

THE ORIGINS OF IT ALL!: A STUDY OF GENESIS XXXIII.) BLESSINGS OF PROSPERITY & PROTECTION GENESIS 30:25-31:55

Q: What is prosperity? How do you define or understand it?

Thus far, in Jacob & Laban, we see established a disturbing trend of human nature. First, in Chapter 27, Jacob is exposed as a deceiver. Then, in Chap. 29 Laban deceives the deceiver. Now, in Chap. 30 the again face off with each wary of the other's potential deception. Where or how will this ever end?

A.) BLESSINGS OF PROSPERITY (Gen. 30:25-44)

1.) **Godly People Trust In Blessings of Prosperity With Integrity and From God Alone (30:25-34)**

Q: How is this a display of integrity?

- The repetition of reference to Jacob's service testifies to his fulfilling his responsibilities.
- Jacob's work has prospered Laban greatly, even while leaving nothing for himself or his family.
- Even though he has something of the advantage, Jacob does not seek anything from Laban other than what he can rightly earn or be granted from God.
- Even Laban recognizes and acknowledges that the Lord was with Jacob.

Q: How is it an example of trusting in God alone?

- The proposal Jacob makes to Laban is one that depends on chance and genetics that are beyond his own understanding and control.
- It is a plan that can only produce prosperity if made so by God Himself. Jacob would separate out all the non-normal animals. He would keep them separate and ONLY breed the normal-colored within their own group. Yet, his prosperity depended upon these normals mated with normals reproducing mutual recessives.
- This is especially true in light of the deceitful and untrustworthy nature of Laban, which Jacob surely expects to continue.
- Jacob desired the opportunity to provide abundantly for his family, but was unwilling to do so at the price of being indebted in any way to a man who has proven to be “a self-seeking, deceptive, ungodly schemer” (Morris, pg. 472).
- Nevertheless, Jacob saw how God blessed his faithful work to this point, and trusts that He will continue to do so.

2.) **Others Seek Prosperity Through Unfair Advantage (30:35-36)**

- In stark contrast to the truly faithful. Like Laban, others may proclaim and go through the minimal motions of following God, but they really trust only in themselves and their own means.
- Despite Jacob's proven integrity and promise to keep the existing spotted and speckled animals completely apart from the others, it is not enough for Laban. Therefore, he insists that he himself separates them and sends them far off under the care of his own sons.
- Laban reminds us of an important truth: *Those who find it difficult to trust others are often that way because they themselves are untrustworthy.*

3.) **If God Promises To Bless His People, Nothing Can Hinder The Faithful (30:37-43)**

Q: But what are we to make of Jacob's elaborate breeding rituals? Was this truly the cause of his prosperity?

- The common assumption is that somehow Jacob figured that if the animals mated in front of the branches that were made to appear spotted and speckled, then they would produce spotted and speckled offspring.
- At best, this would be a silly superstition and even so is unlikely.
- Rather, there is anecdotal evidence of the stripping of the branches was a known means of encouraging the animals to be more likely to get into the mood for mating - whether from the aroma and/or so other release of chemical.
- Whether purely by God's grace and/or blessed by that Jacob had the wisdom to surmise from his years of observing these flocks, that many if not most of the normal-colored flock had the propensity to produce spotted and speckled offspring on occasion (today, we would understand this as an abundance having the recessive gene). The first quantity of spotted and speckled then, came naturally. However, once these appeared and Jacob could recognize both them and the ones who, when mated together, were more likely to produce such offspring, then he had something to work with. For what he did seem to know was what made the animals more likely to mate at a given time and planned this in such a way as to not only produce an abundance of spotted and speckled animals but to breed them of the strongest stock.
- In any case, we see clearly in 31:9-12 and 32:10 that Jacob gives all of the credit to God's divine intervention for the still miraculously high number of spotted and speckled offspring.

B.) BLESSINGS OF PROTECTION (Gen. 31)

1.) **God Does Not Forget Our Calling (vv. 1-3)**

- God again speaks to Jacob in a dream, reminds him of his calling and commands him to leave and return to the Promised Land.
- God recognizes and declares that Jacob has indeed matured into the faithful man of integrity, service and obedience that God needs. Thus, it is now time for Jacob to begin to fulfill his role in the Promise by bringing the foundation of the promised nation into the promised land.

2.) **It Is Necessary To Recognize God's Hand in Prosperity & Protection**

(vv. 4-13)

- Though he knew Laban, his father-in-law, would never willingly allow him to leave with either his family or flocks Jacob wasted no time in acting upon God's clear call.
- He gathered Rachel & Leah and gave an impassioned summary of his faithful service in the midst of Laban's persistent deceit and the need to separate and follow God completely.
- Within this speech, his emphasis throughout is on an acknowledgment of God's blessing and protection. That so long as they go in obedience to God's call, they have nothing to fear!
- It was time, not because Jacob had enough of his father-in-law, but because it was God's revealed will.

3.) **Retribution Endangers The Blessing (vv. 14-35)**

- Though silent and 'good soldiers' all this time, Laban's fatherly abuse and disrespect did not go without notice or consequence.
- As a result, Rachel determines in her sinful heart that simply getting away was not enough; she felt that she needed to hurt and rob her father in return for his hurts against her. So, she stole his idols.

Q: What's the big deal with the idols?

- Most likely, these idols represented Laban's own sense of security and prosperity.
- However, this stealing of the idol also gives Laban the excuse he needs to chase after them and try to reclaim everything for himself!
- The danger is further multiplied through Rachel's hiding of this from Jacob nearly resulting not only in the return of everything to Laban but her own death as well.

Q: What do we need to take/learn from this negative example?

- Vengeance is the LORD's, not our own. When we lay claim of it for ourselves – no matter how justified we may think it is – it only ties an anchor around our own necks and future.

4.) **God Protects Righteous Gain (vv. 36-42)**

- Jacob, however, can defend himself for all he did and gained was by righteous means.
- In fact, he even repeatedly went above and beyond all expectations. Although it was considered the right of every shepherd, Jacob never took any of Laban's livestock to feed himself and his family. Similarly, it was the custom that if a wild animal killed a livestock despite the shepherd's best efforts, he had only to bring back the torn animal as evidence he did his best to beat it off. Under such circumstances, the master would accept the loss. Jacob, however, always took such loss upon himself.
- In return, God watched over and protected Jacob for this day!

5.) **God's Protection Allows Peaceful Coexistence (vv. 43-55)**

- Because of God's protection that even Laban couldn't miss, peaceful coexistence was made possible.
- Of course, Laban would never admit his own guilt and worked tirelessly to change the subject, take back the initiative, and try to take the credit.
- Even so, clear separation was required and maintained for there to be peaceful coexistence because the righteous, faithful man and the selfish pretender.