

The Next Generation, Pt 8: God's Grace for Family Feuds (Gen 29-30)

Please turn to Genesis 29. Last week in v. 1-20 Jacob met a woman at a well named Rachel, and she ran home and told her father and family, they got to know him and dad agreed to their engagement in this chapter. Earlier in Genesis 24 was another story of meeting a woman at a well, Rebekah, the sister of this same Laban. She also ran home and told her father and family, and her dad agreed to give her hand in marriage to Isaac later in that chapter

Later in Israel's history Moses would also meet a woman at a well in Midian named Zipporah, and she runs home and tells her father and family, and dad gets to know Moses and gives him her hand in marriage as well in Exodus 2 as well. This is a pattern or motif in Scripture, starting with Abraham, the father of Israel, first with his son then his grand-son in the covenant line, a woman at a well who becomes the bride of the chosen one of God's people. This continues with Moses who becomes the great leader of God's people.

Years later an even greater Leader of God's people, the greatest chosen One in the covenant line, He also met a woman at a well, a Samaritan woman. It was actually called "*Jacob's well*" and was in the land Jacob had travelled through in Genesis 28 and the well is still called "Jacob's well" 2,000 years later. *This woman* had no male head or husband to run to, in fact, this lady confessed the man she was living with wasn't her husband. Jesus knew that and He knew she had already been married 5x and He knew that what she was seeking in men could only be found in Messiah and the living water of salvation that alone could quench her soul's thirst. He met her there and He revealed He was the Messiah, the Christ (John 4:25-26), and He called her to be a part of His bride, the church of Jesus, the world's Savior (v. 39-43).

I love seeing the connections of Jesus to Genesis and its themes throughout Scripture. Our Lord cares for those the world rejects and He calls them into His family and makes them a part of His bride, as we'll see in His care for Leah in this chapter and her sister. And we'll see no matter our past or our family background, whether married multiple times like that woman, or if our family is as messed up as the one we're about to read about, Jesus meets sinners and makes dysfunctional families part of His family, love, and grace

Let's pick up our reading in Genesis 29:16: *Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel.*

¹⁷ *And Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful of form and face.*

¹⁸ Now Jacob loved Rachel, so he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel." ¹⁹ Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than to give her to another man; stay with me." ²⁰ So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her. ²¹ Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife, for my time is completed, that I may go in to her." ²² Laban gathered all the men of the place and made a feast. ²³ Now in the evening he took his daughter **Leah**, and brought her to him; and Jacob went in to her. ²⁴ Laban also gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid. ²⁵ So it came about in the morning that, **behold, it was Leah!** And he said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? Why then have you deceived me?" ²⁶ But Laban said, "It is not the practice in our place to marry off the younger before the firstborn." ²⁷ "Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also for the service which you shall serve with me for another seven years." ²⁸ Jacob did so and completed her week, and he gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife. ²⁹ Laban also gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maid. ³⁰ So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and indeed he loved Rachel more than Leah, and he served with Laban for another seven years. ³¹ Now the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, and He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. ³² Leah conceived and bore a son and named him Reuben, for she said, "Because the LORD has seen my affliction; surely now my husband will love me." ³³ Then she conceived again and bore a son and said, "Because the LORD has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this son also." So she named him Simeon. ³⁴ She conceived again and bore a son and said, "Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." Therefore he was named Levi. ³⁵ And she conceived again and bore a son and said, "This time I will praise the LORD." Therefore she named him Judah. Then she stopped bearing.

30:1 Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she became jealous of her sister; and she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die." ² Then Jacob's anger burned against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"

Friends, this is not one big happy family, this is one big ugly mess! *This* is the family God promised in chapter 28 to bless all the families of the earth through (28:14)! *This* is the man God showed heaven to like no other and a stairway to it, with angels going up and down, and an OT glimpse of Jesus! But *this* looks more like a bad TV show. We might call *this* "the first soap opera." Or another title I considered for this was "the drama of 2 mommas."

