

God's Conspicuous Protection of Us

Genesis 31:1-55

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Introduction:

Last week in our sermon series from Genesis, we saw how God provided for Jacob in a very conspicuous way.

- By this and other examples, He showed us His faithfulness in providing for His church.
- Throughout the ages, our enemies have very often predicted the demise of the church, and though God's chastening hand is often seen upon her,
 - He continues to provide for her in every age and she continues to resurge again and again.
 - The biggest resurgence is yet to be seen,
 - when the knowledge of the LORD will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea; and when all things will be put under the feet of Jesus our Saviour.
 - But until then, we can be confident that the LORD will provide for us.

You will remember how we saw that Jacob was in Haran where he had served for fourteen years under the oppressive hand of Laban, but was still penniless.

- Yes, this was the price that Laban charged Jacob for his wives, only one of which Jacob had asked for, and this was an extremely exorbitant price.
 - The expected thing in those days would have been for a wealthy man like Laban, especially when he had been greatly prospered by Jacob's service,
 - to send him off now with many rich gifts, both for Jacob and for his daughters Rachel and Leah.
 - Wealthy fathers ordinarily endowed their daughters with a portion of their riches (as an inheritance), but not Laban.
 - He had treated them more like slaves to be sold to for profit.
- And so Jacob, having no means to take his large family on the journey to Canaan, was forced to work for Laban another six years...
 - And to make sure that there could be no misunderstanding, he made an outrageous offer to Laban, believing that the LORD would provide for him.
 - He offered that after the removal of the speckled and spotted from Laban's flocks and the brown among the sheep (these being the rarest among them) he would take as his wages only those that would be born with these characteristics to the ones that did not have them.
 - Laban gladly accepted, and the Lord miraculously provided Jacob with a tremendous number of speckled and spotted animals and brown sheep in this way.
 - The LORD did this to make His hand obvious as the One who provides for His people.

And we pick up in the narrative today at Genesis 31 (verse 1) where we see the reaction of Laban and his sons to Jacob's great prosperity...

- And where we see Jacob responding to God's call to go back to Canaan.
- And then we see how the LORD protected Jacob from Laban's harm.
- So last week, it was the LORD's provision and this week it is the LORD's protection that is made conspicuous, all to encourage us to trust in Him.

Please give your attention now to the reading of this marvellous passage of encouragement, remembering that Jacob and his family represent the whole church,

- for it was through them that God's righteous kingdom was to come and that Jesus Christ the Saviour of the World was to come.
- We will begin in Genesis 31 verse 1.
 - Here is God's holy and infallible Word.

Genesis 31:1-55: Now *Jacob* heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, "Jacob has taken away all that was our father's, and from what was our father's he has acquired all this wealth." ² And Jacob saw the countenance of Laban, and indeed it *was not favorable* toward him as before. ³ Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you." ⁴ So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field, to his flock, ⁵ and said to them, "I see your father's countenance, that it *is not favorable* toward me as before; but the God of my father has been with me. ⁶ And you know that with all my might I have served your father. ⁷ Yet your father has deceived me and changed my wages ten times, but God did not allow him to hurt me. ⁸ If he said thus: 'The speckled shall be your wages,' then all the flocks bore speckled. And if he said thus: 'The streaked shall be your wages,' then all the flocks bore streaked. ⁹ So God has taken away the livestock of your father and given *them* to me. ¹⁰ And it happened, at the time when the flocks conceived, that I lifted my eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the rams which leaped upon the flocks *were* streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted. ¹¹ Then the Angel of God spoke to me in a dream, saying, 'Jacob.' And I said, 'Here I am.' ¹² And He said, 'Lift your eyes now and see, all the rams which leap on the flocks *are* streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted; for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. ¹³ 'I *am* the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar *and* where you made a vow to Me. Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family.' " ¹⁴ Then Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, "Is there still any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? ¹⁵ Are we not

