

Domestic Pain and Divine Purpose

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Date: 18 August 2024

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[0 : 00] Good. Well, let's turn to our reading for this morning, and we are continuing our series in the book of Genesis. So please turn to Genesis chapter 29.

And we're picking up the reading towards the end of the chapter, verse 31. You should have on your seats an outline of the story of Jacob. So on your seats, you'll see this handout, and we are right bang in the middle of this particular section, Genesis.

This is a very carefully structured section of the book of Genesis, as you'll see. And that is no accident. It's a very carefully organized account, and it demands to be taken seriously.

This is not just thrown together. This is very carefully put together, and it's here to teach us. And we're right bang in the middle of this section in Genesis, as you'll see on the handout.

But we read now from chapter 29 and verse 31. When the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.

[1 : 15] And Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben. For she said, Because the Lord has looked upon my affliction, for now my husband will love me.

She conceived again, and bore a son, and said, Because the Lord has heard that I am hated, he has given me this son also. And she called his name Simeon.

And again she conceived and bore a son, and said, Now this time my husband will be attached to me, because I have borne him three sons. And she conceived again, and said, This time I will praise the Lord.

Therefore she called his name Judah. Then she ceased bearing. When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister.

She said to Jacob, Give me children, or I shall die. Now, Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel. And he said, Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?

[2 : 21] Then she said, Here is my servant Bilhah. Go into her, so that she may give birth on my behalf, that even I may have children through her.

So she gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife. And Jacob went into her. And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. Then Rachel said, God has judged me, and has also heard my voice, and given me a son.

Therefore she called his name Dan. Rachel's servant Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. Then Rachel said, With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and have prevailed.

So she called his name Nathali. When Leah saw that she had ceased bearing children, she took her servant Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife.

Then Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a son. And Leah said, Good fortune has come. So she called his name Gad. Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a second son.

[3 : 32] And Leah said, Happy am I, for women have called me happy. So she called his name Asher. In the days of wheat harvest, Reuben went and found mandrakes in the field and brought them to his mother Leah.

And Rachel said to Leah, Please give me some of your son's mandrakes. But she said to her, It is a small matter that you have taken away my husband. Would you also take away my son's mandrakes?

Rachel said, Then he may lie with you tonight in exchange for your son's mandrakes. When Jacob came from the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, You must come into me, for I have hired you with my son's mandrakes.

So he lay with her that night. And God listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. Leah said, God has given me my wages because I gave my servant to my husband.

So she called his name Ishikah. And Leah conceived again, and she bore Jacob a sixth son. Then Leah said, God has endowed me with a good endowment.

[4 : 42] Now my husband will honor me because I have borne him six sons. So she called his name Zebulun. Afterward, she bore a daughter and called her name Dinah.

Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb. She conceived and bore a son and said, God has taken away my reproach.

And she called his name Joseph, saying, May the Lord add to me another son. Amen.

And may God bless his word to us. Amen. Amen. Amen. Well do turn with me to the passage we read there at the end of Genesis 29 and through chapter 30.

