

Genesis in Biblical Perspective: The Gospel of Christ from Genesis – One More Deal and One More Lesson

Genesis 30:25-43

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To start off this study I'd like to first read from Genesis 28 which is the promise to Jacob that had already been given to Abraham and Isaac. The place is Bethel, the ladder or gateway of heaven and this is what God said to Jacob. Genesis 28:13–15 says

[13] And behold, the LORD stood above it (the ladder) 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."

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of our God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may this His Word be preached for you.

Genesis 30:25–43 is our study in the life of Jacob as we continue in our study of the book of Genesis in general but the life of Jacob in particular. Before we look into this study God gave a promise to Abraham. There were three promises. God repeated that promise to Isaac. He has repeated it to Jacob. What are the three promises? One is that God has promised a seed that can spread and will spread throughout all of the earth and God will give a seed that is enumerable like the stars of the heavens and the sands of the sea. Secondly, God will give His presence and because He is with you, He will prosper you. I will walk with you. Thirdly, God will give you this land.

Now to Abraham God gave that promise but there was one child of that promise and that was Isaac. Then God gave that promise to Isaac but then there was one child that He promised to work through and that was Jacob, not Esau. Now to Jacob He gives that promise and we have seen the fulfillment at least in seed form of the promise of a nation that will bless all the nations of the earth. Now for fourteen years he has been in indentured servitude and at the end of the seven years he received his first wife and then seven more years for his second wife.

As we went through the last study of this one commentator called it the birth wars as Rachel and Leah were at war with each other using their hand maidens as surrogate mothers, yet God kept His promise, and He made a nation even out of the sinful rebellion of all who are present.

When Jacob who is now in exile because of the sinful way he sought the promise of God for the birthright, he is now in exile without any of the benefits of the birthright and when he comes out there will be that nation with eleven sons and the promise of one more will yet be given to Rachel. God also made another promise and that was that God would be with you. Wherever you go I will go and I will never leave you until I have done all that I have promised you. It is that which is the focus of this study. What about the third promise of the land? That will be our next study as God brings Jacob back and gives him the land. We have seen the promise of a people which has been fulfilled. Now we will see the promise of the presence of God and the prospering hand of God upon him, even though Jacob does not deserve it but it's by the grace of God. Let's take a look at this account where God's presence is emphasized. Genesis 30:25–43 says

[25] As soon as Rachel had borne Joseph (birth wars are now over between Rachel and her sister), 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." [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." [29] Jacob said to him, "You yourself know how I have served you, and how your livestock has fared with me. [30] For you had little before I came, and it has increased abundantly, and the LORD has blessed you wherever I turned. But now when shall I provide for my own household also?" [31] He said, "What shall I give you?" Jacob said, "You shall not give me anything. If you will do this for me, I will again pasture your flock and keep it: [32] let me pass through all your flock today, removing from it every speckled and spotted sheep and every black lamb, and the spotted and speckled among the goats, and they shall be my wages. [33] So my honesty will answer for me later, when you come to look into my wages with you. Every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats and black among the lambs, if found with me, shall be counted stolen." [34] Laban said, "Good! Let it be as you have said." [35] But that day Laban removed the male goats that were striped and spotted, and all the female goats that were speckled and spotted, every one that had white on it, and every lamb that was black, and put them in the charge of his sons. [36] And he set a distance of three days' journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob pastured the rest of Laban's flock. [37] Then Jacob took fresh sticks of poplar and almond and plane trees, and peeled white streaks in them, exposing the white of the sticks. [38] He set the sticks that he had peeled in front of the flocks in the troughs, that is, the watering places, where the flocks came to drink. And

since they bred when they came to drink, [39] the flocks bred in front of the sticks and so the flocks brought forth striped, speckled, and spotted. [40] And Jacob separated the lambs and set the faces of the flocks toward the striped and all the black in the flock of Laban. He put his own droves apart and did not put them with Laban's flock. [41] Whenever the stronger of the flock were breeding, Jacob would lay the sticks in the troughs before the eyes of the flock, that they might breed among the sticks, [42] but for the feebler of the flock he would not lay them there. So the feebler would be Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's. [43] Thus the man increased greatly and had large flocks, female servants and male servants, and camels and donkeys.