considered strangers by him? For he has sold us, and also completely consumed our money. ¹⁶ For all these riches which God has taken from our father are *really* ours and our children's; now then, whatever God has said to you, do it." ¹⁷ Then Jacob rose and set his sons and his wives on camels. ¹⁸ And he carried away all his livestock and all his possessions which he had gained, his acquired livestock which he had gained in Padan Aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan. ¹⁹ Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel had stolen the household idols that were her father's. ²⁰ And Jacob stole away, unknown to Laban the Syrian, in that he did not tell him that he intended to flee. ²¹ So he fled with all that he had. He arose and crossed the river, and headed toward the mountains of Gilead. ²² And Laban was told on the third day that Jacob had fled. ²³ Then he took his brethren with him and pursued him for seven days' journey, and he overtook him in the mountains of Gilead. ²⁴ But God had come to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said to him, "Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad." ²⁵ So Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mountains, and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mountains of Gilead. ²⁶ And Laban said to Jacob: "What have you done, that you have stolen away unknown to me, and carried away my daughters like captives *taken* with the sword? ²⁷ Why did you flee away secretly, and steal away from me, and not tell me; for I might have sent you away with joy and songs, with timbrel and harp? ²⁸ And you did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters. Now you have done foolishly in *so* doing. ²⁹ It is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your father spoke to

me last night, saying, ‘Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad.’³⁰ And now you have surely gone because you greatly long for your father’s house, *but* why did you steal my gods?”³¹ Then Jacob answered and said to Laban, “Because I was afraid, for I said, ‘Perhaps you would take your daughters from me by force.’³² With whomever you find your gods, do not let him live. In the presence of our brethren, identify what I have of yours and take *it* with you.” For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.³³ And Laban went into Jacob’s tent, into Leah’s tent, and into the two maids’ tents, but he did not find *them*. Then he went out of Leah’s tent and entered Rachel’s tent.³⁴ Now Rachel had taken the household idols, put them in the camel’s saddle, and sat on them. And Laban searched all about the tent but did not find *them*.³⁵ And she said to her father, “Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise before you, for the manner of women *is* with me.” And he searched but did not find the household idols.³⁶ Then Jacob was angry and rebuked Laban, and Jacob answered and said to Laban: “What *is* my trespass? What *is* my sin, that you have so hotly pursued me?³⁷ Although you have searched all my things, what part of your household things have you found? Set *it* here before my brethren and your brethren, that they may judge between us both!³⁸ These twenty years I *have been* with you; your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried their young, and I have not eaten the rams of your flock.³⁹ That which was torn *by beasts* I did not bring to you; I bore the loss of it. You required it from my hand, *whether* stolen by day or stolen by night.⁴⁰ *There* I was! In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from my eyes.⁴¹ Thus I have been in your house twenty years; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times.

⁴² Unless the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God has seen my affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked *you* last night.”⁴³ And Laban answered and said to Jacob, “*These* daughters *are* my daughters, and *these* children *are* my children, and *this* flock *is* my flock; all that you see *is* mine. But what can I do this day to these my daughters or to their children whom they have borne?⁴⁴ Now therefore, come, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it be a witness between you and me.”⁴⁵ So Jacob took a stone and set it up *as* a pillar.⁴⁶ Then Jacob said to his brethren, “Gather stones.” And they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there on the heap.⁴⁷ Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed.⁴⁸ And Laban said, “This heap *is* a witness between you and me this day.” Therefore its name was called Galeed,⁴⁹ also Mizpah, because he said, “May the LORD watch between you and me when we are absent one from another.⁵⁰ If you afflict my daughters, or if you take *other* wives besides my daughters, *although* no man *is* with us—see, God *is* witness between you and me!”⁵¹ Then Laban said to Jacob, “Here is this heap and here is *this* pillar, which I have placed between you and me.⁵² This heap *is* a witness, and *this* pillar *is* a witness, that I will not pass beyond this heap to you, and you will not pass beyond this heap and this pillar to me, for harm.⁵³ The God of Abraham, the God of Nahor, and the God of their father judge between us.” And Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac.⁵⁴ Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and called his brethren to eat bread. And they ate bread and stayed all night on the mountain.⁵⁵ And early in the morning Laban arose, and kissed his sons and daughters and blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned to his place.

