

***The Blessing: A Study in Genesis 12-36***  
**Lesson 8 – Jacob Deceives**  
**Genesis 28:10-31:55**

Jacob, after stealing his brother's birthright, finds himself on the run fleeing for his life. Throughout Scripture, we find stories of individuals who find themselves in desperate situations, often of their own making. Broken and hopeless, they meet the Lord at the crossroads where sin and grace intersect and have an extraordinarily life-changing encounter with the God of Creation. Jacob is no exception, and beloved, neither are you. Neither am I. In the dark hour of the soul, even if the consequences of our own sin have brought us to this place, God meets us, speaking His promises and peace over us. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

"Sin carries the weight of consequences - there is no escaping it - but we also serve a God whose very heart is that of forgiveness, grace, mercy, redemption, and restoration" (*The Blessing*, p. 167).

**I. Between a Rock and a Hard Place – Genesis 28:10-22**

We know that Jacob, true to his name, was a liar, a conniver, and a deceiver. His father Isaac was a God-follower, but struggled with his fleshly nature. Isaac's favorite son was not Jacob, but his twin Esau, who did not care for the things of God. Jacob loved Esau because he was a hunter and would cook up savory venison for him, evidence he was more often than not driven by his own fleshly appetites. His mother Rebekah was also willing to sacrifice her testimony because she favored Jacob over Esau. She helped Jacob deceive his dying father, Isaac, and steal his twin's brother's birthright. We see a dysfunctional family marred by parental favoritism and sibling rivalry. Such an environment in childhood will result in strongholds that will bear dire consequences in adulthood.

Jacob traveled from Beersheba to Bethel. Exhausted from the physical exertion and mental anguish, he "took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place" (Genesis 28:11). God gives him a vision of a ladder. Wiersbe gives us insight into this moment:

The ladder symbolizes Jesus Christ. Jacob is a perfect picture of the lost soul – in the darkness, fleeing for his life, away from the father's house, burdened with sin, and ignorant of the fact that God is near him and wants to save him. The ladder pictures Christ as the only way from earth to heaven. He opens heaven for us and brings heaven's blessings to our lives. And He alone can take us to heaven. Jacob thought he was in a lonely wilderness and awakened to discover he had been at the very gate of heaven! (Warren Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament, Logos*).

Our Old Testament vagabond sets up an altar and worships the Lord. He renames the place Bethel, which means "house of God." He pledges his life to God and promises to tithe of all his possessions.

**II. Reaping What You Sow – Genesis 29:1-30:43**

Jacob continues his journey with no idea that he is about to “meet his match” in scheming Laban, his mother’s brother. Having just had a divine encounter with God, Jacob will be surprised at how quickly his old nature surfaces!

Every mountaintop experience with the Lord is followed by a test of faith to ensure we can learn to live out in daily practice what we have experienced in times of spiritually charged experiences with the Divine.

Two New Testament stories come to mind. The first is Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11). Following Jesus’ baptism, when the Spirit of God descends as a dove, Satan unleashes a vicious attack of the Lord of Glory. This is sometimes referred to as “the devil after the dove” scenario. Obviously, the Lord Jesus defeated the enemy meeting every one of Satan’s attacks with God’s Word.

The second is the accounting of the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-23, Mark 9:1-29, Luke 9:28-26). Jesus took Peter, James, and John to the top of a mountain where He was transfigured – this is, the glory of His divine nature shown through the fleshly body of His Incarnation. Can you even imagine? When they came down from the mountaintop experience with Jesus they were met by a demoniac. Satan nearly always shows up after these life-changing episodes in order to bring doubt, discouragement, despair, and even division among God’s people. In the Luke account, we read that after this event the disciples begin to argue about who is the greatest (Luke 9:46). If this is not evidence of Satan’s highly evolved ability to intrude and insert himself, especially after mountaintop experiences with the Lord, I don’t know what is! These men had just seen Jesus glorified with Moses and Elijah standing in the wings and they want to squabble over the prominence and pecking order of the disciples! Satan is a liar and the father of all lies (John 8:44), and he maniacally sows his lies to tempt us to take our eyes off Jesus! Sadly, when Jacob’s faith is tested, he walks by sight and not by faith.

Back to our story. God providentially directs Jacob to the house of Laban. He first encounters Rachel, Laban’s youngest daughter at the well when she arrives with her father’s flock. At what can only be described as “love at first sight,” Jacob wants to take Rachel as his wife.

Laban has two daughters, Rachel and Leah. Genesis 29:17 says that, “Leah’s eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful of form and face” (Genesis 29:17). Wiersbe notes that Rachel means ewe, while Leah means wild cow. Leah’s eyes lacked that deep sparkle that, in Middle Eastern cultures, is a mark of beauty (Warren Wiersbe, *Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the Old Testament, Logos*).

Jacob agrees to serve Laban for seven years as a dowry of sorts to take the hand of Rachel in marriage. “So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her” (Genesis 29:20). This man is love-sick! When we read that Laban tricks him into marrying his oldest daughter, we can only imagine his indignation when, after the honeymoon, he realizes he has been duped! Outraged, Jacob confronts Laban who replied, “Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the

other also for the service which you shall serve with me for another seven years” (Genesis 29:27). After what must have been the worst weeklong honeymoon in the history of all weddings, Jacob was given Rachel in marriage. I cannot begin to unravel the awkwardness of this “bait and switch” scenario, but suffice it to say that Jacob was on the

receiving end of a cruel hoax by a dishonest con artist who rivaled his own ability to deceive. Jacob's proverbial chickens have come home to roost.

