

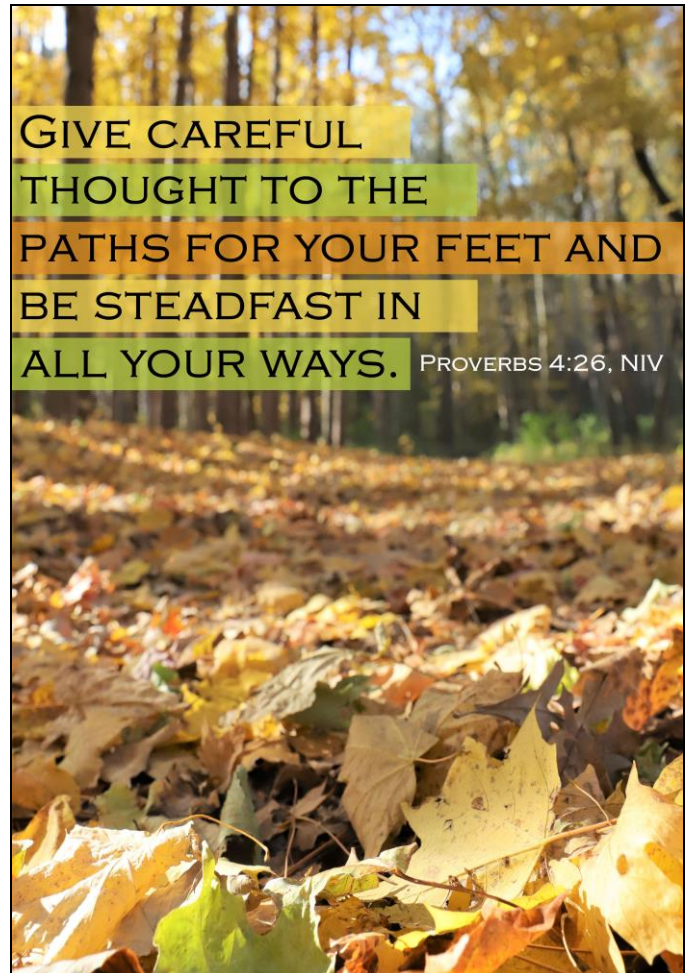
## Jacob's Famine

By Ken Bills

Of all of the heroes of the Old Testament, I don't think that any are more interesting than the patriarch, Jacob. His story is told in the book of Genesis, beginning in chapter 25, and continuing until the end of the book in chapter 50. Almost every chapter provides food for thought. It can be a fascinating exercise to pick a chapter and to contemplate what is happening in Jacob's life. In this article, we are going to focus on chapter 43, verses 1 to 14, in the context of a very, very abbreviated summary of some of what has brought Jacob to this place.

Jacob is an old man now. His life has been eventful (to say the least) to this point. He has known struggle and triumph. He is living in the land to which God had called his grandfather Abraham and father Isaac, but that does not protect him and his family when past with flocks and riches, but famine can be devastating to a shepherd, and in chapter 43 Jacob and his family are in the midst of an extremely prolonged and severe famine.

Jacob's family situation is also not free from trials. Jacob's favorite and much-loved wife, Rachel, whom he loved dearly, is dead, having died in childbirth giving birth to her second son, Benjamin. Jacob had twelve sons, but Joseph, Rachel's first son and Joseph's favorite of all his sons is (Jacob believes) also dead. Jacob had sent the seventeen-year-old Joseph to check up on his older brothers who were out with the flocks and Joseph never returned. (Unbeknownst to Jacob, Joseph's jealous brothers had attacked Joseph, and sold him into slavery in Egypt). Being deceived by his sons into believing that Joseph had been killed by a lion, Jacob has vowed to mourn Joseph for as long as he lives (Genesis 37:35).



The main problem facing Jacob as chapter 43 begins, however, is what do about the continuing famine. Jacob knows that there is food available in Egypt, and in fact, he had previously sent his ten oldest sons on the dangerous journey to Egypt to buy grain, admonishing them, and I paraphrase, *"Why are you standing around looking at each other? Go to Egypt and buy grain, so we don't starve."* Jacob kept Benjamin at home with him, however, and it seems clear that with Joseph gone, Benjamin has become the favored son.

Jacob's oldest sons are understandably reluctant to go to Egypt a second time. The first time they went, they were (1) accused of being spies, (2) thrown into prison for three days, (3) interrogated by the governor of Egypt

Continued on page 2...

