

Laban gave his female servant Zilpah to his daughter Leah and to her servant. And in the morning behold it was Leah. And Jacob said to Laban what is this you have done to me?

Did I not serve you with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me? Laban said that it is not so done in our country to give the younger before the firstborn.

Complete the week of this one and we will give you the other also in return for serving me another seven years. Jacob did so and completed her week. Then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife.

Laban gave his female servant Bilhah to his daughter Rachel to be her servant. So Jacob went into Rachel also and he loved Rachel more than Leah and served Laban for another seven years.

[23 : 45] Amen. And may God bless that reading of his word to us. We're going to sing again to God's praise and this time we'll sing from the hymn book number 122 a prayer as we come back to God's word.

Come Holy Ghost our hearts inspire let us then influence prove source of the old prophetic fire fountain of life and love. Come Holy Ghost for moved by thee the prophets wrote and spoke unlock the truth thyself the key and seal the sacred book.

We'll stand to sing again to God's praise. Amen. Come Holy Ghost our hearts inspire let us thine influence prove source of the old prophetic fire fountain of life and love.

Come Holy Ghost our hearts inspire for moved by thee the prophets wrote and swore unlock the truth thyself the key until the sacred book expand thy grace and celestial dawn through the Lord our nature's night on earth on earth his order spirit is and let there now be light for through himself we then shall know know if thou within the shine and serve with all thy sins below the depths of love divine mind let's pray for a moment as we come to God's word our heavenly father we thank you for the word that we have read and that we come to study now we thank you

Holy Spirit that you are the one who inspired all that we have written and we pray for the help of the Holy Spirit now as we come to study these words and as we come to look in again on this account of this episode in the life of Jacob we pray that you would apply this to our lives that you would teach us the truths that you would have us learn for ourselves and we pray as we've sang that you would reveal yourself to us Lord that we would see more of your love and your patience and your goodness and your grace and your sovereign working in our lives even at the times when we can't see what it is you are doing help us we pray as we think about this passage to to have our faith increased sanctify us by your truth we pray and we ask

[27 : 56] Lord that you would be also close to all those who are absent as well we remember those who are at home those whose health is not good just now who would desire to be in your house but who can't be and we ask Lord that you would minister to them that you would bless them that you would enable them to know in their own homes that they are not alone but that you are with them and we pray for others who may watch services later in the week and who may be completely unknown to us at a great distance from this place and from our own knowledge and we ask Lord that you would speak through your word and that you would add your blessing to all that is read and studied so hear our prayers be at work Lord amongst us we pray cleanse us from sin as we confess it and speak into our lives and we ask this in Jesus name Amen If you could have your

Bibles open please we're looking through the life of Jacob and really what we're doing is we're following this story this account of the life of Jacob that is recorded for us here and it's been a wee while since we've been in this life this passage and so we maybe it'll just take a moment to look back we're in Genesis 29 but just if you glance back at Genesis 28 we have this account there of the testimony I think it's what you would call the testimony of Jacob we love to hear testimonies every Christian has a testimony that they can share it may not be filled with drama it may be very low key it may be very gradual but it's no lesser testimony than somebody who's had a great drama in their lives every Christian has a testimony we have a story that we can tell of when

God met with us when we came to realise that we were sinners and that we needed Christ as our saviour I wonder tonight if I was to go round the room could we all share a testimony and my testimony goes back to when I was ten years old I can think back to the very place I was in when I was ten when I asked Jesus to be my saviour it can go back further than that to when I was eight years old and when I stole an action man boiler suit and felt the weight of sin beginning to press down on me so my testimony goes a lot of years back but I wonder could I ask you do you have a testimony that you can share is God working in your life have you asked Jesus to be your saviour Jacob's testimony I think we find it in Genesis 28 is the account of when the

