

A Bride for Isaac

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[0 : 0 0] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! Turn with me to Genesis chapter 24. I'm going to read a large chunk of scripture, so it would serve you to have a copy of the scripture.

I'm going to read a few scriptures before you. Genesis chapter 24. Look there.

By way of introduction, over 80 years ago, Hollywood released one of the most well-known movies of all time, The Wizard of Oz.

The story centers around Dorothy and her dog, Toto. When a tornado rips through their town of Kansas, Dorothy and Toto are swept away to the magical land of Oz.

[1 : 0 9] As she famously tells Toto, Toto, we're not in Kansas anymore. They follow the yellow brick road. I'm tempted to kind of sing these songs too, but they follow the yellow brick road trying to reach the Emerald City to meet the Wizard of Oz.

Along the way, they meet a scarecrow who needs a brain, a tin man who's missing a heart, and a lion, feeble little lion, has lost his courage.

They journey to the Wizard to get help. The Wizard promises them help, and so they journey to him to get help, or everyone tells them they'll get help. They journey to him to get help, but first they must, the Wizard says, you must bring the broom of the Wicked Witch of the West.

They get the broom, they finally make it back, and the Wizard stalls again. He says, I'll meet with you tomorrow. Tomorrow?

You know, we made it all the way to the Emerald City to the Wizard of Oz. Tomorrow. Dorothy becomes angry at this point, perhaps indignant like our Savior in the gospel.

[2 : 1 4] If you were really great and powerful, you would keep your promises. What kind of wizard doesn't keep his promises? Well, the wizard barks back, do you criticize the great Oz?

You should consider yourself lucky that I am giving you an audience tomorrow. Well, Toto's kind of meandering around and peels back the curtain a little bit, and uncovers an old man working controls and talking into a microphone.

The wizard cries out, pay no attention to the man behind the curtain. Come back tomorrow. Go before I lose my temper.

The great and powerful Oz has spoken. But Dorothy refuses to leave. She realizes it's all a hoax, a sham.

This is no wizard, and this is just an old man behind a curtain. The wizard's a fake. He sits on a throne of lies. Well, Genesis 24 invites us to peer behind the curtain, so to speak.

[3 : 2 4] It is a long chapter, probably the longest chapter you'll ever hear read in church in your entire life, unless someone reads all of Psalm 119. It is the longest chapter in Genesis, and it shows how God keeps his promise to make a great nation by securing Abraham a bride.

So if you know the promise, the promise was you'll have a great nation, you'll have a land, and you, all the peoples of the earth, will be blessed. So you need to keep having children. Your children need to have children, on down the line.

But Genesis 24 invites us to see more. It invites us to see how God works through all the details of life according to his purposeful plan.

The whole chapter includes no word from God. No miracle. No encounter like we're familiar with from Genesis 12 and 15 and 17.

No prophecy. No promise. And yet, in verse 27, the servant says, God led me. God worked and led me.

[4 : 32] What he's saying is God arranges all the seemingly random details for the servant to meet Rebecca at just the right time and at just the right place. See, Genesis 24 is calling us to see that the man behind the curtain in this story and behind our lives, the man behind the curtain of your life is the living God.

How did you come to reside in East Tennessee and not Kazakhstan or Korea or Kenya? How did you come to marry who you married?

Serendipity? I think not. How did you come to do what you do? How did the opportunities that you have had in your life that are unique to only you come your way?

Why? Is it chance or fate? Is it all random? Now, surely we would not say it's all chance. We look back on our lives and we know there's moments where it seems more than chance.

When we get married or we meet this friend that has a vital part in our lives. Or when we have a child, we say it's more than chance. It can't just be chance and that.

[5 : 38] It must be some miracle. But biblically, it's even more than that. The God of the Bible is not one who interjects miracles from time to time. The God of the Bible tells us that all of life is miracle, if we could say it that way.

Every detail of life is ordered by the unseen hand of providence. I've said the word, but he said the word a moment ago. Providence has brought you here.

This truth is the providence of God. You know, you've heard sovereignty. I've talked about sovereignty here. Well, sovereignty is the ordering of all things by Almighty God.