Actually a total of 4 will mother Jacob's children as we keep reading. We could call this "the bride wars" or "they all lived *not so* happily ever after." A sermon title could be: 'Jacob's ladder, rock-bottom.' In the chapter before, he slept with his head on a rock while God showed a ladder with its bottom where he lay, but now figuratively Jacob is at 'rock-bottom.' He had already been on a rocky road to get here, and now Jacob gets enrolled in the school of hard knocks. Jacob doesn't realize it will take more than 14 years till he graduates (he's got a few more years with Laban as his harsh schoolmaster).

[Proverbs 13:15 says "*the way of the unfaithful is hard...*"]

Sinclair Ferguson tells the story of his wedding when he realized during the ceremony that the bride behind the veil was not his bride. It was a true story he said, and he broke out in a cold sweat. Then he woke up from a dream. It was a nightmare! But for Jacob this is real. Jacob thinks he's sleeping with Rachel and he wakes up with Leah! Deceitful dad had swapped daughters in the night, and with drinking, a thick veil, a dark tent ... Jacob hadn't realized he made love to *the sister of the one he loved*. Talk about a rude awakening!

Paul Tripp has an excellent book called *What Did You Expect? Redeeming the Realities of Marriage*. I can tell you for sure Jacob didn't expect Leah in his bed that morning! But marriage is a wake-up call and in different ways, we all have a rude awakening to sin. We find out the person we married is more a sinner than we realized and so are we (and sometimes in-laws are more like outlaws!). That book talks about how marriage realities can be quite different than our expectations and that our expectations can actually be idols. He unpacks James 4 which explains the source of our conflicts is our cravings, when we want things so badly, including things that aren't bad in themselves, but we turn bad if we don't get 'em. Whatever we want more than God becomes our god (or idol). James 4 says the source of my quarrels and complaining is my cravings. Your problem isn't your spouse, what he or she does (or doesn't do). The root problem isn't others or anything outside you - it's you and what's going on in your heart, according to James 4:1-2.

Leah craved affection above the Lord, Rachel coveted children sinfully, and their desires for good things became a "god" size thing to them, their idol. Something is an idol when you sin if you don't get it, like Rachel speaking sinfully to her husband "give me children or I die." Children are good things but a desire for children had become the ultimate thing to her (and Jacob's sinful heart also overflowed in response, revealing bitterness that life hadn't gone like he thought he deserved). Jacob had coveted blessing wrongly in chapter 27 and got it wrongly. Idols are also what we're willing to sin to get.

But what did Jacob deserve? Let's not forget who Jacob is from chapter 25, the guy who took advantage of his brother to get his birthright. Don't forget Jacob is called a worm by God and he weasels his way into the place of the firstborn in chapter 27, the younger usurping the place of the older sibling. Look at 29:25b "... *Why then have you deceived me?*"²⁶ *But Laban said, "It is not the practice in our place to marry off the younger before the firstborn.*

In other words, 'I don't know about you and where you come from, but here we honor the place and right of firstborn (unlike you Jacob with your older brother Esau).' Snap! Ouch. In your face! What goes around comes around? You set traps, you might step in them; you made your bed, now lie in it with Leah. Gal 6:7 says '*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap*' (Gal. 6:7). Prov. 22:8 says "*he who sows wickedness reaps trouble.*" Hosea speaks of those who "*sow the wind and reap the whirlwind*" (8:7). Jacob sowed deceit and now reaps a category 5.

The deceiver just got deceived. The betrayer just got betrayed. The player just got played. In the sport of deception Jacob finds out he's junior varsity! Jacob gets a taste of his own medicine, and some of the aftertaste Esau had.

