**God Initiates Grace – Man Responds by Faith**

**Genesis 28:10-22** Then Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran. 11 And he came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place. 12 And he had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. 13 And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. 14 "Your descendants shall also be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. 15 "And behold, I am with you, and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." 16 Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." 17 And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." 18 So Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on its top. 19 And he called the name of that place Bethel; however, previously the name of the city had been Luz. 20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear, 21 and I return to my father's house in safety, then the LORD will be my God. 22 "And this stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house; and of all that Thou dost give me I will surely give a tenth to Thee."

**Principles/Passage**

1. *God deals with each of us individually – even at 77 yrs. old, while Jacob lived under Isaac’s roof, God dealt with him through his father & mother who continued to make decisions for him.*

* As Jacob steps out on his own, God makes Himself & His promises known to him

1. *God presence in our lives is intended to awaken us to spiritual realities behind the earthly activities*

* God showed him a ladder with angels performing their duties in the spiritual realm
* At the top of the ladder, in heaven God is directing the angels as they perform their spiritual duties.

***John 1:51*** *And He (Jesus) said to him (Nathanael) "Truly, truly, I say to you, you shall see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."*  **Mt 4:11** – angels ministered to Jesus

1. *God makes Himself & His character known to us –* ***Yahweh Elohim*** *the Lord God from Gen 2*

* ***Yahweh*** – **Ex 3:14** ***hayah*** – to be - God’s eternal essence; Elohim – plurality of the Trinity
* Knowing the unchanging perfections of God’s essence is the center piece of the Christian faith.

1. *God’s word to Jacob was the same that He had given to Abraham & Isaac – Gen 12:2-7; 26:24-25*

* The plan of God for mankind centers around the person & work of Messiah – Messianic prophecies
* What God reveals to us individually & personally aligns with His word – never contradicts His word
* God has already declared His plan & will in His word – how do the enduring principles apply to me?

1. *God gives Jacob personal assurances: I am with you, protect & provide for you, bring you back home*

* Behind the events of our earthly life, God is at work protecting & providing for us – leading us home.
* As Jacob was required to leave his home to find his wife(s), so we are left here to complete our work

1. *Jacob’s superstition – God is in this place, His home (bethel), so he built a memorial out of stone*

* Bethel (Luz) was not the site where God’s house was built (Jerusalem), instead it became a place of great evil & idolatry when the superstition of the Northern kingdom turned it into a house for “gods”
* Man’s childish, magical thinking is always looking for a simplistic solution to life’s difficulties – special words (Lord’s prayer), , favorite teacher – rather than being led by the Spirit.

1. *God initiated grace to Jacob & he responded by faith, making a commitment to worship & serve Him*.

* What God offered Jacob had already been given to Abraham & Isaac, his blessings had already been allotted & set in motion to appear in his life the moment he needed them

***Isa 65:24 it will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; while they are still speaking, I will hear***

**28:10-15 – Jacob’s Dream – God Confirms His Covenant**

1. He laid his head on a rock and God gave him a dream of a stairway with angels going up and down.

***John 1:51*** *And He said to him (Nathanael) "Truly, truly, I say to you, you shall see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."*

1. Notice that God initiates the dream/vision, producing the images, identifies Himself the God (***Yahweh Elohim*** – Jesus Christ) of your father Abraham & the God of Isaac.

* God is the Creator, the first cause of all things & He reveals Himself as the God of all power/supply who offers grace through the Messianic promises to Abraham.

***Gal 3:16-18*** *now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ. 17 What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. 18 For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.*

1. God re-affirms the covenant to Abraham/Isaac – all the people of the earth will be blessed through you.

***Gen 12:2-3*** *and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; 3 And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

1. I am with you & will watch over you wherever you go, I will bring you back to this land, I will not leave you until I have done what I promised – 26:3 same promises to Isaac

* These wonderful promises & assurances are the same ones given to us by the Lord Jesus Christ.

***Mat 28:19-20*** *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,* ***20*** *teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

***Heb 13:5*** *Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,"*

**28:16-18 – Jacob Worships at Bethel (house of God) – Monument to God**

1. Jacob woke – surely the Lord is in this place – He must live here Beth (house) El (of God)
2. He sets up a pillar as a memorial and pours oil as a form of worship & respect for God.
3. This is a foreshadowing of the temple idea, in spite of the fact that after the Northern & Southern kingdoms split, Bethel became a place of idol worship – later restored to Benjamites.
4. Legitimate worship is a response to God’s grace & includes symbols & rituals of respect.

**28:19-22 – Jacob’s Vow – Yahweh will be my God (Elohim)**

“If God will be with me, and watch over me, will provide for me, return me safely home, then Yahweh will be my God & this stone I have set up will be His house.”

1. Jacob makes a conditional vow based on his response to trusting God’s promises to him.
2. God initiated by offering His grace protection & provision - Jacob believed Him and responded by making Yahweh His God that He would honor & obey.
3. Jacob responds to God’s promise of protection and provision with a commitment to make God the ruler of his life, showing that he is determined to accomplish God’s plan for his life.

* As people who are designed to be empty & needy, we are only able to commit ourselves to serve the Lord’s interest after we have allowed Him to meet our needs through spiritual growth.
* When an empty, needy person vows to serve someone else’s needs, it is in word & appearance only, lacking true substance because the resources needed to give to others is not present.

