

The Providence of God (Part 3)

God's Providence

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To refresh our memories with something that is familiar, we will turn to Romans 8:28

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose

The key word here as far as this series of sermons is concerned is the word all, because life does not always consist of blessings. In fact there may be more downers, more bad times, than there are good times. Some of us would say that as well, but what we have to come to understand is that God is with us regardless of whether it is good, or whether it is bad. Over and beyond that we have to understand that He indeed may be the One who has engineered this situation that we call "bad."

If He has engineered it, and He is involved with us, I do not see how we can call it "bad." It hurts. It is just painful, and is difficult to go through. Because our faith is weak, we think that it might be a curse.

I want you to go back to Genesis 28. We spent most of the last sermon in this series there. That proved to be the catapult for that sermon, but I want to touch base here again.

Genesis 28:13-15 And behold, the Lord stood above it [the ladder that Jacob was seeing in a dream], and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon you lie, to you will I give it, and to your seed; And your seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in you and in your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with you, [and here comes the important part for us] and will keep you in all places whither you go, and will bring you again into this land; for I will not leave you, until I have done that which I have spoken to you of.

In the previous sermon of this series our focus was almost entirely on one event in the lives of Jacob and Joseph. God appeared here to Jacob in Bethel as he was fleeing from Esau, and He clearly promised him things—the same things that He had promised to Abraham and Isaac before him.

In addition, He told Jacob, "I will keep you in all places where you go, and I will bring you again into this land." This land becomes the physical type of the Kingdom of God. That is where the application for us begins to apply. Keep means guard. "I will guard you." "I will protect you." "I will preserve you." "I will provide for you." That is what the word keep means. It means guard, protect, provide, preserve.

Now Jacob, like us, was beset by human nature, and he became distracted by the business of

life. From time to time he lost his vision, and his faith waned. One particular trial was exceedingly difficult for him. It was bitter. It was a bitter circumstance to accept without becoming lost in his grief, and that of course was the time that Joseph was sold into slavery. Apparently, as far as Jacob was concerned, Joseph was dead.

We of course understand that Joseph was not dead. In Genesis 45 we find where Joseph revealed himself to his brothers.

Genesis 45:5 Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves that you sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.

"God did send me before you." Do you get the import of this? God engineered this whole thing. He may not have chosen exactly every tiny step in what the brothers did in making decisions, but God engineered that whole thing. This was engineered by the same Creator who is our Father.

Genesis 45:6-7 For these two years has the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve [keep, provide for, protect] you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

Remember that Joseph is talking to his brothers who are also the sons of Jacob, and Jacob is intimately tied into this, because all his children are tied into it.

Genesis 45:8 So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

So we see kind of a happy ending. This is what God provided to teach Jacob and Joseph and Judah and all the brothers a very, very valuable lesson.

From every perspective, except the spiritual one, it looked like an evil curse, and yet it actually turned out to be a great blessing. As a result, many were saved from starvation, and there was forgiveness. Reconciliation took place within the family. The brothers were now reconciled to their father, and also to their brother Joseph. Over and above that, it was a major step in God's overall plan, for it provided for Israel being in Egypt where they grew into a great nation over the next several hundred years, thus setting the stage for the events that Moses played such a large part in. That in turn provides us with a physical model of what occurs when spiritually we are released from the bondage to Satan and to sin. A further reverberation from that event is what set the stage for what appears to have been a very terrible curse for Egypt. They were devastated.

Do you see what happens here? It is like a pebble being dropped into a nice still pond. "Plop" and the ripples begin from that one action to spread out as far as they might be able to go. A very humbling principle begins to take form, and that is, for every blessing received there might have been a very serious payment made by somebody else. It also seems as though God somehow or another manages to balance the ledger between like the evil the brothers did against Joseph.

There is another lesson in here that is of equal importance to all of us—something that we have got to learn. Events do not take place in a vacuum. In a vacuum, nothing radiates out from the action that takes place within because there is no air to carry the frequency. Do you understand? Nothing in this world—events—do not take place in a vacuum. There are causes, and there are consequences to our actions. They radiate out from us like the ripples on a pond whenever a stone is tossed into it.