Perhaps as we read this together this morning, you wonder to yourself, how on earth a chapter like this could actually be in the Bible? certainly I think if it was a film it would hardly be family viewing would it it's all about motherhood but certainly not motherhood and apple pie it's about motherhood maidservants mandrakes and a whole lot of misery in a family situation that really you can only describe as a total mess by the way that's one of the reasons that we know we can trust the bible isn't it because it doesn't sanitize it doesn't airbrush out the harsh realities of life it doesn't buff up or gloss over the sins of the heroes of the faith no what it shows us here is a warts and all story of or just domestic meltdown and yet above all it is also a story about divine mercy mercy to a family that isn't a mess a mess of misery and a mess of its own sinful manipulation and not just mercy to this family but through this family to all the broken and the messed up people of this world last week we saw how in the previous episode uh we saw how history tends to repeat itself and chime with eerie familiarity a man reaps what he so as jacob's deceitful plot against his own brother is repeated on him in chapter 29 he's the victim this time of a switch between the first born and the second born and he finds himself married not to rachel as he wanted but to leah and then rachel both and now what we see is the ensuing domestic pain in a household that is damaged by that deceit and how it's played out in the marriage and the family life in rather a similar way as to how that played out in jacob's own parents family life and the painful misery of this covenant household fills the chapter there's no denying that and yet we mustn't miss that it also is a chapter that is full of the purposeful mercy of god it's not just a chapter about domestic pain it is a chapter all about the divine purpose of his grace of his mercy of his faithfulness of that promise to his promise of grace and also to his people of grace despite all their shortcomings all their sin notice how the story is framed everything is clearly bracketed within the hands of god's mercy the god who hears the god who sees and the god who acts in extraordinary mercy in the midst of that misery and the distress of these people in all their own making look at verse 31 of chapter 29 the lord saw that leah was hated and opened her womb it's the same at the end verse 17 of chapter 30 and verse 22 look at verse 17 god listened to leah and she conceived and verse 22 god remembered rachel and listened to her and opened her womb god's great mercy not just to assuage his people's pain but also through them to accomplish his promised purpose for blessing not just of this people israel but through this people israel blessing all the peoples of the earth as he promised so yes it is a there's a story of warning it's a story of instruction for god's people today about the folly of sinfully discarding god's will and god's ways for family life it is that but it's not just that it's not just a story about sin it is a story about god's [9 : 41] persistent grace and above all it's a story to give us encouragement and hope hope in the god of grace and mercy hope that his purpose is at work always even amid the pain the perplexity and even the perversity of sin in the world and among his people it's at work to accomplish all that he's promised for his people and in his people and through his people for the glory of his son and for his kingdom which all of us all of us may also share in just because of his extraordinary and undeserving mercy so let's look at the story try and grapple with it and its message for us today it falls really into six uh scenes but we're going to look at it in three movements each of which reports for us four births there's the misery first of all verse 31 to chapter 30 verse 2 then there's the manipulation that we see with maids in verses 3 to 16 and mandrakes and then there's the mercy that comes to dominate verse 17 to 24 at the end and we'll look at these in turn and try and draw some conclusions finally the story opens with a scene that can really only be described as shared misery from the end of chapter 29 there to the first couple of verses of chapter 30 they speak of widespread misery in the family and in the marriages and yet it is misery that is met by god's particular and protective mercy to the most needy and the most unloved verse 31 tells us poor leah was hated not in an absolute sense but she was an unloved wife she was unwanted jacob loved rachel but he was now stuck also married to leah now don't forget that leah herself wasn't exactly

blameless in this was she she played along with that deception willingly apparently and she trapped jacob into that marriage by sleeping with him and that's not an uncommon thing still is it less so today because abortion is so easy and um so-called sexual equality and so on gives men far easier ways to opt out of their responsibilities much more easily that's one of the ironies isn't it of the triumph of feminism supposedly but many men over the years many men at least with some decency some responsibility has found themselves trapped into a loveless marriage because there's a baby on the way just as jacob was here so Leah is far from blameless in this but she pays a very heavy price doesn't she and she's very vulnerable in a culture like that she could be very easily discarded especially if she was seen to be infertile so she's weak she's unloved she yearns for her husband's affection and the lord saw all of that and he opened her womb and she bore as we read in these verses in very quick succession it seems four strapping sons whatever might have been wrong with her eyes there was certainly nothing wrong with her reproductive system and fertility and fecundity abounds here these are not immaculate conceptions are they jacob jacob clearly is seeking to honor her as a lawful wife he's not denying her her marital rights which would have only compounded the wrong of her very unhappy situation exodus chapter 21 makes very clear that in the law of Moses even an unwanted wife has rights must be treated well so God moves jacob here to act justly and God has a justice and a protective care and a mercy that is lavished

