

THE JACOB ENIGMA

*Tracing the path
of 'the Twister'...*

a series by David Legge

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The Jacob Enigma - Chapter 1

"God Loves WHO?"

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Having sought the Lord over it for quite a time, I believe I've been guided to the character of Jacob. So I'm calling this series - however long it goes on for, I don't know, however long you'll tolerate me! But there is that much stuff here, it's incredible, as the revelation is coming before God - but we're going to look at 'The Jacob Enigma'. Let's pray before we turn to the Scripture, and it's really going to be a pretty intense Bible study in many respects, but I believe that the sword of the Word of God is going to do deep surgery in our lives here tonight, and there are going to be mighty things accomplished for the glory of the Lord. So let's pray - and do pray with me, will you do that now? Would you pray that God would speak to you? Sometimes - I think I've maybe said to you before - we usually let the fellow up at the front do all the praying, and I don't know what we think about: you know, what we're going to have for supper, or the roast tomorrow, or something like that, or Sunday School class we've to do and we haven't it sorted, I don't know. Forget about all that, and come to God now. Will you, in your spirit, approach the Lord and say: 'Lord, would You speak to me tonight?'. I don't know what your issues are, I don't know what your baggage is, but why not even bring that thing before the Lord and say: 'Lord, here I am, You know my need, would You please come and speak to me now?'. Would you do that? If you want to pray for me that's okay, because I need it! Alright, let's pray together.

Father, we just want to agree with everything that we have sung tonight. We want to declare that You are great, You are great, great is the Lord and greatly to be praised! There is no one like our God, there is no one beside You, there is nothing that we can compare You to. Lord, we say these things, and yet it feels redundant even saying them because we haven't the first notion of what You are really like in all Your glory, and splendour, and majesty. The heavens declare Your glory, and we look into space through the satellite pictures and all the rest, Lord, we are just awestruck by nature - and yet it declares Your glory, yet You're bigger than that, for in You we live, and move, and have our being. Lord, we come before You tonight acknowledging that You're so great, and so vast, and so big, and we are so small. Yet, Lord, You love us and You're interested in us - and that is just incredible to us. What is man that You're mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? Lord, would You visit us tonight, would You visit us? We know You're not way out there at a distance watching us, You're here - but, Lord, may we know You're here; because for some people here tonight, I believe, You're the farthest consideration for them in their consciousness. They don't sense You, they don't feel You, they wonder are You even there. Lord, You have mercy upon us - I know that - and I pray that You will have mercy now, and that You will reach down and speak right into the heart of everybody gathered here tonight. Do business with people, Lord, change lives, transform, fix people as only You can do. We welcome You, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in the mighty name of Jesus, Amen.

Now we're turning in our Bibles to Genesis chapter 25, and the whole series is going to be called 'The Jacob Enigma', and tonight's message is called 'God Loves WHO?'. Genesis 25:19, and we're going to read to the end of the chapter - we'll not be dealing with all of this subject matter tonight, but just to give us a bit of context. Genesis 25 verse 19, I'm reading from the New King James Version: *"This is the genealogy of Isaac, Abraham's son. Abraham begot Isaac. Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah as wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan Aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian. Now Isaac pleaded with the LORD for his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived. But the children struggled together within her; and she said, 'If all is well, why am I like this?'. So she went to inquire of the LORD. And the LORD said to her: 'Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger'. So when her days were fulfilled for her to give birth, indeed there were twins in her womb. And the first came out red. He was like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau. Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau's heel; so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them. So the boys grew. And Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob. Now Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he was weary. And Esau said to Jacob, 'Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary'. Therefore his name was called Edom. But Jacob said, 'Sell me your birthright as of this day'. And Esau said, 'Look, I am about to die; so what is this birthright to me?'. Then Jacob said, 'Swear to me as of this day'. So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright".*

Now don't worry if you don't know what an 'enigma' is - who doesn't know what an enigma is? One honest person, two, any advance? Well 'enigma', the dictionary definition will come up on the screen here - thank you, Richard, for your help tonight - 'enigma' is a noun, and when it's attributed to a person it speaks of a person of puzzling or contradictory character. Now you know what an enigma is, maybe you even know who an enigma is - they might even be sitting beside you tonight! To give you an example of an enigma is, someone who says: 'Well, to me, he or she has always been an enigma. One minute they are completely insensitive, the next minute they are moved to tears' - an apparent contradiction in a personality. The word 'enigma' comes from the Latin and the Greek meaning 'to speak in riddles', so it literally means something or someone who is a puzzle or a mystery. On the next slide you will see a contraption called an 'Enigma Machine', and it was a German-built enciphering machine that converted messages into code, and it was used to great effect during World War II - and I think there have been films about it as well. It was actually puzzling up words, putting them into some kind of mystery to conceal information. Winston Churchill, whose burial has been celebrated this week, famously said of the nation of Russia: 'Russia is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma' - what a description! And if you know anything about Russia in recent weeks, you will know that that is very true - and it pans out, indeed, in biblical prophecy, which is not our subject tonight.

So that's what an 'enigma' is, if you didn't know before. I believe it's an apt description of Jacob, because as you read the story of Jacob - and we will find this

out very quickly from tonight - but in subsequent weeks you will see that there are times that Jacob was good, I mean he was righteous and he did the right thing and had the right motives; but there were other times that he was downright mean, twisted, and utterly deceptive. I'm reminded of Longfellow's poem called 'The Little Girl' - anybody know this poem? I'm sure you know some little girls like this anyway: 'When she was good she was very, very good; but when she was bad, she was horrid' - that's a bit like Jacob. Yet, though he is an enigma - and I think he's one of the most neglected characters, I have to say, in the Bible - I agree with one Bible commentator who says: 'I do not believe there is any character in the Bible, other than the Lord Himself, from whom we can learn so many hard lessons'. Why is that? Because he's just like us. As we look at Jacob tonight and in subsequent evenings, we're going to - as it were - be looking into a mirror image, a mirror image of humanity; because the entire humankind, the race that we are a part of, is an enigma, it is a mystery. There is great confusion and contradiction about who we are.

I'm sure you most of you are aware of the three great questions of existence: 'Who am I?', 'How did I get here?', and 'Where am I going?'. When we look at Jacob, we see him asking the question: 'Who am I?' - the issue of identity, who you really are as a human being, forget about religion or Christianity or any faith at all just yet, the whole of the human race is wracked by that dilemma. Corporately and individually, people are asking: 'Who are we? Who am I?'. The next slide will show a quote from a philosopher, Theodore Zeldin, and this is what he said: 'Each person is an enigma. You're a puzzle not only to yourself but also to everyone else, and the great mystery of our time is how we penetrate this puzzle' - that's a profound statement. All of humanity is an enigma, and a great question that begs to be answered - and philosophers, theologians, all sorts of political minds, and the most intellectual aptitudes that there are have sought to penetrate this puzzle, to fix the code in the scramble.

You might say: 'Oh, no, that's not how I view humanity, and it's certainly not how I see myself'. Well, if you should be thinking that - and there are a certain section of our population, and it's the same all over the globe, who are self-deceived, and who don't realise the brokenness that is in their lives. The Bible warns about this, in Jeremiah 17:9 we read: 'The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?' - who can know their own heart? So we can become self-deceived. In fact, that's an Old Testament scripture written in Hebrew, and the Hebrew root for 'the heart is deceitful', that word 'deceitful' actually could be rendered 'Jacob' - 'the heart is Jacobed and desperately sick'! Isn't that fascinating? The root word that is behind the name 'Jacob' is 'supplanter'. Now that's an old word that we maybe don't understand, but it speaks of one who seizes something. Rebekah and Isaac, as we read here tonight, named Jacob with this name 'supplanter' because, as he was coming out of the womb after his brother, Esau his twin brother came first, but as Jacob was coming out of the womb he thrust his arm out and grabbed his brother Esau by the heel, as if to pull him back into the womb so that he could get out first. So they called him by this name, 'heel-grabber', literally.

What a description of our hearts! The idea is of subtlety, shrewdness, stealth. By this, as we read his biography, he wants to displace his brother. We see him getting Esau to sell his birthright. Later on we will see him tricking his father Isaac

into giving the blessing to him, rather than giving it to his elder brother Esau. So this is just the type of nature that this guy has. Look at chapter 27 for a moment and verse 36, running ahead of ourselves a bit, chapter 27:36, after the incident of losing the blessing of Isaac his father, Esau is incensed - as you can imagine - and he says in verse 36: 'Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright, and now look, he has taken away my blessing!', and he asked his father, 'Have you not reserved a blessing for me?'

Now we haven't got time to do this, but if you want to know where this nature comes from in Jacob, it goes all the way back to Adam, and it's in us all. Now before we go on any further, I want to say this, and this is a vital thing - I may have said it even in previous sessions with you - we listen to a plethora of voices in our world. We listen to what the media says; we listen to what the enemy says, Satan; we listen to what our own flesh says; we listen to what authority figures around us, parents, bosses, leaders, political and all the rest, religious leaders - we listen to what they say, and for us, as children of God, we need to block out all those other voices and we need to start hearing what God says. You will not be self-deceived if you listen to what God says, and God speaks in His word. But, you know, sometimes we're deceived by our own flesh, what we think about ourselves, how we really are.

I want to encourage you to do something here tonight, I want you to hear what God says about us - when I say 'us', I'm speaking generically of the human race. I want you, as we come to 'The Jacob Enigma', to pray a prayer. The prayer is found in Psalm 139 and verses 23 and 24 - I'll give you it, you don't need to turn to it because there might be different versions: 'Search me, O God, and know my heart' - what's that inferring? He didn't know his own heart, 'Lord, You search me and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting'. So what the psalmist is saying there is: 'I'm not going to listen to what my kingdom is saying about me; I'm not going to listen to what the politicians and the religious leaders are saying; I'm not going to listen to the voice of Satan; I'm not even going to listen to my own self-deceived heart - I'm going to listen to You, O God, and You alone; and You will tell me the truth about myself, the good and the bad, what I am and what I need to be'. Now would you do that for me tonight? You know, that would be a great step forward - if you don't listen to anything else I say, and I do hope you will - but if you don't take anything else in, that would be a huge step for some of you, because some of you are completely confused and disorientated, not just spiritually but just in your life. You lack direction and identity, because you're not listening to the right voice. Would you just pray from your heart now: 'Lord, as I look into the mirror that is Jacob, would You speak to me about myself? Whatever You show me, I'm prepared to look at it' - would you do that, just quietly just now? Do that, between you and the Lord.

Let's look first of all tonight at the enigma of Jacob's character. OK, we're looking in the mirror now, remember that. The Bible doesn't depict Jacob as a wicked, deceitful character that some have portrayed him to be. I have to be honest, I'm probably going to have to apologise to old Jacob when I get to heaven, because some people have really demeaned his character. He is not the mean swindler that often he is portrayed to be. Actually we make a grave mistake if we think that, because we miss what God is teaching through this character of Jacob. As we read

his life story we find that he is a highly intelligent man, in fact he's got brilliant business acumen. He appears, ladies, to be a very appealing, attractive young fellow; and we see that Rachel and Leah were enchanted by him. In chapter 25 and verse 27, if you read it, you will see that it describes Jacob as a home-loving man - verse 27 of chapter 25: 'Esau was a man of the field', a farmer, if you like, 'Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents' - that literally means he was a home-maker and a home-lover. The Hebrew word can actually be translated 'perfect, complete, sound and wholesome', that's a description of Jacob! We know sometimes he is portrayed as this wee weakling, and Esau was the big burly guy that was out on the farm, but that couldn't be further from the truth. As we read his story, we find that Jacob must have been well physically conditioned, because on his own he removed the stone from the well where Rachel was watering her flocks in Genesis 29, and of course in Genesis 28 he wrestles with a heavenly visitor.

Now we agree that Esau love the outdoors - that was his domain - but Jacob was no wimp or weakling, he was an intelligent, good looking, confident, strong, and in many respects upstanding young man. I would go further, to say that though he has become known as a deceiver and his name means 'supplanter', he appears in his life to be uncomfortable with the deception. Let me show you this, turn to Genesis 27 verse 12 - you know Mummy, she's trying to get him, because she favours Jacob (that's a very dangerous thing, favouring one child over another), and she favours Jacob and Daddy favours Esau. Mummy wants Jacob to get the blessing, and in verse 12 she has hatched this plan to Jacob, and now he objects, he says in verse 12: 'Perhaps my father will feel me' - you remember she got him after this to put the fur on him, but he is objecting - 'Perhaps my father will feel me and I shall seem to be a deceiver to him; and I shall bring a curse on myself and not a blessing'. You'll not seem to be a deceiver, Jacob, you will be a deceiver for doing it! But his fear was that that should be what he would be known as - if you only knew now, Jacob!

Later on he seems appalled at how his uncle Laban deceives him into marrying Leah instead of Rachel - I think we would all have a bit of a shock on that score, if that happened any of us! But he was outraged over it, it was a sense of injustice. In chapter 31, if you want to go there just quickly, and verse 7, we see later on in his story that he is also scandalised over how Laban his uncle has dealt with him over his wages, chapter 31 and verse 7: 'Yet your father has deceived me and changed my wages ten times, but God did not allow him to hurt me'. So he cites the injustice, and he invokes the righteousness of God who had protected him. So here we see that Jacob is disapproving of deceit, and we might well say that he has got some morals about him. Is this the Jacob you recognise from the Bible stories as children, or what you've been taught?

Whatever faults Jacob had, another plus to his character was that he desired blessing from God. We don't think of him this way, but the fact of the matter is - as we read from the reading tonight - Esau despised his birthright. He had, in other words, no time for the things of God; but the birthright and the blessing were important to Jacob, he valued them. I think he must have known the prophecy that was given to his Mum. You remember his Mum wondered what the fight was that was going on in her womb, and she asked God, and God told her: 'There are two nations in your womb', and God told her, 'The older shall serve the younger'. In other words, Jacob would inherit the blessing. So Jacob, I think, knowing this from

Mum - of whom he was the favourite - he wanted to live in the destiny and in the promises of God in his life. Here we are getting really down to the nub of the issue of why Jacob is such an enigma; because he had all this going for him, he had the prophetic promise of God, the blessing of God, the destiny of God as a trajectory in his life ordained by God - and yet we now know him as a twister, a supplanter, and a deceiver: why? What was Jacob's problem?

Well, here it is, and here's my message very simply to you tonight: Jacob couldn't leave the matter with the Lord. I just hope you're getting that, because that is profound. He had to make his destiny happen, do you understand? If you like, he helped the Lord out a wee bit in getting to where he knew the Lord wanted him to be, to achieve the success he so desperately yearned for. This is the main point: the Lord could have given him the fulfilment of all these promises, without Jacob's dubious efforts. Now I don't know how - I mean, I don't know how God would have done it, but I know He would have because He promised and prophesied. I know this much: the Lord didn't need Jacob to help Him out. Are you with me?

Now this, of course, is what Jacob represents. Sometimes we could just delve off the deep end, and say 'Jacob represents sin' - but, no, that's not specific enough: Jacob represents flesh. Do you understand? The fleshly nature within us - what I'm talking about is that old nature that we have inherited from our first father, Adam, that fell into sin, a nature of depravity, this Adamic nature in us. But what we often misunderstand, especially as Christians, is that the flesh in us - that 'old man' as we call it - has a good side as well as a bad side. Did you know that? Did you know that the old sinful nature in us has a good, moral, respectable side that wants to help God out and wants to do good things in its own steam - did you know that? We are familiar, I'm sure, with the works of the flesh listed for us in Galatians 5 - let me just remind you of them, this is the bad side of the flesh: 'The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you', Paul says, 'as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the Kingdom of God'. You will not inherit the destiny and the promises of God if you live like that in the flesh, and all of us will say 'Amen' to that. But how many of us will say 'Amen' to the fact that if you know the blessing and the promises of God that are on your life as a Christian, you will not inherit them if you try to strive for them in the flesh - even though it's the good, moral, clean side of the flesh.

Now I know it's not clean, I know it's tainted, and our righteousnesses are all like filthy rags in the sight of God - I know all that, but what I'm talking about is that propensity within us to try to do good, to inherit blessing and get favour with God by our own efforts. Can I say something to you tonight - and I hope that you're getting this, because this is prophetic that is necessary into the life of individual Christians, but the church at large is absolutely wracked with fleshliness! Now there are a lot of the works of the flesh that we've just read in Galatians 5, there's a lot of immorality and there's a lot of sin, but the danger is that we substitute the bad flesh with the good flesh, and we are trying - 'trying' being the operative word - to live the Christian life in our own strength, or on some kind of moral code or denominational practice, and we're not getting there! That's not where God is, that's not where we inherit the promises, that's not where we get the blessing!

Oh, I hope you're hearing this. In fact, this is what the book of Galatians is all about - I'd say it's probably what the whole Bible is all about, mind you - but the book of Galatians, these were a group of Christians, and a group of false teachers (we call them Judaisers), were coming in and infiltrating, and were now teaching that these Gentile Christians had to obey the laws, the rules and the rites of the Torah (that's the first five books of the Bible, the law of Moses). In fact, 'You've got to become a Jew', that's what they were saying, 'Men need to be circumcised, and everybody has to keep the cleanliness laws, the dietary laws - you've got to become a Jew!'. It became Christ plus Judaism, Christ and His cross plus Moses - so whatever Christ began, Moses would perfect. I want to tell you something: these were Spirit-born, Spirit-filled Christians, but they started to swallow this lie of the devil. In fact in chapter 3 of Galatians, Paul says to them: 'Who has bewitched you?', and actually the words have the sense of 'Somebody has put a spell over you, because Christ was crucified in your midst' - not literally, but by the preaching of the cross they saw Jesus dying and bleeding for them, and being their substitute because they couldn't get there themselves. Miracles were being performed in their midst, this was a mighty church, and yet he says: 'You began in the Spirit, and you're now trying to be made perfect by the flesh' - and that could be a good summary of a lot of Christianity in Ireland, in the world, but particularly in Ireland. Whether it's Catholic, Protestant, evangelical, or whatever - many are trying to get to God in the flesh, but even those who are born again have begun in the Spirit but are trying to be made perfect by the flesh. Do you know something? Where did we read Galatians 5? In Galatians, no prizes for that one - Galatians, in the context. In other words, Paul was saying: 'If you're going to live by the flesh, even by the good side of the flesh, these are the type of things you're going to expect'. In fact, at one point he says: 'You're biting and devouring one another' - and, boy, what a word to the church in Ulster in particular, biting and devouring one another.

So these churches that are experiencing factions and schisms, and Christians in business meetings standing up and ripping the heads off one another either verbally or literally - this is the flesh at work, it is not of the Spirit of God, it cannot be! In fact, at one point Paul says to them - and there is a debate about whether Paul was bad with his eyesight, like me, so we had to get the pulpit raised! I don't know whether he was not, but in this Epistle of Galatians, he says: 'There was a time you guys would have plucked your eyes out and given them to me, but where has all your joy gone?'. That's what the flesh does, that's what legalism does: where has all your joy gone? How many pulpits or church doors could we write that over, or Christian lives and families? There is no joy! There is no joy, because they're trying to do something in the flesh that actually brings a curse - do you know that legalism and trying to live by law brings a curse? Galatians teaches that - and I'm not preaching on Galatians tonight, you would think I was - but the whole point is this, and Jesus said it: that which is of the flesh is, what? Come on! Waken up! That which is of the flesh is? Flesh! But that which is of the Spirit is spirit. In other words, flesh cannot produce spirit - it cannot ever!

So ultimately this was Jacob's problem, let's narrow it down even more - what was his problem? He had an unattractive side, maybe you have one too - a very unattractive side. The problem comes when circumstances - you've heard of a perfect storm, when certain factors all seem to coincide - well, Jacob wasn't a bad critter really, but when the circumstances were right that ugly side rose to the surface. Are you hearing anything tonight? The problem with Jacob, and the

problem with all of us, is that when the perfect storm rises and the old nature rises, like Jacob we cannot control it - in fact, it controlled him. It's so powerful. This is what we see in Jacob: he couldn't control his own natural strengths, he couldn't control the energy of the flesh, and conversely he couldn't wait on God to fulfil His promises. He couldn't wait on God to provide what he needed when he needed it, and so he lived up to his name - he had to snatch and grab! That's Jacob, and he is a picture of us. I hope you're seeing that, whether you're a Christian or not - you mightn't even be a Christian, but he is a picture of all of us, humankind. What do I mean? Working for God, working toward God, rather than working with God in the power of the Spirit - and that is the difference between all established institutional religion and true Bible-believing Christianity.

Sadly today, it is a distinction that can even be made in the church. You know what I'm talking about - what? You come to Christ, and maybe it's a genuine conversion, and before you can think about anything or even enjoy your conversion experience, somebody puts their hand on you and says: 'Teach a Sunday School class', or 'Become an elder', or 'Go to be a missionary', right away 'Give your testimony' - right away! 'You're saved to serve'. Now you know that the enemy often doesn't just tell outright lies, you know that - he mingles a bit of truth with a lie, and that is an untruth of course. But it is right that we are meant to serve the Lord, that is right, but 'Saved to serve', that's too simplistic - we are saved to be worshippers; we are saved to become intimate; we are saved to know God our Father, through Jesus Christ His Son, through the power and person and instrumentality of the Holy Spirit. You see, the disciples were called to 'be with Jesus', Mark chapter 3; and then He sent them out - but you've got to 'be' before you can 'do'. This is the problem in the church, this is the problem with many Christians, that they are trying to do before they have any being, any sense of who they are in God, any security, any safety, any satisfaction deep within their spirit! So they are ministering out of flesh!

Then - and we're running way ahead, but we will get to it some night - what happens when you operate like this is what happened to Jacob. Jacob met his match - not in the wife now, neither of them, but in his uncle Laban. I don't know whether you've ever thought about this, but Laban was a match for this supplanter if ever there was one. Let me say this to you, and this is a warning: if you won't to do things God's way, and if you try to grab the blessing through deception or the flesh, you will meet your match, and it most likely will be someone as fleshly as you. Why does God do that? Because He does it to wear us down - He wants us to realise that this is not His way, this is not how He works, this is not how we inherit blessing.

Maybe there is somebody here - and I think there's more than one, if you're honest - and this is why you are such a spiritual enigma, there is such a puzzle about your life; because, as the Bible says, you're double minded. You're a mixture of flesh and spirit. Turn with me, keep your finger there in Genesis because we'll probably be going back, turn with me to James where he talks about double-mindedness. We're going to be looking at a number of scriptures as we proceed now, so you need to keep awake and look them up. James chapter 1, listen to this and apply it - I'm just realising now, I'm a bit slow on it, that James is 'Jacob', did you know that? You knew that? You see, I didn't know that until now - but James, I forgot James is Jacob, the name 'Jacob'. Verse 3: 'Knowing that the testing of your faith

produces' - what? - 'patience'. Now we could just stop there and say: 'There is your lesson, Jacob. You know, you had faith to believe that you would inherit the prophetic destiny upon your life, but you hadn't the patience to inherit the promise'. You see, that's what the test is for. I'm the same as you, I want to get to the destination, OK? So if I get the train or get the bus, I don't want to admire the scenery, I want to get to where I'm going to. But, you see, our journey with God is not just about getting to where we are meant to be, it's about enjoying the journey - and so many of us don't have the patience to do that - but actually that is what teaches us the patience.

Jacob had to grab rather than wait, verse 4: 'But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect', 'mature' it means, 'and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom' - in other words, you don't know what to do, this is Jacob! He sees the blessing, as it were, like water flowing through his fingers, and he doesn't know what to do to hold it, so he grabs - but if you don't know what to do, don't grab, 'ask God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him'. I think if you analyse the life of Jacob, up to a point anyway, you will find that he gets the counsel of his Mummy, and he gets the counsel of his own acumen and all the rest, but he doesn't ask God how he's going to inherit these promises. But, if you ask God, He 'gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind'. So in other words, what that means is: you've got to believe the promise, and wait patiently upon the promise of God for your life, but not mingle it with doubt - to put it another way, not mingle it with flesh, and think 'Oh, is God going to come through for me, is God going to perform what He has pronounced on my life? Is that going to happen? Do I not have to quickly turbo the process?'

Verse 7: 'For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double minded man, unstable in all his ways'. What a description! Unstable - that's a fleshly person, even the good flesh, unstable. This is what will happen, this is what James was saying, this is what Jacob shows us: that you will be advancing in the flesh for good motives, no doubt, and maybe even for the blessing of God, but you will meet your match along the way. You will be constantly frustrated, blocked, and checked! Now don't misunderstand what I'm saying: do I believe in passionately pursuing the blessing of God? Of course I do! The Bible says that you have to take the Kingdom of heaven by violence, it suffers violence as Christians take it by force - but don't you think for one moment that you can get it by flesh! It's by faith! Grace through faith is a process that is engendered by the Holy Spirit, not by the flesh. Yes, we've got to pursue, but we've got to pursue in the Spirit.

But listen, not only did Jacob meet his match in uncle Laban, but he met himself. Just as you have been looking in the mirror tonight, that's what happened when Jacob met Laban. He found that he was looking in the mirror at himself, and he didn't like what he was seeing. Further, he didn't recognise himself. Do you recognise yourself in Jacob? Be honest now. Let me help you out, turn with me to Romans 7 verse 22. Now Paul, you could think he was writing about Jacob - but, you see, he was, he was writing about the human nature in himself. Verse 21: 'I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good'. Now that's strange, is he schizophrenic? No, he just realises that there are different laws working in humanity. He was a religious Jew and he wanted to do good things with

his will, but he knew that there was a law working against that, a law of sin. Verse 22: 'I delight in the law of God according to the inward man', there's part of me that rejoices and wants to live according to what God requires of me in his law, but, verse 23, an enigma, 'I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members', in my flesh - that just doesn't mean his body, but it's a nature that he has. This is his cry of desperation: 'O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?'. He says: 'This is like carrying a stinking corpse around on my back, this flesh of mine. My mind knows what's right to do, and I even desire to do what's right, but this thing on me just pulls me down to do sinful things'.