- the word "deceived" that Jacob says was done to him in v. 25 is the same Hebrew word used for what Jacob did to Esau in Gen 27:35
- when Laban in v. 26 uses the word "firstborn," it might have echoed in Jacob's mind 27:19 where Jacob lied "*I am Esau your firstborn...*"
- when Laban in v. 14 calls Jacob *brother* and mentions *servicing*, those words were promised Jacob by Isaac in the tent in 27:29, that others and brothers would serve him, but Jacob first serves Laban 14 years
- Jacob had wine and dined his own father and tricked him when he couldn't see very well, now his father-in-law Laban wines and dines Jacob and tricks Jacob that night Jacob can't see very well in his tent
- Isaac trembled when realizing he was tricked, so does Jacob, v. 25
- Jacob pretended to be his sibling by wearing his clothes and kissing Isaac as if he was Esau to fool him, now Jacob is fooled by Leah as she pretends to be her sibling, wearing her clothes, kissing as if her
- Jacob wasn't attracted to Leah because of her weak eyes in v. 17 but now Jacob's eyes are too weak to discern it's her in his wedding tent
- Jacob who left home to escape a family feud is now in a bigger one
- this isn't just dripping with irony, it's pouring like water from a well

Like in Esther's day when Haman built gallows for Jews that he would later be hung on, the deceptive life Jacob had built for himself would hang Jacob.

Allan Ross writes: 'This painful experience was God's rebuke of Jacob for deceiving his father to obtain the blessing ... *God will effectively discipline [His children] by making them painfully aware of their unresolved sins ... discipline he will, often using means similar to the offense to correct them.*'¹

Without Gen 29 you'd think Jacob got away with sin or the Bible ignores it. But God's Word shows men faults and all, sin and its results, and this sets it apart from all other ancient books that glorify or deify characters as heroes. One of the books our family has used in our family devotions after dinner is *The Jesus Storybook Bible*. It's for kids but explains it better than scholars.

'Now, some people think the Bible is a book of rules, telling you what you should and shouldn't do. The Bible certainly does have some rules in it. They show you how life works best. But the Bible isn't mainly about you and what you should be doing. It's about God and what he has done.

Other people think the Bible is a book of heroes, showing you people you should copy. The Bible does have some heroes in it, but (as you'll soon find out) most of the people in the Bible aren't heroes at all. They make some big mistakes (sometimes on purpose), they get afraid and run away. At times, they're downright mean.

No, the Bible isn't a book of rules, or a book of heroes. The Bible is most of all a Story. It's an adventure story about a young Hero [capital H] who comes from a far country ... a love story about a brave Prince who leaves his palace, his throne - everything - to rescue the ones he loves ... the best thing about this Story is - it's true.

There are lots of stories in the Bible, but all the stories are telling one Big Story. The Story of how God loves his children and comes to rescue them. It takes the whole Bible to tell this Story. And at the center of the Story, there is [Jesus]. Every story in the Bible whispers his name. He is like the missing piece in the puzzle - the piece that makes all the other pieces fit together, and suddenly you can see a beautiful picture.'²

When you put a puzzle together where do you start? You start with the edge pieces, right? How do we put the pieces together in a story like this, where the pieces are all over the place and upside-down? Let's start with 4 edges:

- 1) God's grace to Jacob
- 2) God's grace to Rachel
- 3) God's grace to Leah
- 4) God's grace to all people

We'll see Jesus in the center and how He puts the pieces together beautifully

First, God's grace to Jacob

Jacob's life is in pieces but grace will put it back together. At the top of this puzzling story the overarching edge that frames it is God's sovereignty and grace. Like the idol of Dagon had to bow before the ark of the covenant and was broken into pieces by God, Jacob's idols must bow and be broken, too. God in His grace uses sinful men to fulfill His purposes. He can use Satan's messengers so we'll trust sufficient grace (2 Cor 12:7-9). It's the mystery of providence that God uses what goes against His revealed will (like 2 wives, Laban's treachery) to accomplish God's sovereign will. Jacob's son Joseph explains at the end what man intends for evil, God intends for good (50:20).