Over and above all of this, the most serious consideration of all for us is where does God fit into the events of our lives? Can we do things and think that maybe God does not have something planned way, way down the line that is going to come from this original event that may have begun with us?

Think about this. Do you think that Ruth had it in her mind when she was gleaning the fields of Boaz that she was going to be a mother of the Messiah? No way Jose! But many, many generations through David came the Messiah. Maybe we will go into this in a little bit more detail in another sermon.

How about Amram and Jochebed? Do you know who Jochebed was? That was Amram's wife. That was Moses' mother. It must have been exceedingly difficult for them to put Moses out on the Nile River. Think of the emotions that were involved in this. They cast that little ark, pushed it out into the stream, and they set off events that are still reverberating today. That boy became the one through whom the Ten Commandments were given, and perhaps was the greatest prophet ever, except for Jesus. A little baby.

Do you see what I mean? Many generations. We do not know what our Creator is planning from our lives. We have the responsibility to take these things into consideration, put a weight to that on what we are doing, and understand that our job of being faithful to that Creator might be very important.

God's will is going to be worked out regardless. In the overall picture of history, we do not even amount to a gnat on the side of an elephant. But the fact that He is involved in our lives makes our lives far more important than we can ever begin to imagine. We know that He will patiently work to bring us to the place where we will do what He wants.

Let us ask a question then that I asked in the last sermon. How closely is He managing operations in our lives? Is there evidence that He is micromanaging, actually restricting free moral agency in order to bring about the end that He has in mind? I answered that question in that sermon. Absolutely. He does restrict free moral agency just like any good, wise, careful, concerned parent does. They restrict the free moral agency of their children to keep them from getting hurt, and to see that their lives are productive and happy and blessed.

God is far more careful than we are. Yes, He will restrict free moral agency to bring about the end of His purposes. I think it would be foolish to think otherwise. He is so active and so involved, that as I stated in that sermon, I believe that for His children there is no such thing as "time and chance" occurring. To the world, yes; but to His children, no, because God is too serious about His responsibilities and His name. He wants His family name upheld. There is no greater name in all the universe. As a parent, He will not fail us. What He has begun, He will finish. There is a very encouraging scripture here in Philippians 1:6.

Philippians 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which has begun a good work in you will perform [complete] it until the day of Jesus Christ.

He will complete it, to see that His will is done.

The sermon is going to take a little bit of a turn here. We humans have a tendency to be faddish. We desire to follow the fashions of the day, and sometimes we do this even in religion. The modern fad in religion is The New Age varieties. These incidentally are really nothing more than ancient Greek Gnosticism in modern clothing.

Also today there is currently quite a preoccupation with angels. So great is it that now we have TV shows such as *Touched By An Angel*. We have major movies. I believe that there were at least three major movies this year that had angels involved within the context of the plot. There is at the same time an increasingly strong urge toward interest in demons and the occult. Every major newspaper has a horoscope within it. These things come and go through the decades, through the centuries.

The same process is at work with words, only frequently with words it happens much more quickly. They too pass in and out of vogue.

When I was a teenager (it seems like a long time ago) but one of the words we used very frequently was "swell." "Wasn't that swell?" All you have to do is go to an old Van Johnson movie and I will guarantee you Van Johnson is going to say to June Allison, "Wasn't that swell?" But swell evolved into groovy, which in turn evolved into cool. Things are cool. There is probably a different word beginning to come on the horizon right now for these. With those three words—swell, groovy, and cool—we were all applying them to something that we thought was pretty nice.

But word meanings change as well. For an example, look at the word "gay." That word has changed drastically. What about the word "providence"? A hundred years ago that word was used very commonly. It was part of almost every-day speech, because people tended to be more religious day to day than they are today, so the word providence has slipped away from normal usage in people's vocabulary.

As a matter of fact the word providence only appears one time in the New Testament. It is in Acts 24: 2. It is not even applied to God there, but it does appear there. This is a word that is too rich with theological importance to let it pass out of existence with us. That is one of the reasons why I am giving this series. People do not think of God's involvement in their lives like they used to. But we cannot let that slip away, and that word that they used about God's involvement in their lives was "providence." However, even when it was being used commonly, it was almost entirely used in the sense of that which people judged as being good, as being a blessing. But what I am showing you is the Bible is applying the events of our lives, both good and bad, to God—to providence. God Himself was even called "divine providence" to make it even more specific so that others would understand.