May the LORD bless the reading and now the preaching of His holy Word as we look at how God graciously reveals His protection to His servants.

- I say that He graciously reveals it because He does it in a way that shows compassion for us when our faith is yet weak and undeveloped.
- He works with us as a tender Father to strengthen our faith.

I. Let's begin to looking at how, with Jacob, we can see how the LORD accommodates us in our yet undeveloped faith...

A. We see His consideration of Jacob's weakness in the matter of His call to go home.

1. The first thing is that He calls him in a plain, unmistakable way.

- You can see it in verse 3 where there is a call and a promise:
 - **Gen 31:3: Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you."**
- a. This was a great mercy, because this call was already upon Jacob.
 - He knew when he went to Haran that he was to come back to Canaan.
 - Canaan was the land to which his grandfather had been called, and Jacob knew that the LORD had promised to bless them *there...*
 - that Canaan was the place where He had promised to raise up His righteous kingdom through which the Messiah would come, bringing eternal life to his family and to all nations.
 - And the LORD had already renewed this call when Jacob had first set out to Haran to find a wife (and to escape Esau).
 - He had told Jacob that He would fulfill the promise to bless him and to give him this land.
 - But now after 20 years in Haran, and after providing Jacob with more than he needed to return,
 - the LORD renews the call, reminding Jacob that it is his will for him to return and adding the encouragement that He will be with him!
 - That is all Jacob needed to know—all would be well because the LORD would be with him!
 - The LORD doesn't say, "Well I already told him to return, why must I tell him again?"
 - He knows that we need to hear His call many times.

b. It is a marvellous thing that the LORD also renews His call to us.

- 1) He has appointed that the gospel that calls us to salvation in Jesus would be preached each Lord's Day, and that it would be carried into all the world.
 - Now that Jesus has come into the world and been crucified, our call is to repent and to trust in His saving work on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins.
 - We are called again and again to live in God's righteous kingdom with Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, and shepherds are appointed to go to us if we go astray.
 - It is remarkable to see all the ways that the Lord accommodates us in our weakness!

➤ And the LORD does even more than send out His Word...

- 2) He also sends His Holy Spirit to work in conjunction with the Word.
 - The Spirit works in those who speak the Word and He also works in those who hear the Word to open their hearts to believe and obey the call.
 - He brings the word to us with such conviction that we cannot escape...
 - How can we when we are persuaded by the Spirit that in Jesus is eternal life for wretched sinners like us?
 - He raises us up from spiritual death and we go to Jesus!
 - His call and His promise are powerful for us.
- So the first thing He does to help us is to give us clear, unmistakable calls.
2. Secondly, you see how God accommodates our weakness by working out things related to our call...so that it is easier for us to obey.
 - a. We have already seen how He provided for Jacob by giving him flocks.
 - He did not have to do this ahead—He could have sent Jacob on and provided for him in the wilderness, but Jacob was not ready for that.
 - He provided for him first and then He called him.
 - b. Besides that, we see how the LORD stirred up some unpleasantness with Jacob's uncle Laban.
 - We read in the first two verses that Laban and sons were not pleased with Jacob acquiring so many animals through Laban's flocks...
 - This was helpful for Jacob in two ways:
 - 1) First, it was helpful because it kept Jacob from becoming so attached to his prosperity that he would not want to leave.
 - There is always a danger of that for us—that we will be so attached to a job, that even though it is keeping us from the LORD, we will stay there...
 - And sometimes in mercy to us, the LORD will give us trouble so that we will not be drawn away by the deceitfulness of riches.
 - Many, like Demos who worked with Paul, have shipwrecked their faith because of love for the world.
 - So trouble can be a blessing in disguise.
 - 2) Secondly, Laban's being such a scoundrel enabled his daughters to be willing to go.
 - It would have been too much for Jacob to handle if his wives had not been willing to go when God called him, but they were willing.
 - Jacob meets with them in the field (where no one could hear) in verse 4, and he explains to them why they must leave...
 - He reminds them of how he has faithfully served their father, but how their father has repeatedly been unfair with him...
 - He reminds them of how the LORD had given him from their father's flock,
 - and he tells them that this same LORD has called him to return to the land of Canaan.

