

Discussion February 13 and 14:

1. Read Genesis 31.

Re-read our definition for Grace:

Grace can be seen when God moves towards the sinner-saint; actions that manifests as unmerited kindness* towards the sinner-saint. Grace can also be seen when God moves towards the sinner-saint to accomplish His will or His pleasure in their life.

(*Remember* Kindness plays out more specifically than favor; kindness is specific blessings pertaining to the individual and the specific season they're in.)

Keeping this definition in mind, are you seeing any instances of Grace that you hadn't seen before?

2. Write Genesis 30.25 here:

What does Jacob want in this verse?

Has there ever been a time when the Lord laid a desire on your heart before fulfilling it for you?

3. In your own words, what is happening in Genesis 31.1-2:

What is the source of the friction between Laban and his sons and Jacob?

What does God instruct in Genesis 31.3? What reassurance does God give to Jacob that He had already given him (Genesis 28.15)?

4. What does Jacob tell his wives in Genesis 31.5-7?

Write Psalm 118.6 here:

Why do you think Jacob shares this information with his wives?

According to Genesis 31.9, who is working against Laban?

What is Leah and Rachel's response to Jacob in Genesis 31.14-16? Leah and Rachel also acknowledge that Laban's wealth has been given to Jacob; who do they see working against Laban and working for Jacob?

5. In your own words, what does God promise Jacob in Genesis 31.3?

What do you think it means when God promises someone that He'll be with them?

What does Jacob do in Genesis 31.20?

Why do you think Jacob tricks Laban rather than being upfront about leaving?

6. What does Rachel do in Genesis 31.19?

Is Jacob aware of this according to Genesis 31.32?

Does Laban find the household gods, why or why not? (HINT: Genesis 31.33-35)

Where do you think Rachel learned these deceptive ways?

7. Laban has household gods that he frantically searches for, but who does he invoke in Genesis 31.49-50 and 31.53?

What does this say about Laban's faith?

8. Meditate on Psalm 103.8 this week:

*The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.*

What is your response to this?

February 13 and 14, 2024: God's Grace to Jacob, pt.1

I. Recap of Events:

A. Jacob leaves home for Haran to:

- Escape his brother's anger
- Find a bride from his mother's family (the daughters of Laban)

B. Jacob doesn't know much about YHWH or have a relationship with YHWH (what little knowledge Jacob does have he has likely inferred from his parents' own relationship with YHWH and how YHWH revealed Himself to them).

C. The Lord approached Jacob at Bethel in a dream reminding him of the blessing on his life:

Genesis 28.12-15:

12 *And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! **13** And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. **14** Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. **15** 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 promised you."*

D. Jacob's response to the dream is mixed:

-Jacob's has some reverence for the experience:

Genesis 28.16-17:

16 *Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." **17** 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."*

-Jacob's conniving nature comes to the fore when he appears to try and bargain with the Lord:

Genesis 28.20-22:

20 *Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, **21** so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God, **22** and this stone, which I*

have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house. And of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to you."

E. The Lord begins a season of discipline to drive out the manipulating and conniving tendencies of Jacob:

Genesis 29.25:

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?"*

31.1 *Now Jacob heard that the sons of Laban were saying, "Jacob has taken all that was our father's, and from what was our father's he has gained all this wealth."*

Chapter 30 will be overlaid onto our study of chapter 31

The male children from Laban's clan coming together, riled up, deeply envious, and talking bad about Jacob because Jacob's wealth is increasing in proportion to their wealth and Laban's wealth.

Envy is a problem in this family, not only with Laban's sons but also between Leah and Rachel.

The knowledge that Jacob has of YHWH isn't so much personal as it is something he's inferred from his parents' relationship with YHWH:

Genesis 30.1-2:

1 *When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister. She said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I shall die!" 2 Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"*

Because of his parents' story of barrenness, Jacob understood this facet of God's sovereignty.

Jacob knows this about God, but he's not thinking the way the Lord thinks yet, nor is his soul still before the Lord.

2 And Jacob saw that Laban did not regard him with favor as before. **3** Then the Lord said to Jacob, “Return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you.”

The envy of Laban’s sons turns Laban against Jacob. Laban wasn’t wealthy before Jacob entered the picture, so Laban was fond of Jacob if only for the financial benefit Jacob had proved to be:

Genesis 30.27-28:

27 But Laban said to him, “If I have found favor in your sight, I have learned by divination that the LORD has blessed me because of you. **28** Name your wages, and I will give it.”

As Jacob’s wealth increased so did the envy amongst Laban’s sons, and so they distort the facts to Laban, making Jacob out to be some kind of thief.

The Lord Graciously intervenes by telling Jacob:

“Return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you.”

Jacob knew he was supposed to be in the land that God had promised during his experience at Bethel; his mind returned to that promise and he goes to Laban and asks to leave:

Genesis 30.25-26:

25 As soon as Rachel had borne Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, “Send me away, that I may go to my own home and country. **26** Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, that I may go, for you know the service that I have given you.

