

**GENESIS 29-30**

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Genesis chapter 29 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

As we have seen in our previous studies, Jacob is on the run from his brother Esau. Jacob tricked his father, Isaac, into giving him the blessing that was due the firstborn, Esau. And Esau already gave to Jacob the birthright for a bowl of lentil soup.

Because Esau wants to kill Jacob, Rebekah, their mom, sends Jacob to her brother's house, Laban. It was only supposed to be a short time, until Esau cooled off and it will end up being twenty years and Rebekah will never see her son Jacob again.

Both Rebekah and Jacob tried to and succeeded in a sense, to trick Isaac into giving this blessing.

The sad thing here is that God already told Rebekah and Isaac, even before Jacob and Esau were born, that even though Esau would be the firstborn, the blessing and the birthright would go to the younger, to Jacob.

Again, we saw this back in Genesis chapter 25, before Esau and Jacob were born, that the Lord told Rebekah, “**... ‘Two nations are in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; One people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger.’**”

So Jacob and Rebekah are fighting for what God was already going to give to him. They did not need to lie and deceive to get it.

Warren Wiersbe gives us this insight of what was going on here and it does apply to us as well. He wrote,

Life isn't easy, and what life does to us depends a great deal on what life finds in us.

Jacob could have easily left his family problems behind, but he had to take along his biggest problem - himself.

During the next twenty years (31:41) Jacob would experience many painful trials in Laban's household, but in the end, he would become God's man to accomplish God's will.

However, don't read these chapters as an ancient story about one man's family. This is a contemporary story about all of us who are making important decisions on the road of life, decisions that determine character and destiny.

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – OT, p. 104

Again, we don't have to manipulate, deceive, lie, trick to get God's will accomplished. In fact, when we do, we only make things harder for us as we will see here with Jacob. What God has promised us, He is more than able to bring it to pass! (Romans 4:21)

Now keep in mind that this was not a short journey that Jacob was on. His uncle Laban lived in the area of Padan Aram, specifically Haran, which was in Mesopotamia where Abraham was originally from and where his family still lived, and it was about 500 miles away!

So with that as our background, let's begin reading in Genesis chapter 29 beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us this evening as we study His Word.

**GENESIS 29****VERSES 1-3**

As I have said, for Jacob, this was a 500-mile journey and it probably took him around one month to travel that distance, depending on how many miles he traveled in one day.

And remember that in Luz, which he will change to Bethel or House of God, he has a dream of angles ascending and descending on this ladder and the Lord spoke to Jacob and said to him, “**... ‘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.’**” Genesis 28:13-15.

What a promise from God, one He gave to Abraham and to Isaac, and now we see here that He gave it to Jacob.

And out of this we are told in Genesis 28:16-17, “**Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, ‘Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.’ And he was afraid and said, ‘How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!’**”

As Genesis chapter 29 opens up we are told, after this encounter with God, “**So Jacob went on his journey . . .**” Genesis 29:1.

In the English we miss the impact of Jacob’s actions here.

When it says that “. . . Jacob went on his journey” it can literally mean, “And Jacob lifted up his feet.”

What is my point?

It is very simple. It is not just that he went on this journey, it is how he went on this journey!

Remember that penguin movie – *HAPPY FEET!*

That was Jacob! Jacob had “*HAPPY FEET!*”

In other words, he left Bethel with joy in his heart and a bounce in his step and he arrived at the destination that the Lord wanted him to be, he arrived in the area of Mesopotamia, in Haran.

What changed in Jacob?

I mean, he is on the run from his brother who wants to kill him and now he has happy feet. What is up with that?

His heart changed with the Lord and that affected his outward actions. Jacob was not perfect, but God was working, and he was growing!

What kind of feet do you have? And I am not talking about being flat-footed or whatever!

As you are walking each day, do you have happy feet or grumpy feet? Is their joy in your step or are you just dragging your feet because you don't see the point?

If you want happy feet, then walk with the Lord and you will go out with joy and have a bounce in your step as you follow Him!

It truly is a decision we have to make. For Jacob, nothing changed except his perception of God. If you are not walking with happy feet maybe you need to get refocused and listen to the promises that God has for you because it will put a bounce in your step and joy in your heart!

Before we move on, let me kind of put things into perspective for you in regard to Jacob.

When Jacob left Beersheba for Haran, he was 77 years old.

He spent 20 years serving his uncle Laban.

He was 33 years back in the land of Canaan.

And he spent the remainder of his life in Egypt, 17 years.

Jacob lived 147 years and as we shall see, his life is important in God bringing together the nation of Israel.

And here, we see Jacob at a well, the place Rebekah, his mother met the servant of Abraham and he brought her back to meet Isaac, who would become her husband!

