

WEEK TWO NOTES

GRACE CHANGES EVERYTHING/ Genesis 29-30, Ephesians 1-3

Jacob has been searching for significance and worth for his entire life; taking the birthright and blessing for himself, thinking it will fulfill the need for personal value. Chapter 29 introduces us to Leah and Rachel, sisters who will both marry Jacob. They too are looking for significance in all the wrong places.

1. **Seeking Significance** (Gen 29-30) After leaving Bethel, Jacob continues his 500 mile journey north. After weeks of travel he sees an unusual sight—shepherds and their flocks by a well, but not watering sheep. He inquires. The shepherds confirm he is in Haran and they confirm Jacob's uncle Laban lives there. God has led Jacob and God is working in Jacob's life. The shepherds are waiting on one more flock of sheep to arrive...Laban's. At just that moment (No coincidences with God), Rachel arrives with her father's sheep. Jacob kisses her and weeps. He is home. He is relieved and joyful. Rachel takes him home to meet her father and Laban is genuinely glad to meet his nephew for the first time. Jacob stays one month. Laban asks him to stay longer and also asks what the wages should be for Jacob's employment.

Verse 16 opens a whole can of worms. It introduces us to Leah, Rachel's older sister. Immediately we know that Rachel far outshines her older sister in physical beauty. Why the comparison? We are naturally drawn to physical beauty. Jacob certainly was. But God has already chosen Leah to be in the lineage of Christ...*simply by grace*. God chooses differently than we choose. His plans supersede our earthy evaluations. Jacob, however, loves Rachel and agrees to work 7 years for her father Laban in return Jacob can marry Rachel at the end of 7 years. Laban agrees and the Bible says those 7 years seemed like a short time to Jacob. He was completely smitten with Rachel. He loves her for the rest of his life.

Seven years pass and Jacob says it is time to marry Rachel. Laban has a different plan. He substitutes Leah for Rachel. After the wedding night, Jacob discovers he has been tricked. He has married Leah instead of his beloved Rachel. The deceiver has been deceived. God is working in Jacob, disciplining and refining him. There is still much work for God to do in Jacob's life. Laban suggests that at the end of honeymoon week with Leah, Jacob can marry Rachel if Jacob will work another 7 years. Jacob agrees. IN ONE WEEK Laban marries off both daughters. In ONE WEEK Jacob acquires two wives who are sisters. Laban got the better end of deal—a hard working son-in-law for another 7 years. Jacob got a boatload of trouble.

The Bible reiterates. JACOB LOVED RACHEL. Leah is unloved/hated. But remember. Leah was part of the deception. She deceived both her husband and her sister and neither Jacob nor Rachel ever forgot it. But God remembers Leah. He has chosen her to be the mother of Judah, her fourth son, and the one who will carry on the blessing and the promise of God. Leah, however, is looking for significance in her husband's love. In Genesis 29:30-35, she bears Jacob her first 3 sons, each time hoping Jacob will love her. Judah is her 4th son, and she chooses, momentarily, to praise the Lord.

Chapter 30 is a dizzying account of jealousy, strife, and chaos. Each sister wanting what the other has. Rachel is unable to have children and she is jealous of Leah. Rachel has Jacob's heart, but she wants to have his children. Leah has Jacob's children but she wants Jacob's heart. Each sister wants what the other has. Each sister believes she will find value and significance in Jacob love and Jacob's children. The frenzy continues as each sister offers her servant/maid to Jacob as a slave wife. The children of the slave are deemed the children of the owner. Verses 22-24, Rachel finally gives birth to a son, Joseph. By the end of the passage, Jacob has four wives, eleven sons, and one daughter.

Note: Genesis 30:14-16 is an interesting sub-story within the larger account of child bearing. *Mandrakes* are at the center of this brief interaction between Leah and Rachel. MANDRAKES ARE NOT DUCKS☺. They are plants that were believed to boost fertility and Leah has mandrakes. Rachel wants them. Jacob is the bargaining chip. Leah purchases a night with Jacob by giving Rachel some mandrakes.

What a crazy mess this home has become. And yet God will use it all to bless the world. Impossible... if not for grace.

2. Embracing our Significance in Christ (Ephesians 1-3) While we might shake our heads at the tumultuous rivalry between Leah and Rachel, we often look for significance in things or people who can never deliver lasting value or significance. As believers in Christ where is our significance? We find our value in our relationship with Christ. Everything about that relationship is based on GRACE.

Paul is writing the book of Ephesians to a new generation of Christians. They, like us, needed to be certain of their identity in Christ and their value to God. The first three chapters of Ephesians reads like a laundry list of the blessings that are ours in Christ *by grace*. Ephesians 1-3 teaches us *who we are and what we have in Christ*.

Sought (Ephesians 1:3-6) As believers in Christ, we are chosen...sought by God for a relationship with Him. He seeks us. Relationship with God begins with God. He sought us as the groom seeks the bride in Song of Solomon. He is the lover of our souls. Colossians 1:13 says He delivered us from the kingdom (domain, rule) of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son. Our position changes and our status changes. God views us as holy and blameless. *Holy* means we are partakers in His holiness, set apart. God sees every believer as holy, not because we are sinless but because He sees the holiness of Christ. He also says we are *blameless*. *Blameless* was a technical term used in ancient days to designate the absence of anything amiss in a sacrifice. *Blameless* means there is nothing about the sacrifice that would render it unworthy to be offered. We are blameless. Nothing about our past or our future can disqualify us from being a child of God. Ephesians 1:5 continues describing our new position, In Christ *by grace*. *He predestined us to adoption as sons*. *Predestined* simply means *predetermined*. Scripture does not use the word in a negative sense...that some are predestined to heaven while others are predestined to hell. Predestined does not refer to our eternal destination rather it refers to our predetermined position of an adopted adult child. In the Roman culture an adopted son could never be disowned (A biological son could be disowned). Likewise, an adult adopted son had access to everything of the Father's and could use it fully. Listen! When we have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, *God will never disown us!* As His child we have access to every spiritual blessing immediately. We do not have to wait for some future experience. *We got all of Jesus we are ever going to get* However it takes us a lifetime to learn to live fully in all that we possess in Christ. Notice verse 6, Our new position and every spiritual blessing is ours because of the grace God freely bestows on us in the Beloved (Christ).