The word that appears there in Acts 24: 2 is Strong's No. 4307. It is "pronoia," and it means forethought. It can be translated into supply. The root word, No. 4306, is "pronoio." That root means to consider in advance. It means to look out beforehand.

There are two parallel applications to this looking out beforehand, or considering in advance. One is by way of maintenance for others. In other words, a parent looks out for—considers in advance—for his or her children. That would be an example of providence. The second application is by way of circumspection for oneself. In other words, rather than looking out for somebody else's well-being, the person is looking out for his own well-being. There is nothing wrong with this. God does it. He does both. His involvement is for His own well-being—the well-being of His purpose.

This English word providence came into the English language through the Latin. The prefix "pro" has two aspects to it. It means for, in the sense of on the side of, like a person will say, "I am pro-abortion" or "I am pro-life." "I am on the side of life," or "I am on the side of death." It also means before, in the sense of preceding. The basic root word is *videre*, and it means to see. Thus providence means to see beforehand, to see before. *Videre*, incidentally, is the same root from which the word vision comes from. Para-vision. The prefix *para* means far, plus vision equals "far vision." That is what television means—vision from afar. It is also the root of the word video—something that you see.

We might be tempted to conclude that providence merely has to do with foresight or foreknowledge. Let me caution you here that providence is not simply another synonym for foreknowledge or foresight. It has much to do with God's provision—what He provides as with the timing that He does it. Provision has its same roots in the same word as providence. God's provision for His people includes within its broad scope the sense of foresight, so that it has to do with our maintenance or circumspection for His overall purpose.

If you are standing on a railroad track and a train is barreling down on you at 100 miles per hour, what do you do? You use foresight, and you take provision. You see beforehand—you see before the train hits you, and you provide, circumspectly by stepping off the track. So you see. You do something. You see, you provide before a thing actually occurs, though the timing and the act are inextricably linked in this.

A person makes provision for the distribution of his wealth. Timing: He does it before he dies. He sees in advance that he is going to die, and so the timing is in place so that following his death he is able to provide for those he wants the money or property or whatever it is to go to. So what does he do? He makes out a will in order to take care of that.

If you hear that a severe storm is on its way, there is foresight, and then you make provision by getting in supplies before it hits. There is both the foresight and there is the act. There is what you see, and also what you provide. This is the same thing in relation to God. He sees in advance, and then He provides. Both are included. The provision will come at the time that He sees best in order to bring about a purpose that He is working out. It may not have anything to do with what we are thinking about at all.

Is there any better example than what Joseph's brothers did to him? They were not thinking about what they were doing when they put Joseph in the pit and sold him. But God already had it figured out what He was going to do, and so He provided—foresight. The timing though, when it was done, was long before it became evident what was going to be produced from it. In relation to God, providence always has the sense of foresight, but there is just as much

emphasis on the sense of provision—what is provided.

Now let us go to Matthew 6: 25. The word "therefore" at the beginning of this verse is actually showing that it is leading to a conclusion. The conclusion that He is leading to is triggered by this thought in verse 24—"You cannot serve God and mammon." We have to understand that. It has to be an operating factor in our lives. We have got to make a choice between the two. But if we make a choice to serve God, then anxiety might arise that we are not going to be able to have sufficient money to take care of ourselves.

Matthew 6:25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor yet for your body, what you shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

Do you see the way Jesus is pushing our thinking? He is saying, "Get the thoughts off yourself. Begin to understand, because you are a child of God and He is in heaven, and He has foresight, He will provide, and the timing will be perfect for what He wants to bring about. You see, we have to exercise faith that the timing will be right, and also so that we can accept what it is that He does provide, without anxiety.

This section here of Matthew 6: 24-34, as I mentioned to you before, is a lesson on our providence, God's providence, and our responsibility of trusting Him that He indeed will supply.