## "Jacob's Famine," continued...

(who unrecognized by them was their brother Joseph), (4) required to leave one brother (Simeon) in Egypt as a hostage, and (5) commanded not to return without their youngest brother, Benjamin, in order to prove that they had been honest in answering the governor's questions. As if that were not enough, when the brothers arrived home, they discovered that they had mysteriously returned with both the grain they had bought and the money they had used to pay for the grain, so they risked being accused of theft as well.

Jacob is adamant that he does not want his oldest sons to take Benjamin to Egypt: *"You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more... My son (Benjamin) shall not go down with you."* Jacob and his nine remaining oldest sons are now at an impasse. They refuse to risk going back to Egypt without Benjamin, Jacob is afraid to let Benjamin out of his sight, and yet... the famine continues and the grain his sons brought back from Egypt on their prior visit has all been eaten. Jacob is finally forced by the famine to relent and agrees to send Benjamin with his brothers to Egypt, invoking God's protection: *"May God Almighty grant you mercy before the [Egyptian governor], so that he may send back your other brother and Benjamin. As for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."*

That's where we will leave Jacob. We, of course, know the end of the story: The brothers arrive in Egypt, and are brought before the governor, who reveals that he is Joseph, the brother they sold into slavery and that God, in His providence, has raised Joseph into a position where he can help them through the famine. The brothers send for Jacob, who comes to Egypt, where he is reunited with Joseph and all of his sons.

There is a lot to ponder just in this short episode from Jacob's life. I will mention some of the things that struck me:

Jacob's family was a mess, and a lot of it was his fault. If we sometimes think we have failed too badly for God to continue to have anything to do with us, or we are filled with despair over the complications and broken relationships in our

personal lives, we can be encouraged that God remained faithful to Jacob through it all.

When Jacob invokes God's protection as he sends Benjamin off with his brothers, it's the first time in Genesis that Jacob mentions God since Jacob was told by his sons that Joseph had been killed by a lion. It's a mistake to draw conclusions when scripture is silent, but I can't help but wonder: Could it be that God used a famine to bring Jacob (reluctantly, to be sure) back to Him? Whether or not that was the case for Jacob, God can work in the worst situations of our lives to draw us closer to Him.

Jacob entrusts his sons to the care of God Almighty (El Shaddai) as they depart for Egypt. Jacob, who earlier in his life had wrestled with God all night till God blessed him, here acknowledges that God is mighty, and by implication, admits that he is not. But Jacob is clearly uncertain whether God will protect his sons ("If I am bereaved..., I am bereaved"). Has Jacob come to a place of trusting surrender ("Not my will but Thy will")? Or, is this a prayer of despair, when every human effort has been tried and failed and a plea to God is a last desperate cry with little hope that it will be answered? Either way, Jacob's prayer is answered in ways that far exceed his greatest hopes. No matter how much or little faith we have, God is looking for us to turn to Him and put ourselves and our situations in His hands.

Finally, it is striking how little Jacob knew. He didn't know that Joseph was alive and not dead. He didn't know that his sons had lied to him. But mostly he had no idea that long before the famine, long before his cry for God's protection for his sons, God was sovereignly working, orchestrating events to protect and deliver Jacob and his family. The same is true, I believe, for us. At best we only see occasional glimpses of God's on-going redemptive work around us. But as we read in Romans, we can have confidence that *"God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."* (Romans 8:28)



## Elders' Corner

By Ed MacQueen

Greetings in the Lord. I hope your summer has been enjoyable. It's hard to believe that fall is nearly upon us! Before embracing the turn of seasons, though, let me pause to thank God and you for the 5-Day Club ministry we put on in July. It was a team effort all around, and the children were especially grateful for everyone who provided snacks. This year God brought people to the program who had never been to church before, including one family who came because they had visited our egg hunt. Another family came because someone had sent them a photo of our 5-Day Club banner weeks earlier, and as they were deleting old photos *on the first day of 5-Day Club*, they came across the photo and decided to attend. Thank you for your prayers for the event, for the children attending, and for the leaders. God's hand was plain to see in the sharing of the Gospel and the warm receptivity of the children.

As we transition out of summer, please be sure to join for the church picnic at the Straubels' on Sunday, September 10. If you're feeling brave you can squeeze in one more swim!

