

Providence and Discipline Genesis 29:1-30

#1: God's Providence (29:1-14)

29 Then Jacob went on his journey and came to the land of the people of the east. ²As he looked, he saw a well in the field, and behold, three flocks of sheep lying beside it, for out of that well the flocks were watered. The stone on the well's mouth was large, ³and when all the flocks were gathered there, the shepherds would roll the stone from the mouth of the well and water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place over the mouth of the well.

⁴Jacob said to them, "My brothers, where do you come from?" They said, "We are from Haran." ⁵He said to them, "Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?" They said, "We know him." ⁶He said to them, "Is it well with him?" They said, "It is well; and see, Rachel his daughter is coming with the sheep!" ⁷He said, "Behold, it is still high day; it is not time for the livestock to be gathered together. Water the sheep and go, pasture them." ⁸But they said, "We cannot until all the flocks are gathered together and the stone is rolled from the mouth of the well; then we water the sheep."

⁹While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess. ¹⁰Now as soon as Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, Jacob came near and rolled the stone from the well's mouth and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. ¹¹Then Jacob kissed Rachel and wept aloud. ¹²And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's kinsman, and that he was Rebekah's son, and she ran and told her father.

¹³As soon as Laban heard the news about Jacob, his sister's son, he ran to meet him and embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his house. Jacob told Laban all these things, ¹⁴and Laban said to him, "Surely you are my bone and my flesh!" And he stayed with him a month.

#2: God's Discipline (29:15-30)

Derek Kinder

In Laban, Jacob met his match and his means of discipline. Twenty years (31:41) of drudgery and friction were to weather his character; and the reader can reflect that presumably Jacob is not the only person to have needed a Laban in his life.

¹⁵Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my kinsman, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?" ¹⁶Now Laban had two daughters. The name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. ¹⁷Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful in form and appearance. ¹⁸Jacob loved Rachel. And he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel." ¹⁹Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to any other man; stay with me." ²⁰So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her.

²¹Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife that I may go in to her, for my time is completed." ²²So Laban gathered together all the people of the place and made a feast. ²³But in the evening he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and he went in to her. ²⁴(Laban gave his female servant Zilpah to his daughter Leah to be her servant.) ²⁵And in the morning, behold, it was Leah! And Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?" ²⁶Laban said, "It is not so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. ²⁷Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also in return for serving me another seven years."

Kent Hughes

God had brought the arch-deceiver Laban into the life of the great patriarch-deceiver so that Jacob's sin might be displayed before his eyes and he might be cut to the heart. Jacob's nemesis and greatest antagonist was an

instrument of God.... And Jacob was going to change, not overnight but over time. He would become Israel, a prince of God.

²⁸ Jacob did so, and completed her week. Then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife. ²⁹ (Laban gave his female servant Bilhah to his daughter Rachel to be her servant.) ³⁰ So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah, and served Laban for another seven years.

Hebrews 12

⁵ And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,
nor be weary when reprov'd by him.

⁶ For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and chastises every son whom he receives.”

⁷ 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? ⁸ If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. ¹¹ 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.

Kevin DeYoung:

This story is (also) about the God who disciplines those He loves. It's about the God who confronts us with our sin but loves us too much to leave us in our sin.... Chapter 29 is an instance of God blessing Jacob, not cursing him. He loved him enough to show him his sin. What He promised at Bethel, “I will bless you, I am with you, I will keep you,” is coming true in chapter 29, even though it is a hard set of circumstances. So here's the lesson for Jacob and for us. Yes, Jacob's sins found him out. But just because your sins find you out, does not mean that the Lord has lost track of you.

Iain Duguid:

God in love wanted Jacob to experience what it was like to be deceived by someone he trusted. That lesson would give depth and meaning to his repentance of his earlier sin that would have been there without it. God's grace had laid hold of him and would not give him up. The rough, chiseling work of sanctification was in progress in Jacob's life.... As the hymn writer put it, he will “sanctify to you your deepest distress.” He will use the most difficult and challenging experiences to polish rough diamonds such as Jacob – and you and me – until in the end we shine like stars. In all this, he will never waver from his promise to bless us and sanctify us – to forge in us a knowledge of our sinful hearts and utter dependence upon his grace.