

April 2nd

Greed Can't Stop God's Promises

*"Thus the man increased greatly and had large flocks, female servants and male servants, and camels and donkeys."
Genesis 30:43*

"Greed is good." This line is delivered by Michael Douglas in the 1987 Film "Wall Street." Some may have heard the line, but many probably don't know that it's based upon a real-life stockbroker named Ivan Boesky, who delivered a speech at UC Berkeley with the same philosophy. Boesky shared in that speech that greed was healthy and can be morally acceptable. Greed didn't begin on the streets of the New York Stock Exchange. We see here the dueling between Jacob and Laban's greed. Which one is worse, and what does God teach us in this interaction between son-in-law and boss?

As we read these interactions between Jacob and Laban, we've always got to remember that the bedrock beneath the lying, cheating, and stealing is God's promise from Genesis 28. Even as Jacob puts conditions on his own loyalty to God, God doesn't base His own promises on conditions. These are unilateral promises, and God swears by Himself to ensure that He can be trusted. These "I wills" focus the readers on God's care for Jacob, despite the odds being stacked against him. God reveals the inner drive of Laban quickly in these interactions with Jacob...greed. Did you notice what Jacob requests from Laban and how Laban responds here. Jacob wants to take his wives and children back to his homeland. Laban doesn't care at all about saying goodbye to his daughters and grandchildren. All he can talk about is how God has blessed Jacob and made Laban rich. His greed drives him to negotiate for more time with Jacob as an employee.

There's a lot of intriguing superstition with the breeding tactic that Jacob uses here. It's like the superstition of the mandrake love potion a few verses earlier. However, don't miss the main point of the interaction because you're lost in the details. Did you notice the agreement between Jacob and Laban? Jacob states that he will take any of the spotted or striped goats for himself, while Laban will keep the solid-colored ones. It sounds reasonable at first glance. But most people may not be aware that striped and spotted goats are rare. No wonder Laban agreed to the deal...his greed got the best of him. Jacob had just agreed to be his shepherd basically for free because not many animals were spotted in the first place! But did you also notice that Laban's greed doesn't stop there. He takes all of the spotted and striped animals and puts his sons in charge of them at a three day journey away from where Jacob was shepherding. He stops at nothing to cheat Jacob. But God. God's promise to Jacob cannot be stopped.

God has given His grand promise to Jacob. Jacob has acquired the people part of God's promise, but at this point, he has no land and no riches. But God. Notice how the end of this narrative describes Jacob: "Thus the man increased greatly and had large flocks, female servants and male servants, and camels and donkeys." Phase number one was completed with his wives and children. Now phase two of God's promise was complete. Laban had received riches earlier because of Jacob. However, his cheating had only delivered him "feeble flocks." God's purposes can't be stopped by the actions of man, no matter how powerful and smart they might appear. Men, this can encourage us all today. God has given you His grand promise to give you eternal life and has given you a significant mission to make Him famous today. Your failures can't stop Him. Your greed can't stop Him. Your selfishness can't stop Him. Your fear can't stop Him. Rest today in His promises that come from His gracious hand!

Spend some time thinking about God's promise to give you eternal life. Think about ways that you have lost joy because you've forgotten about this grand blessing.

For Further Reading: Genesis 30:25-43