How would you like to preach this sermon? This has been an interesting study. So let's take a closer look at this passage. God has fulfilled His promise. When God has promised to be present He will be and when He is present it will be obvious to others, whether they are saved or not. As this text starts the birth wars are over. Jacob came without any of his birthright because he had to flee Esau. He then had to work for Rachel. Laban pulled a fast one on the 'puller of fast ones,' Jacob and ended up with Leah. Then he promises to work another seven years to actually get Rachel. As long as he is working he has eleven sons between Leah, Rachel and their maid servants, Zilpah and Bilhah and then he'll eventually have one daughter that probably comes in the time period I just read about. Her name will be Dinah. Rachel will also get a promise of another son and we know that one will be Benjamin.

So God has fulfilled the promise of "I'll give you a people" and now the twelve sons from the twelve tribes are in place, but God also said "I'll be with you." Here is the text that emphasizes the presence of God, even acknowledge by someone like Laban. After Jacob has all these children he goes to Laban and says "Send me away. Let me go and take my family and go back to my country." Laban makes a theologically correct and appropriate analysis. He says "I have learned by divination" which can mean discernment, understanding or his attempt at magic arts or superstition and he goes on to say "God has blessed me because you are here. God is with you, you have been with me and the result is that I have a blessing. Now you want to leave."

Now your daughters are married to a man and you have eleven grand children and they are ready to go home. The son in law has brought blessings enormous to you. You are much better off financially and economically than before he came. Jacob doesn't have anything because he has been an indentured servant and his birthright is still back there in the land. What would a father in law do? What would a grandfather do? Do you need some travel money? Laban wouldn't say that. Laban is one of these interesting men who know the price of everything but the value of nothing. You would think Laban would say to Jacob because of the blessings that he has brought to him, "I've so much now because of you so

let me give you a little bit to help get you home.” Or you would think he would at least see the needs of his family, his grandchildren and want to meet them.

Jacob’s needs to get home and Jacob’s lack does not become the occasion for Laban to lovingly meet the needs of his family. No it becomes an opportunity for him to squeeze it one more time. How do you want me to give you the money? What will your wages be? I’m not going to give you anything to go back. What are you going to work for? Jacob comes back with a deal that Laban is ecstatic over. Jacob says “I’ll pasture your flock.” This text covers six years of time that I just read. Jacob says “Whatever lambs are speckled and spotted you give me those and whatever goats have white spots you give to me.” At that time if you had offered to shepherd the flock for the owner of the flock your pay probably would have been twenty percent of the flock at the end of the time. In that day in the Middle East goats were black or brown and sheep were white. The only animals that would not have been that would have numbered about five percent of the flock.

So normally this deal would have cost Laban twenty percent but Jacob has made this deal for five percent and so Laban quickly says “Let it be just as you have said.” He is thinking he has gotten away with the better part of this deal. So Laban is so excited about this deal that he goes and tells his sons. Instead of having Jacob go get the speckled and spotted flock Laban sends his son to do it for Jacob. Then he puts Jacob’s flock under his son’s care three days away from him and Laban puts his flock under Jacob’s care which is the deal. Then Jacob sets about his plan.

Jacob’s plan for the next six years is based on three things. The first thing is Divine revelation. Sometime during this period a dream was given to Jacob as to why he made this deal. Genesis 31:8–13 says

[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. (God did this and went way beyond five percent. Now why will that be?) [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. [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.’”

We are aware that a dream comes to Jacob that tells him the spotted, striped and mottled are going to be his and God will intervene. So Divine revelation of Divine intervention happens here and the deal is made.

The second thing that Jacob works on his that he uses his smarts. He is an experienced shepherd. So as an experienced shepherd he keeps his eye on the sheep and the goats. The more vigorous ones, literally in the text, he made sure they were in the mating process. In other words he made sure the ones who liked to mate got with other ones who were ready to mate and that there was a lot of mating going on. That's all I will say about that. Now remember Jacob is not yet converted here.

So thirdly, Jacob throws in a little superstition. He does something that would have been known at that time of putting in front of potentially bred animals something that would affect them, the prenatal experience that would affect what was born and how it would be born. So he puts these sticks from almond trees in the trough when they come to mate in order to help affect it. I love the honesty of God's Word. If I had been writing this I would have covered that up. I probably would have also covered up Rachel looking for mandrakes, a love fruit in order to become with child. The mandrakes didn't make Rachel bear a child for the Bible says God opened her womb and it wasn't the sticks that made this enormous number of spotted and speckled sheep and goats. It was the hand of God but that is what Jacob is doing.

