

## Genesis, pt2: Jacob's Journey – Lessons of Grace and God's Blessing

### Genesis 29-30

**MPS** Sin perverts God's blessing, but by grace God produces Christlikeness in us when by faith we trust to obey Him.  
**OBJ** Every person can understand how God's grace works to make people like Jesus Christ by three lessons.

**INTRO** **Do you know where you are with God today?** This may seem a strange question to begin with, but I want to set our minds for the message God has for us today. Nothing is more important than knowing where you are with God, understanding how He is working and where He is leading. Neglecting God leaves one exposed to the abuse, deception and destruction of sin in its many and varied effects and affects.

**TRANS** Today we walk through Jacob's journey in Genesis 29-30 to learn lessons of God's grace and blessing.

Genesis 29 begins, *Then Jacob went on his journey and came to the land of the people of the east.*" (Gen 29:1) **Do you remember WHY Jacob went on His journey?** This is important. If you don't remember how or why Jacob went on his journey, you cannot understand all that transpires. He was sent on his journey to find a wife from his father's people because his brother wanted to kill him for swindling and cheating. Jacob was running from his past, but God was with him all along.<sup>1</sup> And though God was with him all along, he never enjoyed God's blessing because his sin perverted it at every turn. The importance of understanding where you are with God cannot be overstated; where you have come from, what you have come out of, where you are, where you are headed and why you experience all you do. **Understanding everything about your life journey begins by recognizing where you are with God and what He is doing.**

When God saves a person by grace through faith, He forgives and cleanses from sin's stain and redeems from all sin's effects, by bringing one from death to life. But addressing sin's affects in life demand that we trust God all along the journey to experience His redeeming power. The good news of Jesus Christ reminds us that our sinful past does not determine the final word of our future. But as long as you fail to recognize God's blessing and trust His work in your life, you are destined to repeat sin's misery (affect) and know little of God's redeeming power. Christians live by promises, not explanations, because we walk by faith, not by sight. God's grace will always prove sufficient to strengthen and sustain you as you walk by faith in His promise, but you must trust to obey Him.

**Sin perverts God's blessing,  
 but by grace God produces Christlikeness in us when by faith we trust to obey Him.**

**OBJ** Jacob's journey traces three settings, a bride(s), a brood, and a bartering. I want us to **learn three lessons of grace that every Christ-follower must learn to live by faith in obedience to God and His promises.**

**We begin in Genesis 29 where Jacob comes to a well with shepherds waiting, surrounded by flocks of sheep.** He asks if they know Laban, his mother's brother. They do, and immediately they point out Rachel, his daughter, who is coming to water her flock. Jacob tells the shepherds to water their flocks, but they respond that they are not able because the stone is so heavy it requires more people to move it. But when Jacob saw Rachel and all her sheep, he immediately rolled the stone away by himself and watered her flock. He then kissed Rachel and wept, telling her who he was. And Rachel ran to tell her father. Laban ran out to greet Jacob. Jacob tells him the reason he has come, and Laban recognizes him as his relative. Jacob goes to live with Laban and his family.

After a month Laban discusses Jacob's "wages" with him. Jacob had noticed Laban's two daughters, and it says he loved Rachel. (.18) Jacob offers to serve Laban for seven years to marry Rachel. And at Laban's agreement on terms those years seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her. When time came for them to be married, Laban held a

<sup>1</sup> K. A. Mathews, [Genesis 11:27–50:26](#), vol. 1B, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 461. Explaining the phrase translated "*Jacob went on his journey*" Mathews says, "The implication is that the hand of God was directing Jacob's travels."



feast. But Laban gave Leah to Jacob instead of Rachel. The next morning when Jacob realized this, he went to Laban. Laban explained he could not give his younger daughter in marriage first, and agreed to give him Rachel as well after the wedding week was complete, in exchange for another seven years.