Is that not you and me in our humanity? When we are looking at Jacob, we are looking into the mirror. Do you know something? All of us, whether you realise it or want to admit it or not, all of us are Jacobs, and all of us are capable of depravity more than we could ever imagine or speak. If you don't believe that, I think you have a problem - not because you don't agree with me, but because you don't realise, really, the fallenness of humankind.

I remember being in an evangelical prayer meeting sometimes, and there was a gentleman - a good man, and I love him dearly - who used to get up to pray, and I always knew what he was praying about because he had watched the news before he came to the prayer meeting, like I watched the news. So when there was a heinous crime, or some form of abuse that had been uncovered, he would sometimes stand and pray, 'Lord, I just can't understand, we can't imagine how people could ever do such things'. I always used to think to myself: 'Well, I hope I would never do any of those things, and I couldn't imagine doing those things and I wouldn't want to, but I know that if the circumstances are right, and the way is given into my life for the enemy to empower, that I'm capable in my humanity of doing anything'. Some of you will have been watching - and I haven't had time this week, but I really would love to - some of the commemorative documentaries about the Holocaust, and the atrocities in World War II and other genocides around the world. You know, it beggars belief, doesn't it? I mean, it's like another planet, and we think in the 21st-century: 'How could that ever have happened? How?'. What? But it did happen. I remember very little from history at school, I have to say, but I remember hearing this much: that Hitler was a very personable, gentlemanly individual - one-to-one he was charming.

The enigma of Jacob's character is the enigma of human character, that means your character. I hope we've all come to terms with that at some stage in our lives, and if you haven't already you need to. But here's the greatest enigma of all, OK? The enigma of God's love for Jacob. This is just incredible, because God passionately loved Jacob. God loves who? Jacob! Turn with me to Romans 9, a couple of chapters, look at verse 11 halfway through it - and we are interjecting in a very deep discourse, but it's just these points I want to make through to verse 16 or so. Halfway through verse 11 of chapter 9: 'That the purpose of God according to election might stand', notice this, 'not of works but of Him who calls, it was said to her', that's Jacob's Mummy, "The older shall serve the younger'. As it is written, 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated'. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion'. So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of

God who shows mercy'. Isn't that wonderful?

Look down at verses 23 and 24: 'And that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?'. That just blows my mind! God loved Jacob, and here's why: He loved him in order to show His mercy upon him, so that people might know that this thing, this thing called 'favour with God', doesn't come through flesh and works, but it comes freely by grace. It doesn't come to those who run, to those who strive, it comes to those who believe God - they are vessels of mercy.

Now there is a big question here: why did God love Jacob? I mean, isn't that a real issue? It is an enigma, it's a conundrum, a puzzle, a mystery. To put it another way: how could He love Jacob when we see what he gets up to? It is baffling! Turn with me to Malachi, that's where Paul is quoting from, Malachi chapter 1, where he is quoting from in Romans 9. It's the last book in the Old Testament, turn with me to Malachi chapter 1. God pronounces there to a people who think that God had forgotten them, when in fact they had forgotten God, verse 2 God says: 'I have loved you', says the LORD. 'Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?' Was not Esau Jacob's brother?', says the LORD. 'Yet Jacob I have loved; but Esau I have hated'. Look down further, because this is profound, chapter 3 and verse 6 He mentions Jacob again: 'For I am the LORD, I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob'.

Now there is a big discussion goes on, you know: how could God hate Esau? Well, I'm not getting into that tonight - I have certain explanations of that, but I'm not entering into that, because that's not really the big question. The big issue is: how could God love Jacob? Not how could He hate Esau, how could He love Jacob? Not only that, He says in chapter 3 verse 6 that we have just read: 'I never change'. He is the immutable God, He is the same as always from everlasting to everlasting, the great 'I Am'. It is because of His unchangeableness, both in holiness, justice, truth and love, that you're not consumed 'O sons of Jacob'. It's because of His unchangeable character that Jacob is redeemed and not destroyed. So what's the answer? Well, it sounds a bit silly, but He loves us because He loves us. He loves us because He loves us, not because of anything that we are, or anything we have done.

Turn with me to Deuteronomy 7 please. Deuteronomy 7, you need to understand this and many, many don't: the unconditional favour of God. Deuteronomy 7:6, and He's explaining to Israel why He has chosen them, to put His favour and blessing upon them. Deuteronomy 7:6: 'For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt'. That's simply saying what I've just said: He loves you because He loves you - that's what grace is. It's beyond reason, so stop trying to work it out - and that's what some of you're doing, that's why you are striving, that's why you're trying to earn it. Even if you know and

understand the love of God towards you at Calvary, and you realise the passion of Jesus when He shed every precious drop of blood for you, you're trying to pay Him back some way - waken up! You can't pay Him back! It's beyond reason, He doesn't have a reason, it is irrational. He did not rationalise it and say: 'Why should I love that person? Oh, well, they've a wee bit more than the folk over here' - no!

Here is where the enemy comes to us, this is a major entry point. You know that his job is the accuser of the brethren, he is the one who wants to sling mud at us who are Christians, that it might stick. He will tell us: 'God doesn't love you, God is disappointed in you. You're not good enough God, you're not doing well enough, you have failed Him. How can you go back to God? How can you, with your tail between your legs, go and say sorry to God?'. That's what he just bombards us with, when the fact of the matter is: it is His gracious love that is our salvation. I could preach to you tonight, if I had time and had prepared for it, on that little word in the Old Testament 'hesed'. You've maybe never heard of that, but you've read it many, many times in your Old Testament - because every time you read the Psalms, in fact every time you read the words 'lovingkindness', 'tender mercies', 'faithful love', it is all speaking of one particular concept that is summed up in the Hebrew word 'hesed'. Do you know what it is? Covenant love, covenant love, God has promised by grace - and you don't work for it, you receive it by faith. His hesed is never-ending, and that covenant is cut - all covenants are cut - in the palms of Jesus' hands, that's why your names are written on those same palms. Isn't that a profound statement? God loves who? God loves who? 'Jacob have I loved'!

Some of you will know the story, and we will get to it, but you know that Jacob wrestled with God - and after that his name was changed from Jacob to 'Israel'. But it doesn't say 'Israel have I loved', does it? 'Jacob have I loved'. Do you know what that tells me? God takes a person at their worst - surely that's worthy of a 'hallelujah'? Are you all alive? God takes people at their worst. While we were still sinners, while we were Jacobs - not Israel - while we were Jacobs Christ died for us. He doesn't disown Jacob, and He's not ashamed of Jacob. This is so vast, it's incredible, 21 times in the Bible God calls Himself 'the God of Jacob', He weds His own name to the name of this supplanter, this twister and grabber! In fact, He's eternally linked with Jacob, the people of God are named after him, and even when he does get his name changed to 'Israel', the twelve tribes and the present-day nation of ethnic Israel come from this man, God is always going to be the God of Israel. In fact, the only person that God's people have been named after, other than Jacob, is Jesus Christ.

Why does He do this? So that He gets all the glory. He can't help but get it with a fellow like Jacob - and yet I can strut around in pride and self-righteousness, and think I'm better than Jacob, when really I'm no different. I need the Redeemer, and I need to realise that only God, by His grace, can bring me to glory; only God can change and transform me. Can I tell you: this is the Christian life, this is why Jacob is so important. We see him wrestling with God, wrestling with his flesh - and I wonder, and I'm not going to run too far ahead, but I wonder does he really completely learn this lesson in his life as we see him on his deathbed? But nevertheless, this is the lesson that all of humanity is striving to learn, and yet it cannot be learned, it cannot be striven or achieved for, it comes from dying, giving up, throwing in the towel, saying 'I don't have what it takes, I haven't got the goods and I can't produce them'! So what happens is - and this is the message of

the cross that we as evangelicals so readily forget, we get people to the cross to get their wee sins forgiven, and then we tell them 'Right, go on, teach a Sunday School, give your testimony' - but we are to die on the cross, not just get our sins forgiven! We are to die! In fact, it's better than that, if we have believed in Jesus we have died - we have died! That old sinful nature has died, the old David Legge has died.

Well then, why does he raise his head when the circumstances are right? Because I often breathe life back into him. But if I reckon him to be dead, he is dead. The lie that you have believed from the devil is that the power source is still there, but if you could just wonderfully come to terms with the glorious message of the victory of the cross - not only over sin's penalty, not only over the debt of sin cancelled, bringing justification, but over the power of sin. The power source has been severed at the cross. The blood of Jesus gives us victory over sin presently, but we've got to believe it. Some of us are striving, we're trying to pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps, we're trying to keep squeaky clean and walk on the clean side of the road with a clean nose and all the rest, and do all the right things, and keep away from all those bad things - that will not work, it never worked, it cannot work! That which is of the flesh is flesh - your flesh, good and bad, has to die at the cross, and the Spirit of God in Jesus has to live in you.

That's it. I don't know where it got buried over the years, but it's still in this book - right from back at Jacob: dying to self, and the saving grace of Christ in us by the power of His Holy Spirit. What an example Jacob is of this. But listen, there is another example, and that is Paul the Apostle. Listen to how he describes himself in 1 Timothy 1:15-16 - I'm reading it in the NIV, listen carefully: 'Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst. But, for that very reason I was shown mercy, so that in me', the worst of sinners, 'Christ Jesus might display His immense patience, as an example for those who would believe in Him and receive eternal life'. Now we often laud Paul for all the great things that he did, and the missionary journeys, and all the things that he suffered for Christ. There is no doubt about it, he is a mighty example, unsurpassed perhaps. But he was not an example because of the good in his life. He says from his own mouth that he was made an example because of how bad he was. In the preceding verses he talks about how he was a blasphemer, an insolent man, but he was chosen by God's grace that he might be a vessel of God's mercy, to bring glory to God, to be saved and transformed, to say to a world that is full of Jacobs and full of Sauls of Tarsus: 'If this is what God can do with a Jacob and a Saul, what can He not do with you?'

Does that encourage you tonight? But it only works if there are two principles activated in your Christian life. True healing will only come from these two principles: one is honesty. 'Jacob, come on now, tell the truth, shame the devil. Jacob, now come on, be straight Jacob, stop twisting. Come on, stop grabbing, be honest here'. You see, this is one of the most difficult things in any human's life - because we're all Jacobs - is to get us to be honest, upfront, put everything on the table. Confession sticks in the throat an awful lot, I don't know whether you've found that or not, it's hard to get out. But if you're wanting to be free and transformed, you've got to be honest - and secondly: there has got to be humility. Honesty and humility. All self-righteousness, all dignity that does not come from God, needs to be completely renounced, and you need to take the low place before

God. We need to humble ourselves, we need to agree with how God sees us. You see, that's what confession is - do you know that? It is agreeing with God, what God says, and you're just putting your hands up and saying 'Guilty as charged. This is how human flesh is, Lord, I haven't got what it takes. If I could get to You by the works of the law, as Galatians says, Christ died in vain - He wasted His time!'

We need to confess how we have wrongly viewed ourselves, and maybe even wrongly viewed God and how to get to God. God will meet you in the place of honesty and truthfulness. Now listen, it says of Jesus that He was full of grace and truth. Here's a profound principle: if you want to encounter the grace of God, those to come together. If you want to experience the grace of God in your life, if you want to experience the healing and delivering power of Jesus in salvation, you need to come on the ground of truth, and God's grace will meet you - and that's when transformation happens.

What an enigma Jacob is. Ah, but what an enigma you are - I'm sorry to say it to you! What an enigma the love of God is. God loves who? God loves you - you are Jacob, remember! Had you forgotten there? But how do you see yourself - and I'm closing - how do you see yourself? When you look in the mirror, metaphorically speaking, do you see the old man? The old sinful nature, do you see Jacob? Maybe you say: 'I can't help but see anything else, because it's that nature that's rising in me, it's those traits that I know that are prevalent in my life'. Well, you see, that's part of the problem - because, though humankind is completely bankrupt in any shape or form to fix themselves and make themselves right before God, the fact of the matter is: if you come and die with Christ at the cross, and He makes you alive through His glorious resurrection, and you're not any more living by laws but you living by the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus which has set you free from the laws of sin and death, and when Paul cries 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?', he finishes by saying that Christ gives victory in triumph. If you continue to see yourself as Jacob, what do you think you're going to live like? Jacob! I hope, tonight, there are people who will come to the cross of Calvary - you might well be saved, you might not be saved, but you can come too, and we would love you to come, please, and be set free - but what if everybody was to come to the cross afresh tonight, and say: 'Lord, I don't have what it takes in my humanity, but I know that my humanity can't be honed, and can't be cleaned up, and can't be given some kind of a boost or renovation; it has to die. I want to die now at the cross, so that Your life might flow through me'.

Then this is what will happen: you will look in the mirror, and you will not see Jacob any more, you will see Jesus. This is what Paul says in Corinthians: 'As we behold Christ', Christ crucified, Christ risen, Christ glorified, Christ in all that He has done and all that He has made us to be, 'As we behold that, as we look on that as we fix our eyes on that, we are changed from glory to glory, into the same image'. Do you know, that is the destiny that God has pronounced upon you - that you should be predestined to become like the image of His Son. Do you know the only thing that will get in the way of that? Jacob.

Let's pray. Well, let's just take a moment or two. Has God spoken to you? He's bound to have spoken to you if you prayed to Him and really meant it. Has He spoken to you tonight? Can I ask, just as everyone is quiet and prayerful before the Lord - I know you, I'm told anyway (I shouldn't label you Fermanagh folk), I've

heard that you're a bit timid at times; but listen: forget about all that, that's a lot of nonsense, alright? You're in God's presence here tonight. You're not in church, and your woman is not glaring over the pew at you - you just realise you're in the presence of God, and it's you and God, forget about whoever is beside you, even if it's your husband, wife, boyfriend, or girlfriend, or whatever. Even if your woman is here and she is not glaring over the pews, but over the chairs, forget about her - and forget about every other voice that would speak to you. Ask yourself the question: do I reckon Jacob dead in my life, or am I breathing life into him? Am I trying to live the Christian life through the good side, the reputable side of Jacob? Ask those questions that we've been asking in our study tonight - but you've got to do something about it, OK? I can't force you to do anything, but you can go away tonight and you can keep going, beating a busted drum, and it's not going to work. Or you can come to the foot of the cross tonight and say: 'I've been a Christian for years, but I've never been able to get off the runway. I know I'm saved, and I know I'm forgiven, but I think I have been living this in my own steam and in the power of the flesh, and I've been ministering in that, I've been teaching in that, and that's why I'm getting burned out, that's why I'm not getting any joy, that's why I'm miserable as a Christian. I'm looking around at other people who seem to be going on well, and I'm thinking: have I got the real thing at all? Am I saved?'

Is there any Christian here tonight, and whether it's the bad flesh or the good flesh that you are manifesting, but that which is flesh is flesh - would you be willing to acknowledge that, just where you are, heads are bowed, eyes are closed, please. Would you just raise your hand where you're sitting, to say 'God has spoken to me'? God bless you, God bless, praise the Lord, God bless, thank you Jesus. There are people putting their hands up all over the room, so you have an opportunity - God bless, God bless. I think it would be easier to count the people that haven't put their hands up, and that's no comment on you at all, that's a marvellous thing. God bless you, you can put your hand down when you've raised it. God bless, praise the Lord, thank you.

I can't do anything for you, only Jesus can do it - that's why He gets all the glory, because He's the only one who can do it for Jacob, for Paul, for you. So I want you to come to Him now, would you do that? Would you surrender to Him as Lord? Just say these words from your heart between you and the Lord: 'Lord, I come to You, and I confess You as Lord of my life. I surrender to You everything, all that I am and have. I humble myself before You, I renounce all pride and all flesh - bad and perceived good. I'm sorry for trying to earn what You have already given me. I'm sorry for grabbing like Jacob, I'm sorry for not waiting, sorry for not having patience and letting it have its perfect work. I come to the only place I can go, to the foot of Your cross, Lord Jesus, and I lay my burden down. I ask You to cleanse me afresh, and release me of this yoke that is not of You. I come to You with all my burdens, my heavy weights, and I come to You for rest. I now trust You, by faith, to produce Your life in me'. If you need to confess sins, do that, if you need to repent, if you need to renounce anything. If you have even spoken over your life things like, 'I'm never going to make anything out of this' - will you renounce that? Because that's a lie, and that's actually going directly against everything that God's word says. You have pronounced that over yourself, and that needs to be broken: 'I'm always going to be a failure, I'm always going to be a train wreck' - those are curses upon your own life, and you need to break them. You need to renounce that tonight in the presence of God, and He will break anything over you. People say:

'I'm stupid', and then they can't see spiritual truth, and they're blind - ask Jesus to break that over you. Come to the foot of His cross - and, wait till I tell you, you stay there as long as you can - but don't forget: He's not hanging there any more, He has risen from the dead, and He is exalted at the right hand of God. All power in heaven is behind what you're doing tonight, if you truly mean it with your heart, and you will have the very life of God - the resurrection life of Jesus - flowing through even your body tonight, if you can come to the foot of the cross and take this by faith, take God at His word. Just believe Him.

Now can I ask, before I close, while every head is bowed and eye closed: is there a person who is not a true Christian, you're not born again, you've never been converted. Maybe you're a wee bit religious, or maybe it's the works of the flesh, the dirty kind, that's manifesting - but you feel guilt because you know what you should be doing, you know the Commandments, and you maybe know enough to know that what you're doing is wrong. So the guilt is coming from knowing what's right, so you know right and wrong, and you're here tonight and you think: 'Oh, God couldn't have me, sure look at the shape of me, and look at what I've done and all'. Listen, you've learned tonight that that's not what it's about: it's for sinners that Jesus came. Doctors treat patients who are sick, Saviours come to rescue sinners - and He is your Saviour tonight and He is for you, He has had favour upon you by dying for you on the cross. He wants to start this wonderful adventure of conforming you to the image of Jesus, and He wants to start it right now. Is there anyone would raise their hand just where they are sitting to say: 'I want to be saved tonight, I want to be right with God, I want to start on this road, I want to travel'. I want to give the opportunity, just in case, and there may be no one here that is unconverted - but just in case there's one, I want to reach out the hand of grace to you and say: come to this wonderful Saviour tonight, come to Him and be saved. Maybe you're very religious, but you've no assurance, no security that you're right with God, and you don't know God like this. Is there anyone, just where you're sitting?

Now, before I close this meeting I want to just remind you that you need the Lord, OK? So, you're very welcome to sit where you are. There will be a cup of tea upstairs I think, but let's try, as far as possible - and I know people want to chat and all the rest - but as far as possible, to preserve the sense of God moving in this place tonight. Alright? Now I'm not trying to be a killjoy, but the Holy Spirit is like the dove-like image that came upon Jesus, He is very easily disturbed - noise, disruption, it disturbs His brooding presence. I would just encourage you to be aware of that, I'm not saying don't talk, but just be quiet enough to be aware that there are people here tonight and God is dealing with them. Please don't do anything to jeopardise that, and there are plenty of places you can talk.

I'm going to pray for you all, and then the meeting is over. Abba Father, I love You, and I love Jesus, and I love the Holy Spirit, because You first loved me. Why? I'm not going to waste any more time saying: 'Lord, why me? Why did You pick me?'. It's nothing to do with me, it's all to do with You - it's just because You are love, You are love. I worship You, O loving God, and I pray that Your love tonight will be shed abroad in the hearts of the people here this evening that have never truly know that. Many evangelical Christians that have been battered with Bibles from their youth, but they have never known the love of God - Lord, would you release them tonight? There are some who maybe have inner healing needs, and

deliverance - but I think, Lord, if they had a baptism of the love of God, and the liquid love of God was poured into their spirits right now. I'm not telling You how to do your job, Lord, but if You were to give them a holy hug deep down in their heart right now, I think they would be set free from a whole lot of stuff. Would You do that, Lord, for Your love covers everything - love conquers all - true love that gives a sense of belonging, a sense of being, a sense of worth. Lord, some of these folk have never felt loved - why am I telling You this? Lord, You know, You have followed them the whole way, You know that they lack love, they lack meaning, they lack security, they lack identity. Lord, You know You're the answer, so be the answer tonight, right where they are before You now as they have humbled themselves. Pour Your love into those deep places, and redeem these Jacobs so that they will not recognise themselves any more, for the right reasons: because they see their identity in Christ. Pour Your Spirit upon us now - and this sense, this sweet sense, the radiance, the fragrance of the Spirit of Jesus with us; Lord, would You increase it. As we may go into ministry, would You be with us, stand with us, and You do the work, Lord, and let us watch. Glory be to the Father - say it with me - glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, Amen.

The Jacob Enigma - Chapter 2

"Flesh Sells Out And Caves In"

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by David Legge

Well, good evening everyone, it's great to be with you tonight. Thank you to the girls, that was great - you did very, very well, wonderful. I'm going to let you into a wee secret: I have learned over the few years that I have been ministering, involved in meetings and series of meetings in particular, and going - not that far - but here and there; I have learned to love the low-key meetings. Here's the reason why: God often shows up when we're not expecting Him. When things mightn't seem as packed out and as organised, or whatever, as before; and maybe God has been doing things, and He has been doing a lot here over the last number of nights I've been here - but, you know, we're not to despise the day of small things, and realise that God always wants to take the glory, because that's when we are most blessed. When He takes the glory, we get the blessing - you do know that? Some people think it's awful self-centred for God always want to take the glory - no, that's when we get the blessing, when He takes the glory. It's through the weak things and the broken things that He can really take glory, because nobody can say: 'Ach, it was something to do with me there tonight', or 'That was so well organised, there were so many people, look at the crowd that was packed in' - and then God comes, and He alone gets the glory. I think God is going to come tonight, I'm expecting Him to come in many ways - maybe in ways that, though I'm expecting Him, He's going to come in ways that I'm not expecting Him to come. That's exciting - so I'm excited about tonight, I hope you are as well.

We're going to turn in our Bibles to Genesis chapter 25 - maybe I could have the first slide up there please, James. Genesis chapter 25 - now, if you haven't been with us, I don't know if this is your first time here this New Year, but we embarked last time in January upon a study of an Old Testament character, the character of Jacob. Of course, up until then, when I've been with you I've been looking at 'Sins', 'Wounds', and 'Demons' - way back last March, that's nearly a year away, can you believe that? But we're taking a character that I believe God has led us to, Jacob, under the heading 'The Jacob Enigma'. Last time we looked under the heading 'God Loves Who?', at the enigma of Jacob, and the enigma of God's relationship to Jacob. So we really looked at how Jacob is such a puzzle - if you don't know what 'an enigma' is, you need to get the recording from last time - but it's really a puzzle, or a conundrum, a mystery: he's very hard to work out. One of the reasons is that he has got godly aspirations in his life - he wants the blessing of God upon him - and yet the way he goes about it, the scheming in the flesh and sometimes downright deceit and twistedness, as he grasps out for blessings that can only come by grace through faith. We saw that that enigma that we see in him, is actually the enigma that we see when we look into the mirror - because we see ourselves in Jacob. Then we saw the enigma of the love of God, because God loved Jacob - God loved him! Even in the middle of all his scheming and underhanded nonsense, God loved him - and God loves us! Isn't it wonderful that we can look into the mirror, and whatever we see that is real there - both externally and

internally - we can look at it, we can look at it and say: 'God loves me the way that I am'. Now, He doesn't want to keep you the way that you are, He wants to change you and transform you into the image of Jesus - but that is so liberating, isn't it? God loves me, as me? I don't have to try and be like anybody else in order to get God to love me, He loves me the way I am. He mightn't love what we do, He mightn't love the way we've become through what we do, but He loves us deep down in who we are. I could just go off on one, on that on its own - it's Valentines night and all, and I'm married, and I'm here on my own on Valentines night - what does that say about me!

Tonight we're going to look at the flesh in Jacob again, and we're going to look at how 'Flesh Sells Out And Caves In' - alright? We're going to look at the flesh in an even deeper way, how the flesh sells out and caves in. We're going to read first of all Genesis 25, and then we're going to skip two chapters to Genesis 27. So it's the end verses of Genesis 25, we already read them last time, but we're going to home in on them tonight. Verse 29 then of Genesis 25: *"Now Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he was weary. And Esau said to Jacob, 'Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary'. Therefore his name was called Edom. But Jacob said, 'Sell me your birthright as of this day'. And Esau said, 'Look, I am about to die; so what is this birthright to me?'. Then Jacob said, 'Swear to me as of this day'. So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright"*.