Some of you are wondering why he does that and yet we still do that today. I see people all the time tell expecting mothers not to do certain things or it will affect their child. I have a sister that is so much like a first cousin of mine that my aunt and uncle accuse my mom and dad of talking about their daughter the whole time my mother was expecting. We still kind of think of that stuff. Some sit around listening to classical music thinking that it will somehow rub off on their child. So we see that Jacob did this kind of superstitious thing and the Bible is honest about it but it wasn't that superstition that gave him what he hoped for. It was that the presence of God brought about what was necessary for Jacob to take this whole family back home and sell the land with the resources that he would need to do the will of God.

In this setting what is it that we can learn out of this? I want to give you three takeaways from it. We are in the life of Jacob and I know that some of you see that something keeps coming up in the life of Jacob and I want to make that as clearly as I can for you. Before I do that I want to walk you through the life of Jacob and show you the three things that now stand paramount to us.

The first one is does God make a difference in the lives of His people? The answer is yes. He makes more of a difference than just you're converted and now you're going to go to heaven. There is a big place in our heart that He makes a difference there too. God makes a difference. When God shows up He makes a difference. Where the grace of God is at work there are two things that you can count on. Number one is that God is with us and if God is with us it will become obvious, even an unconverted, deceptive thief like Laban who would sell

his children down the road to get something else and didn't care about his grandchildren, has to acknowledge that God is with you and when God is with you even I get a blessing.

This is on my heart so I want to share it with you. I am burdened for my country, this culture because I believe it is in a death rattle. With all due respect, while I believe we need to work hard at electing Christian leaders in politics and on legislative issues, I believe all of that is downstream and not up stream. With all of my heart I want us to know something. This culture needs an awakening, a moving of the Gospel among the lost but I don't believe there will be an awakening until there is a revival in the church. I don't believe there will be a revival in the church until the pulpit is reclaimed with the preaching of the Gospel of grace in its Biblical setting and content. I am convinced of that so I point the finger not out there but right here to our pulpit and any and every other pulpit. I'm not doubting motivation. We think what will attract people to Christ and the Gospel is how much like the world we are.

When God is present in the life of God's people it is abundantly clear that He makes a difference and He makes them different. So it's not our love of the world and our ability to walk in it that will draw people to Christ, but it is our love of Christ that we're in the world but not of it and we love people in the world with all of our heart. We will find a way to get to you but our way to you is not by a notion of how much like the world we can be. That does not draw people to Christ. The presence of God makes a difference and where there is a difference people are attracted.

When I came to the end of my rope at the age of 21 I wasn't looking for a religious version of the life I was living. I needed something different. I wanted to know that there is Someone who makes a difference, the living God. God is with us. God said to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob "I'll be with you until I have fulfilled everything I have promised for you. I am with you." God has said the same to you, my brothers and sisters. Matthew 28:19-20 says [19] *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* I will never leave you nor forsake you (Hebrews 13:5). God is with His people.

Secondly, whenever God is with His people, those who welcome His people will be benefited by His mercy. The mercy of God benefits those who welcome the people of God. You cannot get a more degenerate culture than Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain yet as Abraham prayed he said "Lord, if there be just ten righteous people will you spare the city?" God said "Yes." Wherever His people are and welcomed God extends grace. Laban has enough sense to see this. You would think that would lead him to say "So let me help you get back home" to Jacob. No, he thinks perhaps I can squeeze him even more to get more. Yet notice what Laban says; "God is with you, you're with me and

therefore God's blessing has overflowed to me." We call that common grace and mercy where God works through His people to bless those around them and where they are welcomed God's mercy flows.

I believe that has been the key to the United States of America. It's not that it's a Christian nation legally, formally, although it certainly has been impacted by Christians being salt and light, but God's people, the church of Jesus Christ, has been welcomed. If and when and it seems to be well on the way that God's people are not welcome, then I believe the hand of judgment will fall. I wonder why it hasn't yet. The only reason I can see it is because His people are here. We are calling everything acceptable that God calls abomination. Fifteen million babies in a womb have been legally and socially approved, destroyed. We have now moved the death squads into the nurseries, the infanticide movement of children who aren't quite perfect, they say to let them die. We're moving it into the nursing homes, the older people and they say they are too much trouble. To quote Governor Richard Lamb, "They have a duty to die for the younger."

The hand of God has been restrained and the only way I can count it, is that His church is still here and welcomed. So I say to this country, I call upon you not to protect us for we're not asking for any protection but I call upon this country to welcome the testimony of Christ and His church, for if she does not then I believe the hand of God stands ready to fall.