Providence is a biblical term to capture a number of texts of Scripture. The purposeful ordering of all things by our Heavenly Father. Providence is a people of God word in that respect.

So, sovereignty is the ordering of God of all things in the heavens. He does what he pleads. He works all things according to the counsel of his will. And yet, providence is the purposeful ordering of all things by our Heavenly Father.

[6 : 43] For those who love him, all things work together for good. So, the main point that we're going to see, and we are going to read the Scripture bit by bit, but the main point we're going to see is let us rest knowing all the promises and purposes of God come to pass by the unseen hand of providence.

Let us rest knowing all the promises and purposes of God come to pass by the unseen hand of providence. So, this chapter is a long one. I've said we're going to take it bit by bit.

Never done this before. May never do it again. So, we'll just see how it goes. And we're going to have four headings that capture providence. So, first, providence is bound to the promise.

Providence is bound to the promise. You know, if you're new with us this Sunday, we've been studying the book of Genesis. We've been studying our father Abraham. And the last time we saw Abraham was in Genesis 22 when he was called by God to go up on the mountain and sacrifice Isaac.

God was testing his faith. Now, time has passed. Abraham is very old. In Genesis 23, he buries his wife in the promised land.

[7 : 50] He buries his wife. With him near his death, he needs to find a wife for his son Isaac. So, we studied the birth of Isaac and celebrated at his birth. Well, now he needs a wife in order for the promise to continue and for him to have descendants that are as numerous as the stars.

So, look in verse 1. We're going to read 1 through 9. He says, Now, Abraham was old, well advanced in years, and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. It's talking there about financial blessing.

Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he had, put your hand under my thigh, that I may make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell, but will go to my country and to my kindred and take a wife for my son Isaac.

The servant said to him, perhaps a woman may not be willing to follow me to this land. Must I then take your son back to the land from which you came?

Abraham said to him, see to it that you do not take my son back there. The Lord, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my kindred and who spoke to me and swore to me, to your offspring I will give this land.

[9 : 07] So, that's back to Genesis 12. He will send his angel before you. That's the Lord. The Lord will send his angel before you and you shall take a wife for my son from there. And if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be free from this oath of mine, only you must not take my son back.

So, the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham, his master, and swore to him concerning this matter. So, you get the very simple storyline.

Abraham's asking his servant to swear an oath to take a wife, to find his son Isaac a wife. One of the words running through this passage, you may have not, or you may have caught it, you may not have caught it, is the word take.

He says, do not take from the Canaanites a wife. Go to my country and take a wife for Isaac there. If she will not, or if she will not come, do not take Isaac there.

The angel will go with you and you shall take a wife for Isaac. Only do not take my son back there. I mean, with all this taken, what is going on?

[10 : 11] Why must he not take a wife from the Canaanites? And also, why must he not take Isaac there? Well, look again at verse 7. I think this helps us understand what he says.

The Lord, at the center of this passage, and actually at the center of these last recorded words of Abraham, he says, the Lord, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my kindred, who spoke to me.

So, do not take a Canaanite wife and do not take Isaac there, because the Lord took me from there. Do you see? The Lord rescued me out of there, took me from there, and so, you must not take Isaac there, and you must not take a wife from the Canaanites.

What he's saying is his whole life has been spent on clinging to this promise. He's left his country and can't. He's turned his back on all that he's ever known. He's set off for the land that got his promise, and now he's nears the end of his life.

He's holding fast to this promise that God will be faithful to do what he said, so don't go back there and start over. And certainly don't let my son go back there, because he might get stuck like Nahor, like Abraham's brother, who didn't come with him.

[11 : 30] So, he wants Isaac to follow the promise. So, Abraham asks the servant to swear an oath, and verse 2 and 9, it has this oath that he puts his hand on his side, and it swears an oath, and the servant swears.

But wonderfully, one more thing I want to point out, Abraham's confidence is not in the oath that the servant makes with him. You capture that with kind of his graciousness in saying, if you go and the servant won't go, then you're released.

So, his confidence is not in the oath the servant makes. His confidence is in the oath that the Lord has made to him. Look back in verse 7 again. Again, I must underline this is the center of these verses.

