

“Time to Eat Crow” (Genesis 33:1-20)

This past August, I was asked to speak at a Chinese-English church camp. When I accepted this opportunity, I had no idea what would befall me. My friend, Mike Paolicelli (“The Italian Stallion”), the interim pastor of this church, invited me to be the guest speaker. During this retreat, Mike and I were required to team up and compete in a “Chinese Fear Factor.” Talk about an initiation!

The most difficult obstacle in this “Fear Factor” was to bob for a “Century egg” and then somehow eat it. The Century egg is a Chinese “delicacy” made by preserving duck eggs in various substances for around 100 days. The egg that I ate was black, gushy, and nasty!¹ In fact, these eggs cause most people who eat them to vomit. (This includes some Chinese people as well.) They are awful! However, I broke a record in this event by devouring such an egg in 20 seconds. This shattered the previous record of 1:29. By doing this, I demonstrated unusual courage and expertise in the eyes of these Chinese believers and earned great respect. Through this Century egg event, I was reminded that it is best to tackle challenges head-on. To put it another way: When it is “time to eat crow,” or duck, it is best to quickly take the initiative, knowing that it is typically not as bad as you expected.

Genesis 33 is a pivotal chapter in Jacob’s life. Twenty years earlier, Jacob had left his home because his brother, Esau, had sworn to kill him for stealing his birthright and their father’s blessing (27:41-45). Rebekah, the boys’ mother, had told Jacob, “When your brother is no longer angry with you and forgets what you did to him, I’ll send word for you to come back from there” (27:45). But since she never sent for him, Jacob had every reason to believe that 20 years had not diminished Esau’s anger. Needless to say, this caused Jacob to fear Esau in a big way! Yet, God had brought Jacob to the place where he recognized that he needed to make things right with his brother. Remember, Jacob is coming off of his wrestling match with the Lord (32:24-32). He has just had a mountaintop experience. I’m sure Jacob wished he would not have to face off with Esau, yet now he must prepare himself for the inevitable.

In the Christian life, the greatest mountaintop experiences with the Lord do not remove us from the circumstances of life. If the truth be told, the Christian life is filled with one conflict after another. We must recognize that great times of blessing are usually followed by great trials of faith. Therefore, we must be prepared for tension and challenges in our personal relationships. To expect otherwise is to be like an ostrich that buries its head in the sand. But here’s the good news: God doesn’t promise to take us out of the fire, but He promises to get into the fire with us.²

Our story begins in 33:1a: **“Then Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him.”** Jacob lifts up his eyes in fear because he sees Esau marching toward him with 400 men. His guilty conscience can only assume the worst. Like Jacob, we often lift our eyes only high enough to see our problems but not high enough to see God, who has the power to solve our every problem. Jacob should have said, as Jehoshaphat did, “We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you” (2 Chron 20:12, *ESV*; cf. Ps 121:1-2). I wish that he had said, “Lord, You’ve crippled me so I’m helpless unless You intervene. You’ve promised to bless me. I’m trusting You to work.”

But instead, the old Jacob takes over. **“So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two maids. He put the maids and their children in front, and Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last”** (33:1b-2). Jacob has a family-value, depth chart. He divides his children and wives, putting the least favorite in the front so that the more favored can possibly escape the massacre he still fears. Jacob continues to rely on his own wits to get him out of another tight situation. The fact that Jacob made preparation for his encounter with Esau wasn’t necessarily wicked. In fact, the Lord will often lead us to do very practical things when we follow Him. But we must take action only after prayer and guidance from the Holy Spirit. This demonstrates our trust in the Lord.

Sadly, valuing some family members over other family members is not something that is new to the family of the patriarchs.³ Jacob's tendency to favor Rachel and Joseph over his other wives and children was an ungodly pattern, passed on by his own parents. It was a significant factor in the dysfunction of his own family life. This kind of ranking—according to favoritism—no doubt fed the jealousy over Joseph that later becomes an important element in the narrative.