[from the greatest betrayal ever (Judas) comes our greatest good (salvation)]

Turn to Hebrews 11 to see a NT commentary on some of the good God was up to and this might help us put some of the pieces together in this puzzle.

If you look at Hebrews 11:9, it says talking about Abraham: *By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise ...*²⁰ *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come.*²¹ *By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped*

...

By grace through faith Jacob was blessed and became a true worshipper of God and has his name forever enshrined in the hall of faith. He had to live many years in tents in other lands, like Abraham and Isaac, and like both of them, Jacob was rebuked at times for his lying and lack of faith (by Laban in Jacob's case, by Pharaoh in Abraham's case for his lie and lack of faith about his wife [Gen 12], and by Abimelech in Isaac's case for the same lie and lack of faith about his wife [Gen 26]). This sin of the father affected the third and fourth generation, as we'll later see with Jacob's sons lying about Joseph who they sold into slavery. But there was also grace from the God who v. 16 says "*is not ashamed to be called their God.*" He calls Himself repeatedly "*the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,*" a God who repeatedly shows grace to them and others despite their sin that so easily entangles.

Hebrews 12:1 *Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and **the sin which so easily entangles us**, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,*² *fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith ...*

[one of the ways Jesus perfects our faith is by discipline (v. 5). Because He loves us as sons, v. 6 says He disciplines us because we're true sons (v. 7-8). End of v. 10 says this is '*for our good, so that we may share His holiness.*']

¹⁴ *All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness ...* ¹⁵ *See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble [like Gen 30], and by it many be defiled;* ¹⁶ *that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau*

...

Esau turned away from God's grace, but Jacob was transformed by grace. God isn't judging Jacob in Gen 29, He's disciplining a beloved son because of His favor toward Jacob, not so Jacob can get back in God's favor. God is always looking at us in Christ with favor that is undeserved even when we sin because of Christ His beloved Son in whom God is always well pleased. We live by grace, which by definition is undeserved favor - this is exhibit A

A music group called Beautiful Eulogy has a song Jacob could later affirm:

"Thank You for Your grace and Your mercy in the face of adversity...pain is a university
 ... A lifetime of suffering is nothing compared to the glory being prepared
 We can never find a stairway to heaven or climb up a ladder to get there
 It's only by the merits of Christ that sinners inherit eternal life
 So I pray I grow in dependency, strip away my self-reliant tendencies
 Organize and order my days according to Your ordinance
 I'm an instrument in Your orchestra, Lord, and You are my only audience
 Holding Your promises close and watching as Your plan unfolds
 All for Your glory and praise playing the song that You composed
With your hands, play Your song; use my life I'm Your instrument
Tune my heart to sing Your song; use my life, I'm Your instrument"³

Turn back to Psalm 46 for an inspired psalm which was originally tuned to be sung with instruments. Consider its familiar words applied to Jacob's life in 46:10 "*Be still and know that I am God.*" Or in the NASB: *Cease striving and know that I am God ...* [Jacob had been striving since before he was born, striving against his twin in the womb, but God says 'cease striving, be still']; ***I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.***"

¹¹ *The LORD of hosts is with us; **The God of Jacob is our stronghold.** Selah.*

The God of Jacob graciously helped Jacob see that what he was striving for could only be found if he would cease and desist and be still and know God is God and he is not. Jacob was a strong guy, strong enough to roll the stone off a well in Gen 29, but he needed to look to God alone as his stronghold. By grace he did, and learned the truth of this psalm, that no matter what the turmoil of life (v. 1-3), the Lord is with us, "the God of Jacob" our strength.