At that moment, the timing wasn’t right. But the promise remained on Jacob’s life: God is going to bring Jacob back home, and it’s going to happen here when the circumstances become untenable.

The prolonged time in Haran was largely intended for disciplining Jacob, but 1 day longer in Haran is going to compromise Jacob’s relationship with YHWH. In Haran Jacob is seeing idolatry, divination, a focus on wealth, envy, and it appears that no one is worshiping the 1 true God.

4 So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah into the field where his flock was **5** and said to them, “I see that your father does not regard me with favor as he did before. But the God of my father has been with me. **6** You know that I have served your father with

all my strength, 7 yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times. But God did not permit him to harm me. 8 If he said, 'The spotted shall be your wages,' then all the flock bore spotted; and if he said, 'The striped shall be your wages,' then all the flock bore striped. 9 Thus God has taken away the livestock of your father and given them to me. 10 In the breeding season of the flock I lifted up my eyes and saw in a dream that the goats that mated with the flock were striped, spotted, and mottled.

Jacob wisely consults both of his wives.

Jacob reminds them their current living situation is not sustainable since Laban is always working to cheat Jacob out of fair compensation.

Jacob quickly cues his wives in on God's Grace up to this present moment, although he is still saying "*the God of my father.*"

Jacob is keenly aware that God is remedying the unrighteousness of Laban by blessing the breeding efforts always in Jacob's favor. Jacob says that when Laban dictated that the spotted flocks would be his wages then the Lord blessed those breeding efforts. But then Laban would see those were prolific and would change the terms, saying now the striped flocks were to be Jacob's wages, so the Lord would bless those breeding efforts.

A nation will come from Jacob and the Lord is prospering Jacob to set up that nation for success, all the while the Lord is simultaneously opposing the unrighteousness of Laban.

Big picture is that the Lord wants Jacob back home, but God is also showing Grace to Jacob and his wives and their children by removing them from the unrighteousness of Laban and the greedy tendencies that will always strive against them.

11 *Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob,' and I said, 'Here I am!' 12 And he said, 'Lift up your eyes and see, all the goats that mate with the flock are striped, spotted, and mottled, for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. 13 I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me. Now arise, go out from this land and return to the land of your kindred.'"*

Here Jacob relays the details of the dream to his wives: The Lord confirms that He blessed Jacob in the breeding because Laban was deceptive and unfair.

The Lord reminded Jacob of that lovely and intimate encounter they had all those years ago. *“I am the God of Bethel”* reminds Jacob of that call that the Lord put on his life—to bring forth descendants as numerous as the dust of the earth and a land for them to dwell in, as well as continuing the lineage that will bring forth the Messiah.

Genesis 28.16-18:

16 *Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.”* **17** *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.”* **18** *So early in the morning Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it.*

14 *Then Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, “Is there any portion or inheritance left to us in our father's house? **15** Are we not regarded by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and he has indeed devoured our money. **16** All the wealth that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and to our children. Now then, whatever God has said to you, do.”* **17** *So Jacob arose and set his sons and his wives on camels. **18** He drove away all his livestock, all his property that he had gained, the livestock in his possession that he had acquired in Paddan-aram, to go to the land of Canaan to his father Isaac. **19** Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel stole her father's household gods. **20** And Jacob tricked Laban the Aramean, by not telling him that he intended to flee. **21** He fled with all that he had and arose and crossed the Euphrates, and set his face toward the hill country of Gilead.*

It is a Grace to Jacob that Leah and Rachel agree here since he has to move 4 wives, 12 kids, and everything that constitutes his household. It simply can't be done without his wives overseeing the move.

Unfortunately we see Jacob slip back into his flesh. Recall what Jacob was told right at the start of our story:

Genesis 31.3:

3 *Then the Lord said to Jacob, “Return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you.”*

YHWH will be with Jacob, El Shaddai will be with him. God's Grace will cover Jacob here as he lapses back into his fleshly tendency of trickery and deception when he chooses to flee by tricking Laban without saying a word to him of his departure.

Rachel steals her father's household idols. Rachel could have taken the idols because she herself participated in worship of them; another reason is that these idols could have been symbolic of the inheritance that she and her children were denied by Laban, so she steals them thus asserting her son's right to an inheritance; or she could have stolen them to prevent Laban from using them to divinate their location after they fled.

22 When it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob had fled, 23 he took his kinsmen with him and pursued him for seven days and followed close after him into the hill country of Gilead. 24 But God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream by night and said to him, "Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad."

God visits Laban in a dream which confirms that he only meant evil towards Jacob; God's visit to Laban in this dream will serve to protect Jacob. In this dream God tells Laban:

"Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad."

Which simply means Laban is only to speak facts to Jacob...no praise and no negativity.

God is a promise-keeper because He will not blaspheme Himself.

