him and protected him and safeguarded him from the danger.

His confidence was sadly misplaced. In our passage this morning here in Jacob's story, what we see is that Jacob comes to a similar realization.

Jacob, up to this point, you remember, he has relied on his own strength. And like many of us, Jacob wrestles with this problem of self-sufficiency. He's wrestled, he's relied on his own tricks.

[9:35] He's relied on his own effort to get him through. But what we see here this morning is that God loves Jacob enough to teach him a hard lesson. God wants him and us this morning to understand that this is misplaced confidence.

When danger comes into the life of a believer, we can be confident, not because we are strong, but because God is strong on our behalf.

So the big idea for us here in our passage this morning is this. The believer can face their fear of man by looking to the face of God.

The believer can face their fear of man by looking to the face of God. So let's take a look here at our passage. We'll see it in three parts this morning. This is our outline. If you're a note taker, this will help you follow along.

First, we see that the believer sometimes fears man. The believer sometimes fears man. Look there to verse 1 of chapter 32.

[10:41] And let's just kind of recap here and remember where we've been up to this point with Jacob and his story because we're kind of coming to an end of Jacob's story. And we have followed him literally from the womb, haven't we?

We saw Jacob come out of the womb grasping his brother's heel. We've seen him lie and cheat his way into the blessing. And you remember how Esau felt about all of that? Esau wanted his brother Jacob dead.

And so Rebekah, Jacob's mother, sends him away to family members off in Haran to go and find a wife. And on his way there, Jacob goes to sleep. He lays his head on a rock and he takes a nap. And what does he see? He sees this miraculous vision of angels ascending and descending, this stairway or this ladder up to heaven.

God met with Jacob there and reassured him of his plans and his promises for him. Jacob makes his way over to Laban. 20 years go by.

[11:40] We see the Lord has blessed Jacob tremendously. He has wives. He has 11 sons. He has flocks. He has herds. God has delivered Jacob from all the family drama with his father-in-law Laban.

And now God has said, it is time, Jacob, for you to go back home. But there's just one problem, isn't there? What about Esau? Jacob knows that that threat of Esau is still looming there in the background.

I mean, do you think that maybe he's forgotten about being tricked? And maybe 20 years have gone by and Esau has kind of calmed down just a little bit. I don't know. Maybe Esau's dead.

Jacob has no way to know. He can't pick up the phone and call. He can't check social media and see how Esau's doing. He has no way to know whether or not that threat has been resolved. Maybe Esau has just forgotten about the whole thing.

Or maybe Esau has been waiting for 20 years for the chance to squash his little brother, Jacob. And now Jacob is walking right into the path of danger.

[12:45] Jacob's on his way. But just as God did with Jacob on the way out of Canaan, so now on the way back into his homeland, verse 1, it says the angels of God met with him.

And we don't have any more information on this meeting, do we? But I think it's probably safe for us to assume that they have come yet again to assure Jacob and to remind Jacob, yes, there's danger ahead, but Jacob, remember, God is with you.

Jacob, God is for you. Jacob, God has called you to go into this place. His word has compelled you to go. Your circumstances have changed, but God's promises haven't changed.

The danger is there with you, but God is there with you. These messengers come and they comfort Jacob. They assure him of God's presence with them.

And so Jacob, he comes out of this meeting with these angelic messengers of God. And then look what he does. He sends his own messengers before him to go and meet with Esau.

[13:49] And here's what he says. He says, verse 4, Tell my brother, I've been sojourning with Laban. I've stayed there until now. I have oxen. I have donkeys.

I have flocks. I have male servants. I have female servants. Translation, go tell my brother, I am rich beyond your wildest dreams. And buddy, my checkbook is open.

I can give you anything you want. Just please, please, please do not kill me. The messengers come back to Jacob and they say, well, we've delivered the message.

Esau is coming to meet you. And he has 400 men coming with him. You can imagine how this seems to Jacob, right?

Jacob, he has the promises of God. He knows God's plans for him. And yet, look at this threat that's right there in front of his face. Jacob knows intellectually what God has said.