upon Leah here with these sons but her misery her her real yearning is for love it's for recognition and you can see that in the names that she gives to these boys the pathos is palpable isn't it verse 20 32 Reuben now my husband surely will love me Simeon verse 33 because the Lord knows I'm hated Levi Levi surely this time my husband will be attached to me there's desperate unrequited love there isn't there despite all these breaths it's a real mess but verse 31 the Lord saw the law Lord looked on her affliction with protective mercy he gave her son some 127 tells us doesn't it that children are a heritage from the Lord the fruit of the womb are a reward from the Lord a reward notice here to the utterly undeserving it's her self-inflicted misery isn't it and her distress that causes God's protective mercy to draw near to her despite her sin just as in chapter 16 remember God drew near to to rejected Hagar to show her great tenderness and mercy it's one of the habits I think we as human beings don't find very easy in the Lord when he when he rewards those who've inflicted misery on themselves would we have rewarded Leah in that way but God does and it's seen here but meanwhile my meanwhile verse 30 tells us that Rachel remains barren and bitter she's loved by jacob in the way that Leah isn't but she isn't having any babies at all while Leah is filling up the creche all by herself and Rachel's full of envy at what Leah has and she doesn't have which makes the whole situation even worse and poor jacob is caught in the middle of all of this and Rachel's anger is vented on her husband it's your fault she shouts in verse one give me children or I die she's jealous she's very bitter of course it's really God isn't it that Rachel's angry with because she knows clearly there's nothing wrong with jacob's part in the process Leah's having children aplenty it's always the case isn't it that that actually when we're angry with God we don't say that we complain about our husband or wife we complain about the church we complain about our boss we complain about somebody else who's whose fault it is that we're not getting what we want so jacob gets it in the neck and well he doesn't handle it very brilliantly does he he just gets angry with his wife because no doubt she's becoming very hard to live with and jacob's right if you look at verse two he sets her quite right in her understanding of God's sovereignty he has withheld the fruit of your womb he's theologically correct isn't he but utterly psychologically inept I suppose it's quite common in classic male misunderstanding and mishandling of an emotional woman isn't it especially somebody who's so fraught and deeply pained as she is with an issue of this Rachel doesn't want logic like that in theology from jacob does she she needs loving she doesn't need bare doctrines from him she needs the enfleshed loving truth of a godly husband and leader to comfort her to encourage her to trust the Lord and submit to the Lord but you see jacob's angry with God too isn't he he's bitter and miserable in the midst of all of this this is a dire domestic circumstance he said he doesn't know what to do it's a mess widespread misery in these marriages in the family and yet there is mercy amid this mess protective mercy to Leah and this birth of her sons and notice she does acknowledge doesn't she God's kindness to her notice that last name Judah which means praise I will praise the Lord notice she's using the covenant name there the Lord Yahweh the God of Abraham although there's still a yearning isn't there there's a lack of love notice verse 35 then she ceased bearing it almost certainly means that jacob withdrew from her most likely to mollify Rachel sisterly relations are pretty bad here aren't they and spousal relations are pretty bad too it is

a mess of domestic pain there's shared misery all around and yet despite all of this the divine purpose is unfolding here are four sons born to jacob offspring of promise through whom all the families of the earth ultimately will be blessed god's promise is being fulfilled isaac had said back in chapter 28 verse 3 that god would make jacob seed a company of peoples and here we are the first four patriarchs of the tribes of israel are born including levi the priestly line mooses own ancestor and notice judah the kingly tribe about whom even mooses readers knew that there was a future bright and fraught with destiny because they knew didn't they the words of of jacob blessing his sons at the end of his life and they knew what he said about judah in genesis 49 the scepter will not depart from judah and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples so this is a mess this is shared misery but god's mercy is right in the midst of that mess showing kindness to his broken people and showing commitment to his promise for this broken world but the middle scenes verses 3 to 16 get even more messy don't they it's a story of sordid manipulation willful maloeuvring in the family and in the marriage disregarding both god's sovereignty that it is god alone who gives children and also disregarding his commands even further about the sanctity of marriage and yet even in this sinful and sordid manipulation it's met again with god's patient and persistent mercy ralph davis calls this a biblical soap opera and it is that it's even worse isn't it it's like one of these ghastly daytime tv shows documenting some sort of feral family with all its chaos and here's a story of escalating rivalry between leah and rachel first for sons through their respective maids and then for sex through their bargaining over these mandrakes look at the episodes with the maids first in verses 3 to 13 rachel's so determined to have children to call her own that she resorts now to surrogacy striking isn't it to see just how contemporary the bible is these things are not new she's a little more high tech these days but not always the old-fashioned way like this still goes on so here's bill how says rachel in verse 3 she can be a surrogate mother for me she's so desperate for a child she's willing to have a third woman sleeping with her husband we don't know what jacob thought about it but we're told he did what he's told

