

Discussion February 6 and 7:

1. Read Genesis 28 and Genesis 29.

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 2 Corinthians 6.14 here:

In your own words, what is Isaac telling Jacob in Genesis 28.1-4:

Why do you think Isaac instructs Jacob in this way?

What does Jacob do in response to Isaac's command (Genesis 28.5)?

What does Esau do (Genesis 28.8-9)?

3. Write Genesis 28.13-15 here:

Who has been given this promise before Jacob? (Hint: Genesis 12.1-3 and 26.2-5)

Re-read Genesis 28.3-4. Has this promise already been communicated to Jacob? Who had already communicated this promise to Jacob? Why do you think God chooses to communicate this promise to Jacob when he's already heard it from his father?

4. Genesis 29.9-20 captures the love story between Jacob and Rachel; rewrite it here in your own words:

5. What agreement do Jacob and Laban come to regarding Rachel in Genesis 29.18-20?

Does Laban honor this agreement? What happens in Genesis 29.22-30? What does Jacob exclaim in v. 25?

6. Write Genesis 29.30-31 here:

How did Jacob treat Leah? What is the Lord's response to this?

What is Leah's hope in vs. 32 and 34?

What is Leah's response in v. 35?

7. What changes, if any, do you notice in Jacob at this point in time? Compare and contrast the Jacob you met in chapters 25 and 27 with the Jacob you are witnessing in chapters 28 and 29.

8. Meditate on Isaiah 30.18 this week; specifically the following:

*Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you,
and therefore He exalts Himself to show mercy to you...*

What is your response to this?

February 6 and 7, 2024: God's Grace to Jacob and Leah

I. Recap of Events:

A. Isaac and Rebekah conceive and deliver twins, but the blessing of the birthright can only go to one, so God decides and it's Jacob.

Genesis 12.2-3:

2 *And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*

Genesis 26.3-4:

3 *Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. 4 I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.*

Romans 9.10-13:

10 *And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, 11 though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— 12 she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” 13 As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”*

Genesis 25.23:

23 *And the Lord said to her,
“Two nations are in your womb,
and two peoples from within you shall be divided;
the one shall be stronger than the other,
the older shall serve the younger.”*

B. Jacob connives and deceives to get the birthright he's already been promised:

Genesis 25.31:

31 *Jacob said, “Sell me your birthright now.”*

Genesis 27.19-20:

19 Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me; now sit up and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me." **20** But Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?" He answered, "Because the LORD your God granted me success."

C. Esau despised his birthright:

Genesis 25.32-34:

32 Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" **33** Jacob said, "Swear to me now." So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. **34** Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

D. The issue of who gets the birthright culminates when Isaac and Rebekah involve themselves because of which child they favor:

Genesis 25.28:

Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

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

28.1 Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and directed him, "You must not take a wife from the Canaanite women. **2** Arise, go to Paddan-aram to the house of Bethuel your mother's father, and take as your wife from there one of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother.

Rebekah sees Jacob's absence as serving 2 purposes:

-Give Esau time to calm down

-Since the Messiah and God's chosen people will come through Jacob, he cannot take a wife from the Canaanites, therefore he must take a wife from Rebekah's (Abraham's) family.

Nahor and his family were at least aware of YHWH. Nahor has 2 grandchildren we're very familiar with: Rebekah and Laban. That's why the children of the promised lineage are being sent to this family.

Genesis 22.20-23:

20 Now after these things it was told to Abraham, “Behold, Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor: 21 Uz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram, 22 Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel.” 23 (Bethuel fathered Rebekah.) These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother.

3 God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples. **4** May he give the blessing of Abraham to you and to your offspring with you, that you may take possession of the land of your sojournings that God gave to Abraham!”

Isaac now offers the blessing of the birthright happily and without any manipulation.

‘God Almighty’: Hebrew-*El Shaddai*

The Patriarchal name for God, meaning “self-sufficient.”

Isaac blesses Jacob with the blessing of Abraham, thus passing on the promise that Esau despised:

-A collection of people for God and land for them to dwell in

-The Messiah will come through the lineage of Jacob

5 Thus Isaac sent Jacob away. And he went to Paddan-aram, to Laban, the son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother.

We're going to see a theme of discipline coming up...the “heel-catcher” has to be transformed into Israel.

Hebrews 12.6:

For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and chastises every son whom he receives.

6 Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan-aram to take a wife from there, and that as he blessed him he directed him, “You must not take a wife from the Canaanite women,” **7** and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and gone to Paddan-aram. **8** So when Esau saw that the Canaanite women did not please Isaac his father, **9** Esau went to Ishmael and took as his wife, besides the wives he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebaioth.

Esau thinks that marrying a non-Canaanite woman is “good”, so he takes a wife from Ishmael’s clan, even though:

- Ishmael (and his family) is rejected by God
- Esau already has 2 wives
- Esau never consulted his father in the first place about who he should take as a wife

Esau just wanted a checklist for what was “good” and “righteous,” he never wanted his heart examined (i.e. why do we *not* take wives from the Canaanites?).

10 *Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran. 11* *And he came to a certain place and stayed there that night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep.*

In the following verses Moses tells us that this place is Luz, better known to this family as Bethel; Bethel has significant meaning to this family. Bethel is where Abram starts to pursue a relationship with the YHWH who Graciously called Abram to Himself.