[14:47] But the reality that's right there in front of his eyes says something different, doesn't it? That danger that he can see with his eyes is terrifying and it's overwhelming for Jacob. I mean, you may have experienced something like this, Christian.

You know in your heart, you know in your mind the promises of God. You know what God has said. But of course we know just belonging to God, being a Christian, does not remove you from the dangers of this life, does it?

And sometimes when you come across something that's really overwhelming for you, we can be tempted and prone to be afraid. How do you respond when fears arise?

Jacob, we've seen, he's sort of a mixed character, isn't he? Jacob, he responds with this sort of mixture, this mixed trust. It's partial dependence on himself and partial dependence on the Lord. On the one hand, Jacob, he sees the threat coming and he immediately flips into survival mode. Some of us, that's our reaction, isn't it? And we start strategizing. He splits up his people, he splits up his flocks, he splits up his herds and his camels.

[16:00] He divides them into two camps. He starts strategizing. And this guy is never without a plan, is he? This is the schemer, remember? But then, here in verse 9, in the middle of all of this danger and worry, look what he does.

Jacob stops to pray. This is the longest recorded prayer in the book of Genesis, here in verses 9 through 12. And I want us to look here at this because Jacob gives us a model of how we can pray, believer, in the moments of fear and danger.

Look what he says. O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Lord who said to me, return to your country and to your kindred that I may do you good.

You notice what he's doing? Jacob is praying in light of who God is. God, you are the God of my fathers. You are the God of Abraham.

You are the covenant God of Isaac. I've heard the stories. You are faithful. You're the faithful covenant God who's carried them through. Jacob prays in light of what God has said.

[17:10] He prays in light of the promises of God. In fact, he prays God's word right back to him. You see that? God, you said go back home. You said go home that I might do you good.

You said that, God. He prays with a posture of confession and thanksgiving. You see the humility here. He says, I'm not worthy, verse 10. I'm not worthy of the least of all of the deeds of steadfast love and all of the faithfulness that you've shown to your servant.

I only had a staff when I crossed the Jordan and now look what you've done. And finally, verse 11. After all of this, in light of all of this, he asks God to act.

Please deliver me from the hand of my brother Esau. For I fear him. God, I'm afraid. I fear that he will attack me. I fear that he will attack the mothers.

I fear that he will attack the children. But you said, God. You said, I will do you good. You said. You remember? I will make your offspring as the sand of the sea which can't be numbered for multitude.

[18:15] You said that, God. And so, God, would you please do what you've promised to do? Church, this is how we ought to pray. When danger comes.

When, not if. Right? When danger comes. And when, like Jacob, we experience this fear and this worry and this anxiety of what may or may not happen.

Here's what I want you to do. I want you to go and find a place. Take your Bible with you. It's okay to pray with your Bible open. That's good. Right? Pray God's word back to him.

Pray God's promises back to him. God, you said. Praise him for who he is. God, you are good. I know you're good. You've shown yourself to be good.

God, you're faithful. God, you're strong. God, you're sovereign over this and every other circumstance. Pray humbly. Confess your sin to him. Not from a position of you owe this to me.

[19:15] But I am unworthy of all of this that you've done for me. And then ask him. Ask him to act on your behalf. Jacob models for us how to pray in the face of danger.

But then look at this. It's like as soon as he says amen and gets up off of his knees, he gets back to work. It's like he can't help himself. He can't let go of this sense of control. Y'all ever struggle with that?

I know I do. Verse 13 says he stays there that night. He doesn't want to keep moving towards Esau. And so he sends these gifts ahead of him. He divides up all the flocks, all the camels, all the bulls.

He sends them in waves. For he thought. Now this is interesting. Verse 20. He thought I may appease him with the present that goes ahead of me. And afterward I shall see his face.

And perhaps he will accept me. You probably have a note in your Bibles if you look down at the bottom. That gives you a little bit of a different way to translate that verse.

[20:14] And I think that this emphasis is important. The word face shows up four times in that verse. If we were to translate it in kind of a wooden stiff way, it would say something like this.

