

(Genesis) - Part 24

by Zac Poonen

God's sovereignty and discipline are necessary for our growth and transformation, and we must be diligent in seeking His will and guidance.

Duration: 59:53

Scripture: Genesis 30:25-32, Revelation 14:1-5

Topics: "Genesis"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Jacob and how God disciplined him to transform him into a man of God. Jacob had deceived his father and brother, but through twenty years of darkness and discipline, he humbled himself under God's mighty hand. During his journey to Paddan Aram, Jacob had a dream of a ladder reaching to heaven, with angels ascending and descending on it. God spoke to Jacob, promising him the land and numerous descendants. The preacher emphasizes that God's grace is evident in this story, and that God seeks to discipline and transform us as well.

Transcript

After 28, we finished considering how Jacob deceived Isaac, his father, in order to get the birthright. And then he saw he was very upset and wants to kill him. We read in chapter 28, verse 1, And so Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him and said to him, You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan.

Arise, go to Hadanaram, to the house of Bethuel, your mother's father, and from there take to yourself a wife from the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother. May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples. May He also give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your descendants with you, that you may possess the land of your surgeons, which God gave to Abraham.

And Isaac sent Jacob away to his brother-in-law's house. It says here, when Esau, verse 6, saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob, he told him to take a wife from his relatives, and that Jacob had obeyed. And Esau saw, verse 8, that his own wives were not pleasing to his father.

But Esau went to Ishmael and married a third time, besides the wives that he had. Mahalak, the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Leviath. We see here Esau, a person without any conviction.

If it was venison that pleased his father, he'd get him that. If it was another type of wife, he'd get him that. Esau is the head of all those who marry the type of wives that their fathers want.

And there are a lot of believers like that, who have no conviction. They just choose the type of wives their fathers recommend. Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran.

And he came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set. And there we see, of course, it's only a geographical fact that the sun had set. But it is also true of Jacob's life, in one sense, that the sun had set over his life.

The end. He was going into a period of discipline for the next twenty years. It was like a period of darkness that he was going to face.

And it's very significant that at the end of this period, he comes out of it, after twenty long years. And when he comes out of it, it's very interesting that it says in Genesis 32, after his name has been changed to Israel, in Genesis 32, verse 28, verse 31, it says, Then the sun rose upon him. Here was the sun setting, and there was the sun rising.

And that was, it's not without purpose that the Holy Spirit recorded it, because it was something that was true in his life. Isaac had blessed him, laid his hands on him and blessed him. But there was still so much in Jacob, which was contrary to what God wanted him to be, that he had to go through twenty years of discipline before God could make him what he wanted him to be.

And that teaches us something. It's possible for some man of God to lay his hands on us, and we can receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit, perhaps, or some gift. And it can be just like Isaac laying his hands on Jacob.

And of course, Jacob received a blessing. There's no doubt about it. And people do receive an anointing.

But yet the sun can set. And if a person's not willing to be disciplined by God, he can never come through to becoming an Israel, even if some man of God has laid hands on his head. Well, that's one thing we learn.

The wonderful thing here we see is God's grace, that while he was sleeping there on his journey to Bader Maram, he had a dream, verse 12, and a ladder was set up on the earth, with a stop reaching to heaven, and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And the Lord stood above it and said, I am the Lord, the God of your father, Abraham, the God of Isaac, the land on which you lie. I'll give it to you, to your descendants.

Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth. You'll spread out to the west, to the east, to the north and south. And you and your descendants, all the families of the earth, will be blessed.

And 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've done what I've promised for you, what I've promised you. See, there we see how God's nature is so different from ours. If we saw the type of person Jacob was, we'd just give up on him.

We'd say, he's such a crook, he's such a deceiver, someone who can't trust me. I'd have given him the birthright and he used to go into all that deception in order to get it. But here we see something of the sovereignty of God when he chooses someone, that he doesn't let him go.

He works on him. He had a purpose for Jacob. And even though Jacob was not yet all that he was to be, yet God had hope for him.

That's a tremendous encouragement to us. As we saw in an earlier study, God calls himself a God of Jacob. And finally, God's work on him succeeded.

That's a great encouragement to us, that what God has begun, like Paul tells the Philippians, I am sure that he who has begun a good work in you will complete it. It's a wonderful thing to be chosen by God. That's why the word of God says, first of all, brothers and sisters, make your calling and election sure.

It's a very important verse. Make your calling and election sure. That's what the New Testament exhorts us to do.

In other words, make sure that you are really one of God's chosen ones. Remember what Jesus told his disciples? You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you. And if we can have that certainty that God has chosen me, many, many problems in life are solved.

Many people, the only assurance they have is that I have chosen the Lord. That's good that you chose the Lord. But it says, make your calling sure.