25 And Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country, and Laban with his kinsmen pitched tents in the hill country of Gilead. 26 And Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done, that you have tricked me and driven away my daughters like captives of the sword? 27 Why did you flee secretly and trick me, and did not tell me, so that I might have sent you away with mirth and songs, with tambourine and lyre? 28 And why did you not permit me to kiss my sons and my daughters farewell? Now you have done foolishly. 29 It is in my power to do you harm. But the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.' 30 And now you have gone away because you longed greatly for your father's house, but why did you steal my gods?"

Laban is going to put on a show of disappointment and pretend that he's disappointed that he didn't get to see his family off with a feast and music, and that he didn't get to kiss them goodbye.

But Laban's true nature comes to the fore when he says:
"It is in my power to do you harm."

Laban asks 2 questions that demands answers:

"Why did you flee secretly"

"Why did you steal my gods?"

"Because I was afraid, for I thought that you would take your daughters from me by force. Anyone with whom you find your gods shall not live. In the presence of our kinsmen point out what I have that is yours, and take it."

Jacob doesn't know God yet, and doesn't know that God is a promise-keeper and will be with him and keep him safe until God accomplishes all He set out to do in the life of Jacob.

Jacob is wholly unaware that his beloved Rachel took the teraphim, and so he invites Laban to start pointing out what it is that he has wrongfully taken in front of this tribunal.

33 *So Laban went into Jacob's tent and into Leah's tent and into the tent of the two female servants, but he did not find them. And he went out of Leah's tent and entered Rachel's. 34* *Now Rachel had taken the household gods and put them in the camel's saddle and sat on them. Laban felt all about the tent, but did not find them. 35* *And she said to her father, "Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise before you, for the way of women is upon me." So he searched but did not find the household gods.*

God didn't abide the stealing of the teraphim but it was Gracious of God that Laban didn't find the teraphim and that Jacob wasn't impugned on this matter before Laban.

36 *Then Jacob became angry and berated Laban. Jacob said to Laban, "What is my offense? What is my sin, that you have hotly pursued me? 37* *For you have felt through all my goods; what have you found of all your household goods? Set it here before my kinsmen and your kinsmen, that they may decide between us two. 38* *These twenty years I have been with you. Your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried, and I have not eaten the rams of your flocks. 39* *What was torn by wild beasts I did not bring to you. I bore the loss of it myself. From my hand you required it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. 40* *There I was: by day the heat consumed me, and the cold by night,*

and my sleep fled from my eyes. 41 These twenty years I have been in your house. I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times. 42 If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been on my side, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God saw my affliction and the labor of my hands and rebuked you last night.”

Jacob is here rebelling against the unrighteousness of Laban and dissolving his relationship with him.

Jacob gives an account of his faithful service to Laban; recounting how under his stewardship Laban's ewes and goats had not miscarried and that he replaced from his own flock what predators had killed from Laban's flock...he never ate from Laban's flock and suffered countless wage changes.

*“If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac”
Still not my God.*

the God of my father...the Fear of Isaac

Jacob understands there is something grand and reverential about YHWH...that's why he refers to Him as *the Fear of Isaac*, but he hasn't yet learned that YHWH is also personal and intimate.

43 *Then Laban answered and said to Jacob, “The daughters are my daughters, the children are my children, the flocks are my flocks, and all that you see is mine. But what can I do this day for these my daughters or for their children whom they have borne? 44 Come now, let us make a covenant, you and I. And let it be a witness between you and me.” 45 So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. 46 And Jacob said to his kinsmen, “Gather stones.” And they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there by the heap. 47 Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed. 48 Laban said, “This heap is a witness between you and me today.” Therefore he named it Galeed, 49 and Mizpah, for he said, “The Lord watch between you and me, when we are out of one another's sight. 50 If you oppress my daughters, or if you take wives besides my daughters, although no one is with us, see, God is witness between you and me.” 51 Then Laban said to Jacob, “See this heap and the pillar, which I have set between you and me. 52 This heap is a witness, and the pillar is a witness, that I will not pass over this heap to you, and you will not pass over this heap and this pillar to me, to do harm. 53 The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge*

between us.” So Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac, 54 and Jacob offered a sacrifice in the hill country and called his kinsmen to eat bread. They ate bread and spent the night in the hill country. 55 Early in the morning Laban arose and kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned home.

Laban proposes a covenant with Jacob and Jacob allows Laban to state the terms; Jacob shows Grace here by not asserting his will and instead allows Laban to state his desires and wishes.

To seal this covenant Laban is going to appeal to whole host of gods:

- The God of Abraham (the true God)
- The God of Nahor (possibly the true God or God that Nahor added into a polytheistic religion)
- The God of their father
- The judge between Laban and Jacob (to whom all men are accountable)

Jacob seals the covenant by appealing to the Fear of his father Isaac, along with a sacrifice up in the hill country, and they do have a meal together.