¹ *God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble ...* ²

*The LORD of hosts is with us; **The God of Jacob is our stronghold.***

Turn back to Gen 30, and I want us to now see, #2: God's grace to Rachel

Once we have the top edge in place of the puzzle, we can start to look for edge pieces that have Rachel in them on the right side of the puzzle. Rachel doesn't start out Gen 30 any more deserving favor (grace=undeserved favor)

30:1 *Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she became jealous of her sister; and she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die."* ² *Then Jacob's anger burned against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"*

Jacob's theology may have been right here, but his delivery is terrible. This is a warning to us who affirm God's sovereignty in His grace, we need to communicate it with grace, because without love we're a clanging cymbal. When someone says something wrong, we're not to pounce on them or get angry at them - this is convicting as I've done this with those I love - we're to patiently graciously respond, or not respond till we can (2 Tim 2:24-25). In our families if we angrily sinfully speak like Jacob in v. 2, we need to be instruments of grace by asking forgiveness (study Ephesians 4:28-32). If we believe the doctrines of grace then we should be most humbled and gracious

Look back in chapter 25 for an example of how Jacob could have responded like Isaac in Genesis 25:21: *Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived.* ²² *But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is so, why then am I this way?" So she went to inquire of the LORD.*

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all had barren wives (Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel). Barrenness doesn't have to lead to bitterness, it should lead to prayerfulness like it did with them and Hannah (1 Sam 1). Jacob's father *Isaac* tried to live with his wife *Rebekah* in an understanding way. Isaac prayed to the Lord on his wife's behalf and she prayed. Sovereignty and grace should drive prayer but in Gen 30:3 Rachel isn't on her knees, but sins to get a baby on her knee

³ *She said, "Here is my maid Bilhah, go in to her that she may **bear on my knees**, that through her I too may have children."* [this is a term for a servant surrogate mother like Hagar with Sarah⁴] ⁴ *So she gave him her maid Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob went in to her.* ⁵ *Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son.* ⁶ *Then Rachel said, "**God has vindicated me**, and has indeed heard my voice and has given me a son."* *Therefore she named him Dan.* ⁷ *Rachel's maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son.* ⁸ *So Rachel said, "With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and I have indeed prevailed." And she named him Naphtali ['my wrestling']*

This is women's wrestling in Rachel's mind, and Rachel and Bilhah are a tag team, and she thinks Leah is pinned in v. 8. But Leah tags out to Zilpah in v. 9-11 and then in v. 16-21 Leah tags back in with more kids. It's 'birth wars'! Rachel tried mandrakes in v. 14-15, an ancient aphrodisiac that supposedly helped with fertility, but she's still barren 3 more years till God intervenes.

²² *Then God remembered Rachel* [the idea of the Hebrew is remembered in grace and love, not that God ever forgets but this means God gave special attention/grace], *and God gave heed to her and opened her womb.* ²³ *So she conceived and bore a son and said, "God has taken away my reproach."*

²⁴ *She named him Joseph, saying, "May the LORD give me another son."*

Kent Hughes writes: 'Rachel had come to the end of herself. The beautiful, favored wife had given up on her devices. There were no surrogates and no mandrakes. Everything was of God, pure and simple ... Rachel had children only because God did it ... This was grace alone ... With the birth of Joseph, joy almost leaps from the page. God had taken away Rachel's reproach.'⁵

'The Hebrew word *qsaf* means "take away," and *yosef* means "to add." God had taken away her reproach of being childless and had added to her blessings ... It was Joseph whom God would use to save the entire family.'⁶

Here's where the pieces come together with Rachel. God's multi-colored grace is on display in this puzzle through this boy and his multi-colored coat that *added* to his sibling rivalry that led to him being *taken away*. Joseph is not only a grace to Rachel, he becomes an instrument of grace for all Israel's sons in the time of famine, and Joseph becomes a blessing to many nations. So as we see the line of grace to Rachel along the right side of this puzzle, it becomes more clear and colorful as this 2nd edge is in place, Rachel's grace.