The Lord, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house, from the land, and who spoke to me and swore to me. So, there's a swearing going on in 2 and 9, but there's a swearing in verse 7, which is the anchor of it, and it's the Lord's oath.

So, what Abraham is saying, if the Lord promised to make of me a great nation, and if he promised to give my offspring this land, he will keep his promise. He'll provide a wife for Isaac.

[12 : 42] He'll send his angel to bring to pass everything that needs to be brought to pass. You see that? So, what's all this mean for us?

Remember, the intended audience is the Israelites. So, what's this mean for the Israelites? What is Moses, the author of Genesis, trying to say? Well, the providence of God is bound to the promise.

The providence of God is bound to the promise. And I'm going to explain that and help us understand that. You know, most people assume the world is run by fate or chance or luck.

The shape of your life is determined by good or bad fortune, by destiny, like back to the future. By the hand you've been dealt, like the show *Loki*, your life has a predetermined path.

And if you get off the path into a variant, the time variance authority will come after you and bring you back.

[13 : 42] Your life is prepackaged. Former professional basketball player Bill Walton captures this idea very well when he calls himself the luckiest man in the world.

He has a documentary. We talked about the luckiest man in the world, although his career was riddled by injuries, difficulties, and what ifs. He still considers himself lucky, the luckiest.

Because he was a great basketball player and in the Hall of Fame, or is in the Hall of Fame. But lucky is a pagan concept, actually. The ordering of your life is purposeful.

And it's not as though the purpose is mysterious or unknown. You know, the reason we wrestle with fate or fortune or chance or luck or all these things, because we don't understand the reason behind the purposefulness of life.

Well, the idea is that the purpose of life is not mysterious or unknown or out of reach. The providential ordering of your life is according to the promise. Now, if you could hang with me for just a moment more, I want to point out one more thing in this text.

[14 : 57] Did you notice who took Abraham and spoke to him? Now, if you have an ESV, which I do, but most other translations probably do, in verse 7, the first words are the Lord.

And it's Lord, L-O-R-D, all caps. In the ESV, the translators are alerting us that this is the name of God.

Now, there are many different words for God in the Old Testament, but this is the name of God. So, it is four Hebrew letters. What they're translating here is four Hebrew letters that come across in English as Y-H-W-H.

would have likely been pronounced Yahweh. So, it's a way of capturing the name of God. And so, there's many different words for God in the Old Testament.

El, Elohim, Adonai, Jah, Jehovah, and so on. But those are just titles. This word is his name. So, couch within this scene, Abraham was saying, The Lord, the one who came for me, was none other than Yahweh, the one on the mountain who said, The Lord, the Lord of God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

[16 : 12] It is the promise of all promises. David Pallison calls it the DNA of God. You don't know what God is in the essence. Well, this is what he is. Merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and a faithfulness.

And what does all that mean? Why is Moses putting that right there? What he's saying is the providential ordering of your life is bound to God's promise to never stop doing undeserved good.

Providence is bound to the promise. And the providential ordering of your life is bound to God's promise to never stop doing undeserved good. If fate is whatever is must be, well, providence is whatever God ordains for good must be.

That's what it means. Providence is bound to the promise. And so whatever God ordains or what God ordains for our good must be. Nothing good is withheld.

As the psalmist reminds us, no good thing do you withhold from those who walk uprightly. So point two, providence is sought by praying, working, and watching. The story continues.

[17 : 33] Now I'm going to read 17 verses here, so look down. The servant, so the story continues. Then the servant took 10 of his master's camels and departed.

Taking all sorts of choice gifts from his master. And he arose and went to Mesopotamia in the city of Nahor. That is Abraham's brother. That's just a way of saying he lived there. And he made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at the time of evening.

The time when women go out to draw water. And he said, O Lord, there it is again. O Yahweh, God of my master Abraham, Please grant me success today and show steadfast love.

That never failing love to my master Abraham. Behold, I am standing by the spring of water. And the daughters of men of the city are coming out to draw water.

Let the young woman to whom I shall say, Please let down your jar that I may drink. And who shall say, So this is what the woman says, Drink and I'll water your camels.

[18 : 36] Let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac. By this I shall know that you have shown steadfast love to my master.