That I may appease his face with the present that goes out from my face. Afterward I shall see his face. And perhaps he will lift my face. Jacob is fearful of seeing the face of Esau.

He's fearful that his own face will be ashamed and even destroyed. And see he's so worried about this that he can't even sleep. You know how sometimes you lay down to sleep and you're so anxious.

You're so worried. You have so much on your mind that you just can't get any sleep at all. That ever happened to you? You get up. You make sure the oven's turned off. You go check on the kids.

Make sure they're all still sleeping in their beds. Make sure the doors are locked. And maybe you know that you've got to have a hard conversation. When you wake up tomorrow and you're worried about how that might go. What you might say.

[21:17] There's something ahead of you that's keeping you up. You ever had that problem? Verse 22. It says, That same night he gets up and he takes one last safety measure.

He takes his two wives and his two female servants and his 11 sons. And he sends them up north across the ford of the Jabbok. He's just got one last little scheme to pull off.

Jacob's kind of complicated, isn't he? His flashes of dependence and then flashes of self-sufficiency. It looks for a minute like he's depending on the Lord. And then he's right back to scheming.

It's partial dependence on God and partial dependence on self. I know God has promised I'll make it safely home. I know that he'll bless me and I know that he'll multiply me.

But still, here am I stressing out. I can't even sleep. And here I am scheming on how to work all of this out in my own strength. Aren't we just like this, church? Think about whatever it is that you fear the most.

[22:19] That could be sickness. That could be death itself. That could be the loss of a loved one, the loss of a relationship. Maybe you're like Jacob.

You have some family issues that you just don't want to deal with. You're afraid of seeing that person's face again. We can all be prone to fear, whatever that is. But friend, the question is, How do you respond as a believer to the fears that are in your heart?

We see second. Second, the believer looks to the face of God. Second, the believer looks to the face of God.

Look there to verse 24 with me. Jacob is there in the middle of the night all alone, it says. It makes that point. He's all alone. And then it says, All of a sudden, a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day.

What in the world is going on? It says they wrestle all night long until the breaking of the day. And when the man sees that he didn't prevail against Jacob, he just touches his hip socket, and Jacob's hip is put out of joint as he wrestles with this man.

[23:28] I mean, that's not exactly what you want to happen the night before the biggest battle of your life, is it? This is out of nowhere, right? Who is this guy? And where does he come from?

We have no introduction to him at all. We just have Jacob by himself at night, and then this dude jumps down from the top rope, and he's wrestling Jacob all of a sudden. You read the commentaries.

You hear what people say, and some say that this is Jacob's guardian angel. Others say that this is Esau, his brother. I don't know how they reconcile that somehow. Others, they kind of psychoanalyze this, and they say this is just kind of a story.

Jacob's wrestling with his guilt. He's wrestling with his fears. He's wrestling with his emotions and his thoughts. But Jacob comes out of this with a lip, right? This is a physical altercation, a physical wrestling match.

I mean, the best way to understand this, church, is to say what the Bible says. The prophet Hosea, in chapter 12, he says about Jacob, in the womb he took his brother by the heel, and in his manhood he strove with God.

[24:39] He strove with the angel and prevailed. He wept and sought his favor. And Jacob is wrestling here with the angel of the Lord.

This angel who is so closely identified with God himself that to see him, Jacob says, is to see the very face of God.

This is a physical manifestation of the presence of God. Some even go so far as to say that this is the pre-incarnate Christ, the second person of the Trinity.

And I'm not totally certain enough to say to you, church, that that is absolutely right, but it's certainly within the realm of possibility. It's all just, it's mysterious, isn't it?

Which means that if you still have some questions about all this, then I think that that's a good thing. One thing that we don't want to do when we come across a mystery like this in Scripture is to try and over-explain it and over-analyze it to the point where it makes us very comfortable.

[25:45] Because church, I don't know if you know this or not, but we don't worship a God who fits nicely and neatly and cleanly all the time into our categories of thinking.