Now #3: Grace to Leah

At the bottom of this picture the one who felt at the bottom of it all is Leah. Rachel's name meant 'lamb,' Leah's name meant 'wild cow' (really).⁷ She wasn't a beauty queen and is overlooked still, but not by the grace of Jesus.

29:31 *Now the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, and He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.* ³² *Leah conceived and bore a son and named him Reuben, for she said, "Because the LORD has seen my affliction; surely now my husband will love me."* [Reuben means "see, a son," which she wanted Jacob to see, but his name also reminded her God had seen and loved her]

³³ *Then she conceived again and bore a son and said, “Because the LORD has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this son also.” So she named him Simeon. [Simeon comes from the Hebrew root for "heard"]*

For those who feel unlovely or unloved to the world, to people in affliction, God's grace to Leah tells you God sees you, hears you, loves you in Christ.

³⁴ *She conceived again and bore a son and said, “Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.” Therefore he was named Levi. [Levi means "attached" or "joined," and this son would father the Levites who were priests who mediated God's grace. So not only was Leah graced with this son, but she mothered the priestly line who were mediators for God's people. Numbers 18 uses the root word for Levi in how the Levite priests were joined to Aaron in God's worship.]*

³⁵ *And she conceived again and bore a son and said, “**This time I will praise the LORD.**” Therefore she named him Judah. [“He will be praised”]*

Judah would be the kingly line, Israel's rulers, royalty (49:8-10). A Jewish writer says: 'In the naming of the first three sons, Leah named them with a basic hope that Jacob would learn to love her or at least treat her equally. That never happened. By the time she came to her fourth son, she focused on God and not on Jacob, realizing that although not loved by Jacob, she was loved by God. The two key institutions of Israel, priesthood (Levi) and royalty (Judah), came from an unplanned and unwanted marriage.'⁸

30:9 *When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing, she took her maid Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife.¹⁰ Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son.¹¹ Then Leah said, “How fortunate!” So she named him Gad [fortune].¹² Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son.¹³ Then Leah said, “Happy am I! For women will call me happy.” So she named him Asher [happy].¹⁴ Now in the days of wheat harvest Reuben went and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, “Please give me some of your son's mandrakes.”¹⁵ But she said to her, “Is it a small matter for you to take my husband? And would you take my son's mandrakes also?” So Rachel said, “Therefore he may lie with you tonight in return for your son's mandrakes.”¹⁶ When Jacob came in from the field in the evening, then Leah went out to meet him and said, “You must come in to me, for I have surely hired you with my son's mandrakes.” So he lay with her that night. [and you think your family has issues? They got big issues!]*

But despite sin, there's grace: ¹⁷ *God gave heed to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son.* ¹⁸ *Then Leah said, "God has given me my wages because I gave my maid to my husband." So she named him Issachar [wages].* ¹⁹ *Leah conceived again and bore a sixth son to Jacob.* ²⁰ *Then Leah said, "God has endowed me with a good gift; now my husband will dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons." So she named him Zebulun [dwelling].* ²¹ *Afterward she bore a daughter and named her Dinah.*

Leah bore more children than the other 3 ladies combined. Leah is honored by being buried in the same grave as Abraham and Isaac (49:31). Leah later is honored in Jewish weddings like in Ruth 4:11. Leah was greatly graced by the Lord but her great grace was being great-great-great-great-grandma of the Lord Jesus Himself. Through the tribe of Judah that she mothered, the tribe mentioned more than the other 11 in Scripture, came the greatest grace in the most unlikely and unexpected place, the unattractive ancestor of Jesus

Isaiah 53 prophesied of the Messiah coming through Leah's son Judah: *"He had no beauty ... to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows ... by his wounds we are healed."* (v. 2-5 NIV84)

I read a lot of scholars but the best summary was in that children's Bible: **"The girl no one wanted.** Once there were two sisters. The youngest sister was very beautiful and her name was Rachel. But the oldest sister wasn't... her name was Leah...No one hardly even noticed her... 'No one loves me,' Leah said. 'I'm too ugly.' But God didn't think she was ugly. And when he saw that Leah was not loved and that no one wanted her, God chose her – to love her specially ... to rescue the whole world – through Leah's family.