- And to his great delight, his wives immediately agree to go, citing the fact that their father has dealt with them more like slaves than like daughters.
- c. So you see how the LORD does not give Jacob more than he can bear...and you can count on Him to do this for you too if you are truly His child.
 - I would venture to say that some of you men would not even be serving the LORD today if were not for your faithful wives.
 - But of course He works in all different ways.
 - For example, if you are His child and you do not have a faithful wife, He gives you grace for that burden and spares you from other burdens.
 - The thing is, the LORD knows just what we need, and He takes care of each one of in different ways.

TRANS> Jacob needed all of this extra help and support to obey God's calling because at this particular time in his life,

- the LORD wanted to work on one particular area of weakness.
 - As a master teacher, the LORD at times works on many things, and other times singles out one thing to work on...
 - He had just made Jacob strong in believing that God would provide for him materially, now He wants to teach him that He will protect him from enemies.

B. And so you see that the LORD arranges things for Jacob so that his faith is stretched by God's call to go to Canaan...

1. Jacob must go despite his fears—and there were two...

- a. He was afraid of Esau who might still be angry with him.
 - We will look at his fear of Esau in a future sermon, but first, he has the fear of another person...Laban...
 - And by learning that he can trust God to protect him from Laban, it will prepare him to trust God to protect him from Esau.
 - Many times a trial that we have serves a preparation for an even greater trial...as when Israel met and defeated enemies in the wilderness by God's hand before they faced their enemies in Canaan.
- b. So you can see in our text that Jacob was afraid of Laban—
 - He was afraid to face him with his resolution to depart because he know what Laban was like (and so do you)
 - 1) Later on when Laban confronts him, he explains (as seen in v. 31) that he was afraid that Laban might try to take his daughters (Jacob's wives) by force.
 - This seems a little bit extreme, but who would put it past Laban to come up with some scheme,
 - Such as claiming that Jacob was serving him when he took Rachel and Leah as wives and so could not take them away.
 - That was a law for servants, but in this case, Jacob was not a servant in that way, but was working in order to obtain his wives...
 - But who would put it past Laban to do that?

- 2) It is quite understandable that no one in Jacob's place would want to tell Laban he was leaving...
 - Each time he had faced him, Laban had tried to take advantage of him, and often he had succeeded because Jacob had no military power and was a foreigner.
2. And you see that it is right here that Jacob faltered—because of his fear.
 - a. Instead of confronting Laban in the way of manly faith, he takes the way of the coward and sneaks away while Laban is off shearing his sheep.
 - Verse 17-20 tell the story: **Then Jacob rose and set his sons and his wives on camels. ¹⁸ And he carried away all his livestock and all his possessions which he had gained, his acquired livestock which he had gained in Padan Aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan. ¹⁹ Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel had stolen the household idols that were her father's. ²⁰ And Jacob stole away, unknown to Laban the Syrian, in that he did not tell him that he intended to flee. ²¹ So he fled with all that he had. He arose and crossed the river, and headed toward the mountains of Gilead. ²² And Laban was told on the third day that Jacob had fled.**
 - b. If Jacob had faced Laban with manly faith, he would have gone boldly and announced his departure...
 - And then he would have seen the Lord's hand of deliverance if Laban had pulled any tricks.
 - Who knows what the LORD might have done?
 - If Jacob had done this, he would also have gained the greater respect of his wives and set a manly example for his sons;
 - And it might have prevented Rachel from her foolish deed of stealing the household idols...
 - And he might have had a better influence on Laban and his household when they saw his manly courage and faith...
 - It will never be known, but we know how God works, say, when we see the example of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego before Nebuchadnezzar.
 - If they had gone into hiding, God might well have protected them, but how glad we are that they didn't!