This is one of those times where it's okay, it's better even to say, I don't know exactly how this works. But clearly what we can say, because again, the text says it itself, is that Jacob has engaged in a wrestling match with God himself.

So I have another question. Why is God wrestling with Jacob? And apparently it looks like Jacob's holding his own, right?

What is going on here? And here's where I want to get an image in your mind, okay? I want you to picture this with me. Have you ever seen a dad wrestling with his son?

You know dads and sons like to wrestle. Drives moms crazy. I have firsthand experience about this. Part of that wrestling match is the father is allowing his son to test his strength against him, right? [26:55] He says, son, you can't wrestle anybody else like this. You can't fight anybody else like this, but dad can take it. So come on, let's go. And every now and then, dad will even let his son pin him to the ground and count to 10, won't he?

And what do you think that does for the son when he gets dad to say uncle? Now that is a confidence booster for that kid, isn't it? He can leave dad and say, man, if I can pin dad to the ground and make him count to 10 and make him say uncle, I can do anything at all, can't I? But even more importantly than that, is that son is shown in that engagement with their father just how strong their dad is.

And that son knows deep down, even if they don't want to admit it, that my dad, he can end this fight anytime he wants. And his confidence is strengthened in his dad in that moment. And he believes that if a threat actually comes, if a threat actually comes against me, I know my dad can step in, come to my defense, and protect me, not because I'm strong, but because he is strong. [28:06] And they can go to the playground and face those playground bullies and say, my dad is stronger than your dad. And know that it's true. The Lord jumps in the ring and wrestles with Jacob and Jacob is persistent as ever.

He fights all night long. And when the Lord sees this guy's not giving up, what does he do? Pop! Touches his hip. Goes out of joint.

And he says, all right, Jacob, it's time to go. Let me go. It's time to stop. But look at what Jacob does. He says, I will not let you go unless you bless me. Dad says we're done. And the son grips him a little bit tighter and he says, no, you got to give me some ice cream first, dad. You see the picture here? But here the Lord gets to the point. He says, son, what's your name?

And he says, Jacob. He says, not anymore. Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel. Why? For you have striven with God and with man and have prevailed.

[29:14] You know, in this culture, in the ancient Near East, to name somebody, to name something, that's a sign of authority over that person. You think of man giving names to all the animals in the Garden of Eden.

That's a symbol of authority. But it's also a symbol of identity. It's an indicator of who that person is or who we hope they might become.

The Lord says to Jacob, from this time forward, you are no longer that old trickster Jacob. You're no longer that cheat who grabs by the heel.

You're no longer the schemer. Now you are Israel, the one who strives with God. He gives him a new identity here. Even so, Jacob, still wrestling, he says, it's my turn.

You tell me your name. He's still trying to get some authority over this man, isn't he? He's still wrestling with control, but he says, why do you ask my name? He doesn't give in, does he? And there he blessed him.

[30:15] So Jacob calls the place Peniel, which means the face of God, saying, I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered. Do you see what God's just done for Jacob?

God has just shifted Jacob's confidence off of himself and where it rightly belongs, back to the Lord. He has just seen the Lord face to face and lived to tell about it. Sinners don't see the Holy God face to face and lived to tell about it, apart from the great mercy and grace of God.

He's seen and experienced firsthand. Once again, the Lord is for Jacob. He's not willing to destroy him, although certainly he's able. Certainly he's powerful enough to destroy him.

Rather, the Lord in all of his strength is for Jacob to bless him and to protect him and to guard him. He leaves here with the blessing of the Lord. He's just been humbled to see all my strength and all my craftiness and all my ability, all my effort.

[31:23] I cannot match the power of the Lord. But guess what? If this God with all his strength is in my corner, what do I have to fear? He is no longer Jacob, no longer the trickster, no longer the one who grabs by the heel.

He is now the one who strives with God. Christian, do you realize that because you are in Christ by faith, that you share that same confidence in the Lord?

greater even than the confidence of Jacob. To be a Christian is to know with absolute certainty that God, the most powerful being in all the universe, the one who spoke all things into being with just the words out of his mouth, that God is for you in Christ.