Before he had finished speaking, Behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, the son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came out with her water jar on her shoulder.

The young woman was very attractive in appearance, a maiden whom no man had known. She went down to the spring and filled her jar and came up. Then the servant ran to meet her and said, Please give me a little water to drink from your jar.

She said, Drink, my Lord. And she quickly let down her jar upon her hand and gave him a drink.

When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, I will draw water for your camels also, until they had finished drinking. So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough and ran again to the well to draw water, and she drew for all his camels.

[19 : 44] The man gazed at her in silence to learn whether the Lord had prospered his journey or not. When the camels had finished drinking, the man took a gold ring weighing a half shekel and two bracelets for her arms weighing ten golden shekels, and said, Please tell me whose daughter you are.

Is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night? She said to him, I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor.

She added, We have plenty of both straw and fodder and room to spend the night. The man bowed his head and worshipped the Lord and said, Bless be the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken his steadfast love and faithfulness toward my master.

As for me, the Lord has led me in the way to the house of my master's kinsman. Now one author says the chief steward, the chief servant here, is one of the most attractive minor characters in the whole Bible.

I think that's true, and you see why. The servant takes off with ten camels to Mesopotamia. We'll see why in a little bit. But the servant does not so much search for a wife, for Isaac, as he searches for providence.

[21 : 17] He goes first to a well in the evening. Now the author is pointing out very clearly time and place, very importantly, because they're important for providence. So he goes to a well in the evening, because he knows a well in the evening is where and when he's likely to find a young unmarried woman.

So he puts himself in the way. And I love this. He has the camels kneel down, as if to wait on the Lord to render what he promised, to arrange what he promised.

Then he prays for success. Notice what he prays. Look down there with me in verse 14 again. He prays, Let the young woman come to me and say, Please let down your jar and drink.

Or let the young woman to whom I say, So when I say to this young woman, Please let down your jar and drink. Let her then say, Drink, and I will water your camels also.

And so he praying for success. Let me ask her for water. Let her give me water. And then offer water to his camels. And then look down in verse 15.

[22 : 27] So he's praying quietly like we might in our heads. Verse 15. Before he had finished speaking, Rebecca appears.

Behold, Rebecca. Standing before him. Young woman's attractive.

He went down to the Springfield. She went down to Springfield, her jar, and came up. Then the servant ran to meet her. We learn that she's a relative of Abraham's brother. And then all the attention turns to her.

So all the attention turns. And we could linger on this. But all the attention turns to her as she gets some water for herself. And the servant says, Please, please, please, let me have some water.

So she draws water for him. The text says he waits in silence to see what she'll do next. And she says, Let me water your camels too.

[23 : 24] So he knows this is the Lord answering his prayer. And then after she waters the camels, Look in verse 22. When the camels had finished drinking, So when he knew all that he had prayed had come to pass, The man took the gold ring and the two bracelets, Put them on his arm and said, Please tell me who you are.

And she says, I'm your kin. I am Rebecca. I'm a kin of Abraham. So what are we supposed to learn from all this?

A few moments ago we said providence is, Or providence says, What God ordains for our good must be. Right? If that's true, which it is, Then we might assume that all we need to do is passively wait on providence.

But what this servant does so wonderfully models how providence must be sought by praying, working, and watching. So he prays.

You know, when we think about the providence of God, the sovereignty of God, We often think prayer makes all the difference, And therefore God is contingent upon our prayers, Therefore God is not completely sovereign.

[24 : 38] Or we think prayer makes no difference. So either prayer makes all the difference, or it makes no difference. Well, neither one of those are true biblically. Biblically, all things are brought to pass according to the counsel of his will, And yet you have not because you ask not.

So somehow in the mystery, the working out of God's sovereign, purposeful plan includes our prayers. God's purposes are brought to pass. God's purposes are not brought to pass without the prayers we pray.

And so he prays. I love that. The promise is what drives Abraham. But the first thing he does when he arrives is he prays. Then he works. You know, he doesn't wait on the angel to do all the work.

He loads up the donkeys, travels 500 plus miles to Mesopotamia, and he goes looking. And then he watches and waits. What I want us to see is that an understanding of the providence of God should produce in us a readiness to pray, work, and wait on the Lord.