Fortunately, in 33:3, Jacob shows some indication of spiritual maturity. Moses writes, **“But he himself passed on ahead of them and bowed down to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.”** By going ahead of his family to meet Esau, Jacob shows the new Israel overcoming the fear that had formerly dominated the old Jacob. A remarkable and important transition is taking place here. Jacob—the self-serving, greedy, self-promoting, self-protective heel-catcher is being transformed by his relationship with God. He is beginning to take responsibility for the consequences of his own sinful past. After all, it wasn't his wives or children who had cheated Esau out of his birthright and inheritance. It was Jacob. If anyone was going to suffer for sin, Jacob didn't want it to be his family. He himself would suffer first and die if necessary that his family might be spared.⁴

As he neared Esau, the once proud Jacob **“bowed down to the ground seven times.”** Bowing to the ground expresses great humility. This was ancient, court protocol whenever subjects approached a lord or king. Jacob was definitely putting himself in a subservient role.⁵ He was attempting to demonstrate a healthy respect for Esau.

Some argue that Jacob is manipulating Esau and that he is disingenuous. I disagree. It seems to me that Jacob is a changed man. However, like all of us, there is still the residue of the old man. Under the pressure of the moment, Jacob can resort to his old scheming ways and take matters into his own hands; however, that element of Jacob is mixed with some positive aspects of his newly discovered trust in the Lord. So the result is a mixture of living by the flesh and of living by faith.⁶

What I especially like about 33:3 is that Jacob decides to face Esau, man to man. He earns some serious, spiritual chest hair right here. The looming question that fills the air is: How will Esau respond? With just a word, he could command his soldiers to kill Jacob on the spot! What will he do? If he wants to get even, this is his big chance.

Whenever a problem arises, you always have two options: You can run from it or you can face it head-on. Most of us are tempted to run but we must recognize that the problem never goes away. We will always have to face up to it. Like eating a Century egg, it is better to deal with your problems promptly because they typically are never as bad as you may imagine. While you may be fearful, God wants you to step out in faith. Unfortunately, many times we meet the trials of life in the panic of the flesh. When a financial difficulty arises, and it is necessary to meet with a creditor, how do we meet it? Or, when the doctor must be met, do we meet him in the peace that flows from our redemption and the assurance of a Father who cares for all our needs? Or when the boss calls us in for a chat, do we meet him in the strength of the indwelling Spirit? Jacob's problems are really little different from the ones that contemporary believers must meet.⁷ And God wants us to be courageous and trusting men and women of faith.

In 33:4-5, Moses pens a couple of amazing verses. **“Then Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. He lifted his eyes and saw the women and the children, and said, ‘Who are these with you?’ So he said, ‘The children whom God has graciously given your servant.’”** Can you imagine what Jacob must have been thinking when he saw Esau running at full speed toward him? He must have thought, “This is it! My number is up!” Instead, even as God had been working in Jacob's life for the past 20 years, God had been working in Esau.⁸ To Jacob's astonishment, Esau wasn't running to kill him, but to reconcile with him and to bless him. He came as a forgiving friend and brother rather than as a foe.

Think through this scenario slowly and carefully. In Esau's culture, men walk they don't run. Esau is breaking the cultural norms and humbling himself. After running to his brother, Esau raised Jacob up from the bowing down position and embraced him. He gave Jacob one of those big, old, family bear hugs. He kissed him. The kiss seems to be an indication of forgiveness (cf. 2 Sam 14:33).⁹ Finally, the brothers wept in one another's arms. They had been apart for twenty years.

Esau's response to Jacob is remarkably similar to the father of the prodigal son at his return (see Luke 15:20).¹⁰ The account of Jacob and Esau and the story of the prodigal son are recorded for us, to show us what God's heart is like toward us who have sinned against Him. We were all, at one time, like Jacob—scoundrels, self-centered, abusive, selfish people deserving death. Our own conscience condemned us and we had an appropriate sense of anxiety that God was going to punish us. But as we made our way toward Him in our sincere effort at reconciliation, He came running toward us, not to harm us, but to embrace us and kiss us. This is the heart of God. It is the heart of the cross. It is the heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Today, you may not have a relationship with God. You need to know that you can never outrun God's love and grace. No matter what you have done, He is willing to take you into His arms and love you with a perfect Father's love. He only asks that you humbly come to Him, on His own terms, through faith in Jesus Christ. It's also possible you're a Christian that has walked away from the Lord. After a season of sin, you've realized the insanity of it all and you're ready to return. Please know this: God wants us to be restored to Him far more than you'll ever want to be restored. His heart has been breaking ever since you left. When you do return to Him in humble repentance, He will gratefully receive you. May you sense His unconditional love for you.