TRANS> But the LORD will use this situation with Jacob sneaking off to teach Jacob (and all of us) the very thing we need to learn...

- And that brings us to our second main point...

II. See how the LORD uses this to teach Jacob (and us) of His protecting grace!

A. The stage is now beautifully set for the LORD to display His protecting hand.

1. By fleeing to save his skin, Jacob has put himself in much greater danger than he would have been in if he had faced Laban.
 - As soon as Laban hears of Jacob's secret departure, he goes in pursuit of him and he is hot with anger.

- Does this not bring back memories of Abraham and Isaac when they were afraid of powerful men?
 - They had resorted to cowardly lies and by doing so had made themselves all the more offensive to the men they feared.
 - The Holy Spirit has recorded these not so heroic accounts of the patriarchs in Holy Scripture because there is something for us to learn:
 - *the LORD is able to deliver us from our enemies.*
 - Instead of resorting to cowardly lies and escapes, we need to learn to trust in Him!
2. So do you see how the stage is now set for the LORD to show His strength?
- a. Laban is in hot pursuit of Jacob—
 - Jacob is powerless to resist him and does not even know he is coming.
 - On top of this, unknown to Jacob, Rachel has stolen Laban’s taraphim, these household idols that were probably images of ancestors that were called upon for guidance (like those who pray to departed saints today).
 - Laban has this additional issue to add to his irritation, not to mention the struggle he was already having with Jacob’s recent prosperity.
 - Now, humanly speaking, Jacob has more reason than ever to be afraid!
 - b. Brothers and sisters, when you see the stage set, it is not time to despair.
 - It is time to call upon the LORD and to watch to see what He will do!
- 1) We can see forces of wickedness lining up against the church today in our land...in the west in general...
 - We have enemies on the left and enemies on the right who are closing in on us, and we have very little ability to resist them.
 - It is not time to be afraid, and deny our God or His truth—it is time to stand boldly for Christ and to see what He will do.
 - Whether he wants to use us to win our enemies, to humble them, or to suffer patiently before them, He will deliver us.
 - 2) And in our church, how often we see the devil raging against us...
 - stirring up division and strife among us—even in our own families and marriages...
 - How can we withstand him, especially when we have done foolish things in our fleshly efforts to control the situation?
 - It is not time to despair, it is time to look for the LORD to act!
- Rejoice when things are desperate—that means that it is time for LORD to work!
3. The LORD graciously reveals His hand of deliverance here in our text and in others like it so that we can know that we could trust Him for our salvation!
 - What could be a more desperate situation than to be a sinner before a holy God, in bondage to sin and in the clutches of Satan?
 - What folly it is for men to try to deliver themselves from such a state!