Before we go any further I think we need to understand that God's providence in no way relieves us of our own responsibility of working for our daily bread, or of using foresight and preparing to avert discomfort, pain, calamity, disaster, and even death. This helps to explain why David prayed whenever the baby was dying. He did not just do nothing, did he? He fasted and prayed on his belly seven nights, appealing to God, pleading for an intervention. Then when God finally said "no" through the baby's death, David hopped up, fully assured that he had done what he could, accepting what God had provided. In this case God provided a death.

It may not have been easy to take, but David had the kind of heart that accepted God's will. This is what stood him in such good stead with God. God acted, and when David understood God's will, he accepted it.

While the baby languished near death, David was praying. What God was showing us there, is that in between the time that God has foresight and He actually provides, we just do not sit around on our butts doing nothing. We do something, but we do it without anxiety. There is where the problem comes in, because anxiety destroys faith. Anxiety renders a person useless. He will do nothing. It completely stultifies God's purpose.

Proverbs 22:3a A prudent man foresees the evil, and hides himself.

He foresees the evil. Here is foresight. And he hides himself. That is what he provides. That is circumspection. What David did is circumspection. He saw the evil possibility of the death, but he did what was circumspect. He prayed with all of his heart.

Proverbs 22:3b But the simple pass on, and are punished.

The simple pass on. They would do nothing. They are punished. They received the pain. That clearly states the principle.

From this whole process we can also see that free moral agency is working, because we are not always going to do the right thing. David did the right thing. We do not always do the right thing. But you see, while that is going on, God is not just standing there twiddling His thumbs. He is working to bringing us around to His way of thinking and His way of doing, according to His will. The free moral agency is working, but God is manipulating too in order to bring us around so that we are not ignorant of what was going on when the trial was finally over.

This gives rise to the truism that one must pray as though everything depends on God, but we must work as if everything depended on us. There is that saying, "God helps those who help themselves," and that is a truism too as long as we do not help ourselves to things illegally, or outside the will of God.

These works of ours are not going to save us. God is the Savior. He is the Deliverer. But our works do help create character (as we will see as we go along), working within what God provides.

The context here in Matthew 6 is that we learn to avert anxiety through trusting God's providence.

Matthew 6:25, 28, 31, 34 Take no thought for your life? Why take you thought for raiment? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat?... Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

I think that you understand that this is not well translated, because the Greek implies anxious thought. Certainly you take thought for what is going to happen tomorrow. If you were not taking thought, why get off the train track when the train is coming? "Take no *anxious* thought" is what is meant.

Anxiety immobilizes. It keeps one from doing his responsibility. Jesus' theme is that God's providence toward His children is such because He is overseeing our development—our creation into His image. The unspoken implication is that like children, we do not really understand much about what is going on, and that He will provide more and better of what is right toward His purpose far above and over our capabilities. Our lives are in better hands than Allstate's by far.

Catch this. It is not merely that God observes what is going on. The point is that He looks after our affairs. There is a big difference between the two. A parent can sit and watch his children get into trouble, and do absolutely nothing. It seems like there are a lot of parents these days that do that kind of thing. It says in Proverbs that a child who is allowed to run wild brings his mother shame.

Believe me, God follows His own commandments. He does not just watch us, He observes what is going on with the thought of bringing the best out of it that He possibly can. It is not merely that He is watching, but that He *watches over*. He is a very pro-active, involved parent, and that is what goes to the very heart and core of providence.

Always what God provides is exactly what is needed. If He was not really watching over, there is no telling what He might provide. He is love. He never makes a mistake. There is nobody wiser. There is nobody more watchful, and what He provides is exactly what is needed. But always

remember this—it is exactly what is needed for His purpose first.

Do you realize that this is one of the main reasons why you keep "The Night To Be Much Observed"? Do you understand that it says of The Night To Be Much Observed that the One who was observing what was going on was God? He watched over Israel so carefully not even a dog barked when they left Egypt. That is put into the Bible so that we will understand how closely He is watching what is going on in our lives, and providing whatever is needed. He shut the dogs' mouths so that they could walk out absolutely without fear of any kind of retaliation.