Make your election sure that God has chosen you. Say, how can I be sure of that? The Holy Spirit will witness with our spirit that we are God's chosen ones. And I really come to see that that's the reason why many people never seem to make much progress, never seem to make much headway in their life.

That's one of the reasons that they are not too sure that God's chosen them, God's elected them. It doesn't matter what our weaknesses are. If God's chosen us, he'll work on us.

Esau had weaknesses, but God never bothered about him. Jacob had weaknesses, but it was different. He was chosen.

And God was going to work on him, work on him, work on him. And one day, he was transformed into an Israel. And that's the hope we have.

Not everyone, but those who are diligent to make their calling and election sure. Let's turn back to the epistle of Peter in the New Testament, 2 Peter 1, verse 10. Therefore, brethren, 2 Peter 1, 10, be all the more diligent.

Be all the more diligent. That means zealous, wholehearted. To make certain.

To make certain about what? Not that you've chosen the Lord, but that he has called and chosen you. Very important. Are you diligent? To make certain without a shadow of doubt.

That's the meaning of make certain. That God Almighty has called and chosen me. Because if you're not sure about that, you're going to stumble.

As long as you practice these things, you'll never stumble. In this way, the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be abundantly supplied to you. And he says, I'm always ready to remind you of these things.

Always ready to remind you. Make certain that he has called you and chosen you. See, Peter could say that because he was also a failure like Jacob at one time in his life.

But because it was not just he who had chosen the Lord, but the Lord had chosen him, God made sure that Peter came out all right as an apostle. It's a wonderful thing. Jacob and Esau may both be put underwater, but Jacob will come out.

He won't drown while Esau drowns. Because one's called. It's like Israel and the Israelites and Egyptians went through the Red Sea.

The Israelites came out and the Egyptians were drowned. Why? Because the Israelites were called. That's the thing.

Makes a tremendous difference if God's called you. But those who take the Christian life casually, play the fool with God and take it so lightly, I really feel they can just drift along, drift along, drift along and waste their whole life and miss God's purpose completely. So make certain that God's called you.

And I want to ask everyone here, are you sure God's called you? That God's chosen you? If you're not, obey that exhortation in 2 Peter 1.10. It can make a world of difference in your life. That's the thing that made a world of difference in Jacob's life. It's the thing that made the difference between Jacob and Esau.

If in the scriptures we had seen Jacob as a very God-fearing upright man and Esau as a downright crook, we could have said, well, that was the reason for the difference. But we don't see Jacob like that. In fact, we don't see Esau deceiving Jacob.

Is there any instance where Esau deceived Jacob? No. It was Jacob who deceived Esau. And yet think that God's hand was upon Jacob.

It's amazing. The important thing is God's calling. Make sure that He's called you.

And so even though this man who has deceived his brother and deceived his father and goes down, God doesn't let him go. Because He sees in him, there's a lot of guile in him, a lot of deception in him. God says, I've chosen him and I'm going to do something in him.

And so He says, I'll bless you. And He gives him this vision of this ladder. When he was asleep, it's almost as though God were saying to him, I'm going to do this for you and you won't have to worry about it.

I will work on you. I'll break you when the time comes. And I will accomplish what I have planned for your life.

When you turn to John's Gospel, chapter 1, you see that Jesus spoke about this incident. It's very interesting to see that passage in John's chapter 1. We read when Nathanael was told by Philip that they had found the Messiah. John 1.45, Philip found Nathanael and said, We have found him of whom Moses and the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth.

And Nathanael was a skeptic. He couldn't believe it. Can any good thing come out of Nazareth, Philip said, come and see.

Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him and said to him, Behold, we can say, a descendant of Jacob, but one in whom there is no guile like there was in Jacob. This is a true Israel, not a Jacob. Behold, an Israelite in

whom there is no Jacob.

We can read it like that. Behold, an Israelite in whom there is no Jacob. And Nathanael said, how do you know me? He said, I saw you under the fig tree.

Rabbi, you are the son of God. And Jesus answered, because I said I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe you shall see greater things than these? What are you going to see? I say to you, you shall see the heavens open. This is what Jacob saw.

And the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. That's what Jacob saw in Genesis 28, 12. This ladder going up to heaven and the angels of God ascending and descending on him.

And concerning Nathanael, Jesus says, here is an Israelite in whom there is no Jacob. He is being transformed. There is no guile in him.

And you will see that ladder, which is Jesus. Jesus himself explained there that that ladder was the picture of himself. Then we turn back to Genesis 28 and we understand this.

It says here in Genesis 28, 12, it was a ladder that was set on the earth. Genesis 28, 12. It wasn't a ladder that came sort of six feet above the earth and that people had to jump on it to climb.