Now let's skip chapter 26 and on to chapter 27, this is quite long - we're going to read from verse 1 right through to verse 43, but we need to do that to get the whole story. So come with me, verse 1: *"Now it came to pass, when Isaac was old and his eyes were so dim that he could not see, that he called Esau his older son and said to him, 'My son'. And he answered him, 'Here I am'. Then he said, 'Behold now, I am old. I do not know the day of my death. Now therefore, please take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me. And make me savoury food, such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die'. Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt game and to bring it. So Rebekah spoke to Jacob her son, saying, 'Indeed I heard your father speak to Esau your brother, saying, 'Bring me game and make savoury food for me, that I may eat it and bless you in the presence of the LORD before my death'. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to what I command you. Go now to the flock and bring me from there two choice kids of the goats, and I will make savoury food from them for your father, such as he loves. Then you shall take it to your father, that he may eat it, and that he may bless you before his death'. And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, 'Look, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth-skinned man. Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be a deceiver to him; and I shall bring a curse on myself and not a blessing'. But his mother said to him, 'Let your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get them for me'. And he went and got them and brought them to his mother, and his mother made savoury food, such as his father loved. Then Rebekah took the choice clothes of her elder son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. And she put the skins of the kids of the goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. Then she gave the savoury food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob. So he went to his father and said,*

'My father'. And he said, 'Here I am. Who are you, my son?'. Jacob said to his father, 'I am Esau your firstborn; I have done just as you told me; please arise, sit and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me'. But Isaac said to his son, 'How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?'. And he said, 'Because the LORD your God brought it to me'. Then Isaac said to Jacob, 'Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not'. So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, 'The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau'. And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him. Then he said, 'Are you really my son Esau?'. He said, 'I am'. He said, 'Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's game, so that my soul may bless you'. So he brought it near to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank. Then his father Isaac said to him, 'Come near now and kiss me, my son'. And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him and said: 'Surely, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed. Therefore may God give you of the dew of heaven, of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, and let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be those who bless you!'. Now it happened, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. He also had made savoury food, and brought it to his father, and said to his father, 'Let my father arise and eat of his son's game, that your soul may bless me'. And his father Isaac said to him, 'Who are you?'. So he said, 'I am your son, your firstborn, Esau'. Then Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said, 'Who? Where is the one who hunted game and brought it to me? I ate all of it before you came, and I have blessed him; and indeed he shall be blessed'. When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, 'Bless me; me also, O my father!'. But he said, 'Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing'. And Esau said, 'Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright, and now look, he has taken away my blessing!'. And he said, 'Have you not reserved a blessing for me?'. Then Isaac answered and said to Esau, 'Indeed I have made him your master, and all his brethren I have given to him as servants; with grain and wine I have sustained him. What shall I do now for you, my son?'. And Esau said to his father, 'Have you only one blessing, my father? Bless me; me also, O my father!'. And Esau lifted up his voice and wept. Then Isaac his father answered and said to him: 'Behold, your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above. By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother; and it shall come to pass, when you become restless, that you shall break his yoke from your neck'. So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, 'The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob'. And the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah. So she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said to him, 'Surely your brother Esau comforts himself concerning you by intending to kill you. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice: arise, flee to my brother Laban in Haran'" - and we will end our reading there.

Let's just pray together, OK? Now, last time, if you were here, you will remember that I asked you to look into the mirror of God's word, and look at the picture that was portrayed, by the Holy Spirit, of Jacob - and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal your

self to you. I'm going to ask you to do the same again tonight - but you're also going to see a reflection in Esau, and in fact in this whole family. So I want you to be honest with God, honest with yourself, and honest in prayer now - can you pray and ask the Lord to come and reveal? You know, the two greatest blessings that God, perhaps, can give us are: a true knowledge of ourselves and a true knowledge of Himself. Would you be prepared for God to give you that tonight? A true knowledge of yourself, the way you really are; and a true knowledge of Himself, the way He really is - let's pray that now.

Father, we come to You, and we thank You that we come to the All-Knowing God, the Omniscient God, the All-Seeing One whose eyes rove to and fro throughout the whole earth. Lord, we thank You that there is absolutely nothing that is hidden from Your sight. Lord, we can't attempt to try and blindside You in any way. We come to You tonight, and we thank You - those of us who can be transparent and honest with You about even our great weaknesses, and frailties, and deficiencies - that we can bring those into relationship with You, and really be honest and say: 'Lord, I am struggling with this, but I know that You love me and I want to ask for Your help in this particular area of my life'. Lord, I pray for those who are still obfuscating, those who are still hiding, those who are still duplicitous, double minded, and hypocritical in Your sight - that tonight, as the light, the piercing laser light of Your Word, and the power of Your Word anointed by the Spirit, shines into their hearts, that they will no longer hide, but that they will abandon themselves to the light, to the truth, and allow the grace of God to meet them on those terms. Lord, we ended our last meeting with this point: that grace and truth comes together. Lord, I pray that people will enter into true transparency tonight and honesty with You, that they will confess before You their sin, and what Your truth says; and that they will bring themselves in line with the plumbline of Your word - and, Lord, in doing so, that Your grace will meet them and they will find freedom and transformation tonight. Lord, that's what we long for, that's what we want - Lord, we don't want to be sitting in meetings, we don't want to be playing church, we want to have reality, we want to encounter the living God, we want to engage with You, Lord, we want to have You touch our lives and change us. So come, we pray, come blessed Holy Spirit, reveal Christ to us who is the answer to all our needs. Meet every need that we might have, and move and minister in ways that are beyond our imagination, we pray tonight, in Jesus' mighty name we ask it - and everybody said 'Amen'. Amen.

I taught you last time, and I believe with good authority, that Jacob is a picture of the flesh - not just sin, but the flesh, and that's an important distinction. But the flesh is not something peculiar to Jacob, it didn't start with him, but rather with the forefather of us all, Adam, way back in the Garden of Eden. Through Adam's sin, the flesh nature has come into humankind, and so all of us are affected - and, indeed, we could say 'infected' by the disorder of the flesh. I quoted to you the last time Jeremiah 17:9, which says 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked'. I told you there that the Hebrew root for the word 'deceitful' in the original language is actually the word for 'Jacob', the original root of the name 'Jacob'. So you could read that verse: 'The heart is Jacobed and desperately sick'. So Jacob equates to deceitfulness, to a twisted nature. The name 'Jacob' is the same word to describe our fallen human hearts. In fact, to be more specific, the actual name 'Jacob' means 'to grasp', 'to supplant' - do you understand? The reason it was given was because, as Jacob and Esau were coming out of the womb,

of course Esau came out first, the eldest of the twins, Jacob reached out his little fist and grabbed Esau's heel, as if to pull him back into the womb so he could get out first.

This is Jacob's nature - of course, this is the nature of us all, that we are always grasping, aren't we? We are always snatching for significance, for satisfaction, for a sense of meaning in our lives - and so often it is apart from God. Yes, we have already said Jacob did covet spiritual blessings. You remember I shared with you last time that he tried to get those through fleshly means, and that can't happen. God's blessings must be gained God's ways. We're going to see tonight that this problem of the flesh is a problem of our whole species, it's by no means unique to Jacob. In fact, the whole human family is infected by it, every individual family is afflicted by this condition. It's no surprise that we see the family likeness is obvious in Jacob's family. We see the flesh in Esau, his brother. We see the flesh in his Mum, Rebekah. We see the flesh in his Dad, Isaac. As I was thinking about this, I was imagining that the last time we had been given a previous portrait of how Jacob looked like, and we saw the flesh in him - didn't we - and our own flesh; but it's as if tonight we're now going through the photograph album, and we're now coming to the portrait of the whole family gathered together. We're looking - we've already recognised Jacob, but not the other ones - but as we're looking at Jacob, and then we're looking at them, we're saying to ourselves: 'Oh, yea, he's got his father's eyes, and maybe his Mum's nose, and these brothers, they look like twins' - well, they are twins, aren't they? But we start to recognise a likeness in the family, and the likeness is the likeness of the flesh.

Now Jacob gets a hard press, bad publicity for his fleshliness - but he didn't just lick it off the ground, as we say here in Ireland. You know those idioms, don't you? 'The apple doesn't fall far from the tree', 'A chip off the old block', 'Like father, like son'. So we have seen Jacob, and as we have looked into the portrait of Jacob's face, we have seen ourselves - it has been looking in the mirror - but when we look at this family, we see that Jacob is not the only one displaying fleshly tendencies, they have all got it because it has been inherited right from Adam at the very beginning. It is inherited from Jacob's forebears, it's in his family tree, and it's in all our family trees. We all go back to the same father, Adam, we've all got flesh in us - but even when we talk more personally of our immediate families, in more modern times, in our lineage there are things that flow to us in many spheres, not just physically hereditary, but spiritually, emotionally we can receive inherited tendencies that actually affect us in a sinful capacity. That happened to Jacob.

We're not dealing tonight with chapter 26, you will have noticed that I skipped it out, but in chapter 26 Isaac - father Isaac - follows his family sin of deceit, which was the sin of his father Abraham. If you read chapter 26 - obviously we're not going to look at it tonight - but Isaac goes to the Philistine country of Gerar, and he lies to Abimelech, the Philistine king, over his wife Rebekah. He tells that king, 'She's not my wife, she's my sister' - and that was actually a sin that his own father, Abraham, committed in Genesis chapter 12. When he went down to Egypt, he lied and said that his wife, Sarai, was his sister - and that wasn't a complete lie, it was a half-truth, because she was his sister in a roundabout way. I know it's complicated, but it is, and you need to read the book of Genesis - but nevertheless, what I want you to see tonight is: that Isaac was following suit in a lineage of deceit that was running in his family, his father. We're going to see how this flesh is

right throughout Jacob's whole network.

But also this wasn't just something that was inherited in Jacob's life, but it was also learned by example. Here's where we come to the whole debate of nature versus nurture - have you heard of that one? The psychologists and psychiatrists and sociologists, they debate whether we are what we are because we have learned certain tendencies, or whether we have inherited them, they've been passed down. Well, I'm not any of those aforementioned professions, I have no qualifications along those lines, but I'll put my pennies worth in and say that I believe the Bible teaches that we are both. We are both nature and nurture - that would save an awful lot of money and degrees, wouldn't it, if we would just believe the Bible? We are both! We inherit certain things, but we also learn certain things. As kids observe how we - as parents, or guardians, or significant authority figures - how we react, how we deal in certain circumstances with issues, they then learn the same things. So Jacob is the same. I believe he has inherited much of his flesh, but he has also learned from the example of his parents and his brother in particular, maybe even his Granda Abraham.

Now we might recognise the flesh in Jacob's family portrait, but really you need to ask: do you recognise it in you? Do you recognise Jacob in you, but do you recognise maybe Jacob's fleshly tendencies in your own family, in your own inheritance? Now we mustn't be sin or failure focused, and I've emphasised that before with you, and I will get you - by the end of this message - to get your eyes off yourself and onto Christ and onto the answer; but nevertheless, neither ought we to be in denial. The fact of the matter is: if we're not being real with the issues that are issues in our lives - whether it's the world, the flesh, or the devil - we're not going to have victory. We will never overcome if we are in denial over the barriers and obstacles to the blessings that God wants to pour into our lives. We must seek honesty and transparency regarding our problems, and then and only then can we truly be helped. We must understand our enemy. We never want to be Satan or demon focused, but we've got to understand how he works; we've got to understand not only how he works, but how we tick, and how this fallen human flesh responds. Just as we cannot be ignorant to Satan's devices, we cannot be ignorant of how the flesh is.

So we're going to look at this in-depth tonight, and we're going to look at two lessons concerning the flesh: how the flesh always sells out, and how the flesh caves in; and then finally, you'll be glad to know, we're going to answer the enigma of the flesh - what is the answer to deal with this great enigma? So let's look first of all how the flesh sells out, and we're going to Genesis 25 here, and this is the selling of Esau's birthright. If you look at verse 29 first of all: 'Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he was weary'. Now, that's very instructive, because both these brothers are acting out of their natural inclination - do you see that? Read it again: 'Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he was weary'. If you look back at verse 27 that we read last time, 'The boys grew. And Esau was a skillful hunter', an outdoor man, 'a man of the field; but Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents', he was a housebuilder. So in verse 29, Jacob is cooking the stew, and Esau's out in the field and he is weary. So they are living out of their natural characteristics and inclinations, but they are very different, aren't they? We all have flesh, and this is what we've got to understand: however our flesh displays itself, we've all got it! Some of us might manifest fleshly tendencies

in different ways, but all of us have ultimately the same problem.

Now, some people manifest the flesh in obviously immoral ways. Let me read to you again, and I read it last time, you can look at it if you wish, Galatians 5:19-20 - and there Paul outlines the works of the flesh, Galatians 5:19: 'The acts of the flesh are obvious', at least these ones are, 'sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like; I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God' - in other words, you'll not inherit God's blessing if you live in these fleshly ways. But those are not all the manifestations of the flesh, and those might be to your taste or mine, but they may not. A lot may depend on your particular tastes, how you've been conditioned by your environment, by your upbringing, by what you've been exposed to, what experiences you've gone through. In fact, we saw last time when we touched on it briefly, that you might even manifest religious flesh. If you want to know the epitome of religious flesh, it was the Pharisees in Jesus' day, all legalistic religion. Paul the apostle, he didn't perhaps manifest overtly the works of the flesh that we read about there in Galatians 5, but he expressed his religious Judaism in a very blameless and zealous way - but it was ultimately, at the core, flesh.

Turn with me, and I do want you to turn here, to Philippians chapter 3 to see this - Paul is giving a sort of personal testimony there, Philippians 3, and we will begin at verse 4: 'Though I also might have confidence in the flesh', there he is naming it there right away, this is what this is, 'If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as dung', the word literally is 'dung', not just 'rubbish', but 'dung', 'that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death'. Now Paul is saying, 'All of how I excelled in Judaism, all of it was motivated by flesh. It may not have been the immoral type of fleshly manifestation, but it's just as deadly'. Here's where we fall short, especially in the church: we tend to look down our noses at the more outwardly immoral sins, but there are certain sins that we have sanitised, we have made them more respectable. They might be slander, gossip, jealousy, bitterness, pride - we could go on and on, etc, etc - but they are equally abhorrent in the eyes of God. We need to get real here, and realise that this is as much flesh as anything - as Jesus said, 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, but that which is born of the Spirit is spirit'. Flesh can only reproduce flesh, even the religious kind, the 'good' kind.

Now, Esau's manifestation of the flesh was despising his birthright, if you go back to Genesis 25. He despised the blessings of God in his life coming down his family line. But Jacob's flesh was not manifested in despising his birthright, in fact he desired the birthright, he wanted the birthright; but his flesh was manifested

through scheming to get the birthright - but it was both flesh! Neither was right. Though Esau seems to have been particularly depraved, in that he didn't value spiritual blessings at all. I mean, you've got to understand that this birthright was more than just being the head of the family when Dad died, it was more than leading a tribe or anything like that, or being top in the business - this was a spiritual blessing. The birthright spoke of a double portion of God's blessing. You got the inheritance, both physically of the land, the wealth, but also spiritually. You did become the head of the family, but that meant you became the spiritual leader. In this particular family, you got the blessing of Abraham - and with the Abrahamic blessing came the land of Israel, came the people of the Jews, and came the covenant of Messiah - that through your line would come the Saviour of the world! And Esau despised it! Wow!

This is the way most flesh is displayed today in our world - how is that? People who totally disregard the things of God, who don't value spiritual wealth whatsoever. This is reflected in a statement that Esau makes to Jacob in verse 32, look down at it, he says: 'I am about to die'. Now most people, most commentators and Bible teachers, I think, as far as I'm aware, have interpreted that that the guy was so overworked and parched of drink and starving of food, that he was going to just expire - but I don't think that's what it means at all. In fact, it literally has a sense of, 'I'm going to die one day, so what good is my birthright to me?'. You see, there is a bit of sarcasm in what Esau is saying - 'What good is a birthright to me, I'm going to die one day, and nothing will come to me after that!'. The attitude that Esau is displaying is: 'Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow you die!' - where have you heard that before? He only wanted to live for the here and now, that's Esau, that's how Esau's fleshly tendencies are manifested. He is sensual, he is living to satisfy his appetites and his senses, he is focusing on a material existence - but he's not looking beyond that to an eternal reality. In other words, Esau is a guy who lives for the moment, even if it means trading a moment of pleasure for eternal oblivion. That's how Esau's flesh is displayed.

I want you to turn with me - keep your marker in Genesis 25, but come to Hebrews 12. Hebrews 12 gives a comment on this very incident, and on the character of Esau. Hebrews 12 verse 15, it's warning Christian professors not to fall away from their profession in Christ - in other words, not to sell their birthright. Hebrews 12 verse 15: 'Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God', you live short of what God wants for you in grace, 'lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled' - look at verse 16 - 'lest there be any fornicator', that's a very strong word, 'or profane person like Esau'. This is how the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, how He comments on the character of Esau: he's a fornicator and profane - 'profane' means 'unholy and godless' - person, he has no time for God, 'who for one morsel of food sold his birthright'. You see how Esau's flesh is displayed.

I think we could categorise Esau as a hedonist - do you know what a 'hedonist' is? 'Hedonism' is the philosophy that espouses that pleasure or happiness is the highest good - and I think there must be a lot of hedonism in the church, because even some of the teaching that is going around today is that if you're not living an absolutely exuberant life, both financially and in all health and material possessions, that you're not knowing the blessing of God. Now there is a little truth, we are meant to know a certain prosperity in our lives, but most of that is

promised in the spiritual realm. I believe God sends money, and God can send millions of money for His purposes and for His will, but much of what is preached today is just for selfish gratification, for the flesh. Nevertheless, Esau displayed this hedonism: that as long as a thing feels good and makes me happy, it must be right - and that surely must be the prevailing lifestyle philosophy in our world, 'How can something that feels so good be bad?'

Ultimately, his life was utterly selfish - and it always is when you just live for pleasure. When Esau said: 'Sure, I'm going to die anyway, what good is this birthright to me?' - excuse my language, but this is literally what he was meaning, 'To hell with the next generation, I'm going to live it up!'. That's effectively what people are saying when they live self-centred, sinful, fleshly lives - 'To hell with the next generation, with my children, with my grandchildren', because they're not passing on a righteous inheritance, they're passing on generational iniquity and sinful tendencies. Do you see how serious it is, when we consider the generational lineage that we have come into or that we're sending to our children and grandchildren? It seems unthinkable that we, as Christians, could sell our birthright out - that's what we actually do when we indulge in the flesh, when we live sensual, materialist existence without any spiritual significance. You've heard the statement, haven't you: 'Everyone has a price'? Well, is it true? What was Esau's price? A mess of pottage, a bowl of lentil stew or soup. What was Judas' price? Thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave. The question tonight is: what is your price? What will you sell your birthright out for? If you're selling out, if the flesh in you is selling out, do you know what you're doing? You're despising your birthright, you're committing the sin of Esau.

What is our inheritance? Well, do you want another series in the middle of a series? Our inheritance! All the blessings of God are Yes and Amen in Jesus Christ! We get everything in Jesus! The marvellous thing is - and this is a whole other subject, about how we are adopted into God's family now - whatever is in the will of God when Jesus died, OK? Whatever is in the contract of the will of God that is realised through the death of Jesus, whatever comes to Jesus in God's will, in God's blessing, whatever Jesus gets we get! We are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus, our Elder Brother. Now, that just blows my mind! So whatever God says about Jesus, whatever God gives to Jesus, I get! I'm in the will! Amen? So that's your inheritance - and we could talk about what that means: we are adopted into God's family; we've got acceptance of belonging, we're not striving for it, we have it; we've got freedom from the slavery to sin. You say: 'I don't have that tonight', listen - if you're a child of God, you've got it, you just have to step into it. You haven't realised it, but don't contradict God's word, the Bible says you've got it: 'Sin shall no longer have dominion over you'. Your sin nature has been put to death when Jesus died on the cross. Has He died on the cross? He has died and He has risen again! Now His new resurrection life is your life, if you believe it and if you choose to live in it! You've got complete forgiveness, you're not striving for it, you've got it! You're promised the spirit of revelation and knowledge in the knowledge of the mystery of God's will for your life, and the revelation of Jesus Christ in your heart. You're given God's sustaining grace, every day you've got this free favour upon you. You're guaranteed now the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, so that your body can become a veritable Temple of God walking around this world. This is your inheritance! What could you possibly sell that for? What possibly could be worth selling out that type of inheritance for? Yet we do it all the time, and often

for a mess of pottage, a quick fix in the spur of the moment. We all do it, because we've all got this flesh.

The irony is, Jacob had it too. He didn't despise the birthright, he wanted Esau's birthright - but he was scheming in the flesh. Here's the absolute irony of Jacob: he was scheming in the flesh to get what he already had. You say: 'But hold on a minute, was the birthright not going to Esau?'. Well, it was if Isaac had his way, but if you go back, you remember, to where we were last week in verse 23 at the end of chapter 25. In verse 23 the prophecy promise that was given to Rebekah when these two twins were being born was that the younger would be the head and receive the blessing, the elder would serve the younger. We talked about how they should have waited for God to fulfil this, but this is what I want you to see: Jacob was now scheming in the flesh to get what was already his, and that's often what we are doing as Christians! We are living the Christian life in the power of our own steam, and we're trying to gain things that we've already got in Jesus! Jacob was buying something - how ridiculous - that was already his, if he had only believed and waited. Here it gets even more ridiculous, because Esau was selling something that wasn't his possession - it didn't belong to him. I know it's a bit complicated, but the lesson out of it is that the blessing of God cannot be bought, it cannot be sold, and it cannot be traded - why? Because the blessing of God is by grace through faith. Grace is God's hand that gives it gratuitously, favourably, freely; and our hand is faith that receives it. We cannot earn it, we just take it!

You see, that is the blessing of Abraham, the blessing of Abraham is to all who - waken up! - all who believe, not to those who strive. If Esau was a hedonist, Jacob was an opportunist - wasn't he? Snatch and grab, and he used Esau's fleshly weakness, his sensuality, to flex his fleshly cunning; and we're going to see how again. Now we're going to chapter 27. The flesh not only sells out, but I want you to see how the flesh caves in. Look at the first four verses of chapter 27, and the first fleshly character we see here isn't Esau and it's not Jacob, who is it? It's Isaac, and here's why: Isaac is old, OK? You get that in verse 1: 'His eyes were dim', alright? He thought he was dying, and many of you have read this passage of Scripture and believed that he was just ready to pop his clogs - put your hand up. Do you know how many more years Isaac lived after this? Probably about 43 years. So here he is, it must be man flu or something like that, and he thinks he's dying - and what does he do? He panics, he's panicking, can you see it? It's his flesh trying to sort things out before he dies - I've seen this before. A man who thinks he's on the way out, and he has to secure the future, he has to secure the future for his family, for his business, or even the church. I've seen this happening in families and even churches, where people who are obsessed with control try to manipulate situations on the brink of their grave, and leave the fallout for others to grapple with because it was the flesh.

Here in verse 4, if you look at verse 4, he says to Esau: 'Make me savoury food, such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die'. Now there are so many questions in this story of Jacob, it's incredible, that's why it's such an enigma. One that is obvious is: why was Isaac going to bless Esau? What? I mean this is Isaac, that we would consider reasonably godly from his life, but what is he doing here? Does he not know that God promised in chapter 25, through a prophetic promise, that the elder would serve the younger? So why is he not going along with God's promise and God's will? Well, he obviously

favoured Esau, didn't he? So what are we seeing in Isaac, are we seeing a spiritual man? No, we're seeing a fleshly man, at least at this point. 'Why does he favour Esau?', is the further question. Well, I've got a hunch that it was because of his way of life. He preferred Esau's hard-man sort of attitude, out in the field working as a farmer, and he definitely liked his food - but we see that that was a bit of a smokescreen, because Rebekah could rustle up the same sort of meal that was as tasty, and duped him into thinking it was Esau. So it wasn't his cooking as such, but it was the idea of this red, rugged, hairy man going out hunting game and being out there, a man's man. This was, I believe, Esau's fleshiness, a false masculinity that we even see around today. We see his flesh displayed - but even in his enjoyment of food, I mean Philippians talks about people whose god is their belly, they are sensual people that live for the appetites and the tastes of the senses. So, as we're reading this story, you could write over it all - if you were writing a book, apart from 'The Jacob Enigma', which is taken, so you can't use that one! - but 'flesh, flesh, flesh', isn't that it? It's just flesh all over. Here's Isaac going to give the blessing to the wrong boy, why? Because he prefers him, he's more of a manly man's man, and he likes his cooking.

Now if Isaac had waited on God - how do we know he didn't wait on God? Well, he didn't wait on God because there were another 43 years until he dies, so there was time enough to bless his sons and get it right. If he had waited on God for the right time, whatever reservations he may have had about Jacob, they would have been resolved - I have to believe that - and he would have got it right. But what was he trying to do? He was attempting to go round God's will to get his own fleshly way, and we know that because he was doing it in secret. You read the story, he knew what he was doing was wrong. Isaac, the flesh.

Then verses 5 through to 10, who do we see now? A fleshly mother, Rebekah. Look at verse 8: 'Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to what I command you'. Now she had been eavesdropping, and she had heard the whole plan being hatched by Isaac and Esau, and now she brings Jacob in on this plan. Instead of trusting God to fulfil the promise upon Jacob's life that she herself had heard from the voice of God, what does she do? She tries to manipulate the situation, and many a mother has done this. Manipulation and control are often the domain of the matriarch. Many of our mothers have been smotherers, rather than mothers, haven't they? Perhaps for the right reasons, they have manipulated control, and tried to pull the strings of our mannequin in order to get their way. I have to say something to you, and this is important if you are a parent or you have a parent who has been like this: all ungodly control is wrong, all of it. To control or manipulate or foist your will upon another in an ungodly way is wrong, because ultimately what it is is a mistrust of the Holy Spirit. You see this even in churches, because there is a lot of ungodly control goes on in leadership of churches, where there is a dictatorial attitude, a heavy-handed lording it over the brothers and sisters. Do you know why it's there? Because they do not trust the Holy Spirit to lead God's people, and that's why you have to have so many rules and regulations in some places, and so many boundaries; and, you know, you're always afraid if somebody in the church sees you doing something, or going to certain places, or wearing a certain thing. All these fences are put around the sheep because these so-called 'shepherds' do not trust the Holy Spirit, who is the Shepherd, to lead the sheep.