In 33:5, Jacob gave God the glory for giving him his family; he confessed that his family was a gift from God. This echoes James' words that "every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above" (Jas 1:17). This attitude is evidence of a basic change in Jacob's approach to life.¹¹ He is becoming a more humble and content man. Is this true of you as well? Are you steadily growing in your character?

In 33:6-7, we will see that reconciliation requires grace from everyone. Moses writes, "**Then the maids came near with their children, and they bowed down. Leah likewise came near with her children, and they bowed down; and afterward Joseph came near with Rachel, and they bowed down.**" All three divisions of Jacob's caravan bowed before Esau. This is the ultimate in humble submission. Jacob desperately wants to ensure that reconciliation occurred. When we attempt to make things right with someone that we have offended, we must be willing to do the same. We must "pull out all the stops."

In 33:8-9, Esau said to Jacob: "**What do you mean by all this company [herds] which I have met? And he [Jacob] said, 'To find favor in the sight of my lord.' But Esau said, 'I have plenty, my brother; let what you have be your own.'**" In an attempt to reconcile with his brother, Jacob offers him a gift of 550 of his animals (cf. 32:14-15). He wants to find "favor" or grace with Esau. Yet, Esau surprises us with his response. He tells Jacob he has plenty and urges him to keep his animals. These words must have pierced Jacob's soul! Jacob has spent his entire life scheming to get ahead. He has kicked, scratched, and clawed his way to the top, only to find that he has alienated himself from everyone he ever loved. What a devastating and sobering reality. Esau serves as a convicting example to Jacob of a man that is content. Many of you are winning the financial race, but are losing the race of life. You are being consumed by the pressures and demands of success. Yet the Bible places a high premium on contentment. Look at these words: "But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs" (1 Tim 6:6-10).

In 33:10, Jacob responds to Esau by saying, **“No, please, if now I have found favor in your sight, then take my present from my hand, for I see your face as one sees the face of God, and you have received me favorably.”** Either this is a blatant example of flattery and overstatement, or a recognition of God’s character of grace in the life of his brother, Esau. It would seem that the latter is the case. What an amazing turn of events. Jacob is referring back to his previous encounter with God (32:24-32) and saying that Esau’s response to him is evidence of the grace of God. There is no greater compliment for a believer than for people to see in us the face of God! Ephesians 5:1 says, “Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children.”

In 33:11, Jacob continues: **“Please take my gift which has been brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me and because I have plenty.’ Thus he urged him and he took it.”** The word translated “gift” (*berakah*) is the word “blessing.” Jacob had stolen Esau’s blessing and birthright (27:35) and he understood that for reconciliation to take place, he would need to make restitution for his theft.¹² Esau didn’t want or need the animals; he wanted his brother. But Jacob needed to feel he could restore himself; he needed to feel restitution.¹³ Finally, Jacob convinced Esau to accept the gift. Esau took it to allow his brother the opportunity to feel forgiven. When we receive a person back and they sense the need to restore our relationship, we can allow the person to perform restitution, not as a precondition for coming back, but as a result of coming back. This is an important step in the process of reconciliation.