And to be a Christian is to know that when you stand before the living God, he will bless you and not destroy you. Why? Because by his great mercy and grace, he has done everything needed for sinners like us to be made right with him by the blood of his own son, Jesus.

It's to know that he has sent Christ to live and to die and to rise for us so that any who simply put their faith in him will be washed clean of our sin, forgiven of our sin, made new in his sight, given new identities in him, made a new creation before him.

[33:02] Whatever is in your past before Christ, that is no longer who you are in Christ. God has made you a new creation by his grace.

And to be a Christian is to know that what lies ahead of you, church, the promises that lie ahead of you. God has promised you such incredible blessings in this life and especially in the age to come.

And if he's promised you this by his word, certainly he's capable of bringing you safely home through any danger that this life might bring. Who is stronger than your God?

Who is able to stop or derail his plans and his promises for you in Christ? To be a Christian is to have the confidence to know that no threat can stand against you.

No threat can ever remove God's love for you in Christ. No danger in this world or any other can ever derail God's plans and promises for you in Christ.

[34:07] Do you see the confidence this ought to give us, church? church? And when you realize this power of the gospel, you don't turn and say, man, I'm worthy of all that, aren't I?

Man, I'm strong. Whatever danger I have to fear, I can't fear because with a little bit of help from God, I can overcome anything, right? God just gives me a little boost, makes me stronger.

That's not the message of the gospel. The message of the gospel is you cannot do it, but God alone has already done it in Christ.

God is our confidence. If you're in Him, in Christ by faith, church, you can face anything in this life with absolute confidence in Him.

And that's what we see here in our third and final point this morning. I promise this chapter will be briefer. Third, we see the believer faces their fears with confidence in the Lord.

[35:10] The believer faces their fears with confidence in the Lord. And Jacob looks up and what does he see? He sees Esau coming and he's got his 400 men with him and so what does Jacob do?

Again, hot and cold, right? He goes right back to strategizing. Verse 1 says Jacob divides up the children among Leah and Rachel and the two female servants.

He arranges them strategically and look at this y'all. He's not even hiding it, is he? We all know that Jacob loves Rachel most, right? Sometimes you think about that question, what would I grab from the house if the fire comes and what would I grab first?

Jacob makes it pretty clear he's grabbing Rachel and Joseph, everybody else, y'all on your own. So he puts the servants out front with their children that is like closest to where Esau would come, so they'd be the first to go.

And then he's got Leah with her children, so they'd go next. And then way at the back he's got finally Rachel and Joseph and the idea again is well if things go south, my favorite wife and my favorite son, they might have a chance to get away.

[36:19] Y'all are expendable up here. No wonder Joseph's brothers hate him. A little foretaste of what's coming next. In verse 3 it says that he himself goes on before them, he bows himself to the ground seven times, and that's about six times more than what's normal and expected.

He is groveling before Esau. Please don't kill me. Please don't kill me. Please don't kill me. Please don't kill me. Look what happens. Before he even gets a chance to speak, Esau runs up to meet him, and he hugs him, and he falls on his neck, and they embrace, and he kisses him, and they together, they wept.

This big, burly man who wanted his brother dead is crying at the sight of him. Now all of this fear and all of this worry, it seems like it was for nothing.

Why? Because the Lord has gone before Jacob. Didn't the Lord tell Jacob to go back home? Didn't the Lord tell Jacob, go home so I can do you good?

And didn't the Lord tell Jacob that he would be with him, and would bless him, and would multiply him. All of this worry about the danger that's out there was for nothing. Why?

[37:37] Because God has already promised in his word that he would protect him. Esau looks up, and he sees all these women and children, and says, who are all these with you?

And now Jacob gets to introduce them to the family. It's a big, beautiful family reunion after all this time. Twenty years has gone by, and Jacob clearly was worried about how he might be received, and here's Esau welcoming him back with open arms.