And now, this is the place where Jacob will meet his wife, at a well in Haran.

And here at this well we are told the sheep were gathered to be watered and there was a large stone or rock over this well.

The rock was probably a way to keep animals from falling into the well, dying and polluting the well.

As we read on just see how the hand of God is working in all of this as the plans and purposes of God will come to pass!

#### VERSES 4-10

So as Jacob arrives at this well, maybe not sure where exactly he was at since there were no signs telling you, and it is here at this well that there are shepherd boys. So Jacob meets them and he asks them about Laban, if they know him.

And they say they know Laban, he is doing well and in fact, his daughter Rachel is coming.

Upon seeing Rachel and her beauty, it seems like Jacob is trying to get rid of these shepherd boys so he can meet Rachel without their interference.

What he is basically telling them is this, ***“Hey guys, hurry up and water your sheep so you can get back to your other animals and care for them. The cattle are waiting boy’s, hurry it up!”***

You got to love Jacob; he is smitten by Rachel!

And Rachel comes with her father’s sheep, to water them.

We are also told that there was this heavy stone covering this well and Jacob, seeing the situation, flexes his muscles and lifts the stone up, trying to impress Rachel.

You know guys, ***“Which way is the beach?”*** as you flex your muscles to impress the girls.

Well, that is Jacob here, trying to impress Rachel as he is looking for a wife from the family of Laban and she is standing right before him!

I remember when Julie and I met, I had to rescue her as she had fallen into the pool. So I flexed my muscles and jumped in and saved her life. Well, I guess I did throw her into the pool in the first place, but I keep telling her that I did save her life! She doesn’t see it that way!

For Jacob, what he is seeing is the sovereign will of God and as we walk in obedience to Him there are those blessings!

#### VERSES 11-14

We are not told the response of Rachel when Jacob kissed her, but she must have been surprised by it. I don’t think he planted a big kiss on her lips, but it was a kiss of endearment you might say, not just a normal middle eastern greeting type of kiss.

And you wonder what she was thinking as he kisses her and then he wept!

But then he goes on to explain who he is. And as you read this you can clearly see how God orchestrates things and it is amazing, but we shouldn't be amazed, He is God!

And Rachel must have thought about her aunt Rebekah and how the servant of Abraham came for her to bring her to Isaac and now God brought Jacob to her.

Rachel goes and tells her dad and as Laban, the father of Rachel hears about all of this he is excited.

Why is he so excited?

As we will see with Laban, it is all about profit, getting something and he sees this as a moneymaker, a good thing for him and God will use this man to teach Jacob some valuable lessons, as we shall see.

So Laban shows Jacob some hospitality as he stays with Laban for one month!

#### VERSES 15-20

We are told that Laban has two daughters.

The older one is Leah, and it says that her eyes were delicate. Now some feel that she was blue eyed instead of having the more acceptable brown eyes in that culture, so she was looked down upon. Because of that she was not married.

It could be that, but I think there is more to it than that.

You see, we are told that Rachel was beautiful and thus, Leah was not as beautiful as Rachel and Jacob fell head over heels for Rachel.

And what we see here is that instead of working for wages, he was willing to work seven years to marry Rachel and those years went by quickly because he was in love!

Keep in mind Jacob came from a wealthy family but he left with nothing. Thus, working for seven years was a dowry, which was above normal for a dowry. But Jacob didn't want to lose out and Laban saw that he could take advantage of the situation.

That is true love. Jacob was willing to wait those seven years before marrying Rachel. You see, love is not a feeling, it is an act of your will. How you treat the person your dating says a lot about you.

Feelings change but commitment does not as we see here with Jacob.

In our society today we see that true love does not wait and it really is not true love then, it is true lust!

If you love someone then Paul tells us what that love is like. He wrote, **“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. . . .”** I Corinthians 13:4-8a.

Ladies, if someone tells you they love you and they want to have sex with you before marriage, drop them!

That does seem harsh, but if they can't wait, then they don't love you. Don't mix up love and lust, that is what the world does.

You see, true love waits as God has told us!

Jacob waited seven years before he was married to Rachel, before the marriage was consummated.

Now it is time for the wedding, but Laban has other ideas, as we shall see!

VERSES 21-25

Jacob was caught in his own deceptions – he deceived his father Isaac, he cheated his brother Esau, and now Laban was doing to him what he did to others.

It is just as Paul reminds us in Galatians 6:7, “**Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.**”

The Amplified Bible puts it like this, “**Do not be deceived and deluded and misled; God will not allow Himself to be sneered at (scorned, disdained, or mocked by mere pretensions or professions, or by His precepts being set aside.) [He inevitably deludes himself who attempts to delude God.] For whatever a man sows, that and that only is what he will reap.**”

That is what was happening to Jacob here, God was teaching him some lessons of faith and how his sin looks when others are doing it to him! He didn't like it just as Isaac and Esau didn't like what Jacob did to them.