As always, it's an honor to serve you. May God continue His good work in our lives until completion at the day of Christ Jesus.

### Financial Update

(Through July 31, 2023)

*"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want..."*

|         | Actual    | Budget    |
|---------|-----------|-----------|
| Income  | \$87,237  | \$127,750 |
| Expense | \$125,626 | \$127,819 |

Windsor Chapel has sent \$12,693 to our missionary partners this year. That is 15% of your giving!



## Happy Birthday!

Blessings to all who celebrate a birthday this month. May you feel the love, joy and presence of the Lord as we all celebrate your special day with prayers and warmest wishes.

|                    |              |
|--------------------|--------------|
| Elizabeth MacQueen | September 1  |
| Dmitri Morozova    | September 1  |
| Yvonne Ritchie     | September 10 |
| Anna Yang          | September 11 |
| Jessie Yang        | September 14 |
| Jean Warner        | September 15 |
| Emily MacQueen     | September 23 |
| Elena Morozova     | September 26 |
| Cindy Shaw         | September 26 |

## You're Invited to Our Annual Church Picnic!

Enjoy fun, food and fellowship at our Annual Church Picnic on Sunday, September 10, from 4:00 – 7:00 pm. It will be held at the Straubels' home, which is located at 691 Hughes Drive, in Hamilton. Please bring your lawn chair and a salad or dessert to share. If you wish to use the pool, please also bring your towel and bathing suit.

The pool will be open, and the fellowship will be great! Everyone is welcome. Please RSVP Janice Straubel at [jsjanice.straubel@gmail.com](mailto:jsjanice.straubel@gmail.com) to let her know how many people in your party will be coming.



## 11<sup>th</sup> Hour Sunday School

Our adult Sunday School class will begin its fall/winter term on Sunday, September 24, at 11:00 am, in the sanctuary basement. Please plan to join us as we begin a study of Paul's epistle to the church in Rome. Teachers/Facilitators: Larry and Janet Berrill; Ken and Cindy Bills.

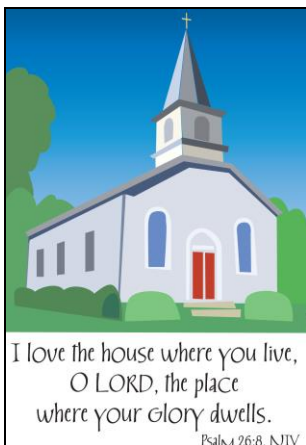
## *Perisseia*

Our women's growth group will begin a five-week series on Thursday evening, September 28, 7:00-8:30 pm, in the Chapel House. We will continue looking at relationships among believers in the early church.

All women are welcome, and no commitment or preparation is necessary. For more information, please contact Cindy Bills ([cynthialbills@gmail.com](mailto:cynthialbills@gmail.com); 609-275-8557).

*The glory of God is available to you in the church in a way it's not available to you anywhere else.*

**Timothy Keller, 1950-2023**



## Children's Sunday School Picnic



Tom and Kate Taylor recently held their annual backyard barbecue for their Sunday School kids and their families. There were fun games, food and a nice dousing with water balloons.

## Further Up and Further In

*Inviting dialogue to encourage growth in  
and among us*



By Cindy Bills

### Seasons of Change

For last month's Chapel Challenge, I wrote about the challenges of managing time as the close of summer and beginning of fall reminds us that time is indeed fleeting. And as we usher in September, the challenges remain. I would like for us to consider another aspect of the passing of time that may encourage us to appreciate the Lord's redemptive use of time and its passing.

As fallen creatures, we are unable to perceive time in anything but an extremely limited way. We see time in a linear, uni-directional way that does not reflect our eternal, redemptive God. Writers have expressed the struggle to more fully understand time over the past many centuries.

***I'm a time traveler.... People don't understand time. It's not the way you think it is. It's complicated, very complicated. People assume that time is a straight progression of cause to effect, but actually from a nonlinear, nonsubjective viewpoint, it's more like a big ball of wobbly wobbly timey wimey stuff.***  
**Dr. Who**

When I consider the history of the Hebrew people as it is recorded in the Old Testament, I hear a drumbeat: Remember, remember, remember.... The Hebrew people were not very good at remembering the LORD's holiness, faithfulness, and personal watchfulness over them. Over and over, they fell away from the LORD GOD as time passed. And then over and over, circumstances and events would remind them of their need for the LORD, and they would repent and return to following Him.

