

Stark Road Gospel Hall

Bimonthly Bible Readings

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JACOB – OVERCOMING CHARACTER FLAWS

or

THE MOLDING OF A MAN

1) **Significance of Jacob's character – Its relevance**

- a. Jacob's life is a clear illustration of the following NT principles:
 - (Ga 6:7) "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."
 - (Heb 12:6) "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."
 - (Php 1:6) "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:"
- b. God will work to perfect us, regardless of our starting point or personal weaknesses.
- c. Witness the Corinthians: (1Cor 6:9,11) "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?... And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."
- d. Jacob's problem was universal to all of us – namely, a will that had to be brought into submission to the will of God.

2) **Uncontrollable circumstances – Jacob's birth and the associated prophecy**

- a. Even before Jacob was born he was a struggler and a grasper. These are personality traits that are certainly less than ideal, yet Jacob can hardly be blamed for who he was...
- b. We live in a cursed world and it has its effects on all of us.
- c. Personality traits that are unchecked, or worse, nurtured, lead to character flaws that God must deal with in order to bring us into conformity with Christ. (Ro 8:29) "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren".

3) **Ill-advised parenting – Favoritism, non-unity in priorities, and deception**

- a. Jacob was raised in what was very much a divided home. (Ge 25:28) "And Isaac loved Esau, (*the rugged man's man*) ...but Rebekah loved Jacob (*the domesticated home-body*)."
- b. As parents:
 - Do we seek to maximize the potential in all of our children?
 - Do we compare one child to another or pit them against each other?
 - Do we have favorites?
- c. God has made us all unique (Ps 139:14) "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made."
- d. Let us enjoy the diversity God has given us in our children, just as he has created diversity in the assembly (1Cor 12)

4) **Self-promoting independence – Jacob's taking of the birth-right and blessing**

- a. God had clearly indicated to Rebekah when the twins were born, that Jacob would have prominence. (Surely she had shared this revelation with Isaac and Jacob?)
- b. Jacob's primary character flaw begins to display itself in his grasping for first place. It was his method (manipulation and deception) more than his motive (wanting God's blessing) that was wrong. (Zec 4:6) "Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This *is* the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts."
- c. Personal advantage and self reliance seems to have been the driving force behind Jacob's recorded behavior. There seemed to be no thought of trusting God to fulfill His purposes or waiting on God's time.
- d. There is a spirit of independence and selfishness in all of us. (Isa 53:6) "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way". Thus the admonition: (Php 2:4) "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."
- e. (Php 2:5-8) "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery (*a thing to be grasped*) to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

The story of Jacob is one of God working in his life to develop the mind of Christ in him. - Dependence on God, humility, and obedience.

5) A recognition of God - Jacob's first recorded dealings with God are at Bethel

- a. God reveals Himself to Jacob first at Bethel. This revelation was the beginning of God's school for Jacob. Jacob concludes that this is a God who is worth serving. (A good start)
 - God is real.
 - God is interested and aware of what's going on down on this earth.
 - God is in control.
 - God is interested in me!(Heb 11:6) "...He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."
- b. Today God reveals Himself to us primarily through His Word.
 - Its one thing to know some theories about God, quite another to have individual dealings with God.
 - As we read God's Word and pass through experiences in life, do we experience God? (Php 3:10) "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death."
 - Do we lay hold of His promises? (2Co 7:1) "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2Pe 1:4) "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world.."
 - Are we committed to serve him? (Heb 9:14) "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb 12:28) "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."

6) The chastening (training) of God – reaping sown seed in the house of Laban

- a. There are many ironies in Jacob's life:
 - The blessed son is exiled (Rebekah never sees Jacob again, the few days to "let Esau cool down" turned into 20 years).
 - The deceiver is deceived (Laban gave Jacob the wrong daughter while he was unable to see!).
 - The cheater is cheated (by Laban the master of cheating who changes Jacob's wages ten times).
 - The unloved wife is fruitful and the loved wife is unfruitful.
 - The house boy spent twenty years in the open field.
 - The one who would have his "brothers bow down to him" bowed down seven times to Esau.
 - The man who claimed his name was Esau was asked by God "What is your name?" (at the end of the wrestling)
 - The one who had his wages changed ten times walked away with all the wealth.
- b. All these are intended to bring Jacob to a point where he will be given a new name (character), and new walk (behavior).
- c. Jacob is not unique in this time of molding and training.
 - Moses' years in the back side of the desert.
 - David's years with the sheep and in the cave.
 - The apostles Paul's three years in Arabia before returning to Jerusalem.
- d. Are we sensitive to God's work in our daily life?

7) Submission to God's plan and leading – Jacob returns to Canaan, ultimately back to Bethel

- a. Jacob returns at the command of God. He had fled Canaan at the bidding of his mother;
- b. Jacob finally comes to a point where he casts himself on God in total dependence. See Jacob's prayer (Gen 32:10-12)
- c. Jacob wrestles with God. This is a strange encounter that ends in Jacob "clinging" to God at the end of the all night struggle. Perhaps this is symbolic of the subduing of Jacob's will to the will of God. It is significant that at the end Jacob clings to God for a blessing in contrast to trying to force his way into the blessing years before.
- d. Jacob is a changed man. Circumstances had not changed (as far as Jacob knew) between he and Esau, Jacob still feared his brother. He was now trusting God to work out the details.
- e. Jacob now depended on God, and was trusting the promise (the Word) of God.
- f. Jacob becomes a worshiper – He is recorded as having built two altars.

8) God's plan for all of His people

(Jude 1:24-25) "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, *be* glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

(Ro 8:29) "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren".