

GENESIS

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Genesis chapter 30 as we continue our study through the Word of God. If you remember from our last study, Jacob is fleeing to his uncle Laban's house because his brother Esau wanted to kill him. You see, Jacob not only got Esau's birthright, bought for a bowl of stew, but he stole the blessing from Esau by making his father Isaac believe he was Esau.

Now Jacob falls in love with Laban's younger daughter Rachel and he works seven years for Rachel's hand in marriage, but the time passed quickly by because he loved her so much. After the marriage, when he woke up that next morning, next to him wasn't Rachel but her older sister Leah. You can imagine how upset Jacob was and when he confronted Laban on his deception. And Laban tells Jacob that is the way they do things, the older daughter must be married before the younger daughter. The deceiver was deceived!

The problem for Jacob is that he still loved Rachel and thus, Laban says that he needs to fulfill the week of the honeymoon with Leah and then he can marry Rachel. But there is a catch. Jacob will then owe Laban seven more years of work, seven more years of labor. Thus, he marries Rachel and serves Laban for another 7 years, 14 years in all for both daughters.

At the close of chapter 29 Leah gives Jacob four sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah. But for Rachel, she was still barren. You see, Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah and God blessed Leah while Rachel was barren. Keep in mind that all these children are born within those second 7 years that Jacob was working for Laban. And that is where we will pick up our study this evening, in Genesis chapter 30 starting in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word.

GENESIS 30

VERSES 1-4

1. As you look at both Rachel and Leah you see two women who are dissatisfied with their position in life. For Rachel, "If I only can have a son!" And for Leah, "If I can only be as beautiful as Rachel!" What is the problem here? Instead of looking to God, they were looking at others and coveting what they had instead of being satisfied in the Lord, trusting in Him. Can we be as David who said, "**As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.**" Psalm 17:15. His desire was not to gain wealth, possessions, things, but to fellowship with God and one day awake in His presence! That is where David found true satisfaction and that is where we will find true satisfaction!

2. Rachel is upset with Leah, she is upset with Jacob and she is upset with God as she cried out, **“Give me children or else I die!”** Men, Jacob’s response may be correct but it is not based in love. He was to be the spiritual leader in the family but instead; he blames God and Rachel for her barrenness. How much better this would have been if he just handled this in love. Folks, isn’t that what we want from the Lord, yes, correction and truth but that it is done in love!

3. Because of her barrenness, instead of bringing it to the Lord, she gives her maidservant Bilhah to Jacob and the child she will have will be legally Rachel’s even though she did not give birth to this child. Bilhah was the surrogate mother and Jacob, seeing nothing wrong with this, has sexual relations with her. Folks, this will never solve the problem, trying to fix things in the flesh by the power of man instead of by the Spirit in the power of God!

VERSES 5-6

1. The first son born to Bilhah we see Rachel call Dan and his name means “judgment.” In other words, Rachel is throwing this child in the face of Leah saying to her that God has vindicated her. She was so envious of her sister that she saw this as victory and it was a vindication to her. I like the way that Barnhouse put it. He wrote: “Can a woman get so low that she will hit her sister over the head with a baby? Rachel did.”

VERSES 7-8

1. Bilhah has a second son for Rachel and Rachel calls him Naphtali, which means, “wrestle.” Once again the idea here is that Rachel is wrestling with Leah, a great struggle and she is victorious. Now keep in mind that Leah has had four sons so far and Rachel only two and these two sons came from her maidservant Bilhah. You see, Rachel named her children based on her bitter struggle with her sister for victory. She saw this as a competition you might say. That nasty creature called envy rears its ugly head and we must crucify it or it can destroy us and hurt others!

VERSES 9-13

1. Not to be outdone, and because Leah was not having any more children, she gave her maidservant Zilpah to Jacob to have a child by her and she conceives and gives Leah two more sons! Do you see the competition growing here and it is not healthy. The first son born to Zilpah we see Leah call Gad, which means “troop” or “good fortune.” And the second son born to Leah from Zilpah and the eighth son of Jacob is called Asher, which means “happy.” Notice the focus here, it is all about Leah and this power struggle that is going on between her and her sister Rachel. They are using their children as pawns; she is more concerned about what others will think of her as she says, **“I am happy, for the daughters will call me blessed.”** Selfishness, envy, greed, all focus on that unholy trinity of: Me, Myself and I! For Leah, she went from praising the Lord to this downward spiral and it is not pretty, nor is it ever pretty when the flesh is seen!

VERSES 14-18

1. Leah's son, Reuben is out in the fields and finds some mandrakes and when Rachel hears of this she makes a deal with Leah that Jacob will have sexual relations with her if she would give Rachel the mandrakes. Why was this so important to her? The mandrake is a root that in the Hebrew is called "love apples" and the idea here is two-fold. First of all many believed it was an aphrodisiac and secondly, they believed it increased a woman's chances of getting pregnant, it would make her more fertile. Thus, Rachel wanted more children and children that were born from her womb and thus, in her mind, here was an opportunity! Now I don't think this was anything more than superstition on their part because it truly is God who opens and closes the womb, that is what the Scriptures are teaching us.

2. Obviously the situation in the home was not good. It seems like Jacob was ignoring Leah, not having sexual relations with her and because Rachel wants those mandrakes, she says that Leah can have Jacob, they can sleep together and have sexual relations. And Jacob, just wanting to help out, obeys what Rachel told him. Give me a break, Jacob was to be the spiritual leader in the family and the family is out of control because they are not obeying the standards of marriage that God had established – one man and one woman joined together. That is what we are told in Genesis 2:24, "**Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.**" It is not plural, one wife and yet, throughout the Scriptures we see men of God disobey this and there were consequences to their actions! God means what He says and says what He means!

And in Matthew 19:4-6 we see Jesus confirm this standard for marriage. We are told, **“And He answered and said to them, ‘Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning “made them male and female,” and said, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”?’ So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”**

That word **“separate”** speaks of pulling apart. Think of it like this. When you glue two boards together they are solid, they become one board, like in marriage when the two become one. But, if you tried to pull those boards apart you would get splinters, pieces of wood would break off and it would be just a mess. Folks, the same is true in divorce. There are all kinds of splintered relationships, broken hearts and it is just a mess! Thus, may we listen to the words of Jesus, **“So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”** Matthew 19:6.

3. For Jacob, he is trying to please four women but not really doing too well. He loves Rachel and the other women recognized that, especially Leah, and he was just satisfying his own flesh with the other three women, there was no emotional ties with them. And as bad as this was and is, Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines and he was supposed to be the smartest man in the world! I question that one – what was he thinking? And Barnhouse makes a good observation here as he wrote: “Is it any wonder that this family had a history of strife and bloodshed? Children reflect the atmosphere of the home.” And we will see that played out as we go through Genesis!

4. And the fifth son born to Leah she calls Issachar and his name means, “reward” or “mine for hire.”

VERSES 19-20

1. Jacob’s tenth son born to Leah is named Zebulun, and it means “dwelling.” You can feel the pain of Leah, who wants to dwell with her husband Jacob, and yet he loves Rachel more, and it would seem that maybe because of the number of children born to her, Jacob would dwell with her. But, that is not the case!

VERSE 21

1. So we have here the record of the first girl born into the family, Dinah, who was born to Leah. And Dinah, as we shall see, is going to play a role in this family’s story. And we also see that Leah, Zilpah and Bilhah have no more children.

VERSE 22

1. Did the mandrakes open the womb of Rachel? Obviously not, God did as I have said. Folks, I can honestly say I don’t understand why God closes the womb of some and opens the womb of others because as I see things, there are some people who should not have children and there are others that I believe should. Here’s the thing, God is sovereign and He knows what is best. He knows why He does what He does and I always don’t. Thus, I can only fall back on the things I know about God when I don’t understand a situation because that is where I will find comfort, peace, security and-so-on.

It is as Moses tells us in Deuteronomy 29:29, **“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.”**

The problem for us is that we waste so much time on the things we don't know and it causes us not to do the things that we do know, to obey the Words of the Lord. The Lord said through the prophet Isaiah, **“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,’ says the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”** Isaiah 55:8-11.

Yes, we may not know everything about an all-knowing God but God's Word gives to us what we need to know and as we take it in it will refresh us and keep us strong. It is as the Lord told Joshua, **“Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”**

Joshua 1:7-9. That is a great lesson for us to learn!

VERSES 23-24

1. So God opened the womb of Rachel and she bore a son that she named Joseph or “may He add.” It would seem that Rachel is gloating here, maybe seeing that Leah and her maidservant are not having any more children and yet, she is! And thus, she maybe is taunting Leah saying that God will give her another child. And that is true, she will have another son, but as we will see, in the birth process of Benjamin, Rachel will die!

2. Folks, these are the children of Israel, from them will come the 12 tribes of Israel. Now think about this, was Jacob worthy to be the father of this nation that was to be born? Obviously not but God did use him and God uses people that are not perfect, He uses people like you and me and we should be thankful for that. God looks for people who are faithful in the work and Jacob is going to show us that he worked very hard in his service for Laban.

VERSES 25-27

1. Jacob has spent 14 years in Haran with his uncle Laban and yet he recognizes that this is not his home. How do I know that? Because Jacob tells Laban he wants to leave and go back to **“my own place and to my country.”** You see, the covenant that God made with his grandfather Abraham and with his father Isaac regarding the land of Canaan, the Promise Land, is going to be fulfilled or continued on through Jacob! It is God’s covenant to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And Jacob now understands that, he knows he needs to go home.

2. Laban has other ideas, he wants Jacob to stay and his reason is “**for I have learned by experience that the Lord has blessed me for your sake.**” Now some may say that this phrase speaks of Laban gaining this information through divination. It can mean that but it can also simply mean that he learned it by experience as he watched Jacob. You see, as he watched Jacob work, he saw how God prospered all he was doing. God blessed his work. Thus, to Laban Jacob was a cash cow, a valuable asset to his life, for when Jacob prospered, Laban prospered. Thus, greed, prosperity is the reason he wanted Jacob and his own daughters and his grandchildren to stay, not because he loved them and would miss them if they would go!

VERSES 28-34

1. There are a couple of points here that show me how Jacob’s faith has grown over these 14 years with Laban and not because Laban had taught him these things, but the Lord did. First of all Jacob worked hard in his service for Laban. He could have just done a half-hearted job; he was married to Rachel now, so why work so hard. But I see Jacob working hard, doing his best for Laban because that is what he promised he would do.

Having good work ethics, working hard, doing your best, finishing the work you promised to do and doing it well I believe is a characteristic of a person who is walking with God. Tragically today, many Christians have poor work ethics, they are lazy, they don't do what they say they are going to do, and-so-on. There is a Christian yellow pages in Chicago that has Christians who do all kinds of work and there are many who refuse to use them, they would rather use unsaved people because they do a better job! How sad that is. In fact, that should not be.

Paul, in II Thessalonians 3:6-14 tells us, **“But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread. But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good. And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed.”** Paul is showing us what we are to do as we serve the Lord, and that is any work we do. We don't serve our boss but we are serving the Lord. And he also shows us what we are not to do!

2. The second point that shows me Jacob's faith was growing is that he does not take the credit for the work he did but he gives glory to God who has blessed his work, the one who has enabled him to do these things. Again, this is important for us to understand. Not only are we to work hard in what we do but we also need to give the glory to God, give Him the credit for what is done, not only for enabling us to do the work but that He has blessed the work of our hands. Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, "**Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.**"

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, "**Let your light so shine before men that they may see your moral excellence and your praiseworthy, noble, and good deeds and recognize and honor and praise and glorify your Father Who is in heaven.**"

Also, Paul tells us in Philippians 2:14-15, "**Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.**" You see, the work we do should be like beacons of light that shines upon the Lord, that illuminates Him and not us! A spot light is not there to shine upon itself but it is to shine upon the object it is to illuminate, that which you want everyone to see. Thus, our good works should shine so people may see Jesus!

3. Jacob now comes up with a plan that by a human perspective seems very foolish. But again, I see Jacob trusting in the Lord knowing that against all odds, God will bless his work and Jacob will not get the credit, the Lord will! Here's his offer. Jacob would take all the speckled, spotted and brown lambs while Laban would take the more common white or solid colored lambs. Also, Jacob would take all the spotted and speckled goats and Laban would keep the more common brown or black goats. You see, Laban would keep the livestock that had the dominant gene, which should assure him of prosperity while Jacob would not, at least that is the rationale of Laban here. And Jacob lay's it all out that when it is time for him to get paid for his labor, he will keep these animals that are speckled, spotted or brown and Laban will get the rest.

4. And Laban's response to Jacob's offer is this, "**Oh, that it were according to your word!**" In other words, Laban is all for it, he sees this as a very good business deal but he is also going to try to assure his prosperity in this deal with the following stipulation that we will read in the next few verses.

VERSES 35-36

1. Now this is interesting to me. Laban knew that God blessed the work of Jacob so he has Jacob care for his livestock, the animals that were solid colored. Not only that, but Laban's sons would take care the spotted, speckled sheep and goats for Jacob to assure that there would be no mixing of these animals giving Jacob the advantage. In fact, he puts a three days journey between the flocks that Jacob was overseeing and the ones that Laban's sons were overseeing. So Jacob is caring for Laban's solid colored animals and any spotted or speckled ones that were born, they would belong to Jacob!

VERSES 37-43

1. This seems strange to me. Jacob put these branches in the drinking troughs of these flocks and these animals conceived and bore streaked, speckled offspring. First of all it is possible that these branches made these animals more fertile but I don't believe they helped produce these streaked and spotted animals for Jacob. Then why did he do it? I can only speculate on this but it is possible that he did this to keep Laban out of his hair, to keep him away. Maybe Laban saw him prosper and he told his sons to do the opposite and maybe Jacob's flocks, the ones they were watching would produce solid colored animals. As far as I can tell there is nothing scientific about what Jacob did here.

There is another way to look at this and that is God honored the faith of Jacob. You see, I don't believe he thought these branches were doing this, but God used those branches to bless Jacob, his work. Maybe it was a step of faith for him and Jacob did as the Lord had told him. How do I know that Jacob believed that God was behind this and not those branches? Because of what Jacob tells us in Genesis chapter 31, starting in verse 6, **“And you know that with all my might I have served your father. Yet your father has deceived me and changed my wages ten times, but God did not allow him to hurt me. If he said thus: ‘The speckled shall be your wages,’ then all the flocks bore speckled. And if he said thus: ‘The streaked shall be your wages,’ then all the flocks bore streaked. So God has taken away the livestock of your father and given them to me. And it happened, at the time when the flocks conceived, that I lifted my eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the rams which leaped upon the flocks were streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted. Then the Angel of God spoke to me in a dream, saying, ‘Jacob.’ And I said, ‘Here I am.’ And He said, ‘Lift your eyes now and see, all the rams which leap on the flocks are streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted; for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar and where you made a vow to Me. Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family.”** Genesis 31:6-13.

2. So Jacob's flocks were growing and they were strong, while Laban's were decreasing and they were weak and we are told of Jacob, "**Thus the man became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks, female and male servants, and camels and donkeys.**" Genesis 30:43. This verse can be translated as follows, "The man burst out exceedingly, exceedingly." In other words, God blessed Jacob beyond what he could ever imagine! Why did God do that? Because of the promises that He made to Jacob back in Genesis 28:13-15, as He said, "**And behold, the Lord stood above it and said: 'I am the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.'**"

God did this, not Jacob or because Jacob placed some branches in the watering troughs! And God not only blessed him with these animals, but He blessed him with servants and camels and donkeys! He truly did prosper just as God said and how that must have encouraged Jacob and stretched his faith.

You see, Jacob did not deserve any of these blessings but God honored His promises to Jacob and blessed him. Folks, that is our God! None of us deserve anything but death because of our sin. But, because God is gracious and merciful He paid in full the penalty for our sins and has given to us abundant life in Him, in Jesus!

Paul, in Ephesians 3:20-21 tells us, **“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”** You see, it is not by might, or our power, or our strength but by the power of the Spirit of God working in us and through us that God blesses us beyond what we could ever imagine!

Also, Paul tells us in I Corinthians 2:9-10, **“But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.”** God has prepared good works for us to do and as we spend time with Him He shows us each step that we must take to achieve that goal, and it is one step at a time, the Christian walk! Again, blessed exceedingly abundantly above all we could ask or think!

And lastly, Paul tells us in Colossians 1:29, **“To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.”** In other words, as we serve the Lord, as we labor for Him, we are moving in the direction He wants us to go because His Spirit is leading us. It is as Paul said in I Corinthians 15:58, **“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”** The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be firm (steadfast), immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord [always being superior, excelling, doing more than enough in the service of the Lord], knowing and being continually aware that your labor in the Lord is not futile [it is never wasted or to no purpose].”**

Folks, what a great and loving God we serve and as we serve Him may we give it our all to bring glory to Him and to shine the light of Jesus to others! And please keep in mind that it is a walk, a long distance race you might say. We need to keep shining. Think about the Fourth of July and all the fireworks and everybody is so impressed by the bright colors that burst on the scene, but they only last a short time. And after they are done do you know what is left, the stars and they keep shining, they are steadfast, they are immovable and so must we! May we keep shining for Jesus, pointing people to our Great God and Savior!