But this is serious, particularly when it comes to mothers. I want to home in on this tonight, because I believe the Holy Spirit has led me to do this. I remember talking to a woman who had heard preaching on the Holy Spirit many times, and she often heard the preachers preaching on the fullness or baptism of the Holy Spirit, life in the Spirit, and they would preach that 'You need to be under the control of the Holy Spirit'. She said that every time she heard that, there was something rose up within her, and it just grated with her. She couldn't get that, and she certainly didn't feel that she was being influenced by the Holy Spirit. Every time she heard that, she thought there was something really radically wrong, because it grated against every fibre of her being, it went against the grain of who she was. Then the Holy Spirit started to work in her life, and started to reveal to her that, because she had had a very manipulative and controlling mother in particular - and fathers can be like that too, but in her case it was her mother - she had determined within her heart that she had been so controlled that she would never allow anybody ever again to control her in her life. So the concept of being controlled by another was absolutely abhorrent to her - and who would have blamed her, honestly? Now you have to be very careful not to vow things like that, you shouldn't really do that, to say 'I'll never be this, and I'll never be that', or even to say 'I'll never be like my mother', that's not a good thing to say - not because you want to be like your mother, but because you should never say 'I never will be this or that', you should be saying 'Lord, I will be what You want me to be'. Because when you say negative things, that can actually give the enemy a right to oppress you, even on something like that.

Anyway, she began to see that she had been controlled by her mother, and she was resisting the control of the Holy Spirit. Now I, from that, actually learned that sometimes we have to be very careful how we preach on subjects like this. Rather than talking about the control of the Holy Spirit, we should be talking about the influence of the Holy Spirit - because here's one thing the Holy Spirit never wants to do: He never wants to take away your freedom, did you know that? We sang tonight, and it blessed my heart tonight, I've sung that I don't know how many times - the 'Surrendering to Jesus' one, the Robin Mark one - and the line in it says: 'It's only in Your will that I am free'. You see one of the lies that the enemy has sown in the church, and even through some of our preaching, is that 'If you surrender to the will of God, and you put your life on the altar, you're going to be sent to the back end of the jungle - and there are no toilets, there are no showers, and there are cannibals, and you'll lose your life and your head and everything will be over' - isn't that right? The enemy makes us scared of the will of God. Listen: there is no better, there is no safer place to be than in the will of God. Amen? It doesn't mean He'll not ask us to do things we're uncomfortable with, He will, and He will push our boundaries - but listen, don't listen to the lies of the enemy, here is the truth of God: God does not want to take away your freedom, He wants to give you true freedom. Do you know what? One of the fruit of the Holy Spirit is self-control, self-control! He wants to actually give you control back in freedom, not take it away! That comes through the influence of the Holy Spirit. But then I began to learn - and she had learned it, of course, first hand - that just as there are people who can't get to know God as their 'Abba Father' because they've had rotten earthly fathers, or maybe absentee or abusive or deserting fathers; so there are people who are stunted in their relationship, personally, with the Holy Spirit, because they're afraid of being controlled because they've had manipulative mothers. Is that someone here tonight? I dare to say it's more than one.

Well, Rebekah was being manipulative mother - what a family, eh? A fleshly father, a hedonistic brother, a manipulative mother, and Jacob was a total opportunist - and it was all flesh. But, you know, let's be honest: what are families like today? What is the general family unit like today? It's broken, it's shattered, it's fragmented. James 3 came to my mind very readily, verse 16: 'For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there', and that's what you're finding in the family. God has set us in families, and so we could talk about deliverance issues, and how the enemy gets a foothold in our lives through sins and wounds - but ultimately we can put that on a corporate level in the family, and then when we take this inherited thing in, that things are passed down to us, and also the learned thing, in corporate learning as we gauge how others around us in our families are reacting and behaving - the whole modern family is in a mess! In fact, the whole family of the human race is affected by sin and fleshiness. You see yourself in Jacob, you see yourself in Esau, you see yourself in Isaac and in Rebekah - it's both inherited and it's learned, this twistedness in this family.

Of course the situation is exacerbated, and I don't have time to go into it tonight, it's such a convoluted plan, isn't it, how Rebekah gets Jacob to get the blessing from Isaac, instead of it going to Esau? Look at verse 12, Jacob objects: 'Perhaps my father will feel me', you know, 'If I put all this fur skin on me, perhaps he will feel me, and I shall seem to be a deceiver to him' - you are a deceiver, Jacob! What do you think you're doing? You're dressing up and smelling like your brother, and deceiving your Dad! But there is a semblance of morality there with Jacob, he doesn't want to be what he is, he doesn't want to be what he is! Who of us wants to be like this? None of us want to be twisted and fleshly, 'and I shall bring a curse on myself and not a blessing'. You see, this is what will always happen, Proverbs says 'a curse without a cause shall not alight', it comes because we live in the flesh and even try to grab at God's blessings in the flesh'. Jacob knew he was wrong, he objects to this as wrong, or maybe it was just the fear of getting his hand caught in the cookie jar - but he capitulates, why? Because the flesh always caves in, it always sells out and it always caves in. If you operate in the flesh, even if you're seeking after the blessing of God in the flesh, you will always capitulate to the flesh: that which is born of the flesh is flesh, it cannot produce spirit.

Now, let's fast forward a wee bit, look at verse 33 - OK, the whole plan has been blown, and in verse 33 it is realised now that the wrong guy got the blessing, according to Isaac anyway: 'Then Isaac trembled exceedingly', when he heard what had happened, he trembles - why? Because you can't defeat God, you can't work a move on God, you can't do it! You see, what happens is: when we operate in the flesh - and we're going to see this later in Jacob's story, he meets himself in Laban, he's looking at his reflection in the mirror when he meets uncle Laban, he's met his match, somebody as twisted and fleshly as himself - but this always will happen, God will lead us into this cul-de-sac experience to show that you cannot defeat Him. You can't wipe God's eye. In verse 34, then it dawns on Esau, and what does he do? When he hears the words of his father, 'He cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry' - can you hear that? It's a real wrenching wail, all of a sudden his tune has changed, hasn't it? He has been laissez-faire, totally disinterested, 'This blessing, I'm going to die one day, and then what good will such a blessing be to me - eternal blessings and all, I want it here and now, I want the things that come to me here and now'. But now, all of a sudden he's interested in

the blessing, but it's too late. How much of an epitaph will that be upon our whole human race, upon our society, but even - sadly - upon many Christians who start to value spiritual things too late in life. Jesus did say: 'If you lose your life, you will find it; if you try to keep your life and save your life, you will lose it'.

But listen to Hebrews 12, there was a verse I didn't read where it says in Hebrews 12:17, after the verse that says that Esau was a fornicator, profane, unholy, and godless, a person 'like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright', Hebrews 12:17 says, 'For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears'. Wow! He is breaking his heart now, he wants the blessing, but what is it? It's not true repentance it's not godly repentance, it's frustrated selfish ambition. It's the flesh that has been thwarted, he has been beaten by God - checkmate. I think he was crying because in fleshly competition his brother had got one over him, again listen to the words that he says in verse 36, look at it, Esau says: 'Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright, and now look, he has taken away my blessing!'.

Now, you can't really say that, Esau, can you? Look at verse 36, 'He took away my birthright' - is that what happened, really? Isn't it interesting how the flesh can revise history? Did Jacob take away his birthright? No Esau, you sold your birthright - a done deal! You despised your birthright, and you sold it for a pot of stew! The sign of the flesh is that we blame others for our own mistakes. Look where all this fleshly jealousy ends, verse 41: 'So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, 'The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob''. Now this is serious, listen carefully: flesh always ends in murder and death. You might say: 'Well, that's a bit strong, even the good flesh?' - even the good flesh. You read the book of Galatians, and they were manifesting immoral flesh - but what was it coming out of? It was actually coming out of a Judaizing teaching, where these Jewish false teachers were coming in and saying: 'It's Christ plus the law, Christ plus keeping Judaism and the rites and the dietary laws and social rituals'. So they were adding to the Gospel, which was legalism, which is flesh, living in your own effort. That's why Paul says in chapter 5: 'All these works will come out of your religious observance, because flesh only produces flesh', but then he goes on to say that, 'you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another'. What's he saying? 'The flesh is manifesting in contention, a divisiveness, a murderous hateful spirit among you' - that's where flesh leads. It's serious.

Now I want to close by talking for a few moments, very practically, on the answer for the flesh - or, to put it another way: the how of holiness. Did you ever wonder how to be holy? How is it done? Now, I have to say this: I thank God for many holiness people in the past, who preached holiness teaching; but I have to say that there have been, over the years, some grave errors in that particular camp. Often it has bred a legalism - and what I mean by that is, people who say: 'Oh, I'm not holy, and I need to be holy, and to get holy I need to pull my socks up and I need to try better', and they form a whole list of their own rules and regulations to live by, or other people's are enforced upon them, and they end up actually multiplying fleshly tendencies within, because that's what law always does - that which is of the flesh is flesh. Here is the key to holiness, now listen, never forget this: holiness, the secret to it is intimacy with God, period. That's it! If you want to be

like God, you come to know God; and the more you get to know Him, the more you will love Him, and the more you love Him the more you become like Him. It's as simple as that - and if ever you complicate it, you're on the wrong track. Holiness is not achieved by rules and regulations, by a load of flesh - here's the reason why: flesh breeds flesh, fleshly rules will multiply, exacerbate. Paul says in Romans 7:8-9, that if it wasn't for the law of God that was sent, I wouldn't have known my sin - but when the good law of God, which is holy, came along, what did it served to do? It magnified my sin, it's like a magnifying glass to show how sinful I am - but what did it do? Did it help me to keep the laws? What did the law of God do? No! It made me an even greater sinner than I was before; because just like when you tell a child 'Don't do that', and they go and do it, when you told me the Commandments, Lord, then I knew what sin was and I had a law working in me, a law of sin, that was drawn to that - the flesh!

Do you know what the only answer for the flesh is? The coffin, death! Death is the only answer. I've got flesh, we've all got flesh, but listen: I can't exorcise the flesh out of me, it's not a demon, it's the flesh. I can't fast the flesh out of me, fasting can deaden the flesh quite significantly for a while, but I can assure you: once the fasting is over, the flesh comes up again and shows you how strong it is. The only answer for the flesh is death, that's what the Bible teaches. Listen to Galatians 5:24: 'Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires'. This is the only answer, the nail of the cross, Jesus puts the flesh to death. Now I want you to turn with me to this portion, Galatians 5:16-17, because I believe this will be very significant to you. This is just before Paul talks about the works of the flesh, but he exhorts the believers to walk in the Spirit, Galatians 5:16-17, you might want to take a couple of notes at this point because I'm going to be very practical in these closing moments: how to be holy, how to overcome the flesh. Galatians 5:16-17: 'I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another', or we could put it that the flesh strives against the Spirit, and the Spirit strives against the flesh, 'these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish'.

On the screen is a picture of a tug-of-war, and that's like the battle between the flesh and the Spirit in you - but here are a number of truths that you need to really get into your mind and your heart if you're going to overcome the flesh. Are you ready? Number one: you are not the sinful nature, you are not your sinful nature. Now, if you look at the verse, look at verse 17: 'For the flesh lusts', or strives, 'against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you...'. Imagine these are personalities that are being spoken of here: there is the flesh, there is the Spirit, but then 'you' do not do the things that 'you' wish. You are being distinguished there from the flesh, which is the old nature, or you could say 'the old you', but Paul is reckoning that to have died in Jesus Christ. You're not meant to breathe new life into it again, you're meant to reckon it as dead - but if you consider yourself as that sinful nature, what way are you going to live? What way are you going to live? If you see yourself as the sinful nature, if you're always 'Woe is me, and my heart is so always wicked and deceitful', and you don't move into the new heart that God has given you, taking away your old deceitful heart and giving you the heart of flesh, how are you ever going to move?

You see, the devil has many of us on the back foot, because we're still living as if we are the old nature, we still have an old heart, we are not dead and resurrected in Jesus Christ. Now this is your first primary foundation: you are not your sinful nature. What am I then? You are the battleground on which the battle, or the tug-of-war, between the flesh and the Spirit is fought. Do you understand? There is a great difference, I know you might think it's semantics and hair-splitting, but I assure you it is not, and we will see why it is not. You're not your sinful nature, you are the one that the battle between a sinful nature that you have had, and the Holy Spirit's nature which you are being gifted by grace, fights. But here's the second, coming out of that: you must not fight the flesh with flesh, OK? You're the battleground, and here's what a lot of us do: we reckon ourselves as the sinful flesh, and we're trying to beat the sinful flesh into submission - and the sinful flesh is too strong for us, it will always win out. So what does it have to do? It has to be put to death, it has been put to death at the cross, but you've got to reckon it so. But you can't with the 'good side' of your flesh - alright? - you can't try to beat it up, that will never work, because that which is of flesh is flesh. You must not fight, but let the Spirit - now I'm not saying there aren't things for you to do, there are - but you must let the power and force of the Spirit win out against the flesh.

So a third thing comes from that - one: you are not your sinful nature, you are the battleground; two: you must not fight in the flesh, but let the Spirit fight; but three: therefore you must give way to the Spirit - that's how you win out! It's not by struggling and striving - I'm not saying there aren't things for you to do, of course there are, there are boundaries we will see in a moment - but you must give way to the Spirit. A brilliant illustration of this is how to surf - and I don't know how to surf, I just know how to sink! I've never even tried it! I go on a Li-Lo on my tummy, that's the nearest thing I've ever done to surfing. But I'm told by those who know how to surf that here is essentially what you do in your mind: you have to become one with the wave, one with the force of the wave, and just let the wave carry you - that's how to surf, and that's how to win the battle over the flesh. You are not your sinful flesh, you have sinful flesh, but it has been disempowered at the cross, you've now been given the new nature of Jesus Christ, and you must reckon your old nature dead - not breathe new life into it by your habits - you must reckon it dead, but you must understand that the Holy Spirit's power must overcome the flesh; and so you go with the flow. You've heard that expression, it's usually put in the wrong connotation, 'Go with the flow', but we are people who have to go with the flow of the Spirit, and just let Him have His way.

Now, fourthly, we do have to call time on the avenues of the flesh - Galatians 6 verse 8: 'He who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life'. You see, here's what some of us do, myself included: we reckon the flesh dead at the cross; we realise that we are not the sinful flesh, we are the battleground; realise the Spirit is the only One who can war and win against it, and we try to give way to the Spirit - but then we also keep certain avenues of the flesh open, and we flirt with the flesh. OK? We need to be ruthless with the flesh. Jesus said: 'If your eye offend you, pluck it out; if your hand offend you, cut it off'. You have to be drastic, you have to be radical. If you're on a diet, you don't go to the bakery, and walk around the bakery and sniff the cream puffs, and study the cream puffs - before long your face will be buried in the cream puffs, isn't that right? If you're on a diet, you don't drive by the confectionery. When you don't need to go, on your way to work, you drive by the

confectionery, then you decide: 'Oh, I wonder the papers are saying today?', and then you go into the newsagents and you browse the chocolate shelf. You know what I'm talking about, you lift it, you look at the price, you smell it - that's often what we do with sin. We're trying to battle, we're trying to overcome, but secretly and even subconsciously we are giving ourselves over in ways - even if we're not completely sinning - but we are allowing the enemy a certain foothold that he can empower that behaviour, and eventually get us to fall flat on our face.

There need to be barriers. Romans 6:12-13, listen: 'Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God'. So what do you do? What do you present your eyes as instruments to do? What do you let go in eye-gate? What do you let go in ear-gate? What do you put in mouth-gate? What happens up here in the mind? What do you feed your mind with? What do your hands touch? Where do your feet take you? Is that conducive with walking in the Spirit, or are you walking in the flesh - and therefore you end up hatching the flesh, reproducing, conceiving flesh?

Now, I want to encourage you tonight: we are more than conquerors through Christ who loved us, there is the Spirit-filled life, there is victory. We will always, until the day we die, struggle with the flesh to a certain extent in these bodies of ours - but, praise God, there is victory! Let it be known that, though we look and see ourselves in Jacob, and we see our families in this family, and maybe we see ourselves in each of the members of this family - you don't need to watch Eastenders to find out how broken society is, you can see this dysfunctionality in the Bible - why is it there? To show us: this is the way we are, but with Christ we are more than conquerors through Him who has loved us, given Himself for us, died our death, put flesh to the death, and gives us our lives back in His life if we will only believe in Him.

I want to finish by encouraging you with two verses, turn with me as I close - and I'm only going to read them to you - Isaiah chapter 41, you'll love this one. Isaiah 41 verses 13 and 14, this is wonderful when you consider everything we've looked at these last two weeks on Jacob, verse 13 of Isaiah 41: 'For I, the LORD your God' - now, you apply this to yourself, will you? - 'I, the LORD your God, will hold your right hand', Amen? Isn't that lovely? 'Saying to you, 'Fear not, I will help you''. Now listen, you might be broken tonight because of flesh, and maybe the devil has got on board as well, and you might need deliverance - alright? But you could be really broken tonight, and think there is no hope, God is saying to you: 'I want to take your hand'. You might have sold out and given in, caved in, but He's saying: 'Fear not, I will help you'. But look at verse 14, this is precious: 'Fear not, you worm Jacob'. I mean, you could say, 'Oh, but that couldn't apply to me here, you know, this verse, I mean, you don't know what I've been into, you don't know what I've been up to, you don't know what my price has been, what I've been selling out for and caving in to. I'm worse than Jacob, I'm worse than any of that dysfunctional family you've showed us tonight'. Listen, look: Jacob was a worm, like all of us are in and of ourselves alone, but 'Fear not, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel!' - all the descendants of Jacob who were stiffnecked and rebellious people, listen to what God says, 'I will help you', says the LORD and your Redeemer', the One who will buy you back from the slave market of sin, the One who will restore you, who will

renew you, 'I am the Holy One of Israel, I am absolutely holy, and yet I'm going to do this for you because of what Jesus did'.

That's some love on Valentine's Night, isn't it? Let's pray. Now I just know that God has been speaking tonight, I just know it. Whatever responses there are, I am satisfied that God has been speaking - but, you know, that might satisfy me, but it'll not satisfy you if you need change and transformation in your life. You need the flesh to really die, and the life, the resurrection life of Jesus to come alive. As I said, there might be ministry that is needed afterwards, and often what happens is the flesh becomes a breeding ground for demonic empowerment and even brokenness and woundedness can - but we can deal with all that.

First things first: there needs to be repentance for how you have indulged the flesh in your life. You can't expel flesh, you've got to repent of sin and flesh, and flesh must die at the cross - the place of repentance, the place of surrender. You know, some of us were just chatting about this earlier, I am uncomfortable and I won't pray for deliverance with people who are not prepared to repent and surrender - because you will end up in a worse state than you are at the moment. So don't be coming for deliverance prayer tonight, I would rather nobody came, as people who are coming who want to get rid of demons or something like that, or some evil tendencies, but they're not prepared to repent. You see, the flesh will always blame others, and 'The devil made me do it' doesn't wash, OK? It doesn't wash - and here's why I know that: I believe that perhaps one of the most demonised persons in the world was the demoniac, and the demons didn't want to be anywhere near Jesus, and yet the demoniac threw himself at the feet of Jesus for help. You might say, 'Oh, was it not the demons?', no, the demons wanted to run away from Jesus, 'What have we to do with You, the Holy One of God?', they didn't want to be near Jesus. But the man had enough in him, even if it was only 1% of 99% demonisation, he had that fraction of a percent that was able to throw himself at the feet of Jesus, and say 'I need help'.

Now you mightn't know how to help yourself, you mightn't know if you've got it within you to repent, you maybe don't even know what that is - but if you know you don't want to be the way you are, and you're prepared, if God helps you (and it's a big 'if' for you at the moment, but if He gives you the help), you're prepared to stop, you're prepared to let go - that's the people we need to be talking to tonight. Those are the ones who are ready to have God's help, who are truthful, and you're not trying to reach one hand out to God, but their other hand is still holding onto their sin - that doesn't work, it never did and never will, OK? So don't kid yourself. That's why people say: 'Oh, I tried that, but it didn't work. Oh, I used to be a Christian' - that's all rubbish you know! So if you're ready to say: 'I agree with what God says about sin, I agree with what God says about my flesh, I agree with what God says about how I have agreed with the enemy, the world; and I am ready to agree with Him, put my hands up and say 'Guilty as charged, I confess my sin, I ask You to forgive me, and I'm prepared to let go of it if You will empower me to do that' - and only He can empower you to do that - well, then you pray that right now.

I want you to pray with me these words, if you're ready for that: 'Lord Jesus Christ, I come to You as my Lord and Saviour, and I confess to You that I am a sinner. I thank You that You died on the cross for me, and I agree with You that I have

fallen short of Your glory. Even the good things that I try to do are of the flesh. I come to the foot of Your cross now, Lord' - by the way, you can pray this if you're not a Christian, or if you are a Christian, it's just the flesh, we've all got it, OK? 'I come to the foot of Your cross, Lord Jesus, and I repent of my sin, and I repent of my fleshly tendencies. I repent of flirting with the flesh, I repent of giving myself over to the flesh, I repent of giving the members of my body as instruments of unrighteousness of the flesh, rather than giving them to You as instruments of righteousness for Your glory'. Maybe you need to repent of trying to do good things, as a Christian, in the flesh: reading your Bible, praying, doing alms, witnessing, going to services, being an officer in the church of some kind, or whatever. You know that you've been doing it out of the flesh, and what happens when you do it out of the flesh is that you burnout, the flesh gets weary. Maybe because you've been moving 'as a Christian' in the flesh, you are manifesting secretly the works of the flesh in Galatians 5. This will happen: there will be secret immorality in your life. Now we all know, God and I know what is going on in my head and heart, OK? I'm not hiding anything from Him, but you're trying to hide this secret part of you from God and from others - you're not honest. We're all struggling with the flesh, we're all struggling with sin, the world, and the devil - but you're not being open and honest with God, and there are not other people who you are being accountable to on this journey of struggle. You need to say: 'Lord, I confess my flesh to You now'.

Could it be, while you're kneeling at the foot of the cross right now - that's where I hope you are - that you need to ask the Lord to cut you off from any generational iniquity or generational sin that has been in your immediate family, things that have been passed down to you by your mother or your father, or further back, tendencies? Could there be things that maybe haven't come from nature, but from nurture, and you've learned them in your own family? Well, ask Jesus now, just pray this prayer: 'Lord Jesus, I ask You now to cut me off from all generational iniquity, or generational curse, coming down to me through my mother or my father's family line. Separate me, spirit, soul, and body from these, and release me to receive complete healing and deliverance'. Maybe you need to repent of having partaken in some of your forefather's sins, you've maybe passed them on to the next generation. Rather than leaving a righteous inheritance, you're leaving an ungodly inheritance; maybe you've undone some of the inheritance in your father or mother's generation, or further back, maybe you're raising your children in a more materialistic way, maybe you're emphasising that it's about education and career and marrying well and getting a nice house and car, rather than investing in the things that really will last for all eternity. You need to repent of that, parents, if that is the emphasis that has been in your family. It can be a very sanitised, Christianised version of that, but it's abhorrent if God is not on the horizon, if it's at the expense of those things that moth and rust does not break in, and thieves do not break through and steal.

We need to repent of the flesh, and we need to say this to the Lord Jesus, OK? 'Lord Jesus, I reckon that my flesh has died with You when You were nailed to the cross, and I choose to believe that I am free, and I choose to abide in You, and I ask now that Your resurrection life will live in and through me. I refuse to strive and struggle with the flesh, but rather die to myself and allow Your life to live through me. Fill me now with the blessed Holy Spirit to empower me to live Your life for Your glory, in Jesus' name, Amen'. Now, let me pray for you all, stay in the

attitude of prayer just now.