Lord broke into Jacob's life in a personal way in a saving way I think it's the passage that we could say that marks the beginning of faith life in Jacob and the question for Jacob as we move from Genesis 28 into Genesis 29 the question for Jacob is a question of what next you know where does he go what does he do and very often that's the way that we think once we're converted especially if we're a little bit later on in life than 10 years old when you're 10 years old you just do what your mum and dad tell you the next day but when we're 20s and 30s and 40s when we come to know the Lord and trust the Lord the question that presses in on us instantly is what now will I do with my life Lord how will

I serve you will it be ministry we keep hearing of how many vacancies there are how many ministers that we need in the and even in our own denomination at this time and so that's a question that often will pass to our minds should we be going into ministry is there a calling into ministry should it be the mission field as we think of others who are away proclaiming the gospel living out as salt and light in distant places or sometimes we we're asking the question Lord will you just have me carrying on doing what I'm doing being salt and light in the workshop in school in the factory on the fishing boat whatever it is that he's placed us so as Jacob goes on now with the Lord he needs guidance and that's the first point that we come to tonight the guidance of God so we'll think first tonight about the guidance of

[33 : 17] God and in terms of receiving guidance if you've got your Bibles open what does the Lord say to Jacob if we scan through the opening verses of Genesis 29 and look for what the Lord says to Jacob what does the Lord say to Jacob in terms of guiding him from here onwards well as you scan the verses what we discover is that the Lord says nothing to Jacob we don't find anything we don't find a verse here that says and then God said to Jacob that there's nothing of that in the text in fact Dale Ralph Davis makes the point that God is never mentioned not once in the passage that we read here and so for Jacob there's no writing on the wall for him to see as others saw there's no cloud of pillar of cloud by day and fire by night that he can follow that the children of

Israel later would experience there's no verse of the day that pops up on his mobile phone there's no truth for life podcast that he can pop in his ears as he goes for a walk around the block so what does he do well he does the next sensible thing he knows he can't go west in terms of the ongoing journey because his brother Esau wants him dead and so he continues going east because that was the sensible thing to do verse 1 then Jacob went on his journey and came to the land of the people of the east as he looked he saw a well in the field and behold three flocks of sheep lying beside it for out of that well the flocks were watered then in verses 2 into verse 3 we learn about the dimensions of the stone that was on the well's mouth there's this huge stone that took many people to be able to shift so they could get access to the well but the point to note here in the opening couple of verses is that

Jacob he knows the guiding hand of God upon him as he does just the normal things of life he's not looking up into the clouds for some special revelation he's not looking into crystals or looking for some kind of supernatural experience before he takes a step he just does the normal things of life we see the same kind of guidance in the life of Ruth remember in the book of Ruth we see this young girl Ruth and she arrives in Bethlehem this place that she she'd never been in that she didn't know and a place where she wasn't known she has no job she has no money she has no contacts so she says on the first morning that she wakes up well I better go out into the field we need to eat and so she wanders out into the field and it just so happens that she wandered into the field of a man called

Boaz and you know the rest of the story and if you don't you can read it I haven't got the time to go into it just now but what we see in the life of Ruth and what we see in the life of Jacob is as they do the ordinary normal sensible things of life God was with them God's hand of guidance was upon them he was he was leading them and that's an encouragement for for us because many of us struggle with the whole area of guidance it's probably one of the most common questions that people come to speak to ministers about one is assurance other is guidance and what do I do where do I go so what do we do when we're not sure what to do well we read the Bible and we pray and we do the next sensible thing ask asking that as we step out in whatever it is God has put before us in life as we acknowledge the Lord as it says in Proverbs chapter 3 as we step out acknowledging the Lord in whatever it is wherever it is we are we pray that he will direct our path and we trust that he will you know the guidance of God is not usually full of celestial drama it's more about common sense and day to day spiritual disciplines where we are in the means of

grace that God has provided for us in the Bible in prayer in God's house acknowledging him asking him to guide us in the way so the first point there is the guidance of [39 : 26] God the second point in this section which is a bit longer probably the longest point that we have this evening we'll see how we go on in terms of time we'll finish by seven the second point is the providence of God so let me just pause for a second we've got some young ones here tonight it's good to see you wake up for a little minute can you tell me what's what's providence you can impress your primary school teachers if you know this word because they probably won't know what it means do you know what providence means no not sure no teenagers not too sure providence means the care you're the care of God how God cares for us in the details of our life and we'll think now about the providence the care the loving care of