That's how I thought for many years, that Jesus had come from heaven, but he hadn't come right down to the level of my flesh. He sort of came with a flesh slightly superior to mine. I wasn't really able to even get to the bottom rung of that ladder.

But we praise God that that ladder was set on, right on the earth. Right down to the bottom level. He came in a flesh just like ours, so that the first rung of the ladder wouldn't be above us, that we couldn't get onto it.

And the top of that ladder was reaching heaven. And the Lord, verse 13, stood above it. Here is the one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

The man Christ Jesus. People call him the God-man. Very interesting, the Holy Spirit never thought of that clever title that many believers have thought of.

Clever believers cannot understand the truth. 1 Timothy 2.5 says, 4 and 5. One mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. He's become a man completely.

The foot of the ladder is on the earth, the top is up in heaven. And that's the only way that we can reach God. Only one ladder.

He is the way up to the Father. And further, we read here in verse 17, where Jacob woke up, verse 16, and said, Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it. 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. He didn't realize how true it was that that ladder was really the gate of heaven. Like Jesus said, I am the way, no man comes to the Father but by me.

But also, he says, this is the house of God. The church where Christ is seen in the flesh. And Jacob rose early in the morning and took a stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on its top, and he called the name of that place Bethel.

Bethel means the house of God. The first picture that we have in the Old Testament of the church as God's house We saw the ark as the picture of the church, but here is the first time that we read of the house of God. God's dwelling place.

And that is the place where he saw the ladder with its feet down to the earth. Then Jacob made a vow. And it's very interesting to see what Jacob says in response to this fantastic revelation of God, and the promise God made.

Of course, he says these wonderful things about this being God's house and the gate of heaven. And God has told him that all the families of the earth, verse 14, will be blessed through you, and I will keep you and I will bless you. But Jacob responds to that in this way.

And it's very interesting to see and compare. If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear, and I return to my father's house in safety, then the Lord will be my God. And the stone which I have set up as a pillar will be God's house.

Of all the dollars given me, I will surely give a tenth to thee. Notice what Jacob is asking for. He says, Lord, give me food to eat, give me clothes to wear, protect me on my journey, and bring me back to my father's house safely, and I won't ask for anything else.

And it's typical of multitudes of believers to whom God says, I'll bless you with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places, right, Jesus? The God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly, and you can be partakers of the divine nature and all their prayers. He says, Lord, just make sure I can make both ends meet this month, make my finances sufficient, help me to get that increment, and Lord, help my children to get their promotion in the classes, and Lord, a house to live in, and good marriage partners for my children. Exactly like Jacob.

God calls them for something heavenly, and they are only thinking in terms of the earth. And if God will do that, yeah, I'll give my tithe. The first time that the tithe is mentioned in the Bible, and it's very significant, that it is mentioned by a man who made a business transaction with God.

If God will bless me, I'll pay you my tithe. I've come across people like that today. If God will bless my field, I'll pay one-tenth of what I earn.

If all my fields prosper, I'll give ten percent to God. So Lord bless me. And there are stupid preachers who are willing to pray for such people, that God will bless their fields so that they give ten percent of their income to God.

The tithing as a business transaction. Jacob was the first person who indulged in that. If God will do this for me, I'll give my tithe to God.

But there's a warning there for us, that when God calls us to something high, we respond with something so low. We must keep this in mind, because when we come to that other place in Genesis chapter thirty-two, where we can say this is Jacob's first meeting with God. And Genesis thirty-two was his second meeting with God.

And in between those two meetings lay twenty years. And in those twenty years of discipline, God broke him and humbled him. And at the end of it, that man comes out in Genesis thirty-two.

And it's very interesting when we come to that chapter to see what he's asking God for there. He's not asking for food. He's not asking for clothing.

He's not asking for protection. You know what he says in Genesis thirty-two? Lord bless me. I don't want anything else.

I want your blessing. I want your power in my life. And then you know that God has accomplished a work in this man.

But he had to break him. That's the time when he dislocated his hip socket, so that he had to limp forever. And we can see that Jacob was a contrast to Isaac.

Isaac began so well and ended up, as we saw, in a pretty pathetic spiritual condition. Jacob was the opposite. Jacob began so badly, but God did such a work of breaking in him, that that work was successful and he came out as an Israel.

Abram's name was changed to Abraham. Jacob's name was changed to Israel, when God finally broke him. And that is how we must look at the next three chapters, three, four chapters, that we are going to study.

It's going to be a study of how God broke this deceiver, this schemer, this man who thought, now my father has put his latest hands on my head and I'll be all right, and the sun had only set on his life. He was going through a period of darkness, discipline, and because he humbled himself under God's mighty hand during those twenty years, he came out as a man of God. And as we look at the circumstances he went through, we can see that this is the way God seeks to deal with us too, to discipline us so that we can come out finally as Israel, so that the sun which has set over our life can finally rise.

