

Contending for Faith 2

Genesis 34

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

We're talking, loved ones, these evening services about walking by faith and not walking by sight. It's maybe good to just point out to all of us that walking by sight has actually a very strong spiritual side to it because we've said that walking by sight is really looking to the people around us in this world, and the things around us for the security and happiness that we need to get. That's the way we're brought up; we're brought up to use the people, things and the circumstances around us to give us security and happiness. And there's a tendency for us to think, "Oh yeah, well that's just materialism. That's just using the wrong thing."

But no, it's important to see that there is a spirit behind those things. You can see that in Ephesians 2:2-3. Ephesians 2:2-3 point out that you're really are getting yourself under something of the same spirits that govern a billion people in China and almost a billion in India -- the evil spirits. Ephesians 2:2, "In which you once walked," "The trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. Among these we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind, and so we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind."

Really we often think, "Oh well, we're just doing what everybody else is doing -- we're depending on our bank accounts for security. We're depending on our friends for our popularity." But no, in depending on those things you're putting yourself under the elemental spirits of the universe. That explains often why at times, and you know it, you've got into very narrow places in regard to your finances. You've almost got yourself painted into a corner. It's not just because your money isn't working out, but you actually put yourself under the elemental spirits of the universe and they bring you into straightened places and into narrow places where you're worried, and where you can't make a move. That's their job.

And it's the same with this business of depending on friends for a kind of sense of importance or significance. It's not really just that they let you down, or that they've started to criticize you, but it's by depending on them you put yourself under the elemental spirits of the universe and those elemental spirits of the universe are bent on only one thing, making you feel that you're a miserable no good who is not worth anything. So, brothers and sisters, when we talk about walking by sight, it's maybe good just to mention again that it's not just that you're depending on money, or you're depending on people, or you're depending on things. It's that in doing that you put yourself under the elemental spirits of the universe that have set up a whole alternative way to live life here on earth and that way is by depending on the things you see and touch as opposed to a way of faith depending on the warmest, and you'll excuse me saying it, but it's true, the warmest, cuddliest father that ever lived. That's exactly what he is.

Our Father is a dear, warm, close, loving, cuddling God who loves us and has a heart for us, and has our names written in his hearts and he has everything arranged for us. Living by faith in him is the way God intends us to live. Now, it's important to see that if you refuse to live by the elemental spirits of the universe you can be free of them. Look at Colossians 2:15 because you can be free of the power of those spirits because of what Jesus did. It's Colossians 2:15, "He disarmed

the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in him.” And Jesus has disarmed those elemental spirits and you don’t need to live life in those depressions. You don’t need to live life in that miserable anxiety and worry. Jesus has disarmed those elemental spirits and they have no power over you and you’ve simply to believe that and to thank God that that is the case and to reject him and resist him in Jesus’ name.

I’d just point out to you again, if you’ve had any kind of fits, depression fits, anxiety fits, worry fits, you know fine well, it is almost funny the way you can simply reject it. I mean, you can almost whistle a little tune and sing zippity-do-da and it’ll go away. It’s almost like that. In fact, if you will against him at all because Jesus has destroyed him on the cross they have to retreat from you. So in a sense it’s very easy to reject depression and to reject that straightened place you get into.

I don’t know how many of you have found it but I’ve certainly found myself in financial situations where it seems that life is closing in on you. Closing in, closing in, and if you’re husband and wife here tonight, you know it can be gruesome. You can wear each other out because it seems as if the elemental spirits of the universe or some power is making you feel you can’t move hand or foot, you’re bound tight. It’s amazing to realize that God in Jesus has destroyed the power of those elemental spirits of the universe and actually all you need to do is resist them in Jesus’ name. The killer is we think, “Oh now, we’ve got to find financial solutions.” You don’t, you actually just have to resist them in Jesus name and they will lift. The heaviness will lift and the darkness will lift and then your mind will be free to work out the solutions that God has.

So loved ones, that’s what we mean by living by faith as opposed to living by sight. It’s not just living by sight, you know, this thing here or this thing, it’s that behind those things are elemental spirits of the universe that bring you – that are bent on bringing you into slavery and narrowness and stringent places and it is possible to live above those by faith in God’s destruction of them in Jesus.

Now, it’s probably important for you to see that the only way to walk safely there is under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I don’t know if you sense it after Easter, do you realize we had a great service here last Sunday? But many of you were all away visiting relatives as we all are at Easter time. I don’t know if you realize it but it would be good for you to know it. This happens every year, every time most of us are away for Easter it takes us a while to get back into the swing again. It’s interesting and it’s amazing how many of us, we go home for vacation, or we go out for a good weekend and actually we miss the life of God flowing into us and we’re just a little bit less filled with God for about a week or so later.

Now there are laws of the spirit in that way and the only way to walk safely by faith in this life is to listen closely to the dear Holy Spirit because we’re not fighting against flesh and blood. And you remember, it says that in Ephesians 6:12. Ephesians 6:12, “For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” And really, all those beings are moving against you on all kinds of occasions and the only way to walk free through them all is down in Verse 18 there, “Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.”

The Holy Spirit is the only one who can guide you through all those things so do listen to him. And

could I encourage you tonight, could you go up to bed half an hour before you're going to go to sleep and get your Bible out and pray God's word into you. Really do. Now do. And if you say, "That's not the Holy Spirit speaking." Yes, this could be the Holy Spirit speaking. Tonight, go to bed a half hour before you're going to go to sleep and just kneel down at that dear bedside and get your Bible out, and pray Psalm 23 into you, "Thou the Lord is my shepherd I shall not want. Lord, I thank you that you're my shepherd. I thank you that I shall not want. I thank you that you're my shepherd that provides all the food that I need." Pray his word up to him so that his Holy Spirit can fill your heart and your spirit. But do that -- go to bed half an hour earlier tonight instead of turning on the television. Go to bed half an hour earlier and then just kneel down and feed your spirit with his word because the Holy Spirit is able by that means to guard you and protect you.

Now that's one of the wonderful things the Holy Spirit does. We're getting into the study, loved ones. It's John 16:13, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come." The Holy Spirit knows what you're going to need tomorrow. He knows the opportunities for temptation and sin that you're going to face the day after tomorrow. He knows the things that are to come and he can protect you ahead, and he can guard you, and he can build you up, and he can fortify you for those things. If you don't listen to him and do what he tells you, it's a bit like what both you sisters shared, do what he tells you irrespective of the results or the detail. Do it regardless of the consequences or the detail. The important thing is to do what the Holy Spirit tells you to do at the time. Even a little impression in your heart that you should pray, or that you should spend some extra time in the word, do it because the Holy Spirit can protect you for things that are about to come.

Now, this is what would have happened to old Jacob if he had listened. Let's go to the study loved ones, it's Genesis 34. If you look back at Genesis 34 and just glance at the previous few verses, the last few verses that is Genesis 33:18, "And Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, on his way from Paddan-aram; and he camped before the city." Now you remember that Jacob escaped from Esau's wrath when he bluffed his father, you remember, about the birth right. Then he spent 20 years serving Laban for Leah and for Rachel. Later he spent another six years serving for the cattle. So, 20 years later he came back to his home land and this was him on his way back.

You notice the way the Bible puts it, "And Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, on his way from Paddan-aram." And God was kind of saying, "He was only on his way." Paddan-aram, by the way, if you look at the front cover of the Bible, you'll see it there if you notice where the join is. I think there are maps -- aren't there in that one? Oh yes, there are. Yeah. If you look, loved ones, just half way down that page and to the write of that join of the two pages, you'll see Paddan-aram.

Now that's where Jacob had been and he was traveling west towards the land of Canaan. If you run your finger straight west you'll come to Canaan. So that's what the Bible is talking about, he was in Paddan-aram and he was on his way from Paddan-aram to the promised land and the Bible is making it as he was on his way and God intended him to keep moving and that is what the Holy Spirit would have kept him doing had he been listening to the Holy Spirit.

But you see what he did? "He camped before the city. From the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, he bought for a hundred pieces of money the piece of land on which he had pitched his tent." That's an anomaly. "He bought the piece of land on which he had pitched his tent." I know a certain person

here has a mobile home or a travel trailer and if every time he pitched his travel trailer he bought the land under it, well he'd be kind of contradicting the purpose of the travel trailer. That's what God had in mind for Jacob. God had him in a tent, it was a mobile home, he had him on his way and if Jacob had been listening to the Holy Spirit, his daughter Dinah would never have gotten into this mess.