Now what all these illustrations tend to point out is that God did not merely create the universe. He did not just create it, and then wind it up like a little clock, and then walk away. He has been involved from the very beginning.

Not only that, He is moved. He has emotions. Our emotions are like His. He is moved by what is going on. Perhaps more important is that even though we humans and Satan can have some impact on events because of free moral agency, God is the prime mover of the action. Now we are getting to the heart and core of everything. Who is running this universe? Whose purpose is it that is being worked out? Well, sometimes, without realizing it we get to thinking that we are really the important cog in the wheel here. I do not mean in the church, I mean in God's purpose—between us and God's. No. Like I said before, it is His purpose that is always going to be worked out. Nobody overcomes God, and if He intends to produce something, He will do it. Now these events include what we may, at the time that we are going through them, judge to be curses, as well as the blessings. He is in charge of all of them.

We are going to take yet another look at Jacob, at another event in his life, because I learned something. Actually Evelyn found it in a commentary on Hebrews 11 by E.W. Bullinger. Some of you have the Bullinger Bible and some of the other books that he wrote, but he has a commentary out on Hebrews 11, *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*. It is a big thick thing, about an inch or so thick, just on Hebrews 11. This event in the life of Jacob is explained by Bullinger in a way that I know I have never seen it before, and I also confess to you I think he is right.

Let us go back to Genesis 32. What we are going to look at is Jacob's name change. We are going to begin at the beginning of the chapter just to provide a little bit of a background on Jacob's personality—the way he did things.

Genesis 32:1 And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.

Jacob was leaving his father-in-law Laban after a rancorous ending of their relationship, during which, incidentally, Jacob tried to steal away without Laban even finding out that he was leaving. So Jacob picked up his considerable wealth in that he organized all kinds of things, and then he stole away so that Laban would not know that he was leaving. That is where the story picks up.

So where is Jacob headed? Oh, he is headed back home, where horror of horrors, his brother Esau is, and Esau is the one Jacob cheated out of the birthright and the blessings.

Genesis 32:2-4 And when Jacob saw them [the angels], he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim. And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom. and he commanded them,

saying, Thus shall you speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob said thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now.

The fellows came back from that meeting with Esau, and they gave Jacob some bad news. Esau is on his way to meet you, and he has four hundred men with him!

What is God providing here? How is Jacob going to get out of what he did? He decided that the best thing to do was to appease Esau by giving him a big gift. You know, Esau always lived for the moment. That was why the lentil stew, or whatever it was, satisfied him at the time. Jacob was a far-looking person—a person with a great deal of vision. He had the drive and the energy to go and get what it was that he wanted. Esau was not quite the same. He was made out of different stuff. I am not saying that one was really better than the other, just different.

But Esau was coming with four hundred men, and Jacob could only think, "Revenge is on his mind. What's the best way to appease him? I'm going to give him a gift. I'm going to give him something that he can't refuse." And so Jacob gave Esau about 550 animals—a lot a wealth as a gift. Esau was appeased, and the two brothers reconciled. But where was God in this picture? He was not done with Jacob yet, and that is what we are going to pick up in verse 24.

Genesis 32:24-32 Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaks. And he said, I will not let you go, except you bless me. And he said unto him, What is your name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Your name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince have you power with God and with men, and have prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray you, your name. And he said, Wherefore is it that you do ask after 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. And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank.

We have to begin here in order to set the stage because of the way the translators have chosen to render Jacob's name change into English. It is misleading because it hides much of Jacob's character and God's purpose in providing this wrestling match. In so doing, it hides much of the instruction that is available here.

One of the things that is being hidden is a problem that every single one of us has. It is a problem that needs to be overcome in our relationship with God—a problem that has existed since the Garden of Eden.

The chapter began with Jacob's preparations for meeting Esau. He arranged the parties into two groups, and he gave Esau about 550 animals. But before that meeting actually took place, God intervened by forcing Jacob into this wrestling match. We know that it was God he was wrestling. It says angel, but Jacob knew better. He said, "I have seen God face to face," and he said, "I lived." We will find confirmation for this in another place as well.

What I want us to think about is the way God presents Jacob to us from the very beginning of Jacob's life. We can encapsulate it pretty quickly.