And so we read in Genesis 29, verse 1, Jacob went on his journey and came to the land of the sons of the east. And he saw well in the field, he finally reached Paranaram, Mesopotamia. And there the stone of the mouth of the well was large and all the flocks were gathered there.

They would then roll the stone from the mouth of the well and water the sheep. They had a custom there that they wouldn't water the sheep till all the flock of all the shepherds had gathered together so that nobody monopolized the place. They would leave the well cover with the stone until everybody's sheep had come.

And Jacob said to them, My brothers, where are you from? We are from Haran. Do you know Laban? And they said, We know him. And he said to them, Is it well with him? They said, It is well.

And behold, Rachel, his daughter is coming with the sheep. You see, this reminds us of the time when Abraham's servant also went to the same place, Mesopotamia, looking for a bride for Isaac. Now Jacob is also going to the same place looking for a bride for Isaac.

But notice the different way these two people went. Abraham's servant, he went with prayer. He said, Lord, guide me.

I want to meet the right person. He sought for a sign from God. He sought for the leading of God.

And when he got the answer, he worshipped God. You don't see anything of that in Jacob. That was not even a descendant of Abraham.

He was Abraham's servant. Jacob was the grandson of Abraham. But see how he behaved.

He's not seeking God. He saw Rachel. And he got all excited because she was good-looking.

And she was charming. You know, that's what happens to a lot of believers. I can say it with children of Abraham.

But they behave worse than Abraham's servant when they see a good-looking girl or a charming one. It says that Rachel was good-looking and charming as we read in verse 17. Rachel was beautiful of form and appearance, shining and attractive.

And as soon as he saw her, he didn't need to pray about it. He knew straight away, this is it. You see, this is Jacob.

Very, very ordinary believer. And he said, verse 7, It is still high day. Isn't it time for the flock to be gathered, water the sheep, and go and pasture them? They said, We cannot, until all the flocks are gathered.

That's our custom here. After all the flocks are gathered, then we roll the stone from the mouth of the well. We water the sheep.

While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came. For she was a shepherdess and came about when Jacob saw Rachel, a sheep of Laban, his mother. Jacob went up, and he forgot all about the rules and regulations of that place and just rolled away the stone and watered the flock of Laban, his mother's brother.

This is 100% like believers. That we forget about all rules and regulations when it's a matter of our own convenience and our relatives. All principles are abandoned when it comes to something that affects our convenience.

I've seen that. Believers who are so sticky about rules and regulations for other people, but when it touches them, they are not so particular about the same rules and regulations. This is the guile and deception that there is in the flesh.

Strict. Very strictly strict towards other people according to the letter of the law. But when it comes to themselves, it can be modified.

We say we follow the spirit of the law now. This is Jacob. Never mind what the rules and regulations are.

Here it's, I've got to impress this girl, and I've got to do something about it, and he rolls the stone away and waters the flock, and God all excited about her. And he kissed Rachel, lifted up his voice and wept. And Jacob told Rachel that he was a relative of her father.

And he was Rebekah's son. And she ran and told her father. So it came about when Laban heard the news.

He ran to meet him and embraced him and kissed him and brought him to the house. And Laban said, Surely you're my bone and my flesh. And he stayed with him for a month.

And then Laban said to Jacob, Because you're my relative, should you therefore sell me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be? And Laban had two daughters. The name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful of form and face.

There was something unattractive about Leah's appearance. Maybe she had a squint or something ugly about her eyes anyway. And Jacob loved Rachel because she was good looking.

So he said, I'll serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel. And Laban said, It's better that I give her to you than I should give her to another man. Stay with me.

It says here, Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her. There's a beautiful verse that tells us how love can make drudgery light. And if a man can love a girl so much that seven years, multiply that by 365 and 2,500 days, was just like a few days.

It was just like about seven or eight days. Seven years were like seven days. Just as though it were a few days.

Because he loved her. That's how it is when we serve the Lord out of love. Anything that we do for Him is never a drudgery.

His commandments are not burdensome. His service is never a drudgery. No sacrifice will ever be considered a sacrifice when we love the Lord.

No service will be inconvenient. Nothing that we give we will ever feel will be too much. And we will not even remember what we have done for the Lord where there is love.

But when love disappears, seven days of work can be like seven years we serve one another. I've come to see one thing. If you serve your brothers just as brothers, you'll always look for gratitude.

And after some time, it will become a drudgery. You can never enjoy for seven years serving a brother. But if you do your service as unto the Lord and not as unto a brother, that everything, even if it's done to a brother, you say, that's not for him.