Genesis 12.8:

From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD.

Genesis 13.3-4:

3 *And he journeyed on from the Negeb as far as Bethel to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, 4 to the place where he had made an altar at the first. And there Abram called upon the name of the LORD.*

God's time to visit his people with his comforts is when they are most destitute of other comforts, and other comforters; when afflictions in the way of duty do abound, then shall consolations so much the more abound.

Matthew Henry

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.”

God moves towards Jacob in this dream to show him kindness and reassure him of His will for Jacob's life. This is so kind of the Lord; the Lord could have taken this opportunity to chastise and rebuke Jacob for the behavior he's displayed so far, but instead, the Lord chooses to directly bless him and remind him of His will for his life.

God Himself gives and repeats the blessing of numerous offspring and a land for them to possess, as well as the promise of a Messiah coming through Jacob's lineage.

Jacob was running for his life but is here reassured that he will have numerous descendants; if he was to bring forth all those descendants, his brother couldn't touch him while he remained in this moment childless.

Jacob was safe, but more importantly, God was with him and would keep him wherever he would go.

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. 19 He called the name of that place Bethel, but the name of the city was Luz at the first. 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.”

There's a lot of debate about what's going on with Jacob here.

The facts are:

-“Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.” & “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”

-...he was afraid

-...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...[and] He called the name of that place Bethel

The debate is about whether Jacob is vowing:

If *God will go with me and do all these things...then the Lord shall be my God.*

or

Since *God will go with me and do all these things...then the Lord shall be my God.*

Look where his focus is:

-...*this way that I go*

-...*give me bread to eat and clothing to wear*

-...*so that I come again to my father's house in peace*

29.1 *Then Jacob went on his journey and came to the land of the people of the east.*

'Then Jacob went on his journey': Hebrew-*Lifted up his feet*

This is the only place this phrase occurs in the Old Testament.

Jacob uniquely responded to the Grace that the Lord had shown him with a renewed commitment to the journey that would find his partner in bringing about God's chosen people and the Messiah.

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."

God's providence guided Jacob to his bride.

This was before roads were marked so Jacob didn't know where he was until he asked around.

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.

We might label their story "love at first sight."

Rachel has that industry about her that is so esteemed in the eyes of God.

Remember these 2 families are well aware of each other, and men from Abraham's clan have come to Nahor's clan for a bride before this point in time. It is very likely that Rachel was aware that a marriage with Jacob was in her future; it would not have been at all unusual for Rachel as second born daughter to marry the second born child, who was obviously Jacob.

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.

We see a lot of the character of these 2 men here:

-Jacob humbles himself to the role of servant, never considering the terms (duration or outcome)

-Laban is eager to procure Jacob as a servant right at the start, rather than refresh him after his journey and show hospitality

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.

Jacob has no dowry, but Laban knows how he feels about Rachel, so the terms will be outrageous—7 years service for Rachel.

We've already met Rachel, but now we'll meet Leah and we're told she has "weak eyes," while Rachel is "*beautiful in form and appearance.*" What a comparison! Their relationship has to be strained and that's before Jacob enters the picture favoring Rachel over Leah.

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.)

The Lord has lavished Grace on Jacob but he still has to be refined; he has to be transformed into the man who will become Israel.

Leah was likely dramatically veiled until they retired to the "honeymoon suite;" It's also very likely that Laban arranged they not retire until dark. Because of the time and culture, both Leah and Rachel were under complete and total authority of Laban, they had no choice but to go along with this.

God's sovereignty over this hurtful mess ensures:

- The time in service, and deceitful actions of Laban, will refine and discipline Jacob
- Jacob's marriage to Leah will bring forth the lineage of Levi (from which the Priesthood will come) and Judah (from which the Messiah will come)
- Jacob's marriage to Rachel will bring forth Joseph who will help preserve God's people during a famine

30 So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah, and served Laban for another seven years. **31** When the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.

The Lord ordains that Rachel will get the earthly comfort of Jacob's love, but Leah will bear the Cross of being hated by Jacob. But God is lavishing His Grace on Leah; the Lord has a will for Leah's life, and He will draw near to her and show her kindness as He accomplishes that will...and it starts with the honor of her womb opening.

32 And Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben, for she said, "Because the Lord has looked upon my affliction; for now my husband will love me." 33 She conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Because the Lord has heard that I am hated, he has given me this son also." And she called his name Simeon. 34 Again she conceived and bore a son, and said, "Now this time my husband will be attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." Therefore his name was called Levi. 35 And she conceived again and bore a son, and said, "This time I will praise the Lord." Therefore she called his name Judah. Then she ceased bearing.

The names given to the children are important because they reveal both her affection towards Jacob and God.

Leah's children's names mean: **see**, **hear**, **attach**, **praise**

-Reuben: "**Behold**, a son"

"Because the Lord has looked upon my affliction; for now my husband will love me."

-Simeon: "**Hearing**"

"Because the Lord has heard that I am hated, he has given me this son also."

-Levi: "**Attachment**"

"Now **this time my husband will be attached to me**, because I have borne him three sons."

-Judah: "**Praise**"

"This time I will praise the Lord."