And what we see here is that instead of Laban giving Rachel as a wife to Jacob, he gives Jacob Leah.

Now how in the world did Jacob not pick up on this?

Because the wife was fully veiled until she was finally alone with her husband and the marriage consummated.

Now, if it was dark out, then it could be very possible for Jacob to be fooled!

The deceiver is deceived!

Remember that just because Jacob deceived his father and cheated his brother, God's plan did not change for him.

What did change or what God was going to do with Jacob is discipline him and teach him some lessons. Jacob, in a sense, went to the school of hard knocks, and folks, how many of us have attended that school?

I bet most if not all of us at one time or another!

In saying that, did it justify Laban's actions?

Absolutely not but God would use this schemer to teach Jacob, the heel-catcher, deceiver some lessons!

In other words, Jacob the schemer, the heel-catcher, the deceiver will become Israel, governed by God. That is what God is doing in his life!

#### VERSES 26-30

Laban tries to make himself look good by telling Jacob the reason that this was done. He basically said to Jacob, ***"I'm sorry Jacob, didn't we tell you that we don't do things like that around here. I thought you knew about this. We can't give our younger daughter in marriage before the older one is married!"***

I don't think that was exactly right but even if it was, you would think that Laban should have told Jacob this before he put him to work for seven years.

But Laban is getting a good deal here with Jacob. He is now working for him for fourteen years so he could get Rachel as his wife!

Make no mistake about it, Laban is not a nice guy!

And we also see that Jacob is still in love with Rachel and Laban tells Jacob to fulfill her week, and then he can marry Rachel.

But here is the kicker; he would have to work for him another seven years if he wanted to marry Rachel.

Yes, after a week he married Rachel, but now he had to work another seven years to get the woman he wanted in the first place.

You see, you do reap what you sow, and Jacob was learning that at the school of hard knocks.

That is what we are told in Job 4:8, **“Even as I have seen, Those who plow iniquity And sow trouble reap the same.”**

What was the pattern for marriage that God established back in Genesis chapters 1 & 2?

The pattern was one man to one woman for life!

And what do we see here?

We see polygamy here!

Now, there is a lot of that going on in the Bible, is God saying it is okay?

Not at all!

Then why doesn't He condemn it?

First of all, let me say this.

Like I have said, the book of Genesis lays down the foundation for marriage, a man and a woman and Jesus reaffirms that as He says in Matthew 19:4-6, **“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.”**

Then why doesn't God say this is wrong?

Because He did back in Genesis and now He is just speaking of what is transpiring here, he is not condoning polygamy!

And here is the problem.

Jacob loved Rachel more than he loved Leah and how do you think Leah felt?

She felt horrible. She wanted nothing more than to be loved and all she will get is the physical love and not the emotional relationship.

Folks, that can also happen in marriage, where you are married but you love something more than you love your spouse!

Don't let that happen!

And men, I will hit you on this one. Make sure your wife feels that she is the most loved person in the world because she is the daughter of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Thus, don't mess with her, her Father is watching and you should be watching over her. Love her as God commanded you to do!

### VERSE 31

Please keep in mind that Leah was aware of this plot to deceive Jacob and she could have come forward and said that she was not Rachel, but she didn't.

But that would have made her father Laban very angry and disgraced before the people.

And if this did happen, maybe Jacob would have been sent away and Rachel would not have been married to him and she would have been very angry at Leah.

It truly was a no-win situation for Leah and the reality is, she was a pawn used in this deception. Leah was a victim in all of this and thus, God comes to her aid and opens her womb and keeps the womb of Rachel closed.

God was going to minister to her even though Jacob, her husband should have been doing that!

### VERSE 32

Leah is excited to have a child with Jacob because she thought he would love her now.

But he is not going to love her any more than he did before. He still loved Rachel more!

Yes, he will have sex with Leah, but he won't love her. There won't be that emotional tie like he had with Rachel. Again, this is very sad.

God is working on this entire family to open their eyes and help them to walk according to His ways and not theirs!

So Leah conceives and the first child born to Leah she calls *Ruben*, which means, ***“behold, a son.”***

She sees that the Lord has blessed her, and she longs for the love of her husband. In fact, she said, **“Now therefore, my husband will love me.”** But he didn't!

### VERSE 33

The second child born to Leah she calls *Simeon*, which means, ***“hearing.”***

She is hoping he will see that God has heard her prayers and blessed her and Jacob would love her now, but once again that does not happen.