I'm doing it as unto the Lord. Then there's never a looking for gratitude and it's never drudgery. It does not depend on how that brother or sister behaves.

It only depends on whether we love the Lord or not. And seven years will be like a few days. Beautiful words.

And we can understand why the Lord told the church in Ephesus, I have something against you because you left your first love. You still labor for me, but it's not for that devotion like it was in those days. Then Jacob said to Laban after seven years, Give me my wife when my time is completed that I may go to her.

And Laban gathered all the men of the place and made a feast and came about in the evening. This is a beautiful incident. It's the one crook meeting with another crook.

We reap what we sow. There's a beautiful verse in Proverbs 27 which says, Iron sharpens iron. So does one man sharpen another.

And here was the man who thought he was the greatest crook in the world. He discovered when he came to Mesopotamia there's one greater than him. And God in his discipline puts a Jacob with a Laban.

One sharp fellow being put with another sharp fellow. That's how it is. And if you find something peculiar about your wife, remember, Jacob and Laban, God has given you a wife because you were also that type of person.

He has given you one like that to sharpen you. Of course, you don't think that. You think you deserve somebody much better because you are so spiritual, etc.

etc. But God didn't think so. God thought you were pretty carnal.

And that's why he gave you a carnal wife. Not to leave you in your carnalities. You both humble yourselves.

You can both become spiritual. But you got to get rid of those high thoughts about yourself first. You can say, I'm Jacob.

I'm the descendant of the promises of Abraham and all that garbage. But God says, I'm not surprised. I'm not interested in all that high talk.

I'll put you with someone who will really sharpen you now. And so, what a lesson he learned. And what a hard lesson that was.

It was pretty smart of Laban to have the marriage feast late at night without any lights. So that finally when he went home with his bride, he didn't even know who she was. Well, they didn't have a marriage like we have these days.

They just had a feast. And then that was it. And in the evening, after the feast was all over, he took his daughter Leah, and Jacob was probably so tired that he just went to sleep and woke up in the morning to discover that it was not Rachel.

It was Leah who had been given to him as a wife in the dark. And it came about in the morning, verse 25, he discovers that it was Leah. And he said, What is this you have done to me? Why have you deceived me? And those words would ring in his ear.

His father asking him, Why have you deceived me? His brother asking him, Why have you deceived me? And now he has to ask somebody else. Why have you deceived me? Amazing how God arranges that we reap what we sow. People who are evil to others.

One day somebody is evil to them. And they question why. They just got to look back and think.

Children treat you badly. Just look back and think how you treated your parents. You don't have to ask anything.

Don't complain against your children and all that. Don't complain against your daughter-in-law. Just ask yourself how you treated your mother-in-law many years ago when you were a daughter-in-law.

Don't complain against daughters-in-law. It's easy to complain. Easy to complain.

Jacob could have thought, I am so spiritual. Why was he deceived? Why are other people treating you that way? You are reaping what you have sown. Maybe you sowed it 30 years ago.

You are reaping it now. You thought you were very smart, Jacob. Now God has put you with somebody smarter than you.

Fooled you. Yeah, that's painful when we have to be paid back in the same coin with which we cheated others. That is the discipline of God.

And at that time instead of rebelling saying, why has God allowed this to happen to me? Humble yourself. Say, Lord, I am pretty carnal. That's why you see that you need to put me into such a situation to sharpen me and discipline me and humble me and I will just humble myself under your hands.

I will not think that I deserve something better. And the same question I am asking somebody else today, why is he treating me like this? Why is she treating me like this? Let me just look back in time a few years and I'll find somebody else maybe asking that question. Why did I treat that person like this? It's the same thing being reaped against.

And then all I need to do is humble myself. That is why I say, be kind to others. Be good to others.

Don't deceive others in your younger days. Humble yourself. Honor your parents.

Respect them. Put God first. And then you'll reap that.

Because if you sow to the flesh, you reap corruption. If you sow to the spirit, you reap eternal life. It works the other way too.

If you sow good, you reap good as well. And so we see in verse 26, Laban says, It's not the practice in our place to marry off a young man before the first month. He could have told him that seven years earlier.

I mean, it's very easy to justify our deception by saying, you know, we just discovered that there's a new rule which doesn't permit that sort of thing. It's so easy to justify the wrong that we do with some rule or regulation that we say we have discovered. Very easy.

Laban, just as smart as Jacob. However, he says, Complete the bridal week. That means, after one week, you can marry Rachel also.

But you'll have to serve me for another seven years after that for her. So, he, after one week, he married Rachel. And now you have to work for seven years again after that for her.

And, it says here that, of course, it is obvious that Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah. In verse 31, When the Lord saw that Leah was unloved or hated, the Lord opened her womb. But Rachel was barren.