It kind of reminds you of the prodigal son, doesn't it? And before he even has a chance to say his peace, Esau runs and greets him and embraces him. After they've all met, Esau says, what do you mean by all this stuff that you sent ahead of me, all this company that I'm at?

And Jacob says, to find favor in the sight of my Lord. And they kind of haggle over this for a minute. Esau says, I have enough. Keep what you have for yourself. Jacob insists and says, I've seen your face, which is like seeing the face of God.

He would know. And you have accepted me. So he urges Esau, and Esau takes it. And everything here is resolving to an end, to about as perfectly of an ending for Jacob as you could possibly imagine, isn't it?

[38:49] Look at verse 12, chapter 33. And Jacob has one last trick up his sleeve. He can't help himself, can he? Esau is ready to escort Jacob back to Seir, and he says, let us journey on our way together.

Come on, bro. I'll go ahead of you. But Jacob says, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. The kids are weak. They're tired. All these flocks and sheep that they need to be cared for. They'll die if they're pushed too hard.

You go on ahead, and I'll go slowly behind you. I'll go at the pace of the livestock and at the children. Until I go, I'll meet you in Seir, okay? You go on and wait for me.

I'll be there soon, but don't wait up too long. And so Esau says, well, how about I leave some of the people with you? And they'll escort you there. Jacob says, no, no, no, no, brother.

You go on ahead. We'll be fine. I'll see you soon. Of course, Jacob had no intention of ever going with Esau, did he? He wasn't pushing his luck here.

[39:48] So verse 16 says, Esau returned that day to Seir, but Jacob, he journeyed over to Succoth, and there he built himself a house and made booths for his livestock, and therefore the name of that place is called Succoth.

Moses ends this story by telling us that Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, on his way from Paddan Aram. And he camped before the city, and he bought land from the sons of Hamar and pitched his tent and built an altar and called it El Elohe Israel, which means God, the God of Israel.

Would you just look at where Jacob has wound up here to kind of bring his story to an end? And finally, after all of this, but finally, at long last, Jacob is finally home.

His enemies are gone. He is back in the promised land. He has set up booths. He's built a home. He's raised an altar there for worship.

The promises are being fulfilled. His pilgrimage is over. But most importantly, God has proven himself faithful yet again. By his grace, he has sustained Jacob through many dangers, toils, and snares.

[41:11] He has already come. Christian, I'll ask you again, what do you fear? We, like Jacob, are pilgrims.

We are making our way home. Some of you are just setting off on your journey. You're just beginning. Others are rounding out the final turn. But we know that God has promised us that eternity with him is just ahead.

If you are in Christ by faith, the true promised land is waiting for us. Soon and very soon, we will no longer live in these temporary shelters and temporary places and temporary societies.

We won't wrestle with these tensions and these enemies and these fears, all these things that give us worry. If you're in Christ, our certain futures that you will live forever in the new heavens and the new earth where there will be no sin and no death and no enemy and no temptation where all of God's promises for us in Christ will finally be realized.

That's ahead of you, Christian. But until then, the dangers around us are very, very real, aren't they?

[42:31] There seem to be new reasons to be fearful every day while we still journey onward here. Fear and danger are in every headline. Fear and danger are around every corner.

Here, the enemy still seeks to destroy us. Here, like Jacob, we can seem hot and cold, off and on, and we wonder how will we make our way forward?

How will I overcome this trial? How will I face this enemy that I fear? How will I overcome? How will I overcome? Friend, you are not strong enough to do it, but God is.

We face every danger in the confidence, church, that our God is for us in Christ. Our God will supply every need of ours according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

Our God will bless us, will keep us, will make his face shine upon us as we behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

[43:40] Father, we praise you for the confidence that we have in you and that we can only have in you, and we acknowledge that there may be some here who don't have that confidence because they don't know you, and so we pray, Lord, would you give them the gift of faith in Christ.

And for us, Lord, for the church, we pray that we would face the dangers that are around us in our lives and in the world with all the confidence of knowing that our good and faithful God will guide us safely home.

We love you, Father. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.