



The following is the summary of the Sunday sermon that is sent to the body at Steadfast in an email called "The Weekly"

---

## Genesis 29-31

The Deceiver Jacob Meets the Deceiver Laban

The Bible stipulates a principle for life: People reap what they sow. In God's ordering of things, there is a measure-for-measure of affairs. Believers understand that God orders the affairs of human beings in order to remind them of their sins and to set things right. For the believer, chance, fate and luck are replaced by an understanding of God's sovereignty and His providence. Jacob's relationship with Laban provides an example of the divine ordering of things in Jacob's life: The deceiver was deceived! When Laban tricked Jacob and explained that his younger daughter could not be married before the firstborn, would have been sufficient to make Jacob realize that his sin had come back to haunt him. Jacob would live with the results of his deception the rest of his life. He would conclude that God's design in all this was to make him, the deceiver, know that such devices were in fact repugnant to God.

### ***Jacob experienced the gracious and magnanimous blessing of God, 29:1-14***

Jacob is zealous, generous and industrious. No longer concerned about Esau and having a new confidence from his vision at Bethel, Jacob senses God's direction in his life. Everything was coming together so quickly: The right well and Rachel. His kiss was one of family affection and she introduced him to her father, Laban. Jacob meets the family from whom he would take his bride.

### ***Jacob experienced the discipline of God, 29:15-30***

Laban had two daughters—the elder was Leah and the younger was Rachel. The motif of the younger and the older appears again in Jacob's life, but he seems almost naïve about the situation, seeing no parallel with him and Esau. He worked for Laban for seven years in order to marry Rachel. His love for Rachel deepened over those seven years. It was time for the marriage; the feast was in place for the celebration; hearts were merry, filled with joy and anticipation. But on the wedding night Jacob discovered he was married to Leah. Von Rad writes: "That Laban secretly gave the unloved Leah to the man in love was, to be sure, a monstrous blow, a masterpiece of shameless treachery" (p. 291). Treacherous deception had brought pain and apparent disaster. Now Jacob understood how Esau felt! He would serve seven more years and then receive a divided family—a wife he loved and a wife he did not, one who had shared in the deception. Jacob exclaimed to Laban, "Why then have you deceived

me?" Jacob now understood that this was God's rebuke and discipline!

### ***Jacob's family, 29:31-30:24***

A contest of childbearing developed between Rachel and Leah. It was a contest provoked by the desire for the affectionate approval of Jacob. Themes of unrequited love, lack of recognition and complete disregard permeate this section. Yet, in the midst of this dysfunction, God richly blessed the unloved Leah with four sons—Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah. Yet, Rachel's womb was barren. So, Rachel's servant Bilhah bears Dan and Naphtali. When Leah could not conceive anymore, her servant Zilpah bore Gad and Asher. Despite the use of a strange superstitious aphrodisiac, God gave Leah another son, Issachar, and later Zebulun. Finally, God "remembered Rachel," and she bore Joseph.

After 14 years of service to Laban, Jacob was determined to leave Laban and return to the Promised Land. He outwitted Laban and left Haran a very wealthy man (30:25-31:55). Genesis 31 delineates how God guided Jacob away from Laban and protected him from danger. Jacob's success was due to the Lord's presence with him; God's intervention in the time of crisis was his only source of strength. Despite the tragedy of the Laban years, Jacob was obedient to God's call to return to the Land, faithful in his service to Laban, protesting his innocence before God and acknowledging God's presence with him.

Lesson for us: Whatever our lot in life—whether we are hated or ignored, oppressed or challenged, troubled or anxious—our attitude should not be one of jealousy or our efforts ones that promote bitter rivalry. Instead, we must cultivate a confident trust in the Lord, waiting patiently for His blessing. Paul writes in Romans 13:13-14: "Let us walk properly as in the daytime . . . not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires." [ESV]

Dr. Jim Eckman