Back when I was in college, a string of wildly popular and eerily suspenseful movies came out, one of which is called Signs. Graham Hess, played by Mel Gibson, is a former priest living in an isolated farm with his family.

[25 : 53] He begins seeing things. You know, he gets worried about those guys. First, he sees cropped circles in his land, which everyone dismisses as vandalism.

Then he sees lights at night, 14 lights in his field. And he can't stop thinking about those lights. He can't stop thinking that those lights must be signs, UFO, I don't know.

Well, something's going on. Something supernatural is taking place. In one of the final scenes, he talks with his brother about what he sees.

He says, Mel Gibson's character, he says, people break down into two groups when they experience something lucky. Group number one sees it as more than luck, more than coincidence.

They see it as a sign, evidence that there is someone up there watching out for them. Group number two sees it as just pure luck, a happy turn of chance.

[26 : 55] I'm sure the people in group number two are looking at those 14 lights in a very suspicious way. For them, the situation is 50-50. Could be bad, could be good. But deep down, they feel that whatever happens, they're on their own.

And that fills them with fear. But there's a whole lot of people, he continues in group number one. When they see those 14 lights, they're looking at a miracle. And deep down, they feel that whatever's going to happen, there will be someone there to help them.

And that fills them with hope. He turns to his brother. What you have to ask yourself is, what kind of person are you? Are you the kind that sees signs, sees miracles?

Or do you believe that people are just lucky? But look at it this way. Is it possible that there are no coincidences? You know, this passage in Scripture is pushing us to ask that question of ourselves.

What kind of person are you? Is it all luck? Or do you see signs? Now, this is not supposed to lead you into some mystical world where you're interpreting things without counsel, without the Bible.

[28 : 11] But you should be on the edge of your seat praying, working, and watching for the Lord. Two kind of bits of caution. Don't overlook providence. Don't overlook providence.

You know, we often live as if God is only doing one thing in one person's life at a time. When God doesn't appear to be at work, we feel lost and forgotten or forsaken.

Is God still at work in my life? Has he forgotten me? What's going on? But we must remember, while God cares deeply for us and has deep purposes for us, his purposes do not center on us.

As if the only thing he's doing in the world is what he's doing in our life. That's not the way it is. Actually, God is the ultimate multitasker.

Now, multitasking is a myth. Don't believe anybody that tells you that. We can't think like that. But God is the ultimate multitasker. He's always working in countless ways at once in the lives of so many different people.

[29 : 08] His purpose is crisscross and zigzag and overlap. That's what we see in this scene. God has purposes that are all intersecting with the servant. Chief servant that slowly rose up in Abraham's house.

With Abraham at the end of his life. With Isaac. With Rebecca. How long has she waited for her husband? With even Laban who will be introduced to in a little while.

Now, God is, John Piper helpfully says, God is always doing 10,000 things in your life. And you may be aware of three of them. You know, one of the things I like to say is that my wife's Vietnamese.

I like to say God calls the Vietnam War to bring me a wife. It's true. Now, Vietnam was a terrible war, but we won't get off on that.

But the point is, God's purposes are that deep. God's doing 1,000 things at one time. And it led to the rebirthing of this, the true American dream of this family.

[30 : 07] And 27 years later, more than that, when I finally met Kim. So give thanks for the Vietnam War today. When you thank the Lord for it.

So don't overlook providence. Don't conclude that God's done. Don't be like Naomi in the story of Ruth and say, my life is bitter now.

You don't know providence. You don't know what God's doing. John Flavel says providence is like Hebrew. It's best read backwards. You can't read it forwards.

So too with providence. Don't rush providence. Perhaps this is a great lesson the servant teaches us as well. The providence develops slowly over time. So he goes and watches and waits.

It's so easy to be convinced of God's plans for our life. And then when they don't come to pass in the timetable that we have, we just think he's done. And so we rush out and do our own thing. Abraham could have rushed providence and went and had his son marry a Canaanite woman.

[31 : 09] We could rush providence and marry someone who's not a Christian. But it would be outside of the revealed will of God. It would be outside of providence.