Sadly, it would seem that Jacob missed two of the more elementary steps in the reconciliation process. As far as we know, Jacob never does come right out and say, “Forgive me for what I did to you many years ago.”¹⁴ He also never verbally confesses the wrongs he had committed against Esau. This is similar to when a husband wrongs his wife. To make peace, he brings home some flowers and a gift. That may be a way of waving a white flag—opening the door for peace talks—but if the gift is all that’s done, there hasn’t been an adequate settlement. The husband needs to specify how he wronged his wife and ask forgiveness. They need to talk about what happened so that they understand each other. Otherwise, she’s going to say to herself, “He thinks he can just run roughshod over me and then bring me a gift to make everything right. But he’s not willing to deal with the real problem.”¹⁵

After reconciling with Jacob, Esau said, **“Let us take our journey and go, and I will go before you.’ But he said to him, ‘My lord knows that the children are frail and that the flocks and herds which are nursing are a care to me. And if they are driven hard one day, all the flocks will die. Please let my lord pass on before his servant, and I will proceed at my leisure, according to the pace of the cattle that are before me and according to the pace of the children, until I come to my lord at Seir’** Esau said, **‘Please let me leave with you some of the people who are with me.’ But he said, ‘What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my lord.’ So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built for himself a house and made booths for his livestock; therefore the place is named Succoth”** (33:12-17). At almost every point in this story, Esau emerges as the more appealing, more humane, and more virtuous of the two brothers.¹⁶ He is literally bending over backwards for Jacob. Nevertheless, Jacob turns down Esau’s gracious offers.¹⁷ To make matters even worse, he deceives his brother again, for old time’s sake. Think about that. Even after forgiveness...and after reconciliation...after the gift has been accepted...and the hugs and the tears...even after all the stories have been swapped...after all of that, and with the best of motives, Jacob still can’t quite believe that everything is okay between him and his brother. So he tells one final lie, and goes his own way.¹⁸

Jacob tells Esau he will come to him in Seir (33:14), but then he immediately goes and builds a house for himself in Succoth. Now Succoth was not to the south and east, but to the north and the west! In other words, it was in the exact opposite direction from Esau. Thus, the flowery words and the tender solicitation of them were a cover-up for a lie. Like Jacob, many of us lie to preserve peoples’ feelings; however, God does not bless this type of deception.

There are several possible reasons for Jacob's deception:

1. His herds and children probably could not keep up with the warriors.
2. God did tell him to return to his land, not Seir.¹⁹
3. He didn't want to face his father, whom he had deceived 20 years earlier.
4. He probably did not fully trust his brother. He was glad to reconcile with Esau, but didn't want to live too close to him.
5. He knew that his herds would do much better in the rich pastures of the Jordan Valley where Succoth was located, while Bethel was in the mountains.

Regardless of the reasons behind Jacob's deception, Derek Kidner, suggests, "Succoth was a backward step, spiritually as well as geographically."²⁰ God had first appeared to Jacob at Bethel, and it was there that Jacob vowed to someday return to build an altar and give a tithe to God (28:20-22). When God instructed Jacob to return to Canaan, He identified Himself as the "God of Bethel" (31:13). Jacob was instructed to return "to the land of your fathers and to your relatives" (31:3). Succoth was in the opposite direction of Seir, where Jacob had told Esau he was coming.

Like his previous acts of compromise and deception, this brought pain and loss into Jacob's life. As a result, he never saw his father again. Furthermore, the next time we find Jacob and Esau together in Scripture is 27 years later at the graveside of their father, Isaac (35:29).

Our story closes in 33:18-20: "**Now Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Paddan-aram, and camped before the city.**"¹⁹ **He bought the piece of land where he had pitched his tent from the hand of the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, for one hundred pieces of money.** ²⁰ **Then he erected there an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel.**" Jacob built his first altar, as Abraham had done at Shechem, when he had first entered Canaan (12:6-7). This is the first instance in which an altar is named (see also 35:7; Exod 17:15; Judg 6:24). "**El-Elohe-Israel**" means "the mighty God is the God of Israel." Jacob used his own new name, Israel (32:29). Here he acknowledges God as *the* God, his own God.²¹

After splitting off from Esau, Jacob crossed the Jordan River and moved his family into the land of Canaan. He chose "**Shechem**" ("peaceful")²² as his home. Although purchasing the land and erecting an altar were acts of faith, Jacob errs in settling into the land of Shechem. He made a vow to worship the Lord at Bethel when he returned to the Promised Land (28:20-22), but it takes him at least ten years to fulfill this vow. The idle years near the Canaanite city reflect a general passivity on Jacob's part that has horrendous consequences.²³