Now when Leah knew that God loved her, in her heart, suddenly it didn't matter anymore whether her husband loved her the best, or if she was the prettiest. Someone had chosen her, someone did love her - with a Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love.

So when Leah had a baby boy she called him Judah, which means, 'This time I will praise the Lord.' And that's just what she did...One of [her] children's children's children would be a prince - the Prince of Heaven – God's Son.... This Prince would love God's people. They wouldn't need to be beautiful for him to love them. He would love them with all his heart. And they would be beautiful because he loved them. Like Leah."⁹

That's the beautiful gospel that leads to our last point: **grace to all people**

Once we have these 4 corners in place the rest of the pieces fit together and we see Jesus in the middle of the picture and how everything is connected to Him. The vindication Rachel was seeking in v. 6 with Dan's name is only to be found in the name of Jesus and His justification. The happiness Leah was looking for in v. 13 is found in Jesus, not Asher's name. Her desire for her husband to dwell with her in v. 20 (like Zebulun's name) had to be met by Jesus who became flesh and dwelt among us (Jn 1:14). The attachment Leah longed for when she named her son Levi (meaning 'join') is only found in being '*joined to Jesus*' (1 Cor 6:17), our Priest and our Mediator. There is grace for all people who praise the Lord, like Judah's name means.

God had promised Jacob right before he met this family in Haran in 28:14 '*All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring*' (NIV), '*in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed*'(ESV)

If God brought grace to this feuding family, God has grace for any family and any feud! This messed up momma drama mandrake-trading family will become the 12 tribes of Israel that will change the world, and this message can change your world if you lay your idols down and praise the Lord Jesus. God's grace is for all types of families and all people who repent. If you've spoken sinfully, like Rachel or Jacob in v. 1-2, repent to the Lord and also those who've witnessed your sin. Turn complaining to praying to praising. And next time you're tempted say with Leah 'this time I will praise the Lord'

A book *Living in the Grip of Relentless Grace* concludes our study: 'Jacob is no hero, and his family dynamics do not provide models to be copied. Yet he provides a classic study of the way in which our God specializes in rescuing losers and in redeeming hopeless cases ... [Jesus] brings life even to those, like Leah and Rachel, who are hopelessly lost in their idolatries.

He does so because he came and lived a flawless life in our place. As we stand before God as his children, he looks upon us with love because we come in Jesus' name. As he looks at us, he no longer sees us marred by the kind of jealousies and insecurities that this chapter of Scripture records, even though we continue to struggle against the cherished idolatries of our hearts. In Christ, however, those sinful thoughts and actions have been covered by his perfect goodness ... Christ's spotless record has been given to us. With Jesus, it is not "Give me sons, or I'll die." Rather, it is "Father, I died to win for you these sons and daughters." Hallelujah, what a Savior!'¹⁰

¹ Allan P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, p. 503.

² Sally Lloyd-Jones, *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, introduction.

³ Beautiful Eulogy, "Instruments of Mercy" album, 2013.

⁴ "The phrase "bear upon my knees" (30:3, KJV) refers to the legal adoption of any children begotten by Jacob and borne by Bilhah (see 50:23).' - Wiersbe, p. 44. The ancient famous Code of Hammurabi also is in keeping with this, according to Fruchtenbaum, p. 449.

⁵ Kent Hughes, *Genesis*, p. 379.

⁶ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Authentic*, p. 44.

⁷ See *Reformation Study Bible* or *New Bible Dictionary*, p. 679.

⁸ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary: The Book of Genesis*, p. 448.

⁹ Sally Lloyd-Jones, PAGE?

¹⁰ Iain Duguid, *Living in the Grip of Relentless Grace*, p. 90.