We can force God's hand and confuse his direction. Point three, providence is received with praise and thanksgiving. Providence is received with praise and thanksgiving.

The story continues with the servant retelling all that happened to Rebecca. Look at verse 28. Rebecca, or then the young man, young woman ran and told her mother's household about all these things.

Rebecca had a brother whose name was Laban. Laban ran out toward the man to the spring as soon as he saw the ring and the bracelets on his sister's arms. Now that's a little clue.

And heard the words of Rebecca, his sister. Thus the man spoke to me. He went to the man and behold, he was standing by the camels at the spring. He said, come in, O blessed of the Lord. Why do you stand outside?

[32 : 14] For I prepared the house and a place for the camels. So the man came to the house and unharnessed the camels and gave straw and fodder to the camels. And there was water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him.

Then food was set before him to eat. But he said, I will not eat. So just another wonderful thing about this servant. I will not eat until I've said what I have to say. Got to get this off my chest. He said, speak on.

Laban did. He said, I am Abraham's servant. Verse 34. The Lord has greatly blessed my master and he's become great. He's given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male servants, female servants, camels and donkeys.

And Sarah, my master's wife, bore a son to my master when he was old. And to him he has given all that he has. My master made me swear, saying, you shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell.

But you shall go to my father's house and to my clan and take a wife for my son. I said to my master, perhaps the woman will not follow me. But he said, the Lord, before whom I have walked, will send his angel with you and prosper your way.

[33 : 20] You'll take a wife for my son from my clan and from my father's house. Then you'll be free from my oath when you come to my clan. And if they will not give her to you, you'll be free from my oath.

Verse 42. I came today to the spring and said, O Lord, the God of my master, Abraham, if you are prospering the way I should go. So this is his prayer. Behold, I'm standing by the spring of water. Let the virgin who comes out to draw water, to whom I shall say, please give me a little water from your jar to drink.

And who shall say to me, drink, and I will draw for your camels also. Let her be the woman whom the Lord has appointed for my master's son. Before I had finished speaking in my heart, alerting us, he wasn't saying this out loud.

Before I had finished speaking in my heart, behold, Rebecca came out with her water jar on her shoulder. And she went down to the spring and drew water. I said to her, please give me a drink.

She quickly let down her jar from her shoulder and said, drink, and I'll give to your camel's drink also. So I drank. She gave the camel's drink. And I said, whose daughter are you?

[34 : 24] She said, the daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bore to him. So I put a ring in her nose and the bracelets on her arm. Then I bowed my head and worshiped the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who led me by the right way to take the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son.

Now then, if you're going to show steadfast love and faithfulness to my master, tell me. Or if not, tell me that I may turn to the right hand or the left. Then Laban and Bethuel said, the thing has come from the Lord.

We cannot speak to you, good or bad. Behold, Rebecca is before you. Take her and go. Let her be the wife of your master's son, as the Lord has spoken. When Abraham's servant heard the words, he bowed himself to the earth before the Lord.

And the servant brought out jewelry of silver and gold and garments and gave them to Rebecca. He also gave to her brother and to her mother costly ornament. And he and the men who were with him ate and drank, and they spent the night.

When they rose in the morning, he said, send me away to my master. Her brother and mother said, let the woman remain with us for a while, at least ten days. After that, she may go. But he said, do not delay, since the Lord has prospered my way.

[35 : 42] Send me away, that I may go. They said, let us call the woman and ask her. And they called her back and said to her, will you go with this man? She said, I'll go. So they sent away Rebecca.

She leaves her home just like her father-in-law. Their sister and nurse, and Abraham's servant and his men, and they blessed Rebecca and said, oh, our sister, may you become thousands of ten thousand.

May your offspring possess the gates of those who hate him. I love this. And, you know, there's so much here.

Gosh. The servant arrives. He will not eat until he's said what he needs to say. Servant continues and tells everything.

Moses records it twice in this same chapter to underline the providence of God. That's what's going on. He tells them how he prayed. How he waited at the well.

[36 : 43] How he asked Rebecca for a drink. How Rebecca then offered to water the camels. What is he underlining? He's underlined God has done all this. And then he tells her how he gave her a ring and bracelets and asked her her name.