Why did Jacob choose Shechem when he was told by God to settle in Bethel (35:1)? The text doesn't give us a motive for Jacob's incomplete obedience, but it may hint at one. Verse 18 states, "**Now Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem.**" Jacob may have felt safe there, but feared returning to the southern part of Canaan, where his father was, because of continuing fears of Esau, who frequented that region. In spite of Esau's warm greeting, Jacob probably didn't trust him. Those who are treacherous, like Jacob, often think others will be treacherous. But while Jacob was afraid of Esau, he wasn't afraid of staying in Succoth, outside the land, or of buying property in Shechem, where his family would be morally polluted. He was afraid of the wrong things! God had promised to protect Jacob if he obeyed; but Jacob felt he was safer in a place of partial obedience than to risk trusting the Lord by obeying completely. Jacob's gradual transition into Shechem is reminiscent of Lot's ever-closer association with the city of Sodom; first pitching his tent facing Sodom, then moving into Sodom, and finally sitting as an elder in Sodom's gates. And, as we will see in our study of Genesis 34, disastrous consequences await Jacob and his family in Succoth for his failure to fully obey the Lord.

My observation of Christians (including myself) tells me that Jacob was doing what we all do.²⁴ He was making an attempt to follow the Lord, but at the same time he was not obeying the Lord completely. By calling the altar “God, the God of Israel,” he was acknowledging his gratitude to God for bringing him safely back to the land. But by not going all the way to Bethel, he was catering to his fleshly fear of Esau. He was the new man, Israel; but he was still the old man, Jacob. We do the same thing. We begin by faith in the Lord, but then live by the flesh.²⁵

Yet, one of the major lessons of this chapter is that those who have received God’s grace may trust in God’s promise of protection when they seek reconciliation with others.²⁶ If you are in conflict with someone today, make a point to reconcile with him or her. You can refer to Matt 5:23-26 and 18:15-17 for God’s instructions on how to go about doing it. Besides the fact that by doing so you will be imitating the reconciling heart of God, reconciling has a number of wonderful practical benefits:

- It will give you a clear conscience.
- It will produce in you personal and spiritual growth.
- It will serve to advance the kingdom of God.

This past Tuesday, I was playing indoor, tackle football with my three children. After being jumped on by all three kids, Joshua (my eldest) grabbed the ball from me while I was on my back and began sprinting for the end zone (i.e., the couch). I tripped him up with a combination of hands and feet and he was catapulted into the air only to land on his right shoulder. The pain that emanated from his crumpled body was horrible. It was devastating; and it lasted over 60 minutes. Finally, we decided to take him to the doctor. It was there that we were informed that Joshua had broken his humerus bone. Obviously, this was not a laughing matter for us. Note: The doctor discovered that Joshua had a bone cyst on his right shoulder, so the impact of my tackle did not cause the break. Whew!

Even so, I felt very badly. I was guilt-ridden. When Joshua was first injured, he screamed that he would never wrestle with me again for the rest of his life. (By the way, he’s maintained that story even today.) I wondered if he would forgive me for the pain that I had inflicted upon him. Now, did I humble myself, eat crow, and profusely apologize? You better believe it! And Joshua compassionately absolved me of blame. In fact, he has wanted plenty of “Daddy time” since his injury. I witnessed in Joshua a deep desire to forgive. Amazingly, he even said that it was his fault. Of course, I then agreed and said, “That’s right Joshua, you never strip me of the football and try to score a touchdown on me.”

Seriously, I have a wonderful son and we are fully reconciled, even though he may have to undergo surgery and will be in a sling for six weeks. There can be consequences in conflict, but in the vast majority of cases, you will find that people want to have a clear conscience. They crave peace and harmony. So you and I must learn to eat crow and initiate the process of reconciliation. Regardless of what happens, we will never regret it.

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Notes

¹ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thousand-year_egg.