Father, I want to thank You tonight for Your book, the Bible. I want to thank You that it is so truthful. I want to thank You that it is warts and all when it comes to these Bible characters, there is no hidden aspects to their life - even the godliest people, Lord, we thank You that we see their frailties; not for some gratuitous satisfaction, but to realise, Lord, that we are normal, and everybody in this world who is fallen and depraved. We can see that this isn't a book of heroes, apart from Jesus, but this is a book full of ordinary people who need a Saviour. Thank God we can say of ourselves, 'O worm, Jacob', that You are our Deliverer, Lord, You are the God of Jacob, You have married Yourself forever to Jacob, and You've married Yourself forever to us. You're not going to leave us or forsake us, if only we will avail of Your help. Lord, I just pray now that as people have met You on the terms of truth tonight, that You will now meet them with Your grace. I pray that You will break the powers and the bondage of flesh in people's lives, that You will put it to death through the power of the blood of Jesus and the victory of the cross; that the cross will triumph over flesh tonight, that the cross will triumph over self tonight, that the cross will triumph over sin and Satan and every ungodly spirit. We would speak to even strongholds that have built themselves upon fleshly edifices, and spirits that have inhabited fleshly houses tonight - we command you now, in the mighty name of Jesus, to go. Every spirit that has been manifesting out of a place of flesh, every spirit that has a foothold in a place of flesh, for those who have surrendered themselves - spirit, soul, and body - to Jesus, I now command every one of those spirits to leave in the mighty name of Jesus. I break your power, I strip you of your job function, I declare to you that you have lost your authority, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, I command you to go right now in Jesus' name - right out, leave, lift off and go. I pray now, Lord, that the blessed Holy Spirit will fall upon lives here tonight, fall upon spirits, souls, minds, emotions, wills - fill the bodies of the people gathered here that are really surrendered, and really repentant tonight, and really believing that their flesh has died at Calvary. Fill them full of the mighty power of God, the mighty fruit of the Holy Spirit, give them gifts of the Holy Spirit, baptise them in the liquid love of the Holy Spirit tonight. Give them their identity, and their sense of being and worth, through the Divine nature being birthed in their hearts, that Your Spirit would witness with their spirit that they are children of God. Birth something of the Holy Spirit tonight, banish all flesh, bury all flesh tonight, and birth something in people's spirits by the Holy Spirit we pray. Oh, come Holy Spirit, do a work of healing tonight, do a work of healing, inner healing, Lord. Heal brokenness, those who have been broken and the flesh has been a way for them to cope. Lord, whether it's fleshly reactions in response to wounding, or whether it's fleshly coping mechanisms of addiction - Lord, break the flesh, set them free from demonic enslavement, we pray. Lord, break habits tonight we pray, lifelong habits, break mental strongholds that have been engraven in the flesh - those tyre tracks that they're always going down in their mind, Lord, break it and make new tyre tracks in the Spirit, through the mind of Christ, we pray, Lord. Break down strongholds, Holy Spirit, to the obedience of the name of Jesus Christ tonight, in minds. Lord, mould emotions according to the truth of God - not the flesh, not any weepy, whininess of the flesh, or any hard false masculine, any proud, bold, rebellious flesh. Lord, let it only be the blessed Holy Spirit's characteristic of Jesus that is manifested in our hearts. Lord, I pray that You will break control, and the Jezebel spirit over people's lives, some daughters here who had manipulating mothers - I pray in the mighty name of Jesus that the Jezebel

strongman will be broken tonight, and will go. Any passivity that there has been, any Ahab-like spirit, will be broken, and will go in Jesus' name out of people's lives. Any sons that have had mothers who they are still beneath their skirts, and they haven't been released into manhood; I ask, Lord, that You will cut those ungodly ties with mothers tonight, that that umbilical cord will be cut, and that they will become real men in their own right, and they will love their wives, and they will leave and cleave, and stop running home. Lord, I pray for healing in marriages tonight, I pray for healing in marriages that are dysfunctional - where, like Isaac and Rebekah, there is whispering behind-the-scenes, and there is plotting and all sorts of plans being hatched, and they are turning one child against another. Lord, put that to death tonight, and let husbands and wives be united, and let there be godly headship in the home, and not any dictating from a husband, but together before the Lord may there be true headship. Lord, I pray for healing in the family where there is real rebellion, that prodigals will come home, Lord, we pray. O Lord, we need healing in our families, we need healing in our marriages, we need healing in our homes. Oh, would You come, Lord, would You do a work of healing - I don't know what You're doing, but I know You're doing something, Lord. I'm just glad here to pray away while You're doing it - whatever it is - because whatever You do, it's marvellous in our eyes. We give glory to You, and we pray that tonight there will be testimonies of what You're doing in the quiet of the Spirit, what is moving upon hearts, Lord - people are being set free, I believe it, and I pray that we will hear the testimony that marriages have been healed, Valentine's night Lord, may marriages be healed, relationships be healed, parent-child relationships be healed - or at least people be broken away from bondage, and put the true godly barriers and boundaries that need to be there. Lord, it is for freedom that Christ has set us free, let us not be enslaved by any yoke of bondage, but let us all tonight be in the wonderful liberty of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Let us be children of freedom tonight, we pray. So we thank You, Lord, for this evening; and we pray, Lord, that You will go with us now. Whatever the rest of the night has to hold, we pray that You will give Your benediction to it with Your lovely, sweet presence - and, Lord, that we will know for the rest of this evening, whether we're here or whether we are somewhere else at home, we will know that You are with us, and we will hear those words ringing in our ears: 'Fear not, O worm, Jacob, I will take your right hand, I will help you; for I am your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel - in whose name we pray, and everybody said 'Amen'.

The Jacob Enigma - Chapter 3

"Jacob's Unconscious Encounter"

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by David Legge

I want you to turn with me in your Bibles to Genesis 28, Genesis chapter 28. While you're turning to that, if you haven't been here already, we're looking at - we've looked at various things from I've been here anyway - but we've been looking from January time at a study in the life of Jacob, and we've called it 'The Jacob Enigma'. We're just looking at this Bible character, and there is great instruction for all of us. I don't know what your circumstances are, how you are, whether you're a Christian, whether you believe in the Lord Jesus, whether you're born again or not, whether you're a Christian who knows Jesus personally as Saviour and Lord of your life - well, there will be something for you tonight - but if you've been a Christian for several years, there's going to be plenty. Indeed, I believe tonight that I have a prophetic word from God for The Stables, for Fermanagh, for Ireland, and for the church in Ireland. So I'm not trying to really build it all up for my sake, but I really believe that there is a message is burning in my spirit for you tonight - and you pray for me that I will get it across correctly. But I want you to pray for yourself just now, will you? That God might speak to you personally. So whatever your circumstances are, even if you're not a Christian, even if you're very uncomfortable even sitting here tonight - and I'm not suggesting I'm picking those vibes up, but there may well be someone, if statistics are right there's probably at least one here that doesn't feel that you're in the right place tonight - well, you're probably the one that is in the right place, and God has something to say to you! Would you please pray with me now, and say: 'Lord, speak to me' - would you do that? 'Lord, speak to me'. OK, let's pray:

Father, we praise You with our prayers just now, our adoration, as we have been doing in our praise. We just know that You are here, we know that You are in this night, and we know that You are going to do things that are going to surprise us. So we just invite You, Lord: come, come and do exceedingly beyond even our imaginations, what we can even think or imagine. So we wait upon You, and we pray that You will come and meet with us tonight, that You will open heaven above us; and, Lord, that You will come down into our midst. In the mighty name of the Lord Jesus we pray - and everybody said 'Amen'.

OK, Genesis chapter 28. If you don't know what this story is about, and if you don't have a Bible don't worry, just listen, or maybe somebody near to you will share their copy of the Scriptures with you - Genesis chapter 28, and we are beginning to read at verse 10. Alright? It's the story of Jacob's dream: *"Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran. So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep. Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: 'I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your*

descendants. Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you'. Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, 'Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it'. And he was afraid and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!'. Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously. Then Jacob made a vow, saying, 'If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God. And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You'''. Amen.

The title of my message tonight is: 'Jacob's Unconscious Encounter'. In John chapter 3 and verse 6, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, said: 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit'. As we've been studying the life of Jacob, we've seen that Jacob really epitomises everything that is in our fleshly humanity. His name literally means 'to grasp, to supplant, to snatch'; and Jacob is the kind of guy who got places in life as an opportunist by the works and energy of fleshliness, rather than waiting on God's time and believing by faith in God's promises. He did want God's best in his life, but he wanted to get it by the arm of his own strength. Now we have seen in previous weeks - and I'm not going to repeat this, get the CDs, and they are free - that the only answer for human flesh, whether it's the bad flesh that manifests itself in sin and the works of breaking God's laws, iniquity, or whether it's the 'good flesh', and there is good flesh with good intentions, trying to get God's favour by doing good works (that's basically a summary of religion), there is no answer for either of those sides of the flesh, good or bad. The only remedy for the flesh is death, death on the cross. You can't wrestle with it, you can't overcome the bad in you by doing good, there is only one way, and that's the way of the cross where Jesus died, and realising that you died in Him, and He put to death not only our sins, but also the fleshly self within us.

But that isn't enough, because we need something to replace the flesh. So we need to answer the question: is there something that will authentically substitute and supplant the counterfeit drivenness and energy of the flesh that gets us into so much trouble, whether it's through blatant sin or religious practices that don't get us anywhere and have us going in circles. The answer is: there is something! It is the revelation of God's Spirit, that is the answer. I'm going to present to you, through this story of Jacob's dream, his unconscious encounter, a kingdom principle - a principle in the kingdom of God: that 'It's not by might, nor by power', God's word says in Zechariah 4:6, 'but by My spirit', says the Lord. Or to put it another way - and I'll explain what I'm saying - Proverbs 29 and verses 18: 'Without a vision, the people perish'. Another translation of that is: 'Where there is no revelation, people cast off restraint'. In other words, people need to be hearing from God. Flesh isn't enough! We cannot get what we need from God by might or by our own fleshly energy and power, we must have revelation from God - and without that vision, people are being destroyed. What will happen is: flesh will

surface when revelation is absent. When God is not speaking, fleshly activity will come to the fore.

Now there is a biblical illustration of this in 1 Samuel 3 and verse 1. We read there: 'The boy Samuel ministered to the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no widespread revelation'. Now let me give you a bit of background to that. Eli is the High Priest, but what that verse is basically saying is: there was no voice from God in those days, God wasn't speaking through revelation and vision the way He used to do. Because of that, Eli was personifying it by his own physical blindness - the people of God were not seeing, and he as a Priest was to lead them, but he wasn't giving any leading because God wasn't speaking to him. His own two sons ministered as priests, but they were abhorrent to the Lord. I'll not go into it, but there was rank immorality in the priesthood to such an extent that God judged His people. The Ark of the Covenant (which was the open manifestation of God's presence with His people) was stolen by the enemy; Eli's two sons were killed; when he heard the news, he himself fell back and broke his neck; and his daughter-in-law, one of his sons wives, she was giving birth - when she heard the news of her husband's death, her waters broke, and she started giving birth, and she died in childbirth - but before dying she named her child 'Ichabod', which means 'the glory has departed from Israel'. Do you see the picture here? Things are really bad amongst God's people - why? Because there was no open vision, God had stopped speaking to His people.

Do you understand the importance of God's voice? When revelation ceases, spiritual life ceases, and that's why we are in the spiritual predicament that we are in in Ireland today - because we're not hearing from God! The churches have not been hearing from God! Whatever particular hue of the colour of the spectrum you want to go, I'm not interested in talking Protestant, Catholic, or what ism or denomination it is, generally speaking - now not everybody, but generally speaking - the institutional church has not been hearing from God. Jesus said in John 6:63: 'It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life' - that's it! In Hosea chapter 4 and verse 6, the prophet says: 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge', or lack of revelation. They don't know what to do, there is no direction! In Amos chapter 8 verses 11-12 the prophet Amos predicted: 'Behold, the days are coming', says the Lord GOD, 'That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the LORD, but shall not find it'. Now, that is where we are in Western Europe - not just in the island of Ireland, but in the Western European developed countries. There is a famine of God's truth. The place is littered with churches, we've got - in the north of Ireland anyway - plenty of Bibles and Christian literature, and the Internet is awash with knowledge about the Bible and history and so on, but that's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about God's spoken word now to this day and generation - there is a famine!

Jacob had come to a juncture where God needed to break in to interrupt his fleshly cycle. God had to do something drastic. Now, please note, God didn't force him to do anything - God never forces you to do things - but what God did was give him a revelation of His truth, and He left him with it to work it out and obey it. This is the point that I want to make tonight: this man Jacob was so full of fleshly activity and

scheming, that God had to make him unconscious before He could speak to him - isn't that incredible? He had to put him under an anaesthetic! There are times when the Lord needs our attention. I want to ask you: how has the Lord allowed debilitation into your life in order to get your attention, stop you in your tracks of fleshiness and striving and scheming, to confront you? Maybe you are so busy with life, or even religion, frantic activism is what marks you - so much so that you can't receive vision from God because you're too busy, you're not still enough. Now if you read in the Acts of the Apostles (which is the story of the early church), chapter 13 and verse 2, we read there that the early apostles ministered to the Lord and fasted, and the Holy Spirit spoke to them and told them what to do - that's what we need to get back to again: waiting upon God and listening for His voice.

Now we've seen what a great man Jacob was. He had ingenuity, strength, cunning and intelligence - but what he really needed was revelation, and that's what we all need: God to speak to us! That cannot be learned at college or university, but it has to be imparted. In other words, it's a gift of grace, not of works - God gives it to us freely, we can't earn it. You see, that's how God works. In Romans 10:17, we read that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God - who knows that verse? 'Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God', but most of us hear that verse like this: 'Faith comes by the word of God', and that's not what it says. 'Faith comes by hearing', and the hearing of faith comes by the word of God - do you understand? So, having the Bible is not synonymous with hearing from God. Sure our churches, particularly here in Northern Ireland, are filled with Bible knowledge, but they are not hearing from God generally speaking. In Galatians 3 and verses 2 and 5 we learn about the hearing of faith, hearing from God. Miracles were being done, the Holy Spirit was being given to the church through the hearing of faith, that is widespread revelation!

Here we see Jacob, without going over the old ground we've covered, he leaves home under a cloud with the threat of death from his brother Esau. His family is utterly dysfunctional, and his world has become a battlefield, all because of his flesh and the fleshliness of his family. He's on this lonely journey, and he lies down - probably totally exhausted running in the flesh and from his own flesh - and all of a sudden, as he expires, God steps in as only He can. I hope there is someone here tonight - I believe there is - and this describes you. What we need only God can give, and we cannot create it. We need God to reveal Himself as He did to Jacob.

I want you to see: this was God's appointment. Alright? Now I'm not saying - please don't misunderstand what I'm saying - I'm not saying that we can't seek and find the Lord any time any place, I'm not saying that; but there are moments, times and places, where God just invades, where God arrests us and grips our attention. We see it in verse 11, if you look at chapter 28 verse 11: 'Jacob came to a certain place and stayed there all night' - so there is a certain time and place, and it was the right time and the right place for Jacob. This was God's timing, God's appointment.

Now I don't know whether you're aware, some of you might be, but there are two distinct Greek words - different words - for 'time'. One of the Greek words is 'chronos', we get 'chronology' from it; and the other is a word 'kairos'. Now 'chronos' has the idea of the clock, OK, 60 seconds in a minute, 60 minutes in an

hour, 24 hours in a day, 7 days in a week, and 365 days (except in a leap year) in a year - it's the idea of the clock and the calendar that doesn't change regardless, that is 'chronos' time. But 'kairos' time has the concept of a God-moment, of an opportunity that needs to be taken but can be missed. Now this was a 'kairos' moment for Jacob, not a 'chronos' moment. I would encourage you, if you have any Bible software, or even on Google, search Bible verses that mention 'the appointed time', or 'when the fullness of time came', or 'at just the right time'. We even read about it concerning the birth of Jesus in Galatians 4:4: 'When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law'. Now I don't have time to go into this, but you can be absolutely assured that when Jesus was born, He was born at just the right time. God had been waiting throughout the whole of history, all the existence of humanity, for this very moment. It wasn't haphazard, He wasn't sitting wondering: 'Is now the right time or should I wait a little bit longer? When should I? When would be?' - He had pinpointed the exact 'kairos' moment when Jesus would be born.

I want to ask you tonight: what time is it? I don't mean looking at your watch, and thinking 'He's going on a bit tonight'; I mean: what time is it? I'm not talking about 'chronos' time, I'm talking about 'kairos' time. What time is it in your life? Well, listen: it's always time to seek the Lord: so if you've never been born again, sought the Lord, and become a true Christian and know Him personally, tonight is your night, today is the day of salvation - you've got to realise that! You've got an opportunity this evening to become a Christian, and really know God. What time is it in your life as a Christian? What time is it in the nation? What time is it in the church? What season are we in? What time is it in The Stables?

I want to share with you tonight - now this passage we've read has been intrinsic in my life on several occasions, but there are many passages. Let me give you a little bit of my testimony. My mother and father were Christians, so I grew up in a Christian environment, and I became a Christian at a very early age. You know that you might be born into a Christian tradition, but you're not born a Christian, you have to be born again to be a Christian. I knew that, and I trusted Jesus at a very early age, and went through all the ups and downs of teenage life and the challenge of: 'Am I going to go with Jesus, or am I going to go with my friends in this world, the way everything goes?'. But there came a time when I really did rededicate my life to Christ, and I felt the call of God very strongly in my heart. Now I don't want to go into it all, but save to say there is hardly a time that I can remember when I didn't know that I was going to serve the Lord in this capacity that you see me tonight. My sister, there are 10 years between me and her, she is 10 years younger, she became a Christian one evening - and I, coming home very late in my youth (couldn't do it now!), coming home very late the light was still on and my Mum was still up. I asked her: 'What's going on?', I thought something was wrong. She says: 'Your sister has become a Christian'. So we sat down and we started to reminisce that night, and she said to me, going over history, she said to me: 'Did I ever tell you about the time you were born?'. I said: 'Well, I think so, 21st of August 1976, and I'm here so I know it happened, I was there when it happened so I ought to know! What do you mean?'. She said: 'Well, the circumstances of your birth'. Now I did know she had a traumatic experience - that's why there was 10 years between me and my sister! - but I wasn't aware that she almost died and I almost died. The surgeon had gone somewhere and couldn't be found, and she had been left very precariously, and I was in a condition called

foetal distress, and I was about to die. She had put her hands on her tummy and prayed to God - obviously she didn't know whether it was male or female - but she said: 'Take this child, and use this child for Your service'. Now I never knew that. I was in my late teens or early 20s, just about to step into Christian ministry, and I knew God's call on my life - but I was not aware of this! I didn't know what to do with my Mum, whether to hug her or choke her! 'Why didn't you tell me that!'. But I was so glad that she hadn't told me, do you know why? Because I would've thought that I was living out some kind of birth wish of my mother's, rather than a call of God. Imagine what it was like getting that message from God, just as I'm entering into Christian ministry!

Now this is where I'm getting to: what I did that night was, I went straight up to my bedroom, and I opened the Bible, and I opened it at 1 Samuel chapter 1 where Hannah was a barren woman with infertility, she was begging God for a child, and it was in the days of Eli, so that God would start speaking again! Are you with me? God couldn't speak to the old fellow, so He needed a new boy to be born - that's what God will do, He will bring people along, if the folk are not receptive now that are there, even the ones who represent Him, He will bring new folk along that will hear Him - even if He has to cause them to be born. I read that, and I thought of my Mum praying that prayer, and God answering because she, Hannah, dedicated that child to the Lord and gave him to the Temple service. Then I went to Jeremiah 1, and I read about how Jeremiah had been chosen in his womb and ordained as a prophet of God, and he objects that he is only a young fellow. God says to him: 'Don't say that, I'm going to use you'. Now please, I'm not focusing on myself tonight, but I want you to turn to Jeremiah - this is about The Stables, this is about what God is doing in the land, and it's about you as well - Jeremiah chapter 1 verse 4, this is the portion I read: 'Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying', Jeremiah 1:4, verse 5, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations".

Now, God used that in my life, but this Scripture - like many Scriptures that God uses in our pilgrimage with Him, He breathes new life into them at various junctures, He brings them alive again. Every time I have told my story about how Christ came into my life, I always tell this passage, I read 1 Samuel 1 and Jeremiah 1 - but when I embarked upon my relationship with you guys here in The Stables a year ago, I was sent by someone here intrinsic to The Stables, I was sent this portion of Scripture specifically - but not the verses that I always focused on, but the later verses. God has more to say, verse 11: 'Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'Jeremiah, what do you see?'. And I said, 'I see a branch of an almond tree'. Then the LORD said to me, 'You have seen well, for I am ready', or watching, "to perform My word". Now I had already seen those verses, and they had come to me, but then I started to learn more and more about what the almond tree is - are you aware of this? The almond tree is what is called in Israel 'the watcher tree', because it's the first symbol of spring, it's the first tree to bud that signifies spring is on the way. What Jeremiah was seeing was - God says: 'What do you see?', 'I see an almond branch'; and God was saying, 'Just like you watch the almond tree to know when spring is coming, I am watching', God says, 'to perform My word. This is a symbol of My execution of My purposes early. I am ready', verse 12 says, 'I am watching to perform. I am hastening My word, I am wakeful to My word'. Boy, was all this coming alive? Because every Christian, not just David Legge, every Christian has God's ordination and favour upon their life, and He has

a job for you to do. He is watching over you to perform His word, He has a destiny for your life. Once you take that step of faith and give your life to Him, there is a whole adventure that He wants to just open up for you!

But I feel that this is bigger than individuals, just like the chorus says: 'The time is right in the nation for works of power and authority, God is looking for a very special people to be counted in His glorious victory'. I wonder are you aware that God now, I believe, in Ireland is watching, He's ready to perform His word - the buds are springing. Now I'm not finished - I'm certainly not finished, I'll maybe go on another hour - but I'm not finished with this little story, OK? Because on 28th January 2014, last year, I was seeking God over a House of Prayer in Portadown, which is where I live. God had spoken to me, I believe, in my heart about having a house of prayer, nondenominational, anybody can come as long as they are praying to the Father in Jesus' name, and seek for God's Kingdom come in Portadown. I felt God telling me to do it, but I wanted to be sure. So I was waiting for a word from God, and guess where God give me the word from? Genesis chapter 28, where we're reading from tonight, Bethel. The vision was of a house of God, a gateway to heaven - alright? - a portal of heaven, an open heaven where the kingdom of God can come. Bethel in Genesis 28 really spoke to me about this, but here's something that I was intrigued about - I want you to look at Genesis 28 verse 19: 'He called the name of that place', Jacob called the place where he had the dream, 'Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously'. Now I knew what 'Bethel' meant, it means 'the house of God', alright, 'the dwelling place of God'. But I thought to myself: 'What does 'Luz' mean?'. What does 'Luz' mean? I'm tempted to ask you because I know nobody knows! Do you know what 'Luz' means? 'Almond tree'. You think: 'So what?'. Well, what Jacob was saying was: 'This place previously known as 'almond tree', or this place that is called 'watcher', is going to be known now as 'the house of God''. Now listen, I don't believe this applies solely to the Portadown House of Prayer, here's the reason why: I believe God wants His kingdom to come on all the earth, I believe God wants gateways to heaven in every town, in every city, in every nation, so that the glory of the Lord will cover the earth like the waters cover the sea. This has always been God's will since Jesus taught us to pray: 'Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven'. I believe firmly that from my relationship began with you a year ago here at The Stables, that this is a place of watchers, that this is a place of waiters, where people are looking for and longing for the kingdom of God to come. This is a place that God has already been making into a Bethel. If you read my prayer letter from January, you will find this very passage - there are actually people here tonight who read that prayer letter, and they are here this evening because of this, not knowing I would preach on this. God is making this a house for Himself, but it's because of the watching that has been going on. I'm going to tell you something: God is raising up watchers and waiters for His kingdom.

Turn with me - keep your marker in Genesis 28 - turn with me to Isaiah chapter 62, Isaiah chapter 62. Isaiah 62 verse 4, now I'm going to read several verses here, and some of these verses are going to penetrate some of your hearts - because, as I was reading these, I knew these were words for people without even commenting on them, God is going to speak into your heart through these. Isaiah 62 verse 4: 'You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate', that could be a description of your life, but certainly of this land, 'But you shall be called Hephzibah', which literally means 'to delight in her',

God is going to delight in you, 'and your land Beulah', which means 'married', you're no longer going to be desolate or forsaken, 'For the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you'. Why? 'I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the LORD, do not keep silent, and give Him no rest till He establishes and till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth. The LORD has sworn by His right hand and by the arm of His strength: 'Surely I will no longer give your grain as food for your enemies; and the sons of the foreigner shall not drink your new wine, for which you have laboured''. Do you see what this is saying? Because there are people who are seeking the Lord, and standing on the walls watching for the Lord, crying to Him: 'God, without ceasing I cry for You to make Your kingdom come!', God is no longer going to allow the enemy to come in and take our grain, to take our wine, to take our produce the way he has been in the past - it's not going to happen any more. Hallelujah! Verse 9: "But those who have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the LORD; those who have brought it together shall drink it in My holy courts'. Go through, Go through the gates! Prepare the way for the people; Build up, Build up the highway! Take out the stones', the obstacles, 'Lift up a banner for the peoples! Indeed the LORD has proclaimed to the end of the world: 'Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Surely your salvation is coming; Behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him''. And they shall call them The Holy People, The Redeemed of the LORD; and you shall be called Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken'.

Isn't this powerful? This is what God is doing: watchers are people who petition God upon His word, and God is being wakeful to His word, and He is about to perform it and make this place - I believe - a Bethel. But listen: you have your personal dreams, don't you? For whatever vicinity that you've come from tonight, your own family, maybe your church, you have your own personal dreams. Maybe you've been given visions by God, literal ones or metaphorically speaking? Now of course this was literally a dream that Jacob had, and we know from the Bible that dreams are significant ways that God has spoken and does speak. The ancient world always understood dreams as often coming from God. I wonder is there someone here tonight, whether you're a Christian or not, and God has come to you in dreams? I believe I have to say that tonight, I believe someone has had fearful dreams, but God has been warning you, God has been speaking to you. Maybe Jesus has even appeared to you in a dream? Maybe your dream is more like a desire for things that God has placed on your heart, or maybe it's promises that God has given you from Scripture - here's my question: are you watching for God to perform His word in your life, in your calling, in the environment that He has put you? Or maybe I'm speaking into the heart of someone tonight, and I believe I am, and you've given up? God did give you a dream, He did impart a vision, but through disappointment, through distractions, you've been diverted. Listen to Habakkuk 2:3 tonight, God is going to bring it alive again: 'The vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry'.

So I suppose I'm saying: some of you are knowing a 'kairos' moment, a moment of opportunity, a God-moment - but I wonder are you recognising it, and are you stepping into it, are you seizing it? Ephesians chapter 5 says we need to redeem the time, buy up the opportunities, because the days are evil. The time is running

like sand through our fingers, this opportunity, this window is not going to last forever? Maybe you're saying: 'David, I don't have a vision from God, and I certainly don't see an open door before me, a gateway to heaven - and a 'kairos' moment? I don't even understand what you're talking about!'. Well, one of the major lessons that we get from Jacob's life story is that what he already possessed he couldn't see, do you remember? He already had blessings from God, but he couldn't see what he had, and he thought he didn't have them - yet he thought he had to strive and scheme in order to achieve them. He had the promise, Genesis 25 and 23, God gave his mother a promise that the elder would serve the younger, and that Esau wouldn't get the blessing; yet he had to scheme to get it. He had to buy, he thought, his birthright, in order to be in God's blessing. Yet God's favour was upon him. If you read verses 12 through to 16, you see that God was blessing him: 'I am with you, I'm going to do all these things for you'.