It's a very interesting verse, a very interesting principle in life, that God is usually on the side of the underdog. God is on the side of the person who is despised and hated. Here, God was watching.

This man, he's married two wives, and he's showing so much partiality to the second one, despising and hating the first one. God says, all right, I'll bless her. And I'll teach him a lesson.

Leah conceived and bore a son, named him Reuben. But she said, the Lord has seen my affliction. It's wonderful, brothers and sisters, when you are despised and rejected by men and hated.

If it is for the Lord's sake, if you have not done anything wrong, Leah didn't do anything wrong. It wasn't her fault that she wasn't good looking. It wasn't her fault that she has squint eyes or some problem with her eyes.

She hadn't done anything wrong. God saw that. If you are despised and rejected because nothing wrong with you, you can be sure that God will come down on your side one day.

Be very careful of taking sides with the ones who are popular. God is on the side of the one who is criticized and despised and backbitten against. And when you take sides with the backbiter, you are usually taking sides against God.

Then she conceived again. The Lord heard that I am unloved and therefore gave me another son, Simeon. She conceived a third son.

Now my husband will be attached to me and he is called Levi. She conceived and bore a third, fourth son. Now I will praise the Lord.

She named him Judah. Judah means praise. Now that's wonderful how God blessed her with four sons and with each son you can imagine how Rachel became more and more envious.

It says in verse 30, verse 1, when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she became jealous. She said to Jacob, give me children or else I die. It's very difficult for two blood sisters to get along together.

Very difficult. One really needs to be highly spiritual because there's always the possibility of envy and jealousy from one sister to the other sister. All can also be in the church, particularly her blood sisters.

She has got more than me. Whether it's children or property or gifts or X, Y or Z. Always is the same story from the beginning of time. But it's wonderful that we can work out our salvation from jealousy.

All jealousy and envy is usually related to some earthly thing or earthly honor. Even jealousy of spiritual gifts is related to earthly honor. Always.

Think of anyone you've been jealous of or envious of and ask yourself, isn't it for some earthly honor that you're jealous of that person or some material thing, some earthly matter. Envy, jealousy, strife. I don't know how many fights Rachel and Leah had with each other.

She's upset because God blessed Leah. Actually, she should have been upset with God instead of getting upset with Leah. And that's why when God made a law in the Old Testament, of course, God permitted people to marry more than one wife.

It wasn't His perfect will, but He permitted a lot of things in the Old Testament because their hearts were hard. But one of the things He said in Leviticus 18, verse 18, was that you mustn't marry two sisters. If you do finally end up marrying two women, don't let them be sisters.

That was a specific law in the Old Testament. And Rachel was envious, jealous of her sister, not because... You see, envy doesn't come because we lack something. Listen to this carefully.

Jealousy comes because somebody else has got what we don't have. We may have plenty, but if the other person has got more than us, there's still jealousy. If the other person's got less than us, we are alright.

So you see, jealousy comes not because of lack, but because another person's got more than me. If Leah also had no children, Rachel would have been happy. But she's got children, I don't have.

Be careful. Be careful of that. And she goes and gets upset with her husband, and shakes up the anger, burns against her, and says, do you think I'm God, who's withheld you from the fruit of your womb? I think that's a good word for some husbands to tell their wives when their wives are upset about something.

Why are you complaining to me? Go and complain to God. God's the one who's done that. So why answer? The Bible says, answer a fool according to his folly.

And when a woman behaves like a fool, it's good to answer according to her folly and tell her that, who you got to complain against? Against God? That God's ordered your circumstances like this? Humble yourself. Humble yourself. I really believe that some of us husbands need to be a little bolder in giving exhortations to our wives instead of treating them like Maharanis and spoiling them.

It says, exhort one another to godliness. Don't be a effeminate slave of your wife, but a shepherd, a leader, who can exhort her. Am I God? You have a complaint, you've got to go to God.

You don't have to get upset like, since Jacob's anger burns, we can get victory over that, but we can give a loving exhortation. Your complaint is against God. Humble yourself.

God can provide our needs. Why do we, why do you get jealous about Leah? Go to God. So there is something, and we can ask, why is it Rachel was so eager to have children? And when we look behind it, you see, both Leah and Rachel knew that Jacob is the man through whom all the blessing of Abraham is going to come.

And it's going to come to the children. And it's because they wanted that blessing for their children. And probably, in terms of earthly things, they knew that this land is going to belong to Jacob's feet, and so they wanted property for their children in Canaan.

When the promises of God are fulfilled, it was all related to material things. I want some material things for my children, and my sister must not get it only for her children. I must get it for my children too.

That was Rachel's complaint. And if I don't have children, there won't be any material land or property for me. So I must have children.

So comes this strife and jealousy and conflict. All related to material things. See how true scripture is to life.