- What folly it is especially when the LORD Himself has told us that He will deliver us and that we cannot possibly deliver ourselves...
 - And when He has sent His Son from heaven to deliver us by His death on the cross!
 - It is not for us to despair—it is for us to trust in Jesus who was crucified—He is the One who delivers us.
- B. So look at how the LORD delivered Jacob from this desperate situation. Look and learn to trust!
1. Laban has overtaken Jacob in hot pursuit, but he is in a very awkward place.
 - a. Here he is, very angry, armed with power to destroy Jacob, but restrained by the LORD...
 - He has had a dream and the LORD has told him not speak either good or bad to Jacob—a way of saying, don't try to stop him either by force or by enticing words!
 - This reminds me so much of a situation where a little guy on my hall was flaming mad at my roommate and stood breathing hard with a hammer in his hand trying to look fierce, but at the same time terrified of him.
 - He was mad enough to attack but he was too afraid of my roommate's size and courage who looked at him and calmly said, "Do it and you die."
 - Laban wants to strike Jacob, but he is afraid to do it now—and even worse than the guy on my hall—not because he is afraid of Jacob!
 - b. Laban's speech is really quite humorous...
 - 1) He begins as the injured father-in-law who only wanted to have a feast and to send his daughters and their husband off with presents...
 - He accuses Jacob of taking them off like captives with a sword which is exactly what Laban wanted to do right now.
 - They had gone, as we have seen, quite willingly with Jacob.
 - 2) But then in verse 29, this proud man must boast of his strength and in so doing lets his true intent slip out...that he had come to do harm but was prevented by the LORD.
 - He says: **It is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad.'**
 2. And then poor Laban (is it possible to feel sorry for this man?) makes a fool of himself searching for his gods...
 - a. There is tremendous tension in the narrative as Jacob, not knowing that his beloved wife Rachel had stolen these gods, pronounces death on the one with whom they are found...
 - The tension builds as Laban goes from one tent to the next...and then to Rachel's tent:
 - **33 And Laban went into Jacob's tent, into Leah's tent, and into the two maids' tents, but he did not find them. Then he went out of Leah's tent and entered Rachel's tent.**

- And then there is the very narrow escape as we are told...
 - **34-35: Now Rachel had taken the household idols, put them in the camel's saddle, and sat on them. And Laban searched all about the tent but did not find them. And she said to her father, "Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise before you, for the manner of women is with me." And he searched but did not find the household idols.**
- b. There is much debate about why Rachel did this...
 - Did she do this to get something of value from her father who had treated her, as she had said, like a slave?
 - Or did she do this because she was superstitious and wanted these as her St. Christopher to protect her?
 - There are many other suggestions as well and each has its own supporting arguments...
 - The truth is, we are not told...
- c. But what we have here is a tremendous piece of irony!
 - 1) First, that we have here a man saying, "You have stolen my gods!"
 - The poor gods—we know of kidnapping and dognapping, now we have god-napping.
 - 2) And then we have this same man trying to find his gods and looking for them...
 - Now we must acknowledge that Laban did not really think these were gods—just representatives of gods—but idol worshippers become so dependent on their idols that they are like gods to them—
 - So here he is desperate to find his gods...
 - 3) And then the humour that might be lost on us but not on any Israelite who read this...
 - Here we have a woman (who is unclean by ritual law because she is having her monthly cycle) sitting on Laban's gods!
 - His gods are under a camel saddle of an unclean woman!
 - What a place for gods to be!
 - What a judgement on these gods!
- 3. And then to complete the humiliation of poor Laban—can we feel sorry for this man?
 - a. His desperate search ends in frustration—and this gives Jacob occasion to rise up and unload twenty years of pent up frustration on Laban!
 - This is definitely worth reading again:
 - **36 Then Jacob was angry and rebuked Laban, and Jacob answered and said to Laban: "What is my trespass? What is my sin, that you have so hotly pursued me? 37 Although you have searched all my things, what part of your household things have you found? Set it here before my brethren and your brethren, that they may judge between us both! 38 These twenty years I have been with you; your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried their young, and I have not eaten the rams of your flock. 39 That which was torn by beasts I did not bring to you; I**

bore the loss of it. You required it from my hand, *whether* stolen by day or stolen by night. ⁴⁰ *There* I was! In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from my eyes. ⁴¹ Thus I have been in your house twenty years; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times.” (Ge 31:36-41 NKJV)

- Poor Laban—can we feel sorry for this man?

b. But now Jacob brings home the wonderful truth with eloquent words that glorify God...