So what had changed in his environment, moving him from thinking he hadn't got these things to realising he had? I don't think anything changed in his environment, to be quite honest, what I think had changed was Jacob's perception and his perspective. He could only see with the vision from God - that's where we started! He could only see from revelation, God had to show him this, God has to show us the truth. He needs to show you, Christian tonight, what you already have. He needs to open your eyes, unplug your ears, soften your heart, and that's how this ordinary barren wilderness where Jacob put his head down to sleep that night became the house of God - how? When God imparted a vision. You watch his actions, look at verse 18, look at what he does after the dream: 'Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it'. Now look back at verse 11 at the beginning of the story: 'He came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep'. He made a pillow out of a stone, strange thing! But do you think, when he lifted that stone to lie and kip up for the night, that he thought that stone had any significance? Do you think that the situation you're in at this moment of time, you maybe don't see it as 'kairos' time, you don't see it as an opportunity in your life for God to step in, you don't even feel that there is anything significant about you - what do you think of where you are right now? What do you think of what you're doing right now? Did he think there was anything unique about this stone? Of course he didn't, he probably hated it - it wouldn't have been a very comfortable pillow, I imagine! It was something insignificant, even painful for him, it was not what he wanted or what he expected the blessing to look like - but, by God's intervention, at God's appointed time, the stone was transformed into what? A marker and a monument, a memorial to the blessing of God, an encounter with God in his life.

Now, that is just amazing to me. Jacob couldn't see any of this. I'm going to say to you tonight: you cannot see, perhaps, this evening, God in your circumstances, God in your environment, God in your situation; but if God tonight - and I believe He's going to do this for many people - if He imparts vision to you, you're going to see something you've never seen before, because the ordinary things, when they are ordained of God and given an imparted vision from God, they become anointed carriers of blessing. That's why this stone that was a pillow became a pillar that he set upright, and he anointed with oil, and it became a monument to God's dealings in his life - in the space of one evening that's how the change happened! Why?

Because God gave him vision.

Revelation chapter 19 and verse 10 says: 'For it is the spirit of prophecy who bears testimony to Jesus'. Prophecy, revelation testifies of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, big question for you: what is dreaming? What is it? Now I don't mean daydreaming, and I don't mean all sorts of fanciful stuff when you eat too much cheese before you go to bed - what is dreaming for God? What is getting dreams from God? What is vision that we are talking about? Well basically, and I'm a simple fellow, this is the way I understand it: dreaming is God dreaming through you, God is dreaming through you. Do you know what vision is? Well, if you're a Christian, the Holy Spirit lives within you, and so vision is God's eyes looking through you, and so you start to see as God sees. Jason Upton has a wonderful song about Jacob, and a few of the lines go:

'Finally Jacob's lying down,
And', speaking of God, he says , 'while he sleeps I will dream
Because My dream', God says, 'is not what you do,
Jacob will you dream for me
The way that I have dreamed for you?'

God wants to dream through you, God wants to bring His plans, His purposes, His blessings to The Stables, to Fermanagh, to Ireland, Portadown. He wants to go from Coleraine to Cork, He wants to go from Bundoran to Bantry, He wants to go from Belfast right across this whole island, without respect of persons, or place, or religion, creed, colour, culture! That is God's dream: that His kingdom should come, that His will should be done - but here's the question: are we dreaming His dream, are we seeing His vision? I believe many are starting.

What was God's dream and vision for Jacob? Let's look at it, verse 13, first of all a land: 'Behold, the LORD stood above the ladder and said: 'I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants''. Now obviously that was specific to the nation of Israel, but the blessing of inheritance of the nations that is promised here is in Abraham, and it's to the whole world, and it's fulfilled in Jesus Christ - and it's being fulfilled as multitudes come into the kingdom of God believing in Jesus. I believe God wants to give us Ireland. Now Ireland will not be completely His until Jesus returns, but I believe He wants, in spirit, His kingdom transformation to come and His renewal and reconciliation to this land that was once the land of saints and scholars, and that God has blessed in a mighty, mighty way, and Satan still wants to destroy. The blessing is the blessing of land, but it's also the blessing of offspring, look at verse 14: 'Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed'. That was the Jewish people, but all the families of the earth shall be blessed through the promise to Abraham. Now listen: when God conceives something of the Holy Spirit like a vision and a dream, there is an incubation, just like the natural seed in the womb. There is a period of gestation, but the objective of conception, impregnation, incubation and gestation is what? Travail and birth, that's the whole point of it all!

God's intention is always to bear fruit. God's own purpose has never ever changed. In the Garden of Eden, He said to Adam and Eve: 'Be fruitful and multiply'; when

He destroy the earth because of sin and Noah built the Ark, and he started to reproduce again and populate the earth, God said: 'Be fruitful and multiply'. God told Abraham, and this is the repetition of the Abrahamic blessing, that God was going to multiply his seed as the sand of the shore and as the stars of the sky. There has never been a time when God was not interested in multiplications - why? Because thousands, millions, are dying and perishing without vision - so God wants millions to be saved!

Whenever the Lord makes these promises of fruitfulness in the Bible - if you're familiar with the Old Testament, and particularly the book of Genesis - you will see that whenever God promises, 'I'm going to multiply you', Satan comes in and he tries to thwart that by creating barrenness. Have you ever noticed that? How many times God brings His promised, anointed deliverer out of a barren, infertile womb. Again and again the Lord has to work a miracle: in Sarah's womb, Rebekah's womb, Hannah's womb - God is working a miracle in this place, and I believe He is beginning to work a miracle in Ireland.

Quickly turn with me, and again this is going to be a prophetic passage. Isaiah 54, keep your finger in Genesis there, Isaiah 54 - and just as I said in Isaiah 61, listen, because God has got a word for some people here tonight just through reading these verses. Let's begin at verse 1, now remember what we're talking about - barrenness, but God's miracle to overcome it. You might feel like a barren Christian, you might feel disappointed and your vision and your dream has been totally decimated - but listen, verse 1: "Sing, O barren, you who have not borne! Break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you who have not laboured with child! For more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married woman", says the LORD. 'Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch out the curtains of your dwellings; do not spare; lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes. For you shall expand to the right and to the left, and your descendants will inherit the nations, and make the desolate cities inhabited. Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed; neither be disgraced, for you will not be put to shame; for you will forget the shame of your youth, and will not remember the reproach of your widowhood anymore. For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth. For the LORD has called you like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a youthful wife when you were refused', says your God. 'For a mere moment I have forsaken you, but with great mercies I will gather you. With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you', says the LORD, your Redeemer'.

Isn't that incredible? God wants to come to barrenness, and He wants to say: 'Get ready! Get ready, because I'm going to enlarge you, you're going to have more children than you could ever imagine!' - that's our God! He overcomes the schemes and plans of Satan by the miraculous, supernatural, almighty power that He has. I was at a retreat last night and this morning with a group of Christian leaders in the local church - I wasn't doing anything at it, only eating and enjoying myself, I wasn't preaching or anything like that! But there was a prophetic word that was given by the speaker this morning, several, a couple, but one in particular that hit me right between the eyes - knowing what I was going to be preaching on here tonight, and this is highly significant to some of you who have been in prayer this week concerning this meeting - he just said: 'There are people here', and he

probably thought he was talking to the church, and there's no doubt he was, the church that was there, but he said, 'There are people here, and the word for you is 'enlarge" - enlarge. Do you know what he said? I've got it in my pocket, he didn't do this, but I thought I would do it, he says the picture that he had was a balloon - and this says 'Happy 40th Birthday', alright? I got it from a neighbour, it's not mine! He said: 'You can blow into a balloon'. You blow the balloon, OK, and it's full right away, alright? I'm covering the puncture! It's full, but it's not filled to capacity, is it? It can be stretched, just like Isaiah was saying: 'Stretch out your tents'.

Now, what are you satisfied with? When you're blowing up a balloon for children, they're not satisfied with that and tying a knot in it, but many Christians, many churches are satisfied with feeling full - whether it's full of Scripture, full of activity, full of a reputation, full of their history. Listen: God wants to expand this work, God wants to expand His kingdom work right across the earth, but my heart is for Ireland - God is wanting to expand right across this island! Enlarge - is that a word for you tonight? He wants to bring offspring for you. Jesus said to the disciples in John 14: 'You have been chosen by God and ordained that you should bear much fruit'. I believe we should not be satisfied until we are bearing much fruit.

So there was land, there was offspring, get ready for enlargement! But thirdly there was protection and promises fulfilled - look at verse 15: 'Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you'. God will protect this work, this baby that He is instrumental in the birth of, He's going to fulfil His promises. Listen: He will fulfil His promises for you, don't be like Jacob and try with the arm of flesh to make it happen - wait on Him in faith! Listen: He is watching over His word, so you start watching in fulfilment for it, and waiting, and stand upon the walls and look for Him - it's coming!

But ultimately God's dream was for His presence, verse 15: 'I am with you'. Now listen: I don't know how much you know about the Bible, but looking at all of biblical history, God's heartbeat, God's desire, His passion has always been to dwell in the midst of His people - do you know that? Right from the Garden of Eden when He walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day; right to the Tabernacle where He dwelt with Israel in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night; right in the Holy of Holies where He dwelt over the Ark of the Covenant in that cloud called the Shekinah, which means 'dwelling of God'; right to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, John 1:14, who tabernacled, who dwelt among us - Jesus was the absolute epitome, because He was God manifest in flesh, God come to dwell in the midst of His people. Listen: God is always looking for a dwelling place, He is always looking for a Bethel, He is always looking for a piece of land, a group of people where He can rest. Do you want that? I do. Do you want that Stables? Would that be good in Fermanagh? Would it be great if Fermanagh was called the county where God rests? Whatever county you're from, wouldn't it be great if Ireland was known as the place where God rested?

You see, revelation caused Jacob to see what was real. Get this: revelation caused him to see what was already there. What does he say? Verse 16, look at it: 'Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it'. Do you see this? Do you see the journey he is on? He comes down to this, as far as he is concerned, godforsaken

wilderness, and he lies down absolutely exhausted from his striving to get blessing from God. That's what the church is doing, striving, striving, striving to get blessing, get blessing. God reveals Himself to him with his head on a pillow, and he wakes up and he thinks: 'God is here, and I didn't even realise it!'. I think if we realised what we already had, there would be revival immediately! Some people just don't see it, some Christians just don't see what's already there - why? Because of the flesh, and they're not getting revelation from God.

What does God want? Here's what God wants: He wants a house, and He wants a gateway of heaven on earth. Look at verse 12, the dream: 'Behold, a ladder was set up on the earth', now this is interesting, the ladder was put up on the earth, it didn't say the ladder was sent down from heaven to earth, do you notice that? The ladder was put up on the earth, and the top of the ladder 'reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it'. What was this? It was a stairway from earth to heaven, and there were angelic ministrations passing between those dimensions. Jacob found himself under an open heaven. Now Jesus is our open heaven, in fact in John chapter 1 Jesus came to a Jew called Nathanael, and He actually quotes from this Bible story. He says: 'Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man'. He said to Nathanael: 'You will see greater things than these!'

Jesus is our ladder to heaven, do you know that? Some poor Protestant people, and some poor Roman Catholic people are climbing up a ten rung ladder to heaven, the Ten Commandments. They think they will get to God through keeping the Ten Commandments, you'll not. Do you know why the Ten Commandments were given? To show you that every single rung of the ladder is broken, that's what the Ten Commandments are given for. The Ten Commandments are there to show us that we can't make our way to God, not to make a way to God. Do you understand? It's like a magnifying glass to show us our sin and our need a Saviour. That's what religion does, it's a way to climb a ladder to God - but Jesus came in John 14 and verse 6 and said: 'I am the way, the truth and the life; nobody can come to the Father but by Me'. But Jesus has gone to heaven, hasn't He? So where is the Bethel today? Where is the house of God today? Do you know what the house of God is? In 1 Corinthians 3 verse 16 Paul says: 'Do you not know that you are the temple of the Holy Spirit?' - the church, and each Christian in the church. Do you know that that's what being a Christian is? Not going to church, Christians, good living people going to church - no! Christians being the church! You're the Temple of God when God dwells in you, God's Holy Spirit, God is living in you - and do you know what that means? If you are a true born-again Christian, you are living under an open heaven.

All I hear about is people telling me, 'What the devil does to me, and the demons do this' - devil, devil, devil, devil! Christians need to start realising, yes the devil can get a foothold in our life, but if you would realise that you are already under an open heaven - look at this ladder, who is at the top of it? The LORD is over it! We are to be stewards of the heavenly realm. We, as Christians, are to be gateways to glory. Do you know what that means? When people meet us, they are meant to meet heaven, they are meant to meet God in His presence - and I believe that's what a church is meant to be. People are meant to come in and sense the atmosphere being heavenly - is that what your church is like? I can't imagine it is

in most cases. Is that what most Christian gatherings are like, a gateway to heaven?

Listen: you are a gate to heaven, you are an opening to heaven, if you're a child of God. God wants gateways to heaven, angels serve you according to the word of God. We need to realise this - and, listen, I believe that God is making The Stables (and I'm not saying that because I'm here, because I have no selfish interest, I'm a visitor, I'm a guest, OK?), but I believe God is making The Stables a gateway to heaven - I believe that. I believe that this, and especially tonight, is a 'kairos' moment for The Stables, of what they're going to step into, and whether they are going to realise this blessing of becoming a gateway to Ireland even, to Ireland, to bless this nation again with the kingdom blessing of the Gospel that has been lost to it for many, many years.

Someone once said: 'The church has been negligent in one thing, she has not prayed the power of God out of heaven' - that's what we need to do! That's what we need to do: 'Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven'. Listen: if it exists in heaven, it's meant to be loosed on earth - that's what Jesus meant when He said, 'Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done'; that's what He meant when He said, 'Whatsoever you loose on earth shall already have been loosed in heaven; whatsoever you bind on earth shall already have been bound in heaven'. It's not that we are doing stuff here and heaven has to, 'Oh, quick, catch up, they're doing something down there', that's not what it means. It means actually bringing God's will to be done on earth as He has purposed, and we have got the authority as children of God - if we're walking in the Spirit and in His kingdom principles - we have authority to do that, and to loose His will and to bind whatsoever is not of His will.

Someone also said: 'Getting us to heaven is not nearly as great a challenge as getting heaven into us'. I love the stories of revival, and I hate looking back now and getting stuck in the past and forgetting that God is a God who does things in the present, and is going to do stuff. But I love the stories of the Hebridean revival, Lewis, and the stories of Duncan Campbell and the Faith Mission. I just love the description, and when you hear that man - if you ever hear him on cassette talking about the revival, the revival resonates through his very intonations. You can feel God in this man as he communicates, he being dead yet speaks. I just can never ever forget what he says about revival: 'God was everywhere'. He describes revival as: 'A people saturated by God'. What are people saturated by in Ireland? We are saturated by addiction. We are saturated by immorality of every kind. We are saturated by materialism, sensuality. We are saturated by political correctness. We are saturated by religious adherence that is empty and dead and meaningless. We are saturated by every manner of despair, suicide, depression. We are saturated by demonic influences, superstition, all sorts of spells and curses. We are saturated! We need to be saturated, we need our people to be saturated by God! Can you envisage, can you receive an impartation of a vision tonight: what it would be like for God to be everywhere! Do you believe that's possible? It's all to do with the Spirit of God imparting vision, and what you do with it. Do you know that wee carol: 'Do you see what I see', do you know that one? 'Do you see what I see? Do you hear what I hear?', that's what God is singing over us tonight: 'Do you see what I see? Do you hear what I hear?'.

Jacob's response, verse 20 quickly, and I'm closing. Do you know what he does? He starts dealing with God. Some of our hymns make this sound pious: 'You shall be our chosen God'. I like that hymn, but it's wrong there. Jacob is dealing with God, he's saying: 'If God will be with me'. God said: 'I will be with you', He didn't say 'I might be with you', He said 'I will'. Jacob says: 'Well, if You will be with me', and instead of humbly submitting to the promises God was giving him, he tries to set the terms of the covenant. That's what people do with God: they try and deal with God, they try and bargain with God - 'Well, if God gives me this, then I will maybe serve Him'. You know, somebody lying on their back, and they're ill, and they say: 'Lord, if You lift me, raise me up, make me well again, I'll give You all my life' - and they're are up like a flash, and they're away to the pub as quick as their legs can carry them. Do you understand what I mean? They are dealing with God on their terms.

You compare and contrast God's promises, you read God's promises - we don't have time to look at it, but God says: 'I will do this, I will do that, I will do this for you'. They were God-centred, God's promises were God-centred. Jacob's conditions were man-centred: 'If You do this, if You do that'. Yet God was gracious with him - isn't it wonderful? God didn't call the whole thing off and say: 'I can't work with this fellow. Look I've just given him a dream, I've just given him a supernatural experience, an unconscious encounter, and he's starting to deal with Me' - but God hung in there, like He is hanging in with you, and hanging in with me. The sad thing about this story is this: Jacob remained unchanged. He had been given a vision by God, and he remained the same. It's unbelievable in a sense, but you see when you understand the propensity of the flesh to get in God's way, you realise it's not incredible at all.

Now from what I've preached tonight, I want to ask you: will you remain unchanged? Please don't go out and say: 'Wasn't that a nice meeting?', or 'Wasn't that wonderful? I never heard that before!'. I want you tonight to go away changed, transformed in such a way as your environment, and everybody that comes into the vicinity of you will be changed too. I want The Stables to be changed, I want Fermanagh to be changed, I want Ireland to be changed - is that too big? Well, how big is God? How big is God? Is anything too hard for the Lord? God lives in all believers, but the glory of His presence comes to rest on only a few. Let me repeat that in case some of you didn't get it: God lives in every believer, but the glory of His presence only comes to rest on a few. Will you be one of the few that will be a gateway to bring His presence to Ireland? Who will be the few?

Let's pray. Now let's have quietness and stillness, the meeting is almost over but we just want to take an opportunity - you prayed at the beginning of the meeting that God would speak to you, some of you did anyway, and He has spoken to you. I haven't a clue how He has spoken personally to you, but you know. So I want you to respond to that. You see, this isn't a spectator sport, this is not watching television where you have no part to play, this is not entertainment: you are receiving words from God. I'm not God, but this is God's word that we have preached, and He speaks through this medium. You have a responsibility: what are you going to do with what God is saying to you? Are there people here tonight - while heads are bowed and eyes are closed - are there people here tonight, and you had a vision from God and a dream from God, and you're a Christian who has been on the road many years, but that dream and vision has been drowned

beneath disappointments, distractions and despair? But God has breathed new life into the dream tonight, and He has told you that He has been watching - you have not been watchful, but He has been watchful to perform His word - He's about to perform it, and the danger is that you're not alert enough to even notice it. But God has drawn your attention tonight that things are changing. Is there anybody here tonight - and I'm not interested in numbers, OK, I'm not interested in going away and saying 'So many put their hands up', I can't even count them, OK, I'm not interested in that - what I'm interested in is you responding, and God ministering to you. Is there anyone who has had a lost dream, and God says to you: 'I am the one who will perform this, I will do it, I am faithful to My word, have hope again, have faith again'? Is there anyone would confess that God has breathed new hope into that tonight? Just raise your hand. There are many people raising their hands, so don't be afraid to raise your hand. God bless you, you can put it down when you've put it up, just as an acknowledgement. God bless.

I think there are people and God is asking them to do something about this dream. You're in a moment of opportunity right now, aren't you? God has been asking some of you to do something, to step out - you know exactly what it is - to actually step out to fulfil this dream. Some of you have been passively waiting for God to drop it on your head someday, but you have a part to play in it. You know what He has told you to do, and you haven't yet stepped into it. He is making you aware that this is the 'kairos' moment, this is the window of opportunity for you to just step out and put your faith and make them works. Is there anybody will say: 'Yes, I know God has told me to do something, I haven't done it, and I need to do it now' - would you put your hand up just where you are? There are people putting their hands up - you know there is something for you to do, and you haven't done it yet, and so you're at checkmate - and that's why.

Is there anyone here tonight, and you know you have been operating in the flesh even as a Christian. You know you've been trying to get the blessing of God - and, by the way, you can put your hand up more than once - the blessing of God by fleshly means. You've been like Jacob, you haven't been waiting on God's time, and you need to repent of that. Just stick your hand up before God to confess that, you can put it down. God is really speaking to people, moving among people tonight.

Is there anybody, and you would class yourself as a backslider? A few people with hands up already - is there anybody else? Do you know what that means? You once walked as a Christian, but you recognise the flesh in your life that is keeping you from the promises blessing of God, and you need to come back to Him. You're like the prodigal, Jacob is the prodigal of the Old Testament - God bless you, anyone else? Jacob is the prodigal of the Old Testament, because he is Israel, God's wayward people. I believe God is saying things to people that are on levels and dimensions that are just - even how this meeting has come into being, not everybody knows about the details and minutia, but God is working, networking things here tonight on levels that are beyond any of us. That is so gratifying to know, because it's nothing to do with me or anybody, it's just happening because it's God.

There may be someone here and you're not a Christian, you're not born again. I know Ireland has been called a Christian country, I know you might go to church, or have your religion or whatever - we've all had that - but you don't personally

know Jesus Christ the way we are talking about. The way the Bible says it - nothing to do with us, we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord. You want that, and you realise that tonight is your opportunity, tonight is your moment to be a Christian and get right with God. While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, would you put your hand up to say: 'I need Christ, and I want to confess my need of Him tonight' - would you do that where you're sitting? I always like to give an opportunity for anyone, although this has been mainly a meeting for Christians, for anyone here who would like to come to Jesus tonight. I will just lead you in a little prayer now that you can pray from your heart, but would you just acknowledge your need where you're sitting? Slip your hand up and down and I will see it, and pray for you.

Let me just lead, first of all, in a prayer anybody who wants to become a Christian - even if you didn't indicate it, but you want to pray just where you're sitting, do this from your heart. Just pray these words and mean them, you've got to realise you're a sinner, and you've got to realise Jesus died for you. All you have to do is receive Him as Your Lord and give Him your life - that's it, that's all you need to do, OK? It's faith that saves you, because of what Jesus did on the cross - it's nothing else. So you just say now, just from your heart quietly, between the Lord and you: 'God, I come to You in the name of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. I confess I am a sinner, and I believe that Jesus died to save me on the cross. I turn from my sin and I turn to You, and I ask You to forgive me and cleanse me, make me Your child. I confess Jesus as Lord of my life, I renounce Satan and all his works, and I ask You to fill me now with the Holy Spirit - that I may live a life that is pleasing to You. In Jesus' name, Amen'.

If you're a backslider, you just confess your sin to the Lord. Confess your sins, and He is faithful and just to forgive you and cleanse you from all unrighteousness. Confess your sin to the Lord, and come to Him just now, come to the cross, the foot of the cross. If you're operating in the flesh, come to the foot of the cross and see that your flesh was nailed to Jesus there in His flesh on the cross, you don't need to strive, you don't need to struggle, you don't need to earn anything from God - it's all given through the promise. You must have faith in what Jesus has done. His resurrection life now can live through you because He is alive, He is here by His Spirit.

But there may be those here tonight and you have blockages to blessing, you're not ready for the new thing that God is breaking into the world at this very moment in these last days, you're not ready for the end time harvest that is being outpoured upon the globe - why? Because the devil has got you in his clutches, because there are sins that you're not repenting of, and maybe you feel you can't - you can't get over them. The reason is: there are wounds in your heart that the devil has a foothold in, or there is demonic empowerment that is driving you in the habits. You need deliverance tonight. Will you bring those things to Jesus, will you take them to the foot of the cross and say: 'Lord, You know that this is my problem, You know that this is the obstacle in my pathway'? Remember we read from Isaiah, we are meant to clear the rocks out of the ground to prepare a way for the Lord. The Lord can't get through these obstacles in your life because you need to remove them, you need to repent of your sin, you need to be healed of your wounds, you need to tell the devil to go. Maybe you need help with that, and that's what these meetings have been - we've been up all night some nights helping

people, and they've been really liberated by the power of the Gospel and the word of Jesus. Maybe you need to wait behind tonight for prayer ministry, but even now where you are, you can deal with God and you can be set free just in the chair. People have been testifying to us we go after week that during this moment of prayer ministry, people have been set free and they haven't needed to wait behind - God did it! You don't need me, you don't need a preacher, you don't need a minister, you don't need a priest, you need God! God is here, this is a house of God, God is just right at your elbow - and He wants to come right into your heart and possess you. You say: 'Lord, this is my problem, will You please help me. I repent of it, and I ask You to deliver me, and I ask You to break the power of this'. Do it now, confess your sin, confess the wound, maybe it's a heartache, maybe it's a hurt, maybe it's unforgiveness or resentment that you have, maybe someone has harmed you are wronged you in some way, or hurt you deeply. Why not bring a person to the Lord and say: 'Lord, here is this person, and I choose - as You have said - to forgive them, because You will not forgive me unless I forgive them' - that's what the Bible says. Is it something you dabbled in in the occult? Is it some dark thing that you've done? Has it been some trait in your family, some tradition or some curse that has even been there? You know what, it's on your family, it's on your life, and you need to be set free - bring it to the Lord, and say: 'Lord, set me free tonight'.

Maybe your family, like Jacob's, has been dysfunctional. It's a mess, and you've ended up with a mess covered all over you as a result. Well, bring it to the Lord, bring your heartache, bring your rejection. Bring your abandonment to the Lord, bring your barrenness to the Lord, bring your unfruitfulness to the Lord, bring your wilderness to the Lord, bring your broken relationships to the Lord, bring it all to Him. He says: 'Come to me, all you that are burdened and heavy laden, and I will give you rest'.