### VERSE 34

Leah is fertile to say the least. Her third son is named *Levi* and his name means, ***“attachment.”***

You see, Leah still feels that Jacob will come around and be attached to her in an emotional way, that he would love her more than just with the act of sex!

Women want to be loved, to be cared for. They want that emotional attachment.

Men, on the other hand, it really doesn't matter. And we have to change that attitude in our marriage relationship.

Listen to this and you will see what I mean regarding men. And this survey was done way back in 1995, I could not find anything after that, and I am sure it is even worse today.

This 1995 survey asked the following question:

**“Have you ever had sex with a woman you have actively disliked?”**

And the response from men was that 58% of them answered **“Yes!”** How sad.

### VERSE 35

The fourth son born to Leah is called *Judah*, which means, **“praise.”**

No longer is the focus on herself or what she is missing but upon the God who has given her these children and thus, she will praise Him in spite of the situations she is in!

How about you, can you take your eyes off of what you don't have and praise the Lord for the blessings that He has bestowed around you?

He wants you to!

You see, even in our toughest circumstances we must get our eyes off of people and get them onto our God and let it give **“birth”** to - **PRAISE!**

And look at what God does here. The two greatest tribes of Israel were not born to Rachel but to Leah.

They are *Levi*, which was the *priestly tribe* and *Judah*, which was the *royal tribe* from which the Messiah would come.

Folks, I don't care how ugly you think you are, how uneducated you think you are, how unworthy you think you are, how unqualified you think you are – God sees you as beautiful and will do great things in you and through you for His glory! May you never forget that!

It is as we are told in II Chronicles 16:9, “**For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. . . .**”

God is looking for faithful people who love Him.

Are you willing to step forward to bear much fruit?

God wants you to, He is looking!

### **GENESIS 30**

#### **VERSES 1-4**

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 in Psalm 17:15, **“As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.”**

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 – ***IN THE LORD!***

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!”**

It has always been about Rachel and now when she could not bear a child, it was no longer about her and she was angry.

And for Jacob, his response is not a good one. He puts the blame upon God and takes the blame off himself. And he is really rebuking Rachel!

How much better this would have been if he just handled this in love.

And if you think about it, isn't that what we want from the Lord? Of course it is! Yes, correction and truth but that it is done in love!

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

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 a 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

Bilhah has a second son for Rachel and Rachel calls him *Naphtali*, which means, “*wrestle.*”

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.

Maybe Rachel meant it in the sense that now Leah seemed to have stopped having children.

Make no mistake about it, 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!

What we are seeing here is an ugly picture of a very dysfunctional family that is rooted in jealousy, bitterness, competition and fighting.

VERSES 9-13

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

Leah’s son, Reuben is out in the fields, he is maybe seven or eight years old at this time and finds some mandrakes. 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.

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.

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.

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!

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

#### VERSES 19-20

Jacob’s tenth son born to Leah is named Zebulun, and it means “*dwelling.*”

She had six of her own children and four more were born to her maid, Zilpah.

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 again, that is not the case!

#### VERSE 21

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 at this point we see that Leah, Zilpah and Bilhah have no more children.

#### VERSE 22

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.

VERSES 23-24

Here we see God opened the womb of Rachel, not the mandrakes, 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 may be 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!

What is interesting and we do this a lot, is that we pray for something, and God gives us what we have been praying for and we are not satisfied. We want something else, something more.

It is as one author put it. He wrote, “*How reflective of human nature - ‘I want this job. I want that car. I want that home. I want that position,’ we say. And when we get them, like Rachel, we find we only want more.*”

May we learn to be satisfied with what the Lord has given to us because it is what is best for our lives!

Now keep in mind that these are the children of Israel. From them will come the twelve 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

Jacob has spent fourteen 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.

But 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

There are a couple of points here that show me how Jacob's faith has grown over these fourteen 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 are characteristics 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.

Make no mistake about it, we serve the Lord and that service unto the Lord is manifested in what we do to others. May we do our best and glorify our Father in heaven!

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.

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 spotlight 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!

So we see here that Jacob 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.

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.

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 because he sees this as a very good business deal. He is also going to try to guarantee his prosperity in this deal with the following stipulation that we will read in the next few verses.

#### VERSES 35-36

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-day 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

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?

Some say that was a superstition and it had nothing to do with science. It may be true that it had nothing to do with science, but I do believe Jacob was following what God had told him. It was a walk of faith on his part!

How do I know that?

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.

What we see here is that 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 him and blessed him.

Make no mistake about it, 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!

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.”**

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 shinning.

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 shinning, they are steadfast, they are immovable and so must we!

May we be like stars and keep shinning for Jesus, pointing people to our Great God and Savior!