

Beginnings: Let's Make a Deal
Genesis 29:31-35

The Story Explained

- Recap:
 - Jacob has just had an incredible encounter with the living God at Bethel. (Gen. 28)
 - Transformation marked that encounter.
 - The stony pillow became a stone pillar to the Lord.
 - A certain place became Beth-El, the house of God.
 - The night became day.
 - The question for Jacob (and us): in what ways will God transform?
- Jacob was looking for a wife, and Jacob found exactly what he was looking for. (vv. 1-12)
 - Jacob takes all the initiative in the opening scene.
 - He has providentially come to Laban, his mother's (Rebekah's) brother.
 - Jacob's feat of strength was meant to impress and win Rachel. (vv. 10-11)
- Laban has found in Jacob a kindred spirit: his bone and flesh (not good!). (vv. 13-20)
 - Laban wanted from Jacob what Jacob could provide—wealth.
 - Jacob wanted from Laban what Laban could grant—a wife.
- In the end, Laban deceived Jacob. (vv. 21-30)
 - The deceiver, Jacob, was deceived!
 - Jacob served Laban double for the hand of Rachel.

The Story Applied

- We should be moved by the sadness of this story (and sadness of sin).
 - Much of what happens in chapter 29 is tragic.
 - Deception is on display in Laban's betrayal of Jacob.
 - Sadly, Rachel and Leah are treated as pawns in Laban's game.
 - Jesus is an anti-Laban, protecting and providing for the vulnerable.

- We should reckon with the biblical principle of sowing and reaping.
 - Underneath the principle of sowing and reaping is God's just and righteous character.

For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind. (Hosea 8:7)

Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. (Galatians 6:7)
 - Our sinful actions have consequences.
 - Sometimes today.
 - Sometimes years from today.

It is easy to observe here how Jacob was paid in his own coin. He had cheated his own father when he pretended to be Esau, and now his father-in-law cheated him. Herein, how unrighteous soever Laban was, the Lord was righteous. Even the righteous, if they take a false step, are sometimes thus recompensed on the earth. (Matthew Henry)
- We should be mindful that God is always working on us, graciously parting us from our sin.
 - Remarkably, God is never mentioned in this story; undoubtedly, God was clearly working in the story.
 - God had greater purposes for Jacob than securing for him a wife.
 - God aimed to deal with the heart of the dealer.
 - Jacob well illustrates the principle that the life of faith is harder, not easier.
 - Yes, we have the glorious promise of forgiveness and heaven, but God's presence with us means God always working on us!

And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. (Mark 8:34-35)
 - This discipline, too, is mercy, grace, and the kindness of the Lord.

It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? (Hebrews 12:7)

For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (Hebrews 12:11)