² This quote is attributed to Charles Colson in R.T. Kendall, *All's Well that End's Well: The Life of Jacob* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1998), 144.

³ Woodrow Kroll, *An Ongoing Problem With Selfishness*: <http://www.backtothebible.org/radio/today/23710>

⁴ Jacob's plan does not seem to me to reflect lack of trust in God as much as carefulness and personal responsibility. However, Jacob was obviously fearful and weak as he anticipated meeting his brother. Faith does not mean trusting God to work for us in spite of our irresponsibility; that is presumption. Faith means trusting God to work for us when we have acted responsibly, realizing that without His help we will fail.

⁵ Gene A. Getz, *Jacob: Following God Without Looking Back* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 153.

⁶ Steven J. Cole, *Forward Halt!* (Genesis 33:1-20):

<http://www.fcfonline.org/site/content/1/sermons/042097m.pdf>, 3

⁷ S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., "After Peniel, 'God's Fighter' Retreating," *Believers Bible Bulletin*, Genesis Lesson 49 January 20, 1980: 4.

⁸ Seemingly in response to Jacob's prayer (cf. 32:11), Esau had had a change of heart. John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis*: EBC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), Electronic ed.

⁹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 18-50*, 344.

¹⁰ Wenham suggests that Jesus had this story in mind when He told the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 304. I agree.

¹¹ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Genesis* (<http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/genesis.pdf>, 2005), 215.

¹² Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, Vol. 2: WBC (Waco, TX: Word, 1994), 298-299. See also Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 18-50*: NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 343.

¹³ In Exodus 22 the law of restitution is double. He perhaps is giving his brother back double what he felt he took from him.

¹⁴ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 18-50*, 346.

¹⁵ Cole, *Forward Halt!*, 4.

¹⁶ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 18-50*, 347.

¹⁷ This is only the second—and it is the last—conversation between Esau and Jacob mentioned in Genesis. On the first occasion (25:29-34) Esau failed to perceive Jacob's capacity for exploitation. On the second occasion he fails to perceive Jacob's hesitancy and lack of excitement about going to Seir. In both cases, Jacob succeeds in deceiving Esau. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 18-50*, 349.

¹⁸ Ray Pritchard, *Healing the Hurts of the Past* (Genesis 32-33):

<http://www.calvarymemorial.com/sermons/SMdisplay.asp?id=335>

¹⁹ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 299.

²⁰ Derek Kidner, *Genesis*: Tyndale OT Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1967), 171-172.

²¹ See also John H. Walton, *Genesis*: The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 609.

²² The King James Version incorrectly takes the adverb "safely" as a proper noun, "Shalem."

²³ Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 461.

²⁴ With great insight, Constable writes, "What were Jacob's motivation and relationship to God when he met Esau? This question arises often in the study of this chapter. Some commentators have felt that Jacob completely backslid and returned to his former lifestyle of self-reliance and deceit. Most interpreters attribute good motives to Jacob. I believe the truth probably lies somewhere between these extremes. It seems to me that Jacob's experience at Peniel had a life-changing impact on him. Jacob seems to be referring to it in 33:10. Nevertheless his former lifestyle had become so ingrained—Jacob was over 90 years old at this time—that he easily slipped back into his former habits. I believe we have a clue to this in the use of his name 'Jacob' in the text rather than 'Israel.' In short, Jacob seems to have had a genuine experience of coming to grips with himself and yielding his life to God at Peniel. Nevertheless from then on, his motives and attitudes vacillated. At times he trusted God as he should have, but at others, many others, he failed to trust God. The divine Author's main concern in this section was not Jacob's motivation, however; He could have clarified this for us. Rather it seems to have been the faithfulness of God in sparing Jacob's life and returning him to the Promised Land as He had promised (28:13-15). The Jacob narrative also contains evidence that God was faithful to bless others through Abraham's descendants (12:3), including Laban (cf. 30:27) and Esau (cf. 33:11)." Constable, *Notes on Genesis*, 216-217.

²⁵ Cole, *Forward Halt!*, 8-9.

²⁶ Constable, *Notes on Genesis*, 217.