that it was to avoid the endless nagging from rachel and it worked so god must have approved of it surely that's rachel's reasoning in verse 6 isn't it god has judged me he's vindicated me so she calls her son her son dan vindication so let's do it again and yes she says with mighty wrestlings literally with wrestlings with god i've prevailed over my sisters he says in verse 8 so she names her son naphtali i've prevailed it's amazing isn't it how good we are at getting very spiritual sounding justifications for things so easy isn't it to convince ourselves that we've got god's backing for what we've done when we seem to get the result that we want but notice that the writer does not say here does he that god listened to rachel doesn't say that right till verse 22 that that was really true but nevertheless rachel gets what she wants and so now verse 9 leah starts to feel threatened again and she joins in zilpah becomes partner number four for jacob and out pops now gad good fortune lucky we could call him an asher happy happy and lucky another two people may call her happy as she says i don't think leah really is happy do you it's a measure of pride no doubt measure of satisfaction about getting ahead again in the baby leagues but she's no longer in jacob's bed well her sister is and now both her servants are there as well but not her what a mess and yet four more sons are born to jacob four more tribes of israel find their patriarch god doesn't strike down this whole harem if you like with infertility as he did to to pharaoh as he did to bimelech remember back in isaac's day no his his patient mercy is at work bringing his divine purpose to pass i made all the mess despite a totally confused a totally corrupted interpretation of his will even among his own chosen people they're revisiting again aren't they the the surrogacy arrangement that caused such disaster remember back with abraham and sarah and hagar the further cheapening the marriage bed with with outright polygamy i'm probably exhausting poor jacob into the bargain you might laugh you might think it's funny you might think jacob was somehow enjoying something a spicy sex life with all these women i suspect the reality was very different from that you ask any man whose wife is increasingly fixated on being pregnant just brings an awful lot of pressure not nearly as much fun as you might think it would be that's why couples who are are facing infertility have such a difficult time an immensely stressful time and those often who are going through different stages of medical treatment for that find it so intensely stressful and difficult in fact sometimes it's so difficult that it actually ends up destroying the relationship and here's jacob not just with one wife desperate for a baby but four women all at once a lot of these pregnancies were overlapping there were 11 births over seven years imagine the hormonal hothouse in that camp but what a mess willful sinful manipulating of the most intimate relationships in life that people determined to have what they want and what god has not given and to have it their way

and yet god does not abandon his people his patient mercy is at work four more sons are born a sin of course has its consequences and no doubt the misery and the pain and the bitterness only poisoned the whole relationships in this household more and more as time went on and verse 14 shows us that that manipulation and maneuvering continues but now now it's in rivalry for sexual attention that's what all these mandrakes are about love apples is another name for them plants that were reckoned to be perhaps aphrodisiacs but certainly fertility drugs you can read about them in song of songs in chapter 7 for example so reuben is out and he finds some gives some to Leah his mother but Rachel is desperate to have some maybe Jacob is in bad shape maybe he needs a bit of a pep-up who could blame him with all of this going on but see this exchange reveals something desperately sad definitely bitter in these poor women's lives doesn't it despite all the triumphant naming of the children Leah's reply in verse 15 seems to affirm that she's no longer got any real intimate relationship with Jacob she's desperate for love so she'll trade all of these valuable fruit just for one night in Jacob's bed it's got a desperate picture isn't it but Rachel's equally desperate because she's desperate for a child of her own not just a child through her maid so much for vindication I've prevailed she knows it's all just show she is still desperately full of longing so she'll chase any superstition any old quackery about mandrakes and Leah gets her night with Jacob but look at verse 16 it's pretty pitiful isn't it you must come to me because I've hired you with my son's mandrakes Jacob's been reduced to just being a stud for hire in his own house he's a slave to Laban in his work now he's a slave even in his own household and the irony is that Leah gives up these supposed magic love fruit she gets her night with Jacob and indeed much more while Jacob well Rachel actually despite the mandrakes remains childless for several more years because the blessings of children and indeed all the blessings in life come not from our selfish manipulation to get what we want but by God's mercy and that mercy is what these last two scenes of the story underline for us in triplicate because at last the awful picture of domestic pain is eclipsed by the divine purpose of grace and of mercy it's been there all the time in the background but now it comes right out into the foreground doesn't it so we cannot miss the point that this story is teaching us all about sheer mercy the wonderful mercy of a sovereign God who's both personal and persistent to all in this messed up covenant family and which is promised through this messed up family for the blessing of the whole world it's not maids and mandrakes that bring the answer it's God's mercy his tender mercy to both loveless Leah and and at last night a childless Rachel first there's mercy to Leah verse 17 do you see God listened to Leah Leah had obviously now turned to God in prayer [29 : 55] it's not that she's suddenly become all sound in her theology all discerning all therefore deserving of an answer from God no verse 18 sure she's just as confused just as mixed up look God's given me my wages she says my just reward as a sacrifice for giving up my maid to my husband not at all and actually Leah had done that utterly selfishly not sacrificially to get what she wanted but still she's just as lonely she's as desperate she's as loveless and God's loving mercy touches her and grants her not only another son but also it seems a measure of restored relationship with Jacob because she keeps on conceiving she must be sleeping with him again and it seems there's been a measure of healing at last in their marriage Leah bears another son and a daughter means she has seven children in all the perfect number in Hebrew thinking and these names do seem to speak about much more optimism don't they verse 20 Zebulun because now my husband will honor me and Dinah the female of Dan vindication again but this time much much more convincing it seems God's healing mercy for Leah and at last verse 22 for Rachel also and this is really the capstone of the whole story of Jacob the great turning point God remembered Rachel and the language there signifies doesn't it one of the great covenant interventions of God's saving mercy remember Genesis chapter 8 God remembered Noah and the flood water subsided Genesis 19 God remembered Abraham and rescued Lot out of Sodom or as Moses people listening would remember very well themselves Exodus chapter 2 God remembered his covenant with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and God saw the people of Israel and he came down to save them God remembered Rachel and listened to her and opened her womb and she conceived and bore a son named Joseph Joseph because God had taken away her reproach her shame and given her hope and she can say with faith well may he add to be another son as of course he would years later with Benjamin and again do you notice how Rachel now uses God's personal covenant name for the very first time here in verse 24 the Lord is the name that she invokes just as Leah praised the Lord in Judah's birth I think we're being told aren't we that they see at last that real hope real happiness comes only from him only from the Lord only he can truly take away all shame and disappointment that real hope in life real happiness in life comes not from blaming your spouse or blaming yourself or blaming God