But in fact, he ended up buying the piece of land the tent was on. He had already spent, we reckon, 10 years in Succoth. So 20 years he had spent with Laban, he'd spent 10 years in Succoth where he had built a home and he was still on his way to where God wanted him to be. But here he was, not only pitching his tent but settling in, kind of putting in the plumbing and the sewage and settling in for a long haul.

Now loved ones, listen to the Holy Spirit. Don't stay longer than he tells you to, don't go faster than he tells you, listen to him because he knows the things that are to come. He can protect you from dangers that are further down the road. Actually, all the dangers that Dinah got into were because her father had begun to make an alliance with these people because he bought the land. You can see that, "And from the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, he bought for a hundred pieces of money the piece of land on which he had pitched his tent." And of course, then like the rest of us, he tried to sanctify his own initiative, "There he erected an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel." The God of Israel.

But really what he had done was initiate something himself and by doing it he got into an alliance with Hamor and his son Shechem and that's where the trouble started in Chapter 34 Verse 1, "Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the women of the land." Naturally, because her father had bought this land and obviously Hamor and Shechem were friends of his now. "And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, he seized her and lay with her and humbled her."

Now loved ones, that really wasn't a sin in those prelaw days. It wasn't a sin in those prelaw days. You'll see it in Deuteronomy 22:28-29. Deuteronomy 22:28, even there were after the law. In a way it was a convention however dreadful it may be, that existed at that time. Deuteronomy 22:28, "if a man meets a virgin who is not betrothed," there were laws against, of course, doing anything to a virgin who was betrothed. "But if a man meets a virgin who is not betrothed, and seizes her and lies with her, and they are found, then the man who lay with her shall give to the father of the young woman fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife, because he has violated her; he may not put her away all his days."

So in a way it was almost an accepted way of a man marrying a woman. So it in itself was not, in those days, prohibited by God's law and so it was accepted as a way for a man to meet a woman. So that was not the bad thing and that's why you have Verse 3-4, "And his soul was drawn to Dinah the daughter of Jacob; he loved the maiden and spoke tenderly of her." And we kind of think, "Oh wait a minute, he just seduced her." But in a sense, you see, it was an accepted habit with those that were heave. "So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, 'Get me this maiden for my wife.'"

However, it was different for the Israelites, something bad had happened and there it's mentioned, you know, in Verse 7, "The sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard of it; and the men were indignant and very angry because he had wrought folly in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing ought not be done." In other words, Israel was the chosen people and the daughters of Israel were to be given only to the sons of Israel and so this was like, there's a piece in the

New Testament, "If I join my limbs to the limbs of a prostitute I force Jesus to join his limbs to her." Well it was that kind of thing.

Israel was betrothed to God and if one of Israel daughters were seduced by somebody who was not an Israelite then, of course, it was an insult to God himself. So from that point of view it was a sin. That's why Jacob's response is so culpable. You see it in Verse 5, "Now Jacob heard that he had defiled his daughter Dinah," and so Jacob knew, "Now wait a minute, this man could have gotten away with this as an ordinary pagan, if this had been a pagan, but this is a daughter of God that he has done this with. He has defiled not only my daughter but the daughter of God." "Now Jacob heard that he had defiled his daughter Dinah; but his sons were with his cattle in the field, so Jacob held his peace until they came."

Loved ones, that was the beginning of the slide, holding his peace. Now I don't know if it happens with you at work, you know, or at school, but I think we can all be Jacobs. Jacob was always used to that old manipulation, playing the odds one against the other, using the powers of the world against the powers of the world and he thought, "Wait a minute, my sons aren't here I can't do very much anyways so I'll just keep quiet about this." He began to give us his leadership and his authority as the head of the family and he just held his peace.

Don't hold your peace. Speak out -- go on record. I think we've been talking often about how important it is to confess with your mouth truth. Speak out, say what is right. Whatever the difficulty say what is right because if you don't you're starting a slide that will end up in worse situations. Is this chapter just a record of hideous pagan violence by pagans? No, then by the children of Israel? It started to go downhill by Jacob first of all not listening to the Holy Spirit, secondly by him not speaking out and not going on record.

Of course, the sons were in some sense better than him though it was with them not a godly response but kind of family pride thing. In Verse 7, "The sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard of it; and the men were indignant and very angry, because he had wrought folly in Israel by laying with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing ought not to be done. But Hamor spoke with them, saying, "The soul of my man Shechem longs for your daughter."