- **42 “Unless the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God has seen my affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked you last night.”**

- This is the wonderful truth that Jacob now sees so clearly!

- The only thing that stood between him and Laban’s harm was the LORD!

- He provided for him and now He has protected him!

- Praise be to His holy name!

C. My brothers and sisters, what powerful encouragement there is for us here!

- There are three things that we are taught here...

1. First, that we can count on the LORD to defend His church...

- Unless God had been with us as His people through all the ages,

- we would be completely empty and ruined by the malice of our enemies.

- We would have been swallowed up long ago.

- The LORD is the one who rescued us from Satan and his minions, and He will continue to preserve us now.

- This does not mean we will not be martyred—we often are—in the New Testament, there not less, but more persecutions for righteousness...

- It does not mean we won’t be martyred, but it means that even when we are, the church will never perish.

- It will only be strengthened.

2. Second, we learn that all false gods will be brought down—and shown to be worthless.

- God will relegate them to be sat on by an unclean woman, and all who have trusted in them will be ashamed.

- Our forefathers were freed from these superstitious ways by the influence of the gospel, but today we see more and more people turning to such things—spirits, saints, horoscopes, necromancy, amulets, and charms.

- But in the judgement day, they will all be cast away as an unclean thing.

3. Third, we see here how the LORD will vindicate us.

- Even though Jacob was far from perfect, his ultimate testimony was that the God of grace was with him.

- All the oppression of Laban was exposed because the LORD was on the scene, and He delights in vindicating his servants when they have been falsely accused.
- This will be done fully on the great day, the day of judgement.
 - It will seem unfair to us when the LORD tells of our righteousness, but it will be His testimony of our works which works have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

TRANS> And now let us look at the ultimate outcome of the Lord's deliverance from our enemies.

III. The ultimate outcome of the LORD's deliverance is peace!

A. Jacob and Laban are here united in the LORD (v. 43-55)

1. Because of the LORD, they enter into a covenant of peace with each other.
 - Laban proposes it, and he proposes that it be done in the name of the LORD.
 - Some have said that he is polytheistic when he mentions the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor and the God of their father (v. 53),
 - but these were most likely seen to be one and the same God, because though Abraham's father worshipped idols,
 - it appears that he as well as Laban saw the LORD as the true God.
2. Next, we see Laban and Jacob worshipping together—Jacob offers sacrifices to the LORD (v. 54) and he and Laban share a meal together in communion with the LORD.
 - Laban who was ready to kill Jacob is now worshipping with him in peace.
3. And finally, we see that they depart in peace, bidding each other a proper farewell with kisses and blessings.

B. This is a beautiful picture of how the LORD will subdue all of our enemies and give us peace...

1. We do not know the true motive of Laban here...
 - Is he still wishing he could harm Jacob but is just acting in fear?
 - Or has he had a true change of heart, being humbled as one who has seen the power of God?
 - We do not know...but we know that there is peace one way or the other.
2. And this does not destroy the picture, because in the end, we will be delivered from all of our enemies and will have perfect peace...one way or another!
 - a. Some of them will, along the way, believe the gospel and we will be united with them in the LORD's salvation.
 - b. Others of them will be humbled before the glory of the LORD and will be forced to acknowledge that they have no power to resist Him...
 - They will no longer fight against us and will be cast into the Lake of Fire along with Satan and his angels.

3. But one way or the other the gospel promises us that we will be delivered from all who hate us and will serve the LORD in peace forever...
 - if, of course we are indeed His people—His people who have heard His call and have come to Him to be blessed with eternal life through the cross.
 - If we have come to be forgiven by faith in Jesus that we might serve God forever in His righteous kingdom, and be freed from all our sin.
 - If you are with us in Christ's kingdom, the deliverance that is revealed in Genesis 31 is deliverance that you will experience.
 - God promises that He will not only provide for you, but also that He will protect from all the enemies that rage against His people.
 - The outcome will be peace.