The second takeaway is will God make a difference? Yes. The second question that comes from the life of Jacob is what is God revealing to us in the record of Jacob's life? The answer is a whole lot. The life of Jacob has repeatedly taught us two things. One is that sin costs and our sin is worse than we ever dared to imagine. Have you not seen that in the life of Jacob? Jacob the deceiver ends up in exile with nothing that he deceived for. Jacob comes to a land of exile and the deceiver is deceived by Laban. What you sow, you reap. Here is Laban who will barter with two daughters to get what he wants from Jacob and he raises two daughters who will barter with their children in order to obtain idolatry. Leah is ready to use any of her children because of the idolatry of her marriage with Jacob and the love she wants from him. For Rachel, God's love and Jacob's love is not enough, so she is willing to barter her children in order to get victory over her sister and the idolatry of bearing children. So the daughters become like the son.

Time and time again we see that sin costs. I do not believe in generational curses of sin but I do believe that sin is a curse from generation to generation. You can see here unfolding from generation to generation, like father like son and what is sown is reaped. Jacob's life stands shouting with neon signs where our sin is worse than we ever dared to imagine, but it also shouts out something else. There seems to be in the life of Jacob something that is consistently born out of the Word of God that there are two unfathomable facts and realities. One is the cost of sin and its heinousness before God but the second fact is that

God's grace wins. God's grace is greater than our sin and God's grace is greater than we ever dared to hope.

If God's grace is so glorious and the Gospel of grace says to me; "Harry if you put your trust in Me, I will deliver you from the persuasion of sin and you'll love Me more than sin. I will break the power of sin and I'll give you a new heart where you're born again. I will deliver you from the penalty of sin where you're forgiven of all of your sins. You will no longer be in the positions of sin. You are not under sin or in Satan's family. You are now in My family and you may call Me, Father for I have adopted you. Because I have delivered you from the persuasion of sin, the power of sin, the penalty of sin and the position of sin, by My grace I call you to kill sin in your life because if you don't it will kill you, your family, the hearts and spirit of your children, and your witness. I don't call you to say 'I'm forgiven so it doesn't matter how I live,' I call you to kill sin and if you don't it will bring death to you."

Let's look at Romans 8:12–13 which says *[12] So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. [13] For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.* He is not saying if you live good enough and deal with sin in your life, I'll give you everlasting life. That has already been settled. All you have to do is look at Romans 8:1 which says *[1] There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* Jesus has delivered you from the power of sin, the penalty of sin and the persuasion of sin and now He calls you by His grace. You can't do this in the flesh. You have to do it by the Spirit of God. He calls you to put to death sin in your life. If you don't put sin to death, it will bring death in your life. It will kill your witness, your joy, your testimony and your family.

If any pulpit or ministry ever tells you that your war against sin in your life can be won and you can be perfect on this side of eternity, please run from that pulpit. If anybody preaches to you that you cannot get victories over sins in your life, run from that pulpit. If I believe that then I might as well give it up right now. The Bible is clear on this. I Corinthians 6:9–11a says

[9] Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, [10] nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. [11] And such were some of you.

Not only can God give you victory over sin but God can take your greatest vices of rebellion against Him and turn it into virtue to serve Him. God is in the business of not only delivering grace and redemption but transforming grace in life. So we are called to do war against sin that remains in our life. Please don't listen to this notion that the way you show you have been saved by grace is how close to the edge your language is or your life is and what you do. Please don't

embrace that. The truth of the Word of God is that when you know you've been delivered from your sin, your fully forgiven and there is no condemnation, there arises within you such a hatred for that which stands in rebellion against God and that which would destroy you and your family that you stand up and Jesus says you're willing to pluck out right eyes and cut off right hands if it will get rid of sin.

He is not giving you the method to get rid of it but He is telling you the intensity of the life of a believer. We sign no peace treaties with sin but we bring the warfare of God's grace against it and the power of the Spirit of God. I believe with all of my heart that that awaits the testimony of Christ in this world and even at this moment – a people who are serious in their walk in and for Christ. I also have victory over the practice of sin in my life. It seems like every time we come to the life of Jacob we see sin and it costs. I thank the Lord for the promises of His grace. So is there a way I can stop the sin in my life? I don't want what's in my life to be in my life or in my family's life. There is a way to stop the sin in your life. You can have victory over individual sins and you can have victory in dealing with sin, even though you'll always have sin living in you. You can weaken its presence, its power and you can rip it out by the roots. Faith and repentance are powerful instruments in the hands of God.