Old Hamor of course was kind of ignorant of it. He didn't realize, "Oh, this is a big deal," the Israelite daughters cannot marry non-Israelites so he just talked as an ordinary man. "I pray you, give her to him in marriage. Make marriages with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters for yourselves. You shall dwell with us; and the land shall be open to you; dwell and trade in it, and get property in it.' Shechem also said to her father and to her brothers, 'Let me find favor in your eyes, and whatever you say to me I will give. Ask of me ever so much as marriage present and gift, and I will give according as you say to me; only give me the maiden to be my wife.'" Just from planting the mobile home down and buying the land, he gets into the whole business of, "Okay, why don't you settle among us and intermarry with us and why don't you join us?" Of course, if you remember the rest of the Old Testament, it's just full of all of God's prohibitions against that.

Maybe you'd look at Leviticus 20:22. Leviticus 20:22, and it runs through all the Old Testament and all the prophets, "You shall therefore keep all my statutes and all my ordinances, and do them; that the land where I am bringing you to dwell may not vomit you out. And you shall not walk in the customs of the nation which I am casting out before you; for they did all these things, and therefore I abhorred them." Loved ones, that runs right through the Old Testament. You get it

repeatedly again, and again, God warns his people that they are not to mix with the people of the land.

It's in Exodus 34:11-16 also. "Observe what I command you this day. Behold, I will drive out before you the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Take heed to yourself, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither you go, lest it become a snare in the midst of you. You shall tear down their altars, and break their pillars, and cut down their Asherim (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God), lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and when they play the harlot after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and one invites you, you eat of his sacrifice, and you take of their daughters for your sons, and their daughters play the harlot after their gods and make your sons play the harlot after their gods."

Repeatedly God was saying, "Stay pure, stay pure, stay pure." It's kind of a message to us. You're meant to work with the loved ones that you work with in your office. You're meant to study with the loved ones at school. You're meant to live with your roommates, but God urges us repeatedly, "Don't mix with them. Don't mix spiritually with them lest you be drawn out after their dependencies on their gods. Stay clean and clear, touch not the unclean thing." We've never talked much about this but it runs through all of the Old Testament. It's one of the things you know you're taught in seminary, they emphasize how "anathema" [] it was for the Israelites to think of intermarrying with one of the other races. Repeatedly God was saying to them, "Look, the only hope you have is to stay clean and pure, stay depending on me and not depending on other people and their gods."

So you can see at this early stage Jacob had already got himself into a position where he was imperiling not only the chosen people's future but he was about to imperil the very birth of the Savior himself because it was vital for God to preserve the race pure so that Jesus could be born. Jacob had slid into this position as we've seen by his easiness about the Holy Spirit. Of course, God was held back from using Jacob to protect the purity of the chosen people. In fact God could use only what he had left and that was the worst of what was in the sons of Jacob. So in Verse 13 we find what God had to use, "The sons of Jacob answered Shechem and his father Hamor deceitfully." The only way God actually could preserve them from this intermarriage and this mixing was by them actually getting themselves into lies.

And they, "Answered Shechem and his father Hamor deceitfully, because he had defiled their sister Dinah. They said to them, 'We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a disgrace to us. Only on this condition will we consent to you: that you will become as we are and every male of you be circumcised. Then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters to ourselves, and we will dwell with you and become one people.'" Just a downright lie of course, "But if you will not listen to us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter, and we will be gone." Of course, Hamor and Shechem didn't realize the significance of circumcision. The circumcision was a sign that God was their God and that they had the faith of their father Abraham.

Hamor and Shechem thought, "Oh, it's just like," – there were many races that circumcised in those days and they thought, "Oh, this is just a sign that these people use." They didn't realize, oh no it's a holy sign, it's the sign that can apply only to one who has the faith of Abraham and so they followed on with it in Verse 18, "Their words pleased Hamor and Hamor's son Shechem. And the young man did not delay to do the thing, because he had delight in Jacob's daughter. Now he was the most

honored of all his family. So Hamor and his son Shechem came to the gate of their city and spoke to the men of their city, saying, 'These men are friendly with us; let them dwell in the land and trade in it, for behold, the land is large enough for them; let us take their daughters in marriage, and let us give them our daughters. Only on this condition will the men agree to dwell with us, to become one people: that every male among us be circumcised as they are circumcised. Will not their cattle, their property and all their beasts be ours? Only let us agree with them, and they will dwell with us.' And all who went out of the gate of his city hearkened to Hamor and his son Shechem; and every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city."