Material things, material things, material things. I'll tell you something I've discovered. Women fight much more about this than men.

Men also. But I found that even many believers among women never seem to be free from their attachment to material things and to fight for it. I'll tell you something.

You're a really godly sister if you have no interest in material things, and if you're quite content with what God has given you, and you're not jealous of anybody else. You're quite happy with what you have. You're certainly a godly sister, and I'd have a lot of respect for you.

If you're really free so that you'll never, never have a conflict, and that applies also to honor in the church. There can be sisters who are competing with other sisters for honor. That's also an earthly thing.

I want to be recognized as a leader among the young sisters in all this garbage. I can't be an elder brother in the church, but I can be a leader of the young sisters. You are a Rachel who needs to be disciplined and go through the darkness and come out on the other side in the sunrise.

Humble yourself. Be small in your own eyes. Stop seeking all this earthly honor and getting into conflict and strife and inner wrong attitudes towards other people, and all the garbage with which Satan tries to ruin people so that they never make any progress.

And a lot of people in that condition, they never progress in their Christian life because they are in this type of inner competition. Rachel versus Leah. Who's going to have more? Whose children are going to have more? Get out of that race.

Get out of that race. Be small in your own eyes and be happy with God, what God's given you. Godliness with contentment is great gain.

Never compare yourself or your children with other people or their children. That's the height of folly. If you want to be a stupid godless sister, do that.

But if you want to be a godly sister, don't compare yourself with others or your children with other people's children or your material things with other people's material things. Think of the story. And so, the conflict begins and Jacob says, go to God, and that's a good exhortation.

If you have a complaint, remember your complaint is against God. Why hasn't God given your children all those things? Go and complain to God. God is almighty.

Don't complain about people. And you see, Jacob is being disciplined. He's being disciplined not only with a tough employer, Laban was his employer, and also a father-in-law.

He's also being disciplined by difficult wives, not just one, but two. Imagine. This is how God breaks a man.

He doesn't break him in a Bible school. God didn't send Jacob to a Bible school. That is the way the devil fools people today.

Send them to a Bible school. No, this is the Bible school. With your wife, with a difficult wife at home.

With a difficult father-in-law. With a difficult employer. So that you're broken, broken, broken, broken, broken, broken.

You humble yourself and say, Lord, I'm reaping what I've sown. I deserve this. Because I had pretty high thoughts about my spirituality.

And I see that you've given me exactly what you felt I deserve. And there's no mistake there. Absolutely.

You just had to deflate my balloon a little bit and bring me down to earth. You brought me into this situation. And I want to humble myself.

Humble yourself doesn't mean become a doormat and let your wife trample over you. That's not what I mean. But accept the difficulties there and say, Lord, now I've got to learn wisdom here.

I want to get sanctification. I don't want to blame people or circumstances. There is no circumstance that cannot be overcome if we have faith in God.

God will never allow us to be tested beyond our ability. He disciplines us, but there will be a purpose in it all. And there you read in the rest of the chapter about the children that Rachel and Leah and Jacob married.

Their two servant maids as well had. And there we have the list of how the twelve sons and the one daughter, Dina, mentioned in verse 21, Jacob's thirteen children, twelve sons and one daughter, were born. I want you to notice just one thing here.

In the middle it says, In the days of wheat harvest, verse 14, Reuben, that was the eldest son of Leah, went and found mandrakes in the field and brought them to his mother, Leah. We don't know exactly what these mandrakes are. But whatever it is, Rachel said to Leah, Give me some of your sons' mandrakes.

You see, she's always waiting for a chance to pick up a quarrel with her sister. Your son has found something. I want it.

Well, you can go to the field and pick it up yourself. No? And she said to her, Is it a small matter for you to take my husband? Would you take my son's mandrakes also? You see, once you have a bug in your head about some person, any little thing, a mandrake may have been a small flower or a little fruit, that's enough to pick up a fight. That's the point I wanted to make out here.

If your attitude is not right to a person, the fact that that person's son brought her some flowers is enough to really bug you and work you up and irritate you till you get into another conflict with that person over some flowers or some little fruit, whatever it is. That's why it's so important for us to keep our heart attitude right. Otherwise, my dear brother and sister, a small flower is enough to make you pick up a quarrel with someone.

It shows that the heart attitude was not cleansed. That's the thing. And further, we read in verse 22, Finally God had mercy on Rachel, and God gave heat to her and opened her womb, so she conceived more sons, and God's taken away my reproach, and she named him Joseph, saying, May the Lord give me another son.

It's very interesting to see in the scriptures that Sarah, Abraham's wife, was barren, Rebekah, Isaac's wife, was barren, and Rachel, Jacob's wife, was barren. And these are the first three healings mentioned in scripture. Healing, the first three mentioned in scripture are all related to the opening of barren wombs.