How do I do this? Here are two things and here is where I'll close. Number one is that you need to surrender and commit your life to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. I can't assume everyone attending church is a Christian. You can recognize God, know the power of God, know the presence of God and still be unconverted. Laban knew about God, recognized God, saw the power of God, the presence of God and the reality of God. He just saw it as one more way to get more money. You can know all of those things and not be converted.

Today, will you say 'God I know I'm a sinner. I know that Jesus Christ, Your Son, died for my sins and paid for all of them. Today I surrender. I receive Him. I turn from my sins in repentance. I place my trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation'? That is the necessary step. You can't kill sin if you're a dead man and you are dead in your sins until you're in Christ. Come and live, have Christ living in you. Please come and make that prayer with those words that I just said. Christ, I trust You.

Secondly, you must entrust yourself, intentionally commit yourself to the means of grace. I'm asking you to swim upstream against not just a culture in our world but a culture in our church today. You can go to pulpit after pulpit that will give you seven steps to behavior modification but it won't be this pulpit. This pulpit will point you to Jesus Christ who doesn't give you behavior modification but heart transformation. It's not just merely refining the way I do things. It is a heart that has taken hold with the grace of God. This pulpit has preached that here for forty plus years and it will keep preaching it. It is all in Christ and it is Christ in you. It's not just a matter of technique in the Christian life. It is being transformed by the

power of God's grace and if you say that you have surrendered to Christ then Christ calls you to the intentional, daily surrender to the means of grace.

Think of it this way. Here is my fountain of grace who is Jesus. I want to feast upon Him. I want to be fed by Him. I want to drink of Him. He says "Amen, I have two conduits coming from the reservoir of heaven to you – the Word of God and the Spirit of God. They are entwined together and they pop up like artesian wells, those means of grace. Now come and drink of grace that you might grow in the grace and knowledge of Me." These aren't merits of grace for this is not what I do to get God's love but this is what I do to feast on God's love.

I want to use another illustration here. It is not a microwave experience. I know everyone wants it in our culture and that's why we're swimming upstream. People want to know the three things for this or the one thing for this. I wish I could just bring you up here, you kneel, I blow on you or pop you upside the head and you walk away sanctified but it just doesn't happen that way. God can and will microwave individual sins out of your life from time to time but He crockpots saints. He builds it into you.

When you make those decisions to listen to the preaching of the Word, read your Bible, your family will be in the Word and we'll not only have good theology but we'll have good "knee-ology" because we're going to pray and call for the Holy Spirit to come upon us. I want to drink from the well of God's grace through worship or the sacraments properly prepared or by fellowshiping with God's people or by taking Him into this world and seeing what He does in and through me. I want to drink from God's well through the preaching of God's Word for faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ (Romans 10:17). I want to drink from the grace of God on my knees and just call upon Him saying "Father, Father, in the name of Christ..."

I believe then that we will impact this world. It is when God's people are serious to drink of the fountain through the means that He has appointed. Sorry there are no short-cuts. Every once in a while God will help you out by laser-ing out a sin but your life is a life of growing in the crockpot of grace, the pressure cooker of obedience. Watch what God does for you'll be a great dish for the glory of God.

I love redemptive history. The Bible does things in redemptive history and then it unfolds a little bit later and every time it unfolds it's a repetition that gets bigger and more glorious. So here is your last thought. Here is Jacob. God is with him. God has blessed him. Laban – let my people go and the man that is writing this by the power of the Holy Spirit which is Moses went before someone worse than Laban and that was Pharaoh. Moses went to Pharaoh and said "You've got your wages from us, now let my people go." Praise God the scroll keeps unfolding. There is One greater than Jacob, greater than Moses and His Name is Jesus. He says to sin, death, hell and Satan, "Let My people go." So let's go in His grace and for His glory. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. If you have made that prayer to commit your life to Jesus Christ please contact us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 for we'd like to help you get started in your walk with Him. Jesus confirm everyone today reading this that has committed their life to You. Father, those who have already come to Your Son, may they know the presence of the Holy Spirit and the assurance of Your Word and then set their hearts growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. Father, while we rejoice in the fullness and freeness of our salvation in Christ we will not sign peace treaties with sin for we declare war on sin. By the power of the Spirit with the Word of God and by the grace of our God may we put to death the deeds of the body that we might live for Christ. Father, I beg You for my country, for there aren't any short-cuts but it's a people in the pressure cooker of grace whom You will use to spark this awakening. Begin with us, Your people for I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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