Now, Lord, I just commit this company of people to You now. I commit every person to You that has interacted with You and engaged with You in repentance, faith, forgiveness, any kind of renunciation or declaration. Lord, I ask You now in the mighty, all-victorious name of the Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of the blood that He shed at the cross, and His glorious resurrection from the tomb - I ask You now to break the power of the enemy over people's lives. I ask You to heal the brokenhearted, I ask You to bind up their wounds, I ask You to pour in Your oil and Your wine, the balm of Gilead, pour it right deep into spirits that are broken, fractured, spirits that are fragmented and stuck in the past, stuck in traumas, stuck with other people. Break ties; break bondages; Lord, break the power of inheritance; break the power of generational iniquity; break the power of generational curse coming down on our family lines; break every association that we've ever had with anything occult, with anything evil; break every curse that has been over our lives sent by others, sent by demons, even pronounced over our own lives by declarations, inner vows and curses that we have made. Lord, break the enemy's power over our lives, remove the rocks, remove the obstacles. We are wanting to prepare a way of the Lord, to make His paths straight, so that He might come suddenly to His Temple. Lord, will You come tonight, Lord, will You come and heal troubled minds, heal hearts filled with unrest, where there is emotional brokenness. Would You come, Lord, and heal shattered and crushed, bruised spirits? Would You come, Lord, and heal those whose bodies are actually manifesting the affliction of their own heartache and turmoil? Lord, would You come

and, in the name and authority of the Lord Jesus, I pronounce over this company: by His stripes you are healed, be healed in the mighty name of Jesus. I command every emissary of the enemy, every curse of darkness, every demon of hell: go in the mighty name of Jesus, go in the name of Jesus. I pray, Lord, tonight, You will baptise people in the Holy Spirit, I pray that You will fill them with the power of the Holy Spirit - I pray that they will realise, that they will actually have a vision, they will have a dream, they will have an impartation of the knowledge that they are connected with heaven, that over their head right now is an opening, a gateway to heaven. Lord, that You would witness with their spirit the heavenly realm and dimension that You're taking them into tonight. Lord, I pray more than this, I pray for The Stables, I pray that You will take these individuals - and those particularly who are intrinsic to the movement of this gathering and this group of people, and what You're pouring out - I pray that You will solidify the wineskins, so that the new wine may have a framework to be held, so that it can be reached out to the thirsty and those who are dying; and, Lord, that this place might be a receptacle to hold the new thing that You're pouring out upon us from heaven right now. Lord, make this place a Bethel, a veritable monument of a testimony to You, that the anointing would be so poured upon this place, that people would find rest from pillows of stone because the healing Spirit is pouring from heaven right down - that this would be a place, right at this moment, right now, Lord, send Your holy Angels, Lord of Hosts, to minister, to bring healing touches, to bring impartation of whatever You want to do, to break vision out in the eyes of the hearts, in the minds and hearts of the people gathered here. Lord, would You do something tonight, would You send something from heaven that will impact Fermanagh, that will impact across the border into Sligo, that will impact into Monaghan, that will impact right across the whole of the Republic of Ireland - that from North and South we would be a people again that will be awash with the supernatural power of God to the glory of Jesus Christ. Lord, we pray that tonight across our island and islands that You would release the glorious power of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; that the power of the cross would be unleashed - what You want to unleash on earth, Lord, we in agreement would unleash on earth in cooperation with You, as it has already been unleashed in heaven. Lord, there is no heartache in heaven, there is no sickness in heaven, there is no sin in heaven, there are no demons in heaven, so why should any of these things be on us and in us here and now. We know we live in a fallen world, and we know that nothing will be perfect until Jesus returns, but Lord we know that You have put the deposit, the inheritance of things to come, in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. So we're asking you now, Lord, for a little bit of heaven on earth - that's what we need, that's what our people need to see! They need to see that God lives, and God is real. Lord, there are some people here tonight, and they need a touch from You to even know that You're even there. I pray that You will just touch them now. I pray that from this meeting people will have dreams, will have visions, I pray that gifts of the Spirit will be imparted and released in their lives. I pray that new characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit will explode within them. I pray that churches will be different tomorrow in this vicinity because of people who have been here, and they have been come carriers of the Presence - that the anointing is on them, which is a testimony of Jesus - and wherever we go tomorrow, that we will carry the fragrance of the presence of Jesus with us, and others will be able to see and hear that we have been with Jesus. Lord, would You pour something out upon us tonight that is beyond anything we've ever experienced before, would You do whatever You want to do - and I don't care what it looks like and what it sounds like, as long as it's from You, that's all that

matters! Would You come, and would You do it, Lord, we pray? We thank You for Your presence here tonight, we thank You for Your prophetic voice, and we pray that it will not fall to the ground because of our neglect of it. We thank You for the remnant of watchers that You're raising up, and we pray that You will raise more up from this gathering tonight - watchers on the wall, that will not give You rest until You bring Your praise on the earth.

Now let me say, before I close the meeting with an 'Amen', that God's presence is here - very heavily here. I'd like the musicians to think of something appropriate that we could sing, and I want to say that we have prayer ministry available for people who are in need. Now, you understand what that means: God has put His finger on something in your life tonight, and you need help with it, you can't deal with it yourself. Well, I want to encourage you to come - we have private rooms where you can talk to me or others. I would just say, and I don't want to put a straitjacket on you, because we're all quite cramped and it's hard - but just be aware that God's presence is here tonight, and God is speaking to people and dealing with people. We want to give people space to do that, so if you want to carry on a conversation, do it quietly. God is in this place, I hope you know what. Do you know the amazing thing? There are people, and there's one person sitting there and they feel God all over them, and there is a person sitting beside them and they don't even know God is here. Isn't it remarkable? That's the way Jacob was. Don't be like Jacob tonight, and certainly don't remain unchanged.

Lord, I bless what You're doing - I'm not asking You to bless what I'm doing, I'm blessing what You're doing. I say: have Your will and have Your way in all of our lives tonight, in Jesus' name, Amen.

The Jacob Enigma - Chapter 4

"Getting The Blessing"

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by David Legge

I've been asked to speak on 'Revolutionised By Faith' - that was a wee while ago, and I didn't know whether I would do it or whether I wouldn't - but I felt the Lord wanted me to do that, although I am taking a different title: 'Mountain-Moving Faith'. So that's my title, you can take the official one if you want, it doesn't really matter - it's all the same stuff anyway! But I want you to turn with me this morning to Hebrews 10, we will be in Hebrews 10 again probably in the fourth session on Thursday, and then we're going to spend a wee bit of time in Mark 11 - where there is that famous passage where Jesus speaks about mountain-moving faith, and about asking in faith, and believing that we have the things we have asked for. It's hard to know when you're preaching - you know if you're in a pulpit ministry - you take big chunks and spend years going through them, but when you've only got four sessions and you're covering a subject like faith - I mean that's really what the Bible is all about - you want to home in on those aspects that are intrinsic to what true faith really is. So there's a lot that I will leave out, I hope you will understand that, and a lot of verses that are maybe springing to your mind right now that I will not touch on - but you understand that I'm given an opportunity, and I want to hit what I feel, before God, are the most important aspects of 'faith that makes a difference', that's really what we're talking about: faith that moves mountains, faith that revolutionises our Christian lives! I want to turn with me in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 32. Now if you have been with us since January, we've been doing a study on Jacob, we've called it 'The Jacob Enigma'. An enigma is a puzzle, and this man certainly has been an enigma to us as we have looked at his life story. This is probably going to be my last night looking at Jacob - and I know I have one more [meeting] before we break off for the summer, and I don't know what I'll be doing that night - but I think this is probably, this fourth study in Jacob, the last that we will do in this. But I really have felt led of God from the turn of the year, during a period of intense seeking God over several things, but also over what to bring to The Stables, I really felt that the Lord told me to speak on Jacob. Each night has been different, and particularly the last time we were here, there was huge revelation - I believe - in the message that came from the Lord as we studied Bethel in Genesis chapter 28. There was a lot of stuff came together for folk even who were here for the first time, and we give praise and glory to God for that. I believe that, to an extent, that's going to happen again tonight as we look at chapter 32, and this great story of Jacob wrestling with the Angel.

Now, I'm calling this message tonight 'Getting the Blessing'. I know that's a very generic concept - 'What is the blessing you're talking about?' - well, any blessing really! You can fit into that whatever you like, but there are principles that we're going to look at tonight that apply both personally to us in our individual Christian experience, and corporately as groups, churches, places like The Stables: how do we get the blessing of God? Let's pray before we come to the word of God, and would you do something for me? I know Sam has prayed, and I appreciate his

prayers very much, but I want you now to pray for yourself - will you do that? Ask that God would speak to you right now personally. If you're needing the blessing - and who of us aren't - would you say: 'Lord, please, would You show me tonight not only how to get the blessing, but may tonight be the night when I will break through into blessing' - Amen? That has been happening, and we give glory to God. So let's come and ask Him for that, and you ask individually as you deal with the Lord.

Father, we come to You in the mighty name of our Saviour, the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. We uplift His name, we extol and glorify His name. We want to join the whole angelic host around the glassy sea in heaven now, and we want to unite our spirits with them, and the spirits of just men made perfect, and we want to say: 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!'. Lord, we pray that not just our lips, but our lives will glorify Him - for He is worthy of all that we are. Lord, we just ask now that You will come and help us, and Lord, tonight, we will encounter You - that we will not be talking about You, we will not be reading about You, we will not be reminiscing or thinking about You; but Lord that we will meet with the Living God in this place tonight, and that there will be people who will have actual face-to-face encounters with the living Christ by the Holy Spirit. So we just cry to You, Lord: speak to us, come and meet with us, touch us, change our lives, do something radical tonight, Lord - just turn everything around even in the atmosphere, may we be completely arrested by a sense of the presence of God. May there be no one here who is blind or insensitive to the fact that God is here, that God has come among us, and that God is doing wonders in our presence. So, come Lord Jesus, come Heavenly Father, come Holy Spirit. Amen.

Let's begin reading at verse 22 of Genesis 32, and we're reading to the end of the chapter: "And he arose", that is, Jacob, "that night and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven sons, and crossed over the ford of Jabbok. He took them, sent them over the brook, and sent over what he had. Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. And He said, 'Let Me go, for the day breaks'. But he said, 'I will not let You go unless You bless me!'. So He said to him, 'What is your name?'. He said, 'Jacob'. And He said, 'Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed'. Then Jacob asked, saying, 'Tell me Your name, I pray'. And He said, 'Why is it that you ask about My name?'. And He blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: 'For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved'. Just as he crossed over Peniel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip. Therefore to this day the children of Israel do not eat the muscle that shrank, which is on the hip socket, because He touched the socket of Jacob's hip in the muscle that shrank".

Now if you have been with us in these studies, you will know already that Jacob - this Old Testament Patriarch - is, for us, a picture of the flesh. Now if you can get the previous recordings, that will fill in the gaps for you tonight - but even his name, the root meaning in the Hebrew of 'Jacob', means 'supplanter' or 'one who seizes', Ya'aqov is the Hebrew, and it's actually a play on words, the word 'heel', and the word 'to twist'. Of course, when Jacob was coming out of the womb, he was a twin and he actually reached out his hand from his mother and sought to pull

back his brother Esau. He grabbed him by the heel and sought to pull him back into the womb, so that Jacob could be born first - so right away he is known as 'a heel-grabber'. He is an opportunist, the idea is that through subtlety, shrewdness, and stealth, Jacob would displace his brother and seek to get blessing in his life. You've got to understand this: we have been down on Jacob, I believe, throughout spiritual history - and we forget that Jacob covets the blessing of God in his life. He wants to be blessed as a first son would be blessed, he wants to be in the covenant - which doesn't just involve material wealth and land and so on in this day and culture, but it actually means you're spiritually in God's covenant blessings. But the problem that old Jacob has is that he tries to get that blessing through fleshly means, he grasps for significance, he wants to be satisfied but he does it the wrong way. He looks for meaning in all the wrong places, apart from God's ways.

You see, this is the message really that Jacob shows us: God's blessings must be gained God's ways, do you understand? We cannot get God's favour through the flesh. We have learned these nights that there has to come this experience of dying to self, that when we come to the cross of Jesus at conversion - and I do trust that you've experienced that, where you've repented of your sins (that means turned from them, realised that your sin is what is damning you before God, what is coming between you and ever having a relationship with God, and you realise that you have nothing in you that is worthy of God's favour, so you turn, you repent, change your mind, do an about circle and come to Christ by faith); believing alone that He can save you - but, you know, you've got to, in your Christian life, stay at the cross. A lot of us move on from that moment. I'm not saying we ought not to grow from conversion, we of course must, and getting converted, being saved or born again, is the threshold experience, it's just entering into the door of the house called 'Salvation' - we've got to explore all the rooms, and the adventure that our Heavenly Father has for us - but that does not mean ever getting off our knees from before the cross. We've got to take up our cross daily and follow Christ, and that means a diet of daily repentance, constantly changing your mind, renewing the mind, constantly - according to obedience to the word of God - changing our lifestyle to come into line with a plumbline of God's truth. So we've got to die to ourselves, we've got to die to that fleshly Jacob nature that is within us.

But as we saw last time we were here, if you can remember: that is not enough. That might shock some people, because there are those who - they know the born-again stuff and 'be converted' stuff, they are good evangelicals, and they have also moved on to the 'Spirit-filled life', and you've got to die to yourself and be consecrated - but that is not enough! Some people are consecrated and not Spirit-filled. You've actually got to have a revelation of God to your heart, an actual experience of not only dying to self, but actually God communicating Himself to you. Now that's what we had in Genesis chapter 28, you remember the Bethel experience, where Jacob falls asleep, his pillow is a stone, and God appears to him. He sees this ladder coming down - well, it actually comes up from the earth to heaven, if you look at the text - and the angels of God are ascending and descending, and it's an 'open heaven' experience that he has. God gives him a revelation, that's what he needed - but then, right away, as always with Jacob, the flesh took over.

If you want to turn back with me quickly to Genesis 28 I'll remind you of this, it's an incredible experience for Jacob, but look at how he responds in verse 20: 'Jacob

made a vow, saying, 'If God will be with me' - now, by the way, that's after a load of promises where God says 'I will, I will, I am, I shall', so God is giving absolute guarantee, emphatically, 'I'm going to do all that I've said' - but then in verse 20 Jacob says, 'If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God'. Do you know what he was doing? He was dealing, dealing with God! Trying to bargain with the Lord! He was trying to set the terms upon which he would give something to God. God is so gracious that He doesn't call everything off - it's just as well, isn't it?

So this revelation, genuine as it was, wasn't enough to get Jacob where he needed to be, into a place where he could actually receive God's blessing. So how does he get the blessing? Well, the truth is, if you remember some of our studies previously, he already had the blessing! Do you remember this? In chapter 25 we are told there, his mother was told that 'the elder will serve the younger'. So Jacob didn't have to scheme, he didn't have to plan through stealth and subtlety to grasp the blessing, God had promised that he would have it! But he wasn't prepared to wait on it. So he had the blessing, and in fact over and over again God tells him: 'I am with you, I will not leave you, I will do everything that I have said to you' - but Jacob's flesh kept getting in the way. That's why the Lord has to keep interrupting him; in Genesis chapter 28 at Bethel, and now we see He again interrupts this fleshly cycle. In Genesis 28 He has to get Jacob unconscious in order to speak to him, and again in chapter 32 the Lord interrupts to give him another chance.

Here we have another encounter and revelation with the Lord, and I think some of you are going to experience that tonight. I believe chapter 32 is the nearest that Jacob comes to getting it - not just the blessing, but getting it, in as far as the economy of God is concerned: how blessing comes and how it can never be achieved. Now please don't misunderstand Jacob. It's not that his fleshly nature goes after this - if you know anything about the rest of the story, you will find out that that's not true - but I believe here in chapter 32 at Peniel, we have the greatest breakthrough, certainly hitherto, in Jacob's life: how he gets the blessing. So I want us to consider two questions really tonight: how to get it - do you want it? Who wants the blessing? Who wants blessing from God? How to get it, and then secondly: what it looks like. So come with me, and you might want to use pen and paper to note some of these things down. I know it's being recorded, but it mightn't do any harm to jot some of these principles down that will help you get through to true blessing with God.

How do you get the blessing, whatever that is? Well, first of all, from Jacob we see that you need to come to an end of yourself. Do you understand? Jacob learns the hard way, why? Because he won't face his own flesh. Now we're skipping out a lot from our last study - we were in chapter 28 and now we're over in chapter 32 - but in the interim in between a few things happened to Jacob. He meets Laban, who becomes his father-in-law. Really, effectively, when he comes face-to-face with Laban, he comes face-to-face with himself - because Laban was a schemer in the flesh. It was like looking in the mirror, the only problem was that when Jacob saw the mirror reflection, he didn't like what he saw - but it was really himself. If you know anything about the story - forgive me if you don't, you can catch up in your own time - but Laban tracks Jacob into marrying Leah first, when he had promised that he would marry Rachel. He said: "If you work for me seven years I will give

you Rachel' - and on their wedding night, (imagine what that would be like!), he discovers it's not Rachel at all but Leah. Then Laban requires Jacob to labour for another seven years in order to marry Rachel - so he's working 14 years for these two wives. Laban has tricked him!

Over and over again we see that he is hard done by by Laban, his father-in-law. But then, tit-for-tat, Jacob returns the favour, and Jacob tricks Laban out of cattle. Now I can't even go into it, it confuses me no end, it's a real operation in cunning and ingenuity - and what's even more intriguing is that the Lord seems to help Jacob in it in a dream. You can work that one out! But Laban begins to then realise that Jacob is as clever as he is, and his attitude begins to change to his son-in-law, and he becomes sinister toward him. Then Jacob fears this, and he takes his wives and his possession and he flees Laban. Now we talked several studies ago about how dysfunctional this family was, and it doesn't stop here whatsoever. We continue to see jealousy, bribery, manipulation of the highest order, and even sexual bargaining in the mix! Eventually, and I'm fast forwarding here, Laban catches up with Jacob and they do smooth things over with a covenant - but you can't help seeing in this whole story that Jacob is being worn down, he's being pursued because he avoids dealing with his own flesh. It's so clear.

Now there are some glimmers of hope, because in these middle chapters Jacob contacts Esau, his brother who he so wronged. He took his birthright off him for a mess of pottage, and you know the story - but he communicates to him in order to find favour with Esau, and it might indicate a bit of a change of heart, although that's up for debate. But Esau replies to Jacob saying that he's going to pay a visit, and all of a sudden Jacob fears meeting Esau face-to-face. Alright? So he's been face-to-face with Laban and he doesn't like what he sees, and it has caused him all sorts of problems. Now he tries to do something right for once, and he fears now coming face-to-face with Esau his brother, lest he kill him. He splits his whole camp into two, just in case Esau goes after one, at least one camp will survive. It's anticipating the face-to-face encounter with the Esau that Jacob actually comes to have a face-to-face encounter with the Living God - and he ends up wrestling God. Do you see the flesh here in Jacob, do you? You can't miss it.

Now I know this passage of Scripture has been preached on many many times, and I've even preached on it myself, I suppose, with another slant. But I do have many questions about this wrestling with the Lord. We so often hear Jacob commended about wrestling with the Lord, and wrestling through, as we should wrestle in prayer and persistence: 'I will not let You go until You bless me' - but I really wonder is his wrestling with God here to be commended at all? Oh yes his persistence is to be commended, and his desperation at the end of the story - but please note this: all the way through this whole narrative we are being told over and over again that God's blessings didn't have to be wrestled from the hands of God. He had already given it to Jacob! He had already assured him of His presence all along! I have got a theory here, and you can disagree with me and talk to me on some future date about it, but I believe Jacob was wrestling with himself. You don't have to wrestle blessings from God. I'm not saying you don't have to persevere in prayer, or break through as it were - but Jacob actually gets to a place where he no longer asserts his strength, and he finds brokenness before the face of God, and that's when the blessing comes through. I'll leave you to think about that one.

Really the principle is: you must come to an end of yourself. Maybe you're wrestling even in your 'spiritual experience', because you're operating like Jacob in the flesh. You're trying to get spiritual blessings through the energy of the flesh, rather than the power of the Holy Spirit - and that's why you keep facing the flesh over and over again, and again, and again. Even when you meet with God you're wrestling.

Here's a second principle of how to get the blessing: you need to come to an end of yourself, but secondly you need to confess what you have been like. You need to be honest. Look at verse 27, chapter 32 verse 27, this supposed Angel asks: 'What is your name?', and he said, 'Jacob'. You might say: 'Well, what's the news there? He just asked his name, and he's telling you what his name is!' - but you know what 'Jacob' means, don't you? 'Twisted', 'the supplanter', and he's not just confessing his name, he's confessing his character, he's actually levelling with God, he's admitting that he is 'Jacobed'. You remember that Jeremiah passage that I've been quoting to you: 'The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, who can know it?', and the word there for 'deceitful' is the root word in Hebrew for 'Ya'aqov', Jacob. He is admitting what he is. Now listen: it is only when you admit what you are that you can be given a new name, and you can get the blessing. There's got to be honesty, grace and truth always come together. If you will not be transparent and you will not admit what you really are in and of yourself, you can not break through into blessing with God. You cannot obfuscate, you cannot hide, you cannot live in the darkness and expect the blessing of God. Yes, it is by grace, but you cannot expect to live a fleshly existence and move under the anointing of the Holy Spirit in blessing - it is impossible!

How do you get the blessing? One: you need to come to an end of yourself. Two: you need to confess what you have been like. And three: you need to let some good things pass you by. I think this is very instructive, and we could easily rush over verses 22 and 23 at the beginning of this story, but let's look at it. It says: 'He arose that night and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven sons, and crossed over the ford of Jabbok. He took them, sent them over the brook, and sent over what he had'. Verse 24 says: 'Then Jacob was left alone'. This reminds me of Saul. I remember years ago this passage really impressed me, the anointing of Saul as King. You remember Samuel had identified Saul as being God's chosen, and he takes him to anoint him with that vial of oil to be King. We read in 1 Samuel 9 and verse 27, listen to this: 'As they were going down to the outskirts of the city, Samuel said to Saul, 'Tell the servant to go on ahead of us'. And he went on'. Then Samuel says to Saul: 'But you stand here awhile, that I may announce to you the word of God'. In other words, let everybody else just pass you by, just go on through, get rid of all distractions so that you might be still, so that you can be alone and you can hear the word of God.

Now listen: if you want the blessing of God in your life, whatever that might mean for you at this particular juncture, you will have to let some good things pass you by. It even says of the Lord Jesus in Gethsemane, you remember He had the twelve, and then He had the three - Peter, James, and John - and He tells them to pray and wait for Him. Then these very insightful words are recorded: 'He went a little farther', He went a little farther, and He fell on the ground and prayed. So this principle that you need to let some good things pass you by, really means you've

got to forego the good at times in order to gain the best. Now, that confuses a lot of people, because there is this concept that in the Christian life I should have everything, and I should enjoy everything. Now don't misunderstand me: I do believe in prosperity in the sense that God always has His best for you, but that doesn't mean that that equates to the world's best, or to the American dream, or what you might think. His thoughts are not your thoughts, and His ways are not your ways. Sometimes we have got legalism in our churches or in our particular Christian ethic, whatever we have inherited, and they say: 'You mustn't do this, you mustn't do that, you mustn't do the other. You mustn't go here, you mustn't possess this, you mustn't watch that' - don't misunderstand me, some of that might be true because they might be very clear moral choices, but in a lot of those cases they aren't absolute moral standards. You cannot do a broad-brush for everyone - here's why: because there will be something that is legitimate for you to do and you to be involved in, that will not be legitimate for me. Not because it's morally wrong, but because it's not God's best for me - do you understand? This is why we're in so much danger of churning out - particularly in our churches, and through denominationalism for years - cloned Christians. At times we feel ourselves in a straitjacket, and we do not have - because Scripture is clear, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty - we don't have that freedom of walking in the Spirit, because we have taken on yokes that are not from the Lord Jesus Christ.

So there are aspects in your life where it has to be said, 'Others may, but you cannot'. Do you understand? That's not for you to legislate for others, and say: 'Well, I don't do that, so you can't do that' - no, no, no. But there are aspects where there will be legitimate practices and ways of life for others, but God will say to you: 'No, that's not My best for you - and you've got to let some good things pass you by, so that you will know My dream and My destiny for you'. There are legitimate things, good things even, even in the spiritual realm, that we must surrender in order to pursue God. It's not for someone else to tell you what to give up, what to do, what not to do - that is control and manipulation of the highest order - it is of the Holy Spirit to guide and direct and lead you in that regard.

So I wonder tonight: are you at an end of yourself? Have you truly confessed what you have been like in regards to the flesh? Not just sinful flesh, the works of the flesh, Galatians 5; but trying to grasp for blessing in the flesh, trying to achieve God's favour in the flesh. Are you prepared tonight to let good things, good opportunities, good possessions, good prospects pass you by in order to get God's best?

Fourthly, a principle of how to get the blessing is: you need to get alone with God. As Jacob sent all his possessions, all the good things over the Jabbok, it says in verse 24: 'Then Jacob was left alone, and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day'. Now, many of us are terrified of aloneness - and that's completely understandable, because we fear loneliness. But listen: we're not talking about loneliness, you cannot have loneliness when you are alone with God, because you're alone with Someone! Loneliness is when you're on your own. I don't underestimate what it is like to be on your own for whatever reason - through bereavement, through divorce, or being single, or whatever - but you know, one of the major reasons why we fear aloneness and fear stillness is this: because when we get quiet, and when we become isolated, the core issues of our life, the brokenness, the baggage, the bondage, they start to come to the surface and we

find them uncomfortable. I say to you: that's one of the reasons why we find quietness difficult even in church. Now don't get me wrong: I really love lively praise, and I think it should be an awful lot livelier - shouting and praising God, and really taking off - but that is abused if that is to the exception of silence, and stillness, and tranquillity, and waiting upon God. One of the reasons why we don't like that, even to the point where we have to have the radio on all the time in the car - and I think it's good too to put praise music in the atmosphere even in your home, it's good - but there need to be times of silence. There need to be times - even if it's not Coronation Street you have on in the background, but it's the God Channel or whatever - there need to be times when it's switched off, and when there is quietness and stillness, where there is solitude for you to hear the voice of God; as Samuel said to Saul, so that you can be still to hear what the word of God would say to you. Maybe you don't like stillness because all those ugly things, whether they are sins, or bondages, or scars, start to come up to the surface.