**Jn 7:37-39** – faith in Christ + Holy Spirit filling us within fills us with living water that can then overflow

**Exo 2:11-15** - Moses tries to rescue his people before he has been appointed by God – killed the Egyptian, tried to rally the Jewish people through his own human effort

* Preachers who teach “what to do” but not “how to access divine power to do it” push believers into attempting to be like Christ using human power – best we do is create the appearance with personality

1. Jacob’s faith that God would meet his needs inspired him to give His commitment to God.

**God Initiates Grace – Man Responds by Faith**

1. **God is the Creator, the first cause of everything & every relationship with Him & with one another.**

***Eph 1:3-6*** *worthy is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him* ***before the foundation of the world****, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.*

* God initiated our existence, created our blessings & chose us in Christ before He created the physical.
* God initiated contact with Jacob through his parents, through the teachings of the Abrahamic Covenant & then personally through the dream.

1. *God is the ultimate initiator of everything in the universe and even though He allows man to choose & allows choices to produce consequences, He remains in control of the circumstances in your life.*

**Jam 1:2-4** God allows our adversities - perfectly designed for our purification & growth plus God’s glory

1. *God has already created our blessings and seen the road ahead of us and has already provided all of the provision & protection that we need for our life journey.*
2. *We often believe that what God is doing or allowing in our lives is in response to our choices & actions, but God is way ahead of us with every form of blessing – prosperity, adversity & divine discipline*
3. **The Divine Decree(s) –**
4. **Def:** God’s eternal, holy, wise, sovereign plan & purpose, including simultaneously all things that ever were or will be, in their causes, courses, conditions, successions, relations & determining their certain fruition & occurrence. The sovereign declaration of God in eternity past of all that would happen in angelic & human history.

***Psalm 148:5-6*** *let them praise the name of the LORD, For He commanded and they were created.* ***6*** *He has also established them forever and ever; He has made a decree which will not pass away.*

1. In eternity past God saw your life from start to finish, in all of its details, with your challenges, successes & failures, your needs and what would perfectly provide for your needs to accomplish His will.

***Eph 1:3-4*** *worthy of praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed (APtc.) us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose (AAI) us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him In love.*

1. Divine decree is the all-inclusive will and purpose of God, designed by God for His own glory, satisfaction and pleasure, His sovereign will that determines that certain things will come to pass while others won’t.
2. The divine decree(s) combine God’s sovereign control & creature free will as determined in eternity past by His omniscience, allowing creatures to choose while controlling the results & consequences to bring about His desired result.
3. God created our blessings before He created the world and chose us in Christ – everything we need.

**Proverbs 16:4** The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil.

**Romans 11:36** For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen.

**Col 1:16-18** For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created by Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. 18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.

**Revelation 4:11** "Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created."

**Psalm 148:5-6** let them praise the name of the LORD, For He commanded and they were created. **6** He has also established them forever and ever; He has made a decree which will not pass away.

**Augustine/Calvin** – God determines (elects) who He will allow to believe in Christ; man unable to understand

* God chose Jacob & rejected Esau – arbitrary use of power to cause evil &

**Pelagius/Arminius** – Man is free to choose to believe in Christ but must choose to obey or lose salvation

* Man centered system – **Provisionism**: man is free to believe but not free to reject eternal security

1. **God’s plan for your life right now is extending grace to you for salvation, logistics, growth, impact & dying giving us the opportunity to access what is already there by believing His promises & principles.**

*Rom 11:34-36 for who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? 35 Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? 36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.*

1. No one has ever initiated to God, has ever reached out to God first, been His counselor, given Him advice
2. No one has ever given to God, done Christian works for Him that caused Him to be indebted to them.
3. God is not waiting on our choices or our prayers to provide what we need – it’s already there now
4. The point of prayer is not to change your circumstances to suit your human agenda, but to agree with God’s word about your situation & ask for wisdom to understand the divine solution already provided.

* **The answer & solution you are seeking has already been provided & is waiting for you to see it.**

1. **God’s eternal plan is not to prosper your earthly agenda but to use your life to teach & demonstrate His truth, revealing His genius to angels & proving that He is righteous in all He does.**
2. Which one of the disciples/apostles ended up wealthy & comfortable, gently easing into the next life?

**Eph 2:7** (1-6 He saved us & placed us in union with Christ) in order that in the ages to come He might show (demonstrate, illustrate) the surpassing riches of His grace by His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

1. Show – ***endeiknumi*** – teach using visual aids, illustrations – we are eternal visual aids of grace - kindness

**Eph 3:8-10** Paul’s teaching about dispensations & the Church Age reveals God’s wisdom to fallen angels

1. God is refuting the devil’s claim that God insisting that all creatures obey Him is not right - unrighteous

**Rom 3:25-26** Christ whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; **26** for the demonstration, *I say*, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be righteous and the One who makes righteous the one who has faith in Jesus.

**Gen 28-30 Jacob Gets Married**

**There are 3 different belief systems (reality), agendas (priorities) & approaches (strategies - meet needs)**

1. God’s version of reality (truth), His agenda (Love-Righteousness) & His relational strategies (grace)

* God’s purpose for what He allows in/through our relationships

1. Devil’s version of reality (lies), agenda (destroy, embitter) & his relational strategies (manipulation)
2. Unbeliever’s reality (human need), agendas (meet needs) & approaches (attach to objects by faith)
3. Believer’s life after salvation is to replace his/her human beliefs/agenda with God’s truth & priorities.

**What is possible in the Church Age is for the believer to view his/her situations based on God’s purpose for it & embrace even difficult relationships for the divine good that God is producing through it.**

1. **Gen 28 – 30 describes Jacob’s crazy marriages & the birth of his children who will become the 12 tribes.**
2. God’