**Jacob got hoodwinked by Laban.** The man who made his life by swindling got swindled, the master of deception mastered by deception. In Laban Jacob met his match. What Laban did was not right, but Laban's sin is never a justifiable rationale to excuse Jacob's. *Jacob was so overcome by his own agenda he didn't bother to consider not consult God's will or way. Rather, he just did what he had always done, find what He wanted and swindled a deal to get it.*

Contrasting Jacob looking for a wife against Abraham's servant (Gen 24:24, 26) taking a wife for Isaac, one commentator notes, "The piety of Abraham's servant starkly contrasts with the action and character of Jacob. When Abraham's servant had discovered Rebekah's identity, he worshiped the Lord (24:24, 26), but here Jacob flexed his muscle, proving his capacity to serve Laban's house."<sup>2</sup> Everything about this situation is defined by what Jacob could accomplish and the "wage" he could earn. Honoring God in marriage or respecting his wife was never the point. *Jacob had made his life by swindling to make the deal so he could get what he wanted.*

**The first lesson of grace is contentment.**

**Jacob was never satisfied with anything because he neglected God in everything.** Jacob failed the first lesson of grace, as we all have, because he failed to recognize God. He failed to consider his situation in light of God's call on his life and consult God for His wisdom. He let his eyes and pride drive his life, and completely neglected the presence of God to reject the work of God in his life. As long as God is no more than an option in life there will be no contentment. *Living in constant awareness of God's presence is the key to contentment.*

*"be content with what you have, for he has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'" Hebrews 13:5*

Hebrews reminds us that the presence of God is abundantly greater and more than all the power and riches of this world. When Jesus is near, we find contentment by His presence. It doesn't mean our situation changes, nor that our needs automatically vanish. *Contentment comes as we look to God's will and glory for us and trust His promise in Jesus to us.*

**And maybe most important for us today is to remember that contentment must be learned.** Paul writes, *"for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. <sup>13</sup>I can do all things through him who strengthens me."* Phil 4:11,13

Learning contentment is the only way to kill envy, sinful ambition and covetousness. And it is the key to persevering, because it manifests the sufficiency of God's grace and demonstrates His faithfulness to us. Learning contentment means learning to lean on Jesus at all times for strength to obey Him, not accomplish what you desire. *Regardless of the situation, God's grace produces contentment in us when we pursue a closer presence of Jesus.*

**APPL** *Is there any area in your life where you are dissatisfied, disgruntled or discontent today? Have you turned to the Lord for His grace in Jesus or neglected Him? Are you trusting the promise of His way, or still trying to make your own?*

**TRANS** And as is too often the case, one failed misery always leads to another.

**Genesis 29:31-30:22 introduces Jacob's children, who would become the heads of the tribes of Israel;** Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph. But instead of celebration, these names are recorded amidst tension and apprehension, by competition, striving for love, fueling envy, desperately trying to get the attention of one man who was only focused on himself. FOMO as a disorder has been driving people from the very beginning. Fear rules Jacob's whole life and becomes the raging fire that burns through his whole family.

We are told that Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah. This passage begins, *"When the Lord saw that Leah was hated".*(29:31) Jacob hated Leah not because of her, but because of what she represented; the man who made his life by swindling got swindled and lost. And this reality created a cold, dark, lonely place for Leah that forced her to live her whole

<sup>2</sup> K. A. Mathews, [Genesis 11:27–50:26](#), vol. 1B, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 463.



life trying to birth Jacob's love, but to no avail. But Leah wouldn't be the only one bruised and abused by Jacob's love. When Rachel was unable to conceive and demands more from Jacob than he can swindle, he snaps. The same fear that caused Jacob to hate Leah, over a deal where he was out swindled, would later find expression in despising Rachel, over a demand that he could not satisfy. What he hated just wanted his love, and for the one he loved he couldn't provide what she demanded. The fact is, Jacob's hate toward Leah and anger toward Rachel was not about them at all, but how he felt about himself. The life built on pride always self-destructs. [When love for self is sourced in self, it can only last as long as fleeting pleasure, satisfaction, or control remains, then it becomes self-loathing; self-care becomes self-destruction that harms all who are near.](#)

**TRANS** Life has a way of teaching us how not in control we really are. Problems reveal where pride rules.

### **The second lesson of grace is humility.**

Jacob didn't trust himself because inside he knew who he really was, an untrustworthy swindler. Jacob's pride bruised his wives, making them insecure by absence of love and forcing them to compete to gain it. And all his children were born of a spirit of envious striving and named for hopeless gain. The burning of Jacob's pride singed his whole family, and Jacob was both blind to it and powerless to stop it. [Crucifixion is the only cure for pride.](#)

Humility is the declaration of war on oneself, to kill sin where it rules and pride remains, so that the cleansing power of grace can redeem and transform into Jesus' likeness. Pride destroys, but humility brings honor. Pride sets you opposed to God, but humility brings you into his grace. The only way to kill pride is to crucify it and enthrone King Jesus over your whole life.

