

GENESIS: Where Grace Begins

Necessary Lessons for the Man God is Shaping – Genesis 29

29 Then Jacob went on his journey and came to the land of the people of the east. ² As he looked, he saw a well in the field, and behold, three flocks of sheep lying beside it, for out of that well the flocks were watered. The stone on the well's mouth was large, ³ and when all the flocks were gathered there, the shepherds would roll the stone from the mouth of the well and water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place over the mouth of the well.

⁴ Jacob said to them, "My brothers, where do you come from?" They said, "We are from Haran." ⁵ He said to them, "Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?" They said, "We know him." ⁶ He said to them, "Is it well with him?" They said, "It is well; and see, Rachel his daughter is coming with the sheep!" ⁷ He said, "Behold, it is still high day; it is not time for the livestock to be gathered together. Water the sheep and go, pasture them." ⁸ But they said, "We cannot until all the flocks are gathered together and the stone is rolled from the mouth of the well; then we water the sheep."

⁹ While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess. ¹⁰ Now as soon as Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, Jacob came near and rolled the stone from the well's mouth and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. ¹¹ Then Jacob kissed Rachel and wept aloud. ¹² And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's kinsman, and that he was Rebekah's son, and she ran and told her father.

¹³ As soon as Laban heard the news about Jacob, his sister's son, he ran to meet him and embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his house. Jacob told Laban all these things, ¹⁴ and Laban said to him, "Surely you are my bone and my flesh!" And he stayed with him a month.

¹⁵ Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my kinsman, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?" ¹⁶ Now Laban had two daughters. The name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel.

¹⁷ Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful in form and appearance. ¹⁸ Jacob loved Rachel. And he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel." ¹⁹ Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to any other man; stay with me." ²⁰ So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her.

²¹ Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife that I may go in to her, for my time is completed." ²² So Laban gathered together all the people of the place and made a feast. ²³ But in the evening he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and he went in to her. ²⁴ (Laban gave his female servant Zilpah to his daughter Leah to be her servant.) ²⁵ And in the morning, behold, it was Leah! And Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?" ²⁶ Laban said, "It is not so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. ²⁷ Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also in return for serving me another seven years." ²⁸ Jacob did so, and completed her week. Then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife. ²⁹ (Laban gave his female servant Bilhah to his daughter Rachel to be her servant.) ³⁰ So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah, and served Laban for another seven years.

A few interpretive principles:

1) Not everything in the Bible is _____. Some of what we see (particularly in the Old Testament) is _____.

What we see here should not be considered _____ or even _____. It is just "was".

2) There are some _____ on display.

Sin is _____ – even if the price we pay is _____.

3) God's _____ is clearly at work throughout the story. There are no chance happenings or accidents in a world ruled by God. God promised to be _____ Jacob – and He was.

An overview:

Rebecca's plan seems – at first – to be working flawlessly ...

The immediate danger from Esau has been left behind.

Jacob had completed the trek safely.

His distant family was found easily.

A potential wife has already emerged.

Jacob is given a warm welcome and a soft place to land.

If we didn't know better, we'd be led to believe that _____ ... or at least that there are no real _____.

... the way of the treacherous is their ruin. ("The way of the treacherous is hard" NASB) (Prov. 13:15)

¹¹ Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the children of man is fully set to do evil. (Ecclesiastes 8:11)

⁷ Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. (Gal. 6:7)

The first sign that Jacob still had a price to pay (and by connection, so did Rebecca) was Laban's requirement that Jacob _____ him in order to gain his daughter's hand in marriage.

Jacob – who had schemed in order to _____ served was about to experience a long season as _____. And Jacob – the _____ – had met his match.

Jacob's first necessary lesson: _____.

The second sign that the treacherous life is hard is the debacle with Laban's two daughters.

How did Laban justify his deception?

Jacob's second lesson: _____.

The third sign that Jacob was paying a steep price was the amount of TIME he had to give in order to meet Laban's demands (14 years).

Jacob's third lesson: _____.

The one who had refused to _____ God and _____ on His timing (25:23) was now learning a painful lesson.

"It is in the sequel that God is vindicated. History in fragments denies God, but history as a whole is seen to be His story."

- A.W. Pink

Big Picture Lesson:

God made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and now continued it with Jacob. In spite of that promise, God brought the patriarch-to-be to Laban for discipline that would bring his deception before his eyes. The lesson is that, "even though God's people may experience God's blessing on their endeavors, God will effectively discipline them by making them painfully aware of their unresolved sins." (Allen P. Ross)

Remember: God has an invincible determination to sanctify us.

Postscript:

"Twelve sons and one daughter would be born to the four women (Rachel, Leah and two concubines). Through unloved Leah and her maid Zilpah, eight of the twelve tribes would come. Leah would be the mother of Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. Despised Leah was the hereditary mother of the kingly tribe of Judah and the priestly tribe of Levi. This makes her ultimate offspring Moses, David, and the Lord Jesus Christ! Indeed, God's work goes on and even thrives amidst human failure."

- R. Kent Hughes

That is called _____.