We are not very good at remembering, either. We are often tempted to follow the way of the world, to

do life ourselves, and reserve faith for emergencies and holidays. It seems to me that remembering might be easier if we considered time more from the expanded perspective of Dr. Who. The Lord has promised to complete the work He has begun in us. He is in the process of sanctifying us, of inviting us to partake in His nature and to become fit for heaven. This means that we need to be willing to change. And the kind of change that the Lord wants for us is eternal; it requires us to embrace change over time.

It is not easy for me to change: I don't like it! New events and adventures are uncomfortable, and I am always relieved when I can get my life "back to normal." But that is short-sighted. If I look beyond discomfort to the redemptive purposes that the Lord uses those new events and adventures, I can allow Him to use them to change me. And as this change occurs, I can look back in time and view those uncomfortable times with greater appreciation and gratitude. It changes my view of history, which in turn changes the way I view the future. I can learn to be changed in deep ways that remain as time passes.

And so here we are, at the end of summer and the beginning of fall. It is time to put swimsuits away and get out school supplies and sweaters. The party is over: back to work! But we serve the great I AM, the eternal Being, the Lord who sovereignly guides past, present, and future toward His redemptive ends. So rather than putting summer away, I would like to suggest that we take those parts of summer that changed us: that helped us to see the Lord more clearly or experience His faithfulness more deeply and carry them with us into the fall with an eagerness to continue to see the Lord do His redemptive work in us. And in that way, we are living in three-dimensional time: we apply the confidence of the Lord's work from the past to the choices of the moment as we look toward greater maturity in Christ in the future.

*Please feel free to contact Cindy (609-275-8557) or [cynthialbills@gmail.com](mailto:cynthialbills@gmail.com) to continue the dialogue....*

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## Do Not Stumble

By Janet Berrill

Have you ever cared a lot about someone or something and earnestly prayed for God to act? The kind of situation I am referring to is one you care deeply about, so much so that you petition God throughout the day with heartfelt prayers, asking Him to change the situation according to your request. I am referring to situations such as praying for healing, or an end to financial troubles, or an end to a conflict, or for wisdom regarding the future, etc.

I am in the midst of such a situation now. My dear friend is suffering physically to the point of debilitation. She continues to go to doctors seeking their assistance in determining what is wrong and looking for their advice as to what can be done to help her feel better.

In Matthew 11:2-6, John the Baptist is in prison and he sends his disciples to ask Jesus if He is the *“one who was to come,”* that is, the Messiah. Jesus replies by giving an account of the miracles He has performed such as healing the blind, deaf, lame, those with leprosy, and raising the dead to life. Then He says, *“Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.”*

John had expectations of the Messiah that were not being realized. John had been called by God to prepare the way for the Messiah and he had done that. So why was he in jail? This is not what he expected. It was anticipated that the Messiah was going to free the nation of Israel (see Acts 1:6), but it did not look like Jesus was doing that. Because Jesus was not meeting John’s expectations, he may have thought he made a mistake, maybe Jesus was not the one he thought He was. In Jesus’ reply, He says to look at what He had done and see how it fulfilled scripture (see

Isaiah 35:5-6). He then goes on to tell them that they will be blessed if they do not stumble, that is, think He is not the Messiah, because everything about Him was not the way they thought it was going to be. He is who He says He is, even if He does not do what one expects Him to do.

As I have been praying for my friend, I have expectations. I know God is all knowing, He designed our bodies, He knows exactly what is causing her to feel so bad, He knows exactly what to do to help her feel better, He is all powerful, He can miraculously heal her, He loves her more than I do. Luke 4:40 says, *“When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying His hands on each one, He healed them.”* Inspired by this verse, I have been praying for her, figuratively bringing my friend to Jesus, seeking her healing, expecting God to act. But as of yet, she is not healed.

*“Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.”* God is not meeting my expectations, how am I going to respond? I will honestly admit that for a time I was unhappy with God for His perceived lack of response. He healed the people that were brought to Him, why is He not healing my friend? But as I read Jesus’ words about not stumbling on account of Him, I realized that I cannot turn from God because I do not see Him working as I asked, as I expect Him to, but I must continue to trust in the truth of who I know Him to be.

(This edited article was originally printed in August 2019)

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**If you have any items or information you would like to share in the newsletter, please e-mail:**

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