And then he rejoiced in the Lord. And verse 48, if you look there with me again, he says, I bowed my head and worshiped the Lord and blessed him, the God of my father, who led me in the right way.

Laban and Bethel agree. And then the scene concludes with Rebecca turning her back on all she's ever known to go with the servant. The servant models how providence should lead to praise and thanksgiving.

When the Lord answers his prayer, he doesn't get proud. You know, sometimes we get answers to prayers and our hearts get puffed up. But not this servant.

Every time, we don't have time to underline them all, but 26 and 27, 48 and 52, he rejoices in the providence of God. All the movements of providence humbled him.

[37 : 47] The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places, he could be writing. Just like David did and led him to praise and thank God. We should continually give thanks and praise to God for the orderings of providence.

We should give thanks for food. Not just for bread on our plate, but for the farmers and millers and bakers and distributors and drivers and grocers that work together to bring you the bread on your plate.

Thank God for shelter. Yes, for a home, but all the providential workings for a job, to pay the rent, pay the bills, help to get up and go out the door. We give thanks for friends and for work and for all the hard stuff.

We give thanks because it's God who gives everything. And there's so many things he's doing behind every good gift that we have. We give him thanks and praise.

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights. There's an eagerness. There should be an eagerness to trace in us the little movements of providence in our lives.

[38 : 51] All the ways of God are undeserved good. Do we know the works of providence? John Flavel, he wrote a fabulous book.

I would, you know, John Flavel is one of the Puritans. And he wrote a fabulous book that I think is very readable. Not all the Puritans are readable. But this one is called The Mystery of Providence.

Amazing book. Number two in all the Puritans that I've read. Or number two book. The first one is the rare jewel of Christian contentment, in my opinion.

Favorite Puritan books. But this is number two. Amazing. Look what he says. Let me tell you. Let the preacher preach to you. There is not such a pleasant history for you to read in all the world as the history of your own lives.

If you would but sit down and record from the beginning hitherto what God has been for you and done for you. What signal manifestations. What signal works.

[39 : 53] And the outbreking of his mercy, faithfulness, and love there have been in all the conditions you have passed through. What do you say? Is there a greater history than your history? You might like to read history.

But do you read your history? The history of his undeserved favor. Unexpected kindnesses. Repeated deliverance. The history of his purposeful working. Just the other night after Thanksgiving.

I was asking my brother-in-law. What is the story of your conversion? Because God converted him at the campus of UT. He called home to his younger sister who was 12 to tell her what God had done.

Nine years later. I don't know the math. Six years later. Freshman at UT. Kim's born again. God led her brother there to save her soul.

To be a part of the work. Do you trace out Providence? Now we don't all do this. But get yourself a journal and write it down. I don't know how many times I've paused.

[40 : 58] I don't know what the Lord's doing in my life. Trace out Providence. Why was I born here? Not there. Why are these things? How many things had to work together for that person to preach the gospel to me in August of 2001?

So many things. So that you'd be like the servant. Oh. All praise to God. Do you love your history? Do you love your story?

Finally. Providence centers on the salvation of God. Conclude reading the longest chapter in Genesis now. Look at verse 61. Then Rebecca and her young women arose and rode on the camels and followed the man.

Thus the servant took Rebecca and went his way. Now Isaac had returned from Berleharoi and was dwelling in the Negev.

And Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening. And he lifted up his eyes and saw and behold there were camels coming. Rebecca lifted up her eyes. And when she saw Isaac she dismounted from the camel and said to the servant.

[42 : 15] Who is that man walking in the field to meet us? The servant said it is my master. So she took a veil and covered herself. The servant told Isaac all the things that he had done.

And Isaac brought her into the tent of Sarah his mother and took Rebecca. She became his wife and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

Now we know why Isaac took ten camels. Because he was bringing back Rebecca and all her women. All her servants.

When they arrive Isaac is in the field meditating. He lifts up his eyes and sees the camels. I remember there was a single guy praying through this verse. Praying the Lord. I'd just be walking around. The woman of my dreams would arrive.

Took a little bit more work and prayer convincing too. Rebecca sees Isaac.