himself for what he doesn't give but rather in finding satisfaction and thanksgiving and praise in what he does give in his time and his way we all find that so hard to learn don't we and that's why so often there is a lot of misery a lot of manipulation in our lives and in our families and in our marriages as well some writers and preachers really go to town in this chapter on the wickedness that's going on the idolatry

Leah's idolatrous quest for affection and so on Rachel's idolatrous pursuit of children but we we must be careful not to be too harsh on these women certainly not harsher than God seems to be on them surely natural isn't it it's right for Leah to crave her husband's love and the story highlights doesn't it the impossibility of true marital love being a shared love with more than one person three people in a marriage is always always going to be destructive and surely Rachel's desire for children was equally natural her infertility was deeply painful and we must recognize the agonies of that we must share God's mercy in his response to that and yet at the same time it is still true isn't it that no earthly relationship will bring the satisfaction that meets our deepest human need and desire except the satisfaction for which we were truly made which is to know and to love the Lord God himself and it seems that that is at last what both Rachel and Leah do grasp in naming the covenant name it's his covenant mercy and his alone that will solve not just the pain of this family but also all the pain all the misery of our sinful and suffering world and that's you see what this story is really all about it points us to the answer of God to all human pain and that lies in his divine purpose in God's unfolding promise of grace and mercy through his promised seed of salvation which we see beginning in this grim story

Ralph Davis captures it with characteristic flair he says it seems like sheer bedlam conjugal arguments mandrake madness bedroom deals the covenant family in all its dysfunctional splendor and yet in spite of all this crabbing strife conflict tensions bickerings hatred and misery God is faithful to his promise here after all there are 11 sons God's fidelity doesn't sanitize all the circumstances or twistedness of his people but in all the slop the seed is multiplying you see that you see that what this story does above all is to point us to God to his purpose to his gospel of grace to his mercy unfolding unstoppably for this world it forces us doesn't it to see past the sin and the weakness of the covenant people to see to see the covenant God who as we sang who gives us hope and light from heaven above in this dark day through Christ who takes our sin and our guilt away and that's why this is written for us as we close let me just try to crystallize three ways that this chapter teaches us about the covenant mercy of God first first of all it points to God's merciful precepts to the wisdom of his law what this story exemplifies for us in hideous technicolor is the catastrophic results that happen when God's merciful ordering for the institution of marriage is ignored or corrupted

God's word teaches doesn't it from Moses to Jesus from Genesis to Revelation that marriage is to be an exclusive union between one man and one woman for life is God being restrictive is God being vindictive repressing us with that well you just need to read this chapter don't you and the further fallout that goes on down future generations to see it is the very opposite God's precepts are merciful he prohibits these things in order to protect his people from the pain from the misery from the disharmony from the distress all the things that are illustrated exactly here in this story Moses readers knew the laws that he had taught them from God including specific prohibition from ever marrying two sisters in Leviticus 18 specific protection in Deuteronomy 21 for the unloved sons of an unloved wife those laws are there not because