Jacob's life consisted of one contentious struggle after another, beginning even while he and Esau were in the womb. They were wrestling in there. That is what Rebecca said. When finally they were born, they found that Jacob, who was the second-born of the twins, had his hand on Esau's heel like he was trying to pull him back in or in order to beat him back out! He did not succeed. There was an interesting sideline to this because it says very plainly that God chose Jacob before he was even born. He knew what kind of a makeup this man was going to have. In one sense it looks like he picked the weaker of the two in terms of what we will call "innate" character. But Jacob's life consisted of one contentious struggle after the other, and so after he was born, God presents us with him contending with Esau for the birthright, taking advantage of Esau's famished condition, and then he snatched the blessing away from Esau by deceitful lying with Isaac. He then fled, because Esau was really upset. He fled to the land where Rebekah had come from, and also where Abraham had come from, hoping that out there he would be able to find a wife.

He did find a wife, but he also found people who were pretty much like him. You almost wonder if something was not in the genes there! Laban switched brides on him, and there was one contention after another between Jacob and Laban. Twenty years later this still was not resolved, and so Jacob stole away in the dark of night to get away from Laban.

What do we see? We see a contentious man. Everywhere he went fights erupted within the family. He was deceitful. We find something else too, and we are going to look at this in Genesis 29, because it is part of his makeup.

Genesis 29:1-2, 7-10 Then Jacob went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east. And he looked, and behold a well in the field, and, lo, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks: and a great stone was upon the well's mouth?. And he said [to one of the other shepherds], Lo, it is yet high day, neither is it time that the cattle should be gathered together: water ye the sheep, and go and feed them. And they [the shepherds] said, We cannot, until all the flocks be gathered together, and till they roll the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep. and while he yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep: for she kept them. And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother.

The point here is this: That stone was so large it took several men to move it. That is one of the reasons why they gathered all the sheep together at one time, and then they would all get together and move the rock off there, and water the sheep. Then all the shepherds would be there to put the rock back on the well. Jacob did it all by himself! He was not only a man who was very contentious, he was also a man who was possessed with unusual physical strength. People were afraid of him. What Jacob wanted, Jacob got, one way or another, struggling, being contentious, deceptive, and manipulative. He was willing to work hard and long for whatever it was that he wanted.

Look how he wrestled with the angel. He wrestled gamely, and with great courage. But I think that we can understand that God exerted just enough strength to keep things under control and to get His point across. It was God who ended the match, because Jacob demands a blessing. The blessing conferred was a change of name that suited Jacob's personality, and a lesson that he had to learn, and the painful putting of his hip out of joint as a constant reminder of that lesson. He limped for the rest of his life, apparently with some measure of discomfort, because we find him later needing a staff to get along with.

Now how can something like that be a blessing? It was though, because it was intended by God to keep Jacob humble. What was the lesson here?

Genesis 32:30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

Jacob knew that he had not won. "My life is preserved." He knew in his heart of hearts that if the One who was wrestling with him wanted to, He could have made Jacob a grease spot right there, and that would have been the end of it. Jacob did not win, but the translation here makes it look like he won. Nobody wins against God. God's will is done in every case. We do not have enough wisdom, enough experience, enough knowledge to know what is good for us, like God does.

I am going to remind you of this verse where God says "I will never leave you, nor forsake you..."

Genesis 28:15 And, behold, I am with you, and will keep you in all places whither you go, and will bring you again into this land; for I will not leave you, until I have done that which I have spoken to you of.

God was still in the process of fulfilling that, because what happened here carries on right through to our day, through the Millennium, and on to The Great White Throne Judgment. His seed is going to become as the sand of the earth, and so forth.

I don't know how much Jacob understood, but I think that he undoubtedly more fully understood that God had been more deeply involved in his life than Jacob was willing to admit by this time-working, creating, to get him to understand that it is *God who orders life*.