***"Before destruction a man's heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor."* Proverbs 18:12**

***"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."* 1 Peter 5:5**

***Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.* James 4:10**

Pride will fight to disrupt humility at every point, at its invitation, its situation, its justification, and its initiation, but it cannot thwart God's promise. When we humble ourselves and trust in Jesus, His redeeming power works in us. Only humility invites the cleansing power of the gospel to purge us by Holy Spirit conviction, Word-illuminating counsel, and godly wisdom for faithful walking in God's will. The more one pursues Jesus, the more promising and pervasive humility becomes in their heart and mind, to trust Jesus in all that He says, in where He leads and how He is working by Holy Spirit and His Word. [Regardless of the demand, God's grace always produces humility when we pursue a closer presence of Jesus.](#)

**APPL** Two Lessons for Men and husbands from Genesis 29. First, men, you will never be satisfied with your wife as long as you remain self-consumed by anything else, until you live (ie, die to self) to serve her above being served by her, until you cherish her above all else as God's gift to you so strongly that you do nothing, in action, attitude nor inclination, to be unfaithful to her. [Prov5:18; Mal2:15](#) Second, husband/father, your pride will make toxic the soil that taints your whole family / household. But humility before the Lord that kills your pride will cleanse your family by pointing them to Jesus through every failure and success that they behold in you.

**TRANS** Finally we come to the last lesson.

Jacob asks Laban to let him leave. As long as he remains, his pride is stifled by Laban. Laban doesn't want Jacob to leave because he's been good for profit. So, the two swindlers face off again, and Laban tells him to "name his wages". Jacob sets terms for growing the herd and keeping a portion. Laban agrees. Sounds honest and fair, except Jacob manipulates the strategy to gain the advantage. He doesn't rip Laban off, but only grows the flock toward his advantage. One thing about a swindler, he's always waiting and never satisfied until he can get revenge for his last loss. Jacob manipulated everything to his favor so that his flock increased greatly in number and strength. But while his flock swelled by his accomplishment, his heart shrunk and atrophied. [Pride allows just enough "other" to remain to avoid exposure, but it shrinks one's capacity to consider others.](#)

### **The third lesson of grace is gratitude and generosity.**

Jacob was a self-made man who was still making himself. And the more he failed in family relationships the more he worked to salve it by other successes. Pride fueled his greed to scheme and not just 'get even with' but get ahead of Laban. He had



to make back the “lost wage” in Laban’s win; nevermind that his calculation of “loss” was not in things, but in the way he regarded people. Greed holds no regard for anything or anyone other than getting, acquiring, collecting and accumulating.

Greed is only conquered in one way; grace that grows gratitude and generosity. Gratitude is not about material stuff and generosity is not about money. Both are about God’s grace growing a healthy, God-honoring understanding of all things, people, money and material things. Greed and grace cannot coexist; one always purges the other. Greed burns; grace builds and blesses by gratitude and generosity.

**Grace can never be received as long as earning remains.** This whole passage and all the harm and destruction, brokenness and bruisedness, flows from one conversation of striving after and earning, “name your wages”.(29:15; 30:28) Earning always opposes and deters grace. Grace is never earned, but only comes by faith through repentance and receiving; but always comes to the one who believes in Jesus!

*For by grace you have been saved through faith.*

*And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup>not a result of works, so that no one may boast. Ephesians 2:8-9*  
God’s grace always produces gratitude and generosity when we pursue a closer presence of Jesus.

*Sin perverts God’s blessing,  
but by grace God produces Christlikeness in us when by faith we trust to obey Him.*

**CLOSE** If we find any true encouragement from this passage it must be this; God is far more committed to our redemption than we are. And His grace and blessing are given to fuel His redemption is us and through us. A grace-deficient life can never produce a Christlikeness for God-honoring glory. Where there is a deficiency of grace, there will always be an absence of these qualities in our life. Christlikeness is only produced where grace is working in us.

Jacob was not just a man God chose to randomly bless. God never does anything randomly. But one through whom He would bless all the families of the earth! And Christian, hear me – because of Jesus Christ, the same is true of you! Your blessing by God is never random, but purposed to bring His glory!

Is there any area in your life where God’s blessing is being skewed by sin’s work?