God approves of polygamy because these things are so damaging that when that did happen due to sinful disregard of God's laws it needed very specific protective rights to limit the damage so friends believe me passages like these are written for us Paul says that in the Corinthians doesn't he they're written for us don't go that way be warned don't kick against God's precepts for marriage for the right place for sexual relations exclusively within monogamous marriage these precepts are merciful they're for our blessing not for our harm and this passage of all passages surely shows us the wisdom of God's law our politicians today need to hear that too don't they we disregard God's creation ordinance for marriage the inevitable result will be domestic pain if we tinker with the institution of marriage we do so at our peril our communities our countries our whole world will reap a terrible harvest as it is doing from family breakdown domestic despair strife throughout the generations let this chapter be a warning to all of us personally and to the church but also to our society but if that's all this story does give us a warning then it would be a counsel of despair wouldn't it but it's not all that it does because as

[40 : 01] I've said above all it points us secondly to God's merciful promise points us to the wonder of his love his loving grace and his mercy not only to this dysfunctional family but to all who have made disastrous mistakes of sin and mess and through the unfolding story of this messed up family of Israel God's grace and mercy has come to this messed up world of ours through the seed the Messiah the Lord Jesus Christ it's sometimes hard to believe isn't it that God really will keep his promises it's hard to believe God really is in control of this world because it looks such a mess and we make such a mess so much of the time don't you think Moses people understood that they stood on the brink of the promised land and they looked back on 40 years of calamitous disaster wandering around in the wilderness because of their sin but here's a story that says

God can work even in the midst of great mess and even with very messy people the Israelites knew that don't you think verse 24 here was a wonderful thrill for their hearts think about Joseph Joseph who they knew became the savior of the whole family of Israel despite his brother's hatred despite them trying to kill him that what they meant for evil God meant for good for the saving of many lives and it's just the same isn't it in this story in all this mess of sinful manipulation of selfish misery God turns it into saving mercy as this Joseph was born a savior who would go ahead of them and bring blessing and prosperity to a family that deserved absolutely none of it but not only Joseph Rachel's son whose birth is the climax of this story but also Judah the unloved

Leah's son whose birth is the climax of the first part of the story it was through Judah's line that God's promised holy seed came preserved all through the generations until at last the whole story of God's wonderful love reached its climax and fulfillment in the coming of the son of Judah the Lord Jesus Christ the ultimate seed of Abraham the savior of the world born to this unloved desperate woman Leah this is a story that points us constantly to God's merciful promise which has been fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ so that the wonderful love and the mercy that this mucked up family experience despite all the mess all the pain of their life so that that wonderful love can be experienced by every family by every broken man by every unloved wife but every messed up child in this sad world of ours through faith in Jesus

Christ the promised seed through whom that promise of saving mercy has come because Peter said you remember on the day of Pentecost this promise is to you and to your children to all who are afar off whom the Lord will call to himself through this marvelous promise of his merciful gospel that's why this is here written for us that as Paul says through the encouragement of the scriptures we we might have hope and finally you see it's a it's a story that points us to what is still God's merciful pattern to the way God is at work in our lives because of his merciful promises he fulfilled in Jesus Christ his saving mercy is poured out to bless all the families of the earth and that means that everyone who will call on the name of the Lord the covenant

God made known to us in Jesus Christ can find that mercy and can be brought into the story of that wonderful mercy to share it and play our part in it even if we've made a mess of things in our own lives as usually we have but God's mercy riches out to people that are in a mess and he uses people with a lot of mess with a lot of baggage in their lives and he takes them up into his story just like he took up Rachel here and Leah and Zilpa and Bilha and Jacob himself a mess of relationships it should never have been God never will condone our sin but you see because of the triumph of the lion of the tribe of Judah the lamb who was slain nor does he condemn our sin he washes it away in his great mercy and he invites us also to come in and be part of that ongoing story sharing in the story of his glorious kingdom so that even our domestic pain become a vehicle in his hands for his divine purpose that's his merciful pattern still it still is today he works in our lives if we love the

[45 : 42] Lord Jesus Christ despite all the mess of our lives of our own making a final Ralph Davisism as we close the chemistry of divine providence takes the sludge and crud and confusion of our doings and makes it the soil that produces the fruit of his faithfulness isn't that a wonderful thing for people like us to hear because we get in such a mess don't we and so often it is through our own sinful maneuverings so much of our misery is self inflicted isn't that right but thank God we can have a share in that extraordinary mercy and that means that we can say with Rachel God has taken away my shame and we can say with

Leah here therefore I will praise the Lord amen let's pray together oh God who declares thy almighty power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity mercifully grant unto us such a measure of thy grace that we running the way of thy commandments may obtain thy gracious promises and be made partakers of thy heavenly treasure through Jesus Christ our Lord amen