God for Jacob in all the details that we'll read of so we find Jacob going into verse four here and Jacob at this point in time he is 550 miles away from Bethel so in Genesis 28 he has this amazing experience at a place called Bethel but he keeps on journeying he keeps on traveling and he's now 550 miles away from Bethel and he's standing by a well the reason he's standing by a well is because that's where people would gather it's the place that you would expect to find people and sure enough as Jacob stands by this well he sees some men and they're gathered there so verse four Jacob he goes up to these men and he says to them my brothers where do you come from they said we're from Haran he said to them do you know Laban the son of Nahor now you might be wondering why is he asking that and just as a reminder of what we've read already remember Jacob's mother that he was so close to she had said to him after the battle that he had with Esau Jacob's mother Rebecca said to Jacob you have to leave home and you have to leave home now your brother Esau he is wanting to kill you so you have to flee and I want you to go and I want you to stay with my uncle Laban that's Genesis 27 verse 43 and she says also in Genesis 28 verse 2 take us your wife from there one of the daughters of Laban so here's Jacob he's gone from Bethel he's heading in the direction of where he thinks Laban is and he's now miles away he's in the middle of nowhere but he doesn't know where to find Laban it's a bit like looking for a needle in a haystack he doesn't have Google Maps he doesn't have an iPhone he doesn't have a postcode he doesn't have the mobile phone number of his uncle so he just goes to the first guys that he sees in this vast land and he says by the way have you ever heard of a guy called a labor and they said verse 5 we know him which was a miracle he said to them is it well with him they said it is well and see his daughter

Rachel is coming with a sheep now think about this here's Jacob middle of nowhere first place he goes to this well first guys he sees first conversation he has and he he hits the jackpot if I could put it that way he finds labor and he actually lays eyes on this girl that he falls in love with at first sight what are the odds of this well minuscule and the unbeliever would say well you know Jacob he just got lucky he's in the right place at the right time but there's no luck here this is the providence this is the loving care of God he's working everything together to help

Jacob Jacob said verse 7 behold it is still high day it is not time for the livestock to be gathered together water the sheep and go past you but they said we cannot until all the flocks are gathered together and the stone is rolled from the mouth of the well then we will water the sheep so Jacob he says to these guys you know you're not going to get on with things you know you get the cattle watered and get out of here what's Jacob doing in this conversation well the commentators think that what Jacob is trying to do as he tries to hurry these guys on is he's just trying to get them out of the way he's seen Rachel she is very attractive he fancies her to put it in your young terms and he wants rid of the competition he wants to be able to speak to her alone so he's trying to hurry the guys up while he was still speaking verse 9 with him

[45 : 33] Rachel came with her father's sheep for she was a shepherdess now as soon as Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother Jacob came near and rolled the stone from the well's mouth and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother sometimes sometimes young men we've got a few young men here sometimes young men will do surprising things for love you know they'll they'll go to the cinema and they'll watch a romantic film that they would never dream all of watching in their own homes they'll offer to help with the peace of the father that the girl they have an affection for when they have absolutely no interest or desire to be to be digging about in a peat bank for the day they'll probably offer to fix or spray paint the car of the girl that they've got a desire for and here what we see is we see