Then of course, the disaster, just a tragic violent murder by the Israelites, "On the third day, when they were sore, [from the circumcision] two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their swords and came upon the city unawares, and killed all the males. They slew Hamor and his son Shechem with the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went away. And the sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and plundered the city, because their sister had been defiled; they took their flocks and their herds, their asses, and whatever was in the city and in the field; all their wealth, all their little ones and their wives, all that was in the houses, they captured and made their prey." And then at last of course, Jacob begins to realize how far down the whole chosen people have deteriorated because of his lack of leadership.

"Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, 'You have brought trouble on me by making me odious to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites; my numbers are few, and if they gather themselves against me and attack me, I shall be destroyed, both I and my household.'" Of course, he realized that if you lived by the sword, you'll die by the sword, "But they said, 'Should he treat our sister as a harlot?'" And no, he shouldn't have. People shouldn't be unjust to you and me and they shouldn't hurt us, and they shouldn't criticize us, and they shouldn't take advantage of you at work because you're a Christian. They shouldn't be unjust to you but when they are, don't descend to their level using the weapons of Satan. Don't fight them with their own weapons.

Stand in Jesus, at the right hand of God and see that you are there far above every rule, and authority, and dominion, and power and even should you lose your job, even should you lose money over the thing, even should you lose some more precious things, don't answer in justice within justice. Don't answer it with violence. Don't fight with their weapons. You're fighting against principalities and powers and the worst thing is not the injustice but the worse thing is Satan pulling you into the same kind of violence and the same kind of tactics as he uses himself.

So loved ones, it doesn't matter what injustice you suffer, continue to exercise faith in Jesus that he is able, as he did in Calvary, to bring everything around, to turn everything around to your advantage as he would have done for the Israelites. Indeed, he could have prevented them ever coming into this had they listened to the Holy Spirit. Oh there's a good verse that Jesus gave us in Luke 6:32. "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much again. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful."

Loved ones, that's it. I don't know how many times you've found yourself done wrongly by somebody in trade. Or, you go to a service station and they just take you for all they can get. Remember

that at that moment, Satan and sin is crouching at the door to try and rouse you to antagonism and to resentment, and to tackling them with their own weapons. Reject it. Say, "Lord, I thank you that you've placed me in Jesus and that you'll make this up 100 fold and you'll turn this around to my advantage. Lord, I trust you to administer your love and your life to this dear guy who has just taken \$200 out of my pocket." But that's a triumph, loved ones, that's a triumph.

So, injustice is par for the course. It's an occupational hazard of those who walk the Calvary road. There was nothing just in what Jesus received, there was only injustice and yet he blessed those who treated him unjustly and that's the place of safety for us because, "Vengeance is mine," said the Lord and he is the one who will work out the vengeance in a way that will glorify him and yet will preserve us. Do you remember William Penn who founded Pennsylvania? He said, "When you get angry the person you hurt most is yourself." You hurt yourself most.

Let us pray.

Dear Father, we thank you Lord, for giving us this book of your dealings with your chosen people. Lord, we thank you for the plain messages in this book that it is written for our instruction and that you expect us to read it and to walk free from those dangers.

So Father, we know that we have met injustices in the past and we will meet many in the future. But Lord, we see that the worse that injustice can do to us is to stir up in us a spirit of bitterness that will steal the peace from our souls and spirits. Lord, we commit ourselves to resisting Satan. The injustice is the least part of the problem. We see that Father. The greater problem is the bitterness that would come in or the desire to answer injustice with injustice or violence with violence.

Father, we thank you that you've placed us in Jesus, the one who as a sheep before his shearers was dumb so he opened not his mouth. We have seen, Lord, how mightily you answered on his behalf. So we commit ourselves, our Father, to the same life of peace and we trust you, Lord, that we will be able to bless those that persecute. We will be able to lend again to those who take advantage and we will be able to love those who hate so that you will be able to show yourself merciful to them through us.

We thank you, our Father, for this evening. Thank you for Sabbath, and for the quietness of this night and we trust you, Lord, to deal with us tonight at our bedsides as we kneel down to pray and minister the spirit of your word into our hearts and our spirits.

Now the grace of our Lord Jesus, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us now and ever more. Amen.