Galatians 6:7-8 says, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the spirit reap eternal life." Jacob's situation is the ultimate illustration for what is often referred to as the principle of the law of the harvest.

Dr. Adrian Rogers described this principle this way:

The first part of the law of the harvest is that men reap what they sow. Men reap what they sow. Whatever man sows, that shall he also reap. The second part of the law of the harvest is this, that you always reap more than you sow. If you sow the wind, you reap the whirlwind, the Bible says. The third law of the harvest is this, that you reap later than you sow. You do not sow and reap the same day. There is a time of germination. There is a time of the sprouting. There is a time of the blooming. There is a time of the fruition. Men reap later than they sow (Dr. Adrian Rogers, retrieved from sermon, *What You Sow is What You Get*).

Jacob is reaping what he has sown. Although Jacob should have learned from his own parents' mistake, he showed partiality to Rachel. "Indeed he loved Rachel more than Leah" (Genesis 29:30) but she was barren. Multiple wives have never been a part of God's plan for marriage (Genesis 2:24) and every time it occurs in the Bible, disastrous results are not far behind. This story is no different. Rachel is loved, but barren. Leah is unloved, but able to give Jacob children. This home is destined to be marred by bitterness, jealousy, and division. Only the Lord can redeem this mess and use it for His glory and proliferation of the lineage of Christ.

After fourteen years, Jacob feels the need to strike out on his own. When he asked Laban to send him away, his father-in-law was unwilling to lose such a valuable asset, for the Lord had prospered him through Jacob. Laban offered wages, but Jacob was, with good reason, skeptical of his motives.

Wiersbe writes, "Jacob offered to work as Laban's shepherd, if Laban would give him the "rejects" of the flocks and herds. Oriental sheep are white and goats brown or black. By accepting the striped, spotted, and speckled animals, Jacob was apparently giving Laban the better deal" (Warren Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament, Logos*).

The scheming nature of Jacob resurfaces yet again. Instead of trusting God to provide he contrives his own plan. Jacob uses "selective breeding" so that only the stronger livestock conceived. True to his nature, Laban changes the terms of the contract several times as he watches Jacob's flocks increasing. God's hand of providence supernaturally intervenes and allows Jacob to become a wealthy man.

**An aside:** God often uses difficult people or circumstances to hold up a mirror so that we might see that same character flaw in our own nature! Ouch!!

### **III. There's No Place Like Home – Genesis 31:1- 55**

Jacob realizes that Laban was growing more conniving and he feels the time had come to make a move. He has served Laban for 20 years and he has changed his wages 10 times (Genesis 31:7; 41). "Then the Lord said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to our relatives, and I will be with you" (Genesis 31:3). Having gotten a clear word from God, Jacob gathers his family and reveals his exit strategy to leave without telling Laban. Jacob doesn't seem to be able to shake his natural propensity of dealing in lies and deceit!

Jacob knows God's will in this situation as God has clearly told him to return him (v. 13), but he goes about it in the wrong manner, acting out of fear and unbelief.

Rachel agrees with Jacob's plan to leave, but takes the idols, either out of fear of losing their protection or out of fear Laban will use them to find their location. Either way, she is fearful and faithless as well (*The Blessing*, p. 180).

Laban is involved in shearing his sheep, so it takes several days for him to discover Jacob has left with his family and flocks in tow. He comes after Jacob in hot pursuit. God speaks to Laban in a dream and warns him against harming Jacob. When the two men meet, Laban seems to be the most concerned with his missing idols (v. 30). Hidden sin leads to more sin as Rachel, the thief, lies to her father and her husband while Laban ransacks the caravan. Jacob's poor spiritual leadership in the home reveals itself most dramatically through this scenario.

The two men did not trust each other. They set up a pillar as a memorial to remind both of them that God is always watching. This becomes a boundary marker beyond which Jacob dare not go.

**Another Aside:** Not every person that crosses your path (relative or not) has been placed there by the Lord. Satan has ways of inserting irregular people into your circle of relationships. Sometimes it is necessary to set up healthy boundaries. This does not mean you should automatically cut them out of your life completely, although that may become unavoidable. So be careful to move very slowly and prayerfully as you attempt to navigate these difficult relationships in a way that pleases the Lord. God has a purpose, and wants to use you to pray for those individuals so beware of the current trend to irresponsibly "cancel" people. If possible, leave the door open for a possible reconciliation while understanding that not everyone has your best interest at heart. Matthew 10:16 says, "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves." Be wise. Be watchful. Be gentle. Be prayerful.

Beloved, through this snapshot of Jacob's life, we can see the fallout of not walking with the Lord. Jacob continually fell into old ways of thinking which led to the recurrence of sinful habit patterns. We must learn to crucify the flesh and walk by the Spirit of God. We will be BLESSED and we will be a BLESSING!