Jacob remember Jacob the mommy's boy Jacob the guy who doesn't like doing outdoor work but much prefers being in the kitchen and he's power lifting he's lifting a stone from the mouth of a well that would usually take half a dozen shepherds to shift and we can imagine the other shepherds saying to Jacob what are you doing what are you doing trying to move this this olach on your own you're going to put your back out you're going to do yourself an injury but Jacob is absolutely determined to shift this stone he's determined likely to impress Rachel and he lifts it then Jacob verse 11 kissed Rachel and wept aloud and Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's kinsman and that he was Rebecca's son and she ran and told her father now the kiss at this point is not a romantic kiss it's more like a handshake in our terms it's just a polite greeting but when Jacob tells Rachel that he was her father's kinsman it was the equivalent of an Old Testament marriage proposal I don't know how Hugh popped the question last week to Julian but this is the way they did it in these situations in the Old Testament it was using words like this and so Rachel understood and everybody understood that what Jacob was saying was that he loved her and he wanted to be with her and so she charges home to tell her father and it seems to be well received in the family as soon as Laban verse 13 heard the news about Jacob his sister's son he ran to meet him and embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his house Jacob told Laban all these things and Laban said to him surely you are my bone and my flesh and he stayed with him for a month so that's the story to this point we see Jacob heading off eastwards not really sure where he's going and not really sure what's ahead but trusting that God will guide him and we see that as he progresses as he comes to these different people and these different scenes God is with him and he's experiencing first hand the providence of God the care the loving care of God in all the details of his life Dale Ralph Davis helps us summarize at this point he says Jacob came to write where he needed to be verse 4 to track down the people he needed to find verse 5 and of all things he simply bumps into the very household he was looking for verse 6 is that not says Ralph Davis the kind providence of God so although God the name of God is not mentioned in any way here it's very evident that God is all over this scene that the providence of God is very clear to see in every move in every conversation in every situation and that's his life far away from us a long time ago but as we so often sing in Psalm 46 the God of Jacob is our refuge he's our strength he is our

God and his guiding hand is upon us if we are his people and he is still working in providence for our good and for his glory so let me just finish just by taking a moment to just hopefully let that sink in how amazing is it to think that this God is our God how amazing is it to think about the fact that the God of heaven and earth just as he knew exactly where Jacob was just as he knew exactly what was around every corner just as he knew every person that needed to be in every place in Jacob's experience he knows us just the same way he knows the detail of your life and my life intimately the God of Jacob our God he's not a distant remote aloof

[52 : 46] God he's not a force that is unknowable he's a person he's the personal loving living God and he is near to us and the providence of God is active still today in all of our lives and I think that should cause me and it probably should cause you as well to be more at peace than we are and less worried about the details of our lives because God has them covered and that should cause us also to praise God for his providential care and keeping of us if you are God's child then your life and mine they're not a series of coincidences our lives are governed by the providence of God and often times we can't see what he's doing and sometimes the providence of God can be mysterious and way beyond our grasp sometimes the providence of God can be painful and it can be difficult but our calling is to trust him even when we can't see him and even when we cannot figure out what he is doing and when we're struggling as sometimes we will be when we're struggling to trust when we can't see where do we go we go back to the cross think about how confusing and how dark a providence that must have seemed to Peter and James and John and these disciples that love

Jesus so much think about how confused they must have felt as they saw their master their saviour their lord being nailed to a cross and left to die and yet it was through the darkness of the cross that our salvation was secured and the love and the eternal care of God for his people was and still is so clearly seen and we'll finish there with eyes on the cross thankful for the guidance and the providential care of God the God of Jacob heavenly father we thank you for your word we pray that you would bless it to us and we pray that you would help us to trust you in every situation of our lives and we pray this in Jesus name amen we'll sing to conclude from psalm 72 verses 17 to verse 19 we'll stand to we'll stand to sing to God's praise his name his name forever shall endure last

night the sun is shall then shall be blessed in him
I'm blessed all all nations shall him call blessed be the Lord the God the God of Israel for he alone
the God wondrous works in glory God his well and blessed be his glorious name to all eternity!
the whole earth let his glory fill amen so let it be and may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ the
love of God the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all now and forever more
amen