And it came about when Rachel had borne Joseph and Jacob's son to Laban, verse 25, Send me away, that I may go to my own place, to my own country. Give me my wife and children, for whom I have served you, and let me depart. Laban knew that God had blessed him, prospered him when Jacob was there.

It's amazing that God had his hand on this man despite all his crookedness. Laban said, If it pleases you, verse 27, stay with me. I've divined that the Lord has blessed me on your account.

Name me your wages and I'll give it. But Jacob said, Do you know how I've served with you? How your cattle have fared with me? You had little before I came. It has now increased to a multitude and the Lord has blessed you wherever I've turned.

Now when shall I provide for my own household also? He said, What shall I give you? Jacob said, You're not going to give me anything. If you'll do one thing for me, I'll still keep your flock. And here is Jacob and Laban matching their shrewdness against each other.

One businessman making a transaction with another businessman. He's still the businessman, Jacob, after all these. The work is not complete.

He's had this difficult father-in-law, difficult employer, difficult wife, but still he's not broken. He's taking quite a bit of time. And we read here that Jacob says, Let me pass through your flock, verse 32, and remove every speckled and spotted sheep, and every black one among the lambs, the spotted and speckled one, they shall be my wages.

So my honesty will answer for me later when you come concerning my wages. Everyone that's not speckled among the goats and blacks and the lambs is found that they'll be considered stolen. And Laban said, Good.

See, I don't think Laban would have agreed to that if the vast majority of the sheep were speckled and brown. He must have mentally calculated and said, Well, there are not very many speckled and brown ones. Okay, he's a bit of a fool, this Jacob, to pick on those ones.

And I'll take the bigger lot. But he didn't realize this was another smart businessman on the other side who'd got a trick up his sleeve on how to multiply the flocks. And Laban agreed.

So Jacob removed the striped and spotted male goats and all the speckled and spotted female goats, everyone with white in it. And he put a distance of three days during verse 36, and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks. And here's a little trick that Jacob tried.

I don't know exactly how this works, but scripture says it worked, and in some way it did. It took fresh rods of poplar and almond and plain trees and peeled white stripes from them with 37, exposing the white in the rods. And he set the rods, which he had peeled in front of the flocks, so that when they conceived, they came to drink the flocks conceived by the rods, and the flocks brought forth stripes speckled and spotted.

And Jacob separated the lambs and made the flocks face toward the stripes and all the black in the flock of Laban. And he put his own herds apart. And this is where you see his real shrewdness, verse 41.

He says, Whenever the stronger of the flock were made, that Jacob would place the rods in the side of the flock in the gutters. But when the flock was feeble, verse 42, he didn't put them in. So the end result was the feebler flock were Laban's, and the smarter, stronger were Jacob's.

And the man became exceedingly prosperous and had large flocks of female and male servants and camels and donkeys. Do you see what type of man Jacob was? Till the very end, always saying, Where can I make a fast buck? Where can I make some profit here? Something for myself, some gain by duping someone, fooling my father, fooling my brother, fooling my father-in-law. Always, What can I gain out of all this? Which is the most profitable thing for me? This, an acting so humble when he goes to Laban and says, I'll just take these speckled brown ones and he's got this trick up his sleeve.

This is a man with tremendous amount of guile. One would think that God would just give up on him, but he doesn't. And that's why he hasn't given up on us, dear brothers and sisters.

You see, I hope when you see Jacob, you see a picture of yourself. That's what I want to say in conclusion. If you don't see a picture of yourself in Jacob, I would exhort you to go home and pray, Lord, give me light that I might see myself.

Because I believe that's the first step to salvation. If you think you're quite humble and you're not so shrewd and scheming, you're quite simple. A lot of people like to think, I'm a simple brother.

You're not, brother. I've never met a simple brother yet. The ones who look simple are more deceptive usually than the ones who are openly deceptive.

Like they say in the world, still waters run deep. So, these quiet image types are pretty shrewd. Jacob was also in the, one of the vernacular translations, Genesis 25, said Jacob was a sadhu.

He was a sadhu. But see what is underneath that sadhu's skin. Pretty shrewd schemer.

And God had to break him. God has to break us. And all the disciplines he takes us through in our place of work and in our home is to deliver us from this Jacob in our flesh.

So that one day he can say about us, in a new covenant sense, there is a true Israelite who has power with God and power with men in whom there is no Jacob. That is the 144,000 who stand on Mount Zion in whose mouth was found no guile. So we praise the Lord for the working of the Holy Spirit.

Day by day faithfully working with us. And if we will see our needs and cooperate with Him, God can do a quick work. It need not take 20 years.

It depends on how quickly we cooperate with His working in our lives.

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