Saved (Ephesians 1:7-8a). Paul uses the word *saved* in Ephesians 2:5, but he uses the word *redemption* (redeem) in Eph 1:7. Both words are similar. *Redeem* means to buy back and make new. It was often used in reference to the ancient slave market. *The redeemer* would purchase a slave, paying the full price, then set the slave free. Many times, the slave would enslave himself back to the redeemer out of gratitude. In Scripture, our redemption is based on God's mercy and grace. He buys us off of the slave block of sin and sets us free from the bondage of sin (Read Ephesians 2:1-5). He makes us a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). The price of our redemption is the blood of Christ shed for us at Calvary. Our redemption cost God greatly. Dear one, He created us, but sin entered the world and enslaved every human being. BUT GOD, paid the full price, the blood of His only son Jesus, to redeem us. God rejoices over you... "*You are mine ; you are mine. You are twice mine. I made and I bought you. You are mine*".

Sealed (Ephesians 1:13-14, Ephesians 4:30) Jesus says in John 10:25 that nothing can snatch us out of the Father's hand. We are secure. Our salvation is secure. Paul writes, *we are sealed*. The ancient seal was often used on a letter or document. The sender would secure the contents of the letter with hot wax and then apply his seal or signet to the wax. The seal indicated authenticity and ownership. An unbroken seal assured the recipient of the letter that the contents was secure. The seal was also used in a business transaction to indicate a completed transaction. Like the ancient seal, our salvation is sealed by the Holy Spirit. We are blessed with the Holy Spirit at the point of salvation. The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives indicates we belong to God and our salvation is secure, a finished transaction. Verse 14 states that

the Holy Spirit is also a pledge, a downpayment of more to come. We have every spiritual blessing here and now, but heaven and all of its glories is yet to come.

Seated (Ephesians 2:6) *“...by grace you have been saved and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus.”* What a beautiful picture. While we are still walking around on this earth, our citizenship is in Heaven (Philippians 3:20). Spiritually and positionally we are seated with Christ. Scripture often refers to Christ being at the right hand of God. (Ephesians 1:20, Hebrews 10:12-13, Romans 8:34, and others). The right hand of God is a place for Christ only, a place of honor and authority. Paul is saying we are seated WITH Christ! Because of God’s great grace, we are not beggars or second-class citizens. We are seated with Christ in a place of honor and significance... not because of anything we have done, but what Christ has done for us by grace.

Strengthened (Ephesians 3:16-19) We are not saved and then left to live the Christian life in our own strength. We are strengthened with power, by the Holy Spirit, in the inner man so that Christ is at home in every area of our lives as we entrust ourselves more and more to Him. We are being strengthened daily, continuously from the inside out. His strength within us makes a difference in how we live. The Christian life is not behavior modification. It is transformation. He is daily changing us, conforming us to the image of Christ. This work is the life-long process of sanctification. Jesus wants every part of us, every room of our house. He wants to strengthen the areas that are weak. He wants to clean out the areas that are cluttered with sin. He wants to unlock the doors that we have hidden from others. He wants to heal our past and free us from debilitating habits. He wants every single part of us! *Listen! We are not getting more of Jesus. He is getting more of us!* The sanctifying and strengthening process makes our roots go deep, grounding us in the love of Christ. We begin to have much more than head knowledge about Christ. We have experienced His salvation, His cleansing, and His transforming and strengthening. We are *filled* with Jesus. *To be filled* is to be controlled by His Spirit! What a difference His presence makes in our lives, in our relationships, our interactions with people, our worship, and our service to Christ.

Jacob, Leah, and Rachel were all seeking significance in things that would never deliver it. Learn from them. Gain understanding from God’s Word and *stand firm* in your value, your worth, your significance in Christ. God loves us! He will never let us go! We are sought, saved, sealed, seated, and strengthened. BY GRACE.

Praying for our “Jacobs”

“If you’re waiting for the salvation of someone for whom you’ve been praying for a long time, don’t suppose that God is not at work.

Remember, God has to work at His own pace and He has heard your prayer for that person’s salvation. You can’t hustle souls into the kingdom. God must be working first in that person’s life before there will be any sort of detectable change.

We need to be careful that we don’t let a feeling of impossibility influence a full heart of simple faith in matters that confront us or in matters concerning those for whom we pray”

Elizabeth Elliot

“There is a temptation for parents to believe that if they try harder, say more, or intervene sooner, they can prevent pain. But God often works in ways we do not understand, and His timing is not ours. Parents must learn to trust that God is present even in the waiting”

Ruth Graham

“You never have the power to change the heart of your child—only God does. Parents must remember that they are instruments, not redeemers. This truth becomes especially important as children enter adulthood, when control must give way to prayer, humility, and trust in God’s work.”

Paul David Tripp (from his book, *Parenting*)

These quotes primarily refer to praying for adult children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, or friends. *Parents of children* (who are not yet adults) must also pray, as well as guide, teach, discipline, and love with the grace and truth of Christ.