[43 : 16] Says who is that man? He says it's my master. She takes the veil. Covers herself like we do in wedding ceremonies. Married Isaac. Isaac takes her into his tent to be his wife. What a great ending.

What a beautiful story. What's it mean? Did you notice that in verses 1 to 60.

The servant calls Abraham my master 16 times. Couldn't be more clear. Who he's doing errands for.

But did you notice. In verse 65. The servant says. Isaac is my master. Did you notice also. That in the. The outsides of this scene. In the oath. In 1 to 9. It's all about Abraham. Isaac is not present. Not active. And then in 61.

[44 : 18] Through the end. The final kind of 8 or 9 verses. Abraham's not present. Not active. Isaac is. Well. The idea is.

The story is shifting. From Abraham to Isaac. Sarah died. Isaac has a wife. Genesis 25. Will record Abraham's death.

And the birth of Esau and Jacob. So. What he's saying is. Genesis 24. Is not merely about a marriage. A nice little verse to read. At your wedding ceremony. But about the continuing promise of God.

To bring salvation to his people. That's what's going on. Providence centers on the salvation of God. The story of history.

Is a story of a gradually unfolding salvation. That comes to us in Jesus Christ. And so. Genesis 25. Is the first transition. From Abraham.

[45 : 12] To Isaac. But the promise will continue. From Isaac to Jacob. And then to Judah and Perez. It'll pass through Boaz. And Obed. And Jesse. It'll carry on through David.

And Solomon. And many more. Until it reaches Joseph. The husband of Mary. The mother of Christ. That's where this is all going. Just as Rachel read a few minutes ago.

When the fullness of time had come. God sent forth his son. The fullness of time. That's providential language. What he's saying is. Not when the right hour had come about.

No. When the decisive moment had come. For God to send his rescue. When all the names have been added up. The families have been traced through. So that God might send his son.

Into the world to rescue sinners. So all of the providences of the Bible. Center on Jesus Christ. But all the providences of your life. Center on him as well. I had this thought this morning.

[46 : 10] That our individual lives. Are like tributaries. Running to the great stream. Of the promise of God. And the people of God. And the place of God. So there are all these different tributaries.

Millions and millions of tributaries. That are going to the great stream. And our life often feels. Kind of off course. Out here. Like what is going on? We are in the sticks. But God is leading toward a place.

Where his people will be with him. In his place. Forever. So the providence of God. Center on Jesus Christ. Who came to ransom.

His own bride. He didn't send a servant. God sent him. To break the back of hell. To bring his bride back to himself.

To prepare her. To adorn her. To make her beautiful. To present her to the Lord. The father of the bride. And to the bridegroom. All the providence of your life.

[47 : 13] Center on Jesus Christ. All the highs. Are meant to lead to praise. And thanksgiving. All the lows. All the struggles. And sins. And failures. And struggles. Meant to lead us to the salvation.

Jesus Christ. If you're not a Christian. I want to offer you the salvation. Jesus Christ. Today is no accident. God's providence has brought you here.

Why would you be here? Apart from the providence of God. Perhaps you arrive longing to know. Your life is not random. Not worthless.

Not merely luck. Which luck has a great side. But it has a bad side too.

Longing to know. There's somebody. Threading through all the hurt and pain. That you've been through. Just leading somewhere. The reality is. Your life is worse than you can realize.

[48 : 17] Than you realize right now. You've sinned. Against the holy God. And deserving of eternal punishment. But salvation is better than you can imagine.

God. God is working. God is drawing. You. To open your eyes. To see. The forgiveness of God. And Jesus Christ.

God is going to act. Not merely trying to make you feel. Worthy. Or. Significant. Or special. She does all those things.

When he calls us sons and daughters. But to be reconciled to him. Forevermore. So let us rest. Knowing. All the providences and purposes of God.

Come to pass by the unseen. Hand of providence. The man behind the curtain. is the Lord. It's your Father who loves you with an everlasting love, Jeremiah tells us. Let us pray.

[49 : 18] Father in heaven, oh Lord, we hide ourselves in you. We give you thanks for the privilege of resting in you, rejoicing in you.

We pray that you would help us, God, to know you more and more, to love you, more and more. We pray that you would come.

You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at