Now this will revolutionise some of your experience of stillness if you can really get this. You run from that, especially if it's of a sinful nature, but you've got understand: it's not necessarily the devil who is bringing those things up, because when you get into the presence of God, God's Holy Spirit brings those things up - not to distress you, but so that you can deliver them up to Him. You know, sometimes what we do is, when we are in the presence of God - even in church this can happen - have you noticed, or is it just me, is there something really bad about me? Have you noticed that in the holiest moments, sometimes the vilest thoughts can come? Now obviously, often that comes straight from the devil himself, but sometimes there is stuff comes right up from our hearts - for Jesus says 'Out of the heart proceeds all these things'. What do we do? We panic and think: 'Oh, that's awful, I'm in church here this morning and I shouldn't be thinking that, I'm a terrible, terrible sinner', we think, 'Oh, the devil is at me again, and its old Jacob'. Yes it might be the devil, or it might be old Jacob, but here's the point: the Lord would have you actually deal with that in His presence, and not suppress it - because when you suppress it, you're pushing it down to a place where it's going to pop up again. Wouldn't it be wonderful as we are in the presence of God, and we are so comfortable with Him and know His heart toward us, that we can actually say: 'Lord, it's so silly isn't it? You already know that's there' - as if He didn't! You know, as if you pushing it down is going to mean, 'Oh, He's all right, He'll turn a blind eye to it!' 'Lord, You already know it's there, would You please take that, would You cleanse my heart, would You purify my imagination? Would You take that broken place in me that has just come to the surface - because all the things clamouring for my attention, all that noise pollution around me is now away, and this is coming now to the forefront of my consciousness - Lord, would You take that now, release me of it, and would You heal the depths of my heart?'

You see, this is how, in the presence of God, He heals us. So, do you get alone with God privately? I'm not talking about just doing your wee Bible reading, and going down your prayer shopping list; I'm talking about having stillness before God where you're actually allowing His presence to touch your heart, and you're doing business with God. It was alone with God that Jacob, the Twister, the Supplanter, became a Prince with God. The greatest miracles Elijah and Elisha performed took place when they were alone with God, the preparation for them did at least. Joshua was alone when the Lord came to him and revealed Himself to him as the Captain of the Army of the Lord of Hosts. Gideon and Jephthah were by themselves when

they were commissioned by the Lord to save Israel. Moses was by himself when he encountered this burning bush that was aflame but not consumed. Cornelius was praying and he was fasting when an angel came and appeared to him; and Peter, wasn't he on his own on the housetop when the Lord said: 'Go to Joppa and speak to Cornelius' household with words whereby they may be saved'. John the Baptist, he's in the wilderness on his own when he's commissioned to be the forerunner of the Lord Jesus. John the Apostle is on the Isle of Patmos, and he's given one of the greatest revelations that mankind has ever had, the book of Revelation at the end of our Bibles. Our Lord Jesus, who is our ultimate example, how many times do we see Him going into a solitary place, going into the wilderness, going into the mountain tops, going at the dead of night to quiet places and seeking His Heavenly Father - and He is the One who taught us: 'When you pray, enter your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray'.

'If chosen men had never been alone,
In deepest silence open-doored to God,
No greatness ever had been dreamed or done'.

It costs to get the blessing of God. It costs. You need to come to an end of yourself. You need to confess what you've been like. You need to let some good things pass you by, and you need to get alone with God. It costs. Now this often confuses me: how does it cost me when Jesus paid it all? Did you ever think about that? Or, if it's all of grace - which it has got to be, for if it's any little fraction of works then it's none of grace and all of works - so how does it cost, if it's through repentant faith alone, it's gratuitous, a gift of Heavenly Father through what Jesus did on the cross applied by the Holy Spirit? How does it cost? Well here, I believe, is the answer - and it's only the one I believe the Lord has given me, so I hope it right! It's not that the blessing costs, the blessing has been paid for. The cost is the price to be paid to get the flesh out of the way - that's where the cost comes in! - to deal with the flesh so that the blessing that has been paid for by the blood of Jesus can come to me.

That was Jacob's wrestling match, and it's yours and it's mine - it's for all of us. The question is: will you engage these principles in your life, to just give up, throw the towel in and say, 'I haven't got what it takes, and this is the way I really am, and I'm going to have to let all these good opportunities, and all these things that are a semblance of godliness and achievement in my life, all this grasping after favour through works of the flesh, I'm going to have to let it all pass me by, and I'm going to have to get alone with God until I truly finally have wrestled the flesh to get through to Him'.

The second question we want to answer is: what does it look like? What does the blessing of God look like? Here's the first thing: it looks like overcoming through weakness, not strength - that's what the blessing of God looks like. Overcoming through weakness, not strength. Look at verse 28, the Angel said: 'Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed'. Now, as I've said already, I think it's wrong to interpret that as Jacob overcoming God through wrestling - that's not what is taught here. Jacob actually couldn't overcome the Lord - now the Lord was having a struggle with Jacob, but that shows you that the Lord was, you understand, proportionate in His response to the flesh that was in Jacob. He wanted Jacob to feel the strength of

his own flesh - don't be daft and think that the Lord couldn't wrestle Jacob down! Of course He could! So Jacob didn't overcome the Lord through wrestling, He overcame into blessing through submission. When he wrestled and wrestled, and wrestled and wrestled, and the Lord knew: 'This guy's flesh is so strong I'm going to have to touch his hip, I'm going to have to do something so that he becomes broken'. So Jacob submits to the Lord, and he surrenders and says: 'I'm not going to let You go until You bless me'. That's where Jacob came through to the blessing, when he realised: 'This fleshly stuff isn't going to work' - do you see it? Look at it in verse 25: 'When He saw', the Lord saw, the Angel, 'that He did not prevail against him, the Lord touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. And He said: 'Let Me go, for the day breaks'. But he said, 'I will not let You go unless You bless me!''.

His overcoming came through his weakness, not his strength. The consequence of this encounter was brokenness before the face of God, and this was a brokenness that would follow Jacob about his whole life. If you look at verses 31 and 32: 'As he crossed over Penuel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip' - and for this reason the Jews don't eat the sinew in the animal that was touched in Jacob's thigh. He was marked with brokenness. Now, again, here is where confusion comes in - because we can hear preaching like this about brokenness, and we can misunderstand. We're not talking here about brokenness through sin. If you've got the CDs or been at the meetings where we talked about 'Sins, Wounds, and Demons', barriers to blessing, we have seen that there are a lot of consequences of our sins that bring woundedness into our lives. We're not talking about that when we're talking about brokenness. We're not talking about the things that are done to us by others that bring brokenness into our lives, what we're talking about neither is the human condition of fallenness, and the total chaos that has come, and the pain and distress through sin in general. What we're talking about is the brokenness of our flesh - do you understand? Where that part of us that wants to achieve, that wants to gain God's favour, that wants to buy the blessing - where we finally surrender that and allow ourselves to be broken in that strong part of us. Yes, all those other broken things, through sin, through hurts, through abuse, we bring those things and cease to allow them to be used by the devil to be a wedge between us and God, and actually offer them up to God for healing so that that brokenness can become a stepping stone to blessing, the blessing.

He overcame, this is what the blessing looks like, it's overcoming through weakness not strength. This is a wounding as we become broken before God's holiness, in order that God might heal us. I think one of the best illustrations of this is found in the Gospels, where Mary comes with that alabaster box. You know, we haven't got a clue about how priceless this ointment was. I don't know what it's like in your house, maybe there are no females in your house, but if there are one or two sprays of perfume that go puff puff upstairs, it lingers - it would make you nauseous at times, it's like being in Boots the chemist - it's very strong, and the more expensive the perfume the longer the fragrance lingers. This was the most expensive perfume that you could imagine, and Mary smashed that alabaster encasement - can you imagine the fragrance that came forth? Jesus says that not only did that perfume fill the house, but it filled the world because everywhere the Gospel would be preached, that woman's sacrifice would be mentioned. But what I want you to understand is that there was a hard exterior, and it was an expensive exterior too, what was inside was much more expensive but in order for that to

break forth there had to be brokenness.

You can't get round this: the blessing of God comes through weakness, not through strength. I want to ask you here tonight: what do you need to bring to the feet of Jesus to be smashed once and for all, so that the priceless thing might ascend to Him as a sweet smelling savour of worship, and your life may be a sacrifice that might even touch the world? This is what the blessing looks like - this is not what you often hear in popular preaching, but this is what the blessing looks like.

Secondly: his receiving a God-given identity. If you look at verses 27 and 28, the Lord asks him: 'What is your name?', and he says, 'Jacob'. Then the reply is: 'Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed'. 'Israel' means 'Prince with God', and there is a bit of a debate what the name means, but essentially that's what it means: a Prince with God. I said earlier that to get the blessing with God you need to confess what you've really been like, and so when Jacob says: 'My name is Jacob', he's saying 'I've been twisted, I've used the flesh. Yes, I've been coveting Your blessing, I've wanted godly things in my life, but I've gone about it all the wrong way'. It's not until that happens that you'll be given a new name, but this is what the blessing looks like: it is receiving a God-given identity.

Can I ask you tonight: what identity are you striving for, even subconsciously? Is it some kind of caricature, a cardboard cut-out of what an ideal Christian should be that you have inherited from your denomination or your particular religious tradition? Is it some kind of hero in Christian biography that you aspire to be like? Don't misunderstand me, that's not a bad thing - but you need to come to God in your own brokenness, and you need to start seeing yourself as God sees you. That will require the prerequisite of letting good things pass by you, and getting alone with God to allow Him to tell you that, to allow this great exchange to take place: where you give your broken identity, maybe a false identity, a contrived identity, to the Lord and say, 'Lord, who am I, and what am I meant to look like, and what is my destiny meant to be?'

Now we've all got the same destiny, we've all to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, be changed from glory to glory to be like Him - but you know, the Body of Christ is multifaceted in the members, and so we're all becoming more like Christ, but what part of Christ are you becoming like? What part are you in the Body? It's Him who tells us that! So often there is so much manipulation in the church, and somebody sees that you can play the guitar and so you can be the worship leader; and 'Oh, you're an accountant, so you can be the treasurer' - you know what I'm saying - or 'You can string two words together, so you can be the Pastor!'. This is the concept that people have, and it's not coming from God, and we're not getting our true identity from the Lord.

I love the story of Gideon for so many reasons - in particular because I in the past had a real problem with fear, and Gideon, that was his issue. He is threshing the wheat behind the winepress for fear of the Midianites. If it wasn't so sacred, it's hilarious: the Angel of the Lord appears to Gideon and says, 'Mighty man of valour'. So if you can translate this into our idiom today, it's like standing there biting your nails and your knees knocking, and God stands and says: 'Alright, mighty man of courage and strength and boldness, fearlessness' - are you having a laugh? That's

what we would think! You see, we might interpret that as saying 'God doesn't see what you are, He sees what you will be' - but I don't think that's right. It's not a case of what you will be, as far as God is concerned it's what you are - do you understand? That might not be your reality at this moment, but, you see, that's the problem: you've got to allow your reality to catch up with God's reality. So often our perceived reality is judged by external factors and circumstantial issues. So if we have a fearful scenario round about us, that will cause emotional reaction in us that is derived from our thought patterns and strongholds of the mind that have been fermented over many many years, and we just see reality in the external. We are so trained to the physical sphere, the material realm, that we are out of tune to the spiritual dimension. We need to start hearing not what the devil says about you, not what your old cranky schoolteacher said about you, and not what your mother or your father said about you, and not about their expectations of you - we need to start listening to Heavenly Father. What does He say about you? Even what you have been in the flesh - and Jacob was Jacob, but he had to be honest with the problems that he had, but it wasn't meant to stay there; that's where some of us have got stuck. We've got stuck with the issues and the problems that we have, and we haven't moved on to revelation. You see it's alright coming to the cross and dying to the old self, but we've got to receive the revelation of God. Many Christians are stuck and they are miserable - they believe in holiness, they believe in consecration, they believe in surrender; but they have never actually moved from the cross to Pentecost.

Now I've said that you haven't to get up from the cross - that's right - but what I mean is that every day is meant to be the full orbbed, fully faceted Gospel experience of death, resurrection, and Pentecost - every day! That's Christianity! As He is, so are we in this world. So, have you received a new identity from God? I quoted this is the last time I was here, and I felt led to quote it again - Isaiah 62, I love this passage, verse 4, speaking of the city of Jerusalem: 'You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married' - that's what 'Hephzibah' and 'Beulah' mean, 'Delight' and 'Married'.

Now I want to encourage you to do this, and I will probably be preaching on identity some time in the next season - but why not do this, and I have done this, in fact it's over there in my journal, but you're not going to get it! I have ruled two columns in a page, and I've put down the side things that I would struggle with, or ways that I would have seen myself - now this is done in a prayerful disposition, alone with God, letting everything else bypass you. Then I have listened for Heavenly Abba Father, what He says about me - and I have exchanged those names that the enemy has given to me, or that I have given to myself, or circumstances; I have exchanged those names for what God has given me. Boy, that changes, doesn't it? In Scripture in particular you will know that names have a significance in Scripture, and the names that God gives us are very significant. In fact, in the book of Revelation, to the church at Pergamum, the Lord Jesus says: 'Those who overcome in that church' - that's what we want, the folk that get the blessing - 'if you overcome' - how do we overcome? Through weakness, not our strengths: 'Those who overcome I will give hidden manna, food that you don't know, from heaven to feed inside', and then He says, 'and I will give you a white stone, and I will put a new name for you on that stone' - wouldn't you love to know

what that is? Well, I think you can know what it is if you overcome, if you enter into the blessing of the Lord.

So what does it look like? You overcome through weakness, not strength. You receive a God-given identity. Thirdly: you see God face-to-face. The blessing is seeing God face-to-face, look at verse 30: 'So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: 'For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved''. Now can I say to you, seeing God face-to-face is not what we necessarily understand it to be. When we talk about being 'face-to-face' with somebody, we mean to eyeball them, to actually look at their countenance. I don't think that's what it means in Scripture, essentially face-to-face encounters with God are God-encounters - when you actually experience something of a personal meeting with the Lord. Jacob is the first that this is recorded of the Bible, a man seeing God face-to-face.

Now we haven't got time to go into this in-depth, but this Angel was probably the Angel of the Lord, who is the Lord Jesus Christ, in a preincarnate form, the Word of God, the Son of God before He became flesh. But there is an apparent anomaly here, we might say what seems to be a contradiction. Does anybody know the verse that says no man has seen God at any time? No? And verses that insinuate that you can't see God - and yet here we have Jacob, right in the book of Genesis, seeing God face-to-face. Do you remember Exodus chapter 33 and verse 20? Moses said: 'Lord, let me see Your glory' - I love that passage of Scripture - 'Let me see Your glory', is that not your prayer? This is wonderful as well, I'm digressing: 'Then the Lord caused all His goodness to pass before him', isn't that wonderful? He wanted to see God's glory, and what did God show him? His goodness - He's a good, good God, all the time, and His glory is His goodness. But the Lord said to him, when he said 'Let me see Your glory': 'You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live'.

You ought to be scratching your head at that point! Because Jacob saw the face of God, and in fact the Lord who said this, God who declared that Moses would die if he saw the face of God, speaks later - this is God now I'm quoting - He speaks of having been 'the friend of Moses, and having spoken to him face-to-face'. Now, how do we explain this? Well, I think God is up to something here - do you know what it is? God wants people who are willing to risk to encounter Him. Moses was willing to risk this - now yes, I believe, and this might be one way to explain it, you cannot see the fullness of God and live. We are not wired for that, we would be completely incinerated. But there are many others in Scripture, and I could recite some of them to you tonight, who expected - thinking they saw God in some way - they expected they were immediately going to die. Gideon was one of them, and the Lord has to say: 'Don't worry, Gideon, you're not going to die, you're not going to die'. Manoah, I was reading about him yesterday, Manoah, that's the father of Samson, panics when he realises it's not just an angel but it's the Lord he has seen, and he thinks he's going to die. I think this is a test. I mean, you think of the Israelites that are all around Mount Sinai - remember this was a mountain that was smoking, and there was thunder and lightning and all sorts of fearful things, and God said 'If you come near this mountain and touch it you will die' - and what does Moses do? He goes up the mountain! He has forty days with God, and then he comes down, and then he goes up and has another forty days with God. He supernaturally fasted, and he didn't drink for 80 days in the presence of God. Then other elders of Israel, was it 70, they all go up and they have a feast in the

presence of God. They didn't die! What's going on here?

Well, do you know what I think is going on here? The Lord is wanting to test our hearts to see who of us are going to relate to Him on a rules-religious-legalistic basis in fear, and who will really go after His heart. The ones who will go after His heart will be rewarded, and they shall see His face. Do you know something? Not one of them that saw His face died, not one! Now what we do read is - we read it of John on the Isle of Patmos, we read it of Daniel, we read it of Ezekiel - that when they saw the Lord they fell as dead men. So there is a sense in which, when we do face the Lord - and that means an encounter with God - and we risk it, we do die. We die to Jacob, we die to self, we die of even the good that is within us, we die before the face of God - and this is categorically the case: that no one who ever saw His face remained the same thereafter, they became a new man or woman.

Do you need this? I need this. I want more of this. Essentially, seeing the face of God, I believe, is a God-encounter, an experience of God. Listen, I have been at meetings where I have preached, and I've preached about experiencing God, and I've been criticised, I've been lambasted - I'm not saying these things out of pity, but it's just the fact that some people, particularly in Ulster, are uncomfortable with the concept of experiences, and that is tragic. Now I do think we need to be careful that we don't become spiritually sensual junkies who are just looking buzzes, but I'll tell you this: you cannot have a relationship with anyone or anything without an experience. Is salvation an experience? Yes, it is, isn't it? It's an experience - but many will say, 'Ah, but don't be searching after experiences!'. I have preached, and I've actually have people come up after me and warn people not to seek experiences! Can you imagine a clergyman counselling an engaged couple for the wedding day, and putting them over the vows. Then he performs the ceremony, and he presents them with a marriage certificate, and he says: 'Now, that'll do you, don't be seeking any experiences'. Isn't it ridiculous? No experiences with one another, no romance, no photographs, no memories, no experience! Experience is the fruit of relationship, isn't it? Whether it's the parent-child relationship, or siblings, or in the marriage relationship - experiences! If you get to know God, you will have experiences, and it is during those experiences that there will be a deepening of the relationship with the Lord - and you will come out of those experiences with a new name, and with a change that will be irrevocable, you will not be the same person.

So what does it look like? Overcoming through weakness, not strength. Receiving a God-given identity. Seeing God face-to-face. Finally: being a memorial of brokenness, so that God gets the glory. This is what Jacob became: a memorial of brokenness. I think these are two of the most beautiful pictorial graphic descriptions in the Bible. Look at verse 31, just read this slowly and picture it in your mind - maybe you don't want to read it, just listen in your imagination: 'Just as he crossed over Penuel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip'. Do you see that? 'Therefore to this day the children of Israel do not eat the muscle that shrank, which is on the hip socket, because He touched', God touched, 'the socket of Jacob's hip in the muscle that shrank'.

Hebrews 11:21 says that at the end of Jacob's life, when he was dying, he blessed each of his sons, and the sons of Joseph, and he worshipped leaning on the top of his staff. To the day he died, he had the limp - it was a memorial to the brokenness

that was in his life. He didn't get healed of that. We believe in healing, but this was a brokenness that was necessary in order that the blessing of God would outflow to him, in order that that fleshly propensity within him should forever be dead, and he should always have a reminder of where true power lies, where power with God and power with men lies. It is not in the flesh, but it is in the Spirit.

This is New Testament doctrine. Quickly turn with me - and we're coming to a close soon - to 2 Corinthians chapter 4. It would be good if you could turn and look at these verses, 2 Corinthians chapter 4 - there is so much truth in this passage, but we can't look at it all. Verse 6, this is you if you're a believer tonight, 2 Corinthians 4:6, think of the similarities here: 'For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'. There is the face, that light that we want, isn't it? But look: 'But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us'. What's that a picture of? An old clay pot, that's what it is, and a lit candle in the depths of that clay pot. In order to let the light of the glory of the face of Jesus, your God-encounters, in order for that to benefit others and glorify God, people don't want to see the pot - they want to see the light coming through your crevices, coming through the cracks of your brokenness! Do you understand?

Do you know what we do? We want to show the strength of our clay. What is clay? Dust of the ground, flesh. Who wants to be broken? Not me, thank you very much, I'll take the blessing but not the brokenness - there is no blessing without brokenness. I don't like saying that, because I don't want it - and that's why I wrestle with brokenness. I think there are some brokennesses we have to tell to go, because it's not God's intention. Watchman Nee wrote a fantastic little book, 'Release of the Spirit' it's called, and it's all about how so often we wrestle with brokenness in our lives, rather than realising that God is allowing certain things in order that the fragrance of His presence may come forth through our brokenness.

Well, do you want the blessing? You need to come to an end of yourself. You need to confess what you've been like. You need to let some good things pass you by. You need to get alone with God. It will be overcoming through weakness, not strength; receiving an identity from God that is entirely new; seeing God face-to-face with fresh God-encounters; and becoming a memorial to brokenness that gives the glory all to God, and you get none. Will you go after a Jacob experience like this? Jason Upton, I quoted his wonderful song on Jacob last time, and another verse goes like this - this is so insightful of the whole story:

'Jacob really longed to be a hero' - and then God speaks,
 'All I really wanted was a friend
 I'm the way, the life, the truth
 So tell Me Jacob when will the lying end?
 And does the striving make you strong?
 Because when I came to love on you
 You fought me till the dawn'.

You want blessing, but some of you are struggling against God because you're struggling with your own flesh. I have one more thing to share with you tonight that is, in a sense, unrelated to everything that I have said - and yet it is

intrinsically related, and I believe there is a prophetic element to it. At the beginning of this story, if you look at chapter 32 of Genesis, there is something I want to highlight. Now listen, God, I believe, spoke very definitely through the last message about Bethel; not just in many aspects, personally and so on, and to you in your small corner and me and mine, but to The Stables here - I believe there was a prophetic word, and that is that God wants to create (and this is the case anywhere and everywhere God's people are) He wants to create a Bethel, which means 'the house of God'. He wants to create an open heaven whereby He can bless this earth, and the people on this earth through the community of His people. That's what Jacob experienced in this revelation, you remember he said: 'I didn't realise, the Lord is in this place and I knew it not! This is none other than the house of God, and a gate of heaven'. So I said last time that you can be sitting here, soaked in the presence of God, and not even know it - but through this revelation that Jacob had, his eyes were opened, he realised God was here.

Now this didn't happen to me until the last couple of days, as I've been reading Scripture and daily readings, and I have definitely felt this message burning in my heart. There was something that intrigued me about this Scripture, but I just couldn't fit in, this chapter 32 at the beginning of the chapter, I just couldn't fit it in with anything I was going to say so I left it out. Over the last couple of days I've been reading constantly about angels, constantly. I know some of you have been too, because I know some of you do the same daily readings as I do. Yesterday I even texted some folk John chapter 1, Nathaniel's experience, where the Lord said to him - and this is the New Testament equivalent to Bethel - the Lord said to him: 'You will see greater things than these. You will see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man'. Now, I believe that that was referring to the day of Pentecost when heaven would open, I believe that that is the present-day living in the power of the Spirit. So that was yesterday, what else was there? There was loads of other stuff. Today I was reading from Psalm 103, 'The LORD has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all. Bless the LORD, you His angels, who excel in strength, who do His word, heeding the voice of His word. Bless the LORD, all you His hosts, you ministers of His, who do His pleasure. Bless the LORD, all His works, in all places of His dominion. Bless the LORD, O my soul!'. Jacob experienced angelic ministries in chapter 28. We have seen him wrestling with the Angel here in chapter 32 and getting his blessing. There have been other people who have been talking to me about almost visions that they have had of angels ministering in significant ways - OK? You think, 'Where are you going with all this?'. In the last couple of days people have been telling me - this is all disjointed, I know, because it was with me until this - people have been telling me how they come to the corner of the bottom of the lane where it comes onto the ground here at 'The Stables', and they sense a different atmosphere as they come round. Now I don't know whether you concur with this, but there is something special about here, there is something significant, there is a sense of the presence of God about the place. OK, that's all a bit unrelated, until I got reminded this morning very forcefully of the beginning of chapter 32 of Genesis: 'Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him' - Jacob has a lot of angelic experiences - 'When Jacob saw them, he said, 'This is God's camp'. And he called the name of that place Mahanaim'. If you have a marginal reference Bible, that means, 'Mahanaim' means 'double camp'. What Jacob was saying was: 'There is my camp here, but there is an angelic camp here'. I'm going to tell you what I think, take it or leave it: I believe, and I declare tonight, that there is an

angelic encampment here. I believe that. I believe, even by declaring that, that there will be an intensification of those angelic ministries, who do God's bidding. Our focus isn't on angels, it's on Jesus Christ, the Lord of Hosts, the Lord of Angels. It wouldn't surprise me, it really wouldn't, if somebody sees one or two tonight - and I have never seen one, but I'm up for it, and I'll be a wee bit jealous if you see one before me!

Some of you think I've now lost my marbles, I know - but you either believe in angels or you don't, you either believe they are real or you don't. You either see in your spirit the truth of what God says - that's not the same as actually seeing, we need to start seeing by faith - but sometimes, sometimes the dimension will be broken so that we will see, and that's what happens in Scripture, Old and New Testament. I believe we're going to see, but I believe - I mean, I've been looking out the windows here since I've come tonight, and it looks like an encampment - there's that much flat ground it's unbelievable, all around here. Oh that it would happen to us, that we would see that this can be, and I believe is, a Bethel - it is a meeting place between God and men, it is a place where the ladder can come down here to up there, and we can know angelic ministrations of blessing as they do God's business and bidding, as the kingdom comes on earth as it is in heaven. Oh that our eyes would be opened, as Elisha said for Gehazi: 'Lord, open his eyes'. These angelic hosts can bring you God-encounters tonight, as they did to Jacob. Do you want one? Are you ready for one?

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