I do not care how physically strong you are. I do not care how intelligent you are, how manipulative, or how persuasive a person is with words, God's will is going to be done no matter what. Through our manipulations, through our deceptions, and through our failures to submit to His way, we are just making it hard on ourselves, and what are we in reality doing? We are struggling—we are wrestling against God. That is what Jacob had been doing all through his life in his deceptive manipulation and his lying to get the end out of life that he wanted to get. But now he met his match. And so God touched him on his thigh. I do not know whether God said this, but this is what came through: If I want to, I will make you a grease spot. You are going to do what I say. You are not going to manipulate Me. You are not going to deceive Me. My will is going to be done in your life, and I am going to make you what I want to make you into.

All the manipulations of Jacob were so much useless vanity. If he had not manipulated to get

the birthright, God would have given it to him, because He had already chosen Jacob. He did not have to manipulate to get the blessing. God would have given it to him. All his life Jacob was taking things into his own hands. Do you know why? Jacob was a controller par excellence. He wanted to control everything within his frame of reference so that he would always come out on top—and he did.

Jacob did well in the wrestling match, and he prevailed only in that he did not give up, and that was admirable. He did not give up, but he did not win. Think of this. Satan, an immortal spirit being of far greater powers than Jacob ever even dreamed of, could not beat God. How is a mere man going to beat God? That is what I am telling you when I said that the translation here is misleading. He prevailed only in that he did not give up, and that is to his credit. Jacob only got as far as God's suffering of him would allow.

We are going to look at the name Israel. It is variously translated in Bibles as: prince with God. That is not too bad of a translation. Or it is translated as He who strives with God. That one is not good at all. Or it is translated as He who prevails with God. That one is a bad translation, and yet that is the most common one that you will see in Bibles. Sometimes it is even translated God prevails. Hey! That is the best one yet. That last one, according to Bullinger, is the one that comes the closest to what the word really means.

The root of the name Israel is two words. Fact: Everybody knows El means God. The other word is a word that transliterates into English as sar. Do you know what sar means? It means one who arranges, one who orders, one who commands. It has the usage prince. A prince is one who orders, who arranges, who commands. Abraham's wife's name Sarah is derived from this, and it means princess. She is a person of authority and power.

This same word sar is translated in modern Bibles "princes." The same verse, in like the King James, might read "officials." [See Genesis 12: 15, "The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house."]

We are all familiar with the name Potiphar. Potiphar was a captain. That is the word sar translated captain. Pharaoh's butler had a chief. The word chief is sar. The king's cattle had rulers. The word ruler is sar. The Israelite slaves had taskmasters. The word taskmaster is sar. This is the same word that is translated into Israel—one who prevails with God. How did they ever get that out of that? Do you know why? Because they think he won the wrestling match.

All of these are from sar. All of these are people who give orders, who command, who control, who arrange, who lead, who are those whose word prevails. Now when the word sar is combined with the noun El, the noun El becomes the one doing the action. God commands, God orders, God arranges. Israel's name was changed from "the supplanter" to "God orders," "God commands," not Jacob. Jacob is a servant. Jacob is a slave. God's will is going to be done in Jacob's life. God is going to use Jacob the way He wants.

Now the name Daniel. Everyone loves Daniel. It means God judges. The noun at the end of the word is doing the action—God judges.

The name Nathaniel. Nathaniel was one of Jesus' disciples. The name Nathaniel means God gives. He is the one who is doing the action. There are over forty names given in the Bible

where a verb is combined with El, showing God doing the action.

Why did the translators set that rule aside for Jacob? It is very misleading. Israel means God commands, God arranges, God prevails. So all of his life Jacob had been contending—wrestling as it were—with men in order to gain advantage over them to control things to his own liking, and indeed he had prevailed over men. The lesson he had to learn was that he could not prevail against God and His will for what God wanted to do with Jacob's life. No matter how hard he tried, he was not going to win. God's will is going to be done regardless. In all his life, without understanding it, even though he was a man of some faith, he had been wrestling against the will of God in seeking his own will in many matters of life.

The next time I speak, God willing, we will go into Hosea 12: 1-9. If you want to look in advance, you will find that set of scriptures clarifies Genesis 32: 24-32 considerably. We will make some other modern-day applications to what is going on there in Hosea 12, because it is very important to us right now during this scattering of the church. Is it possible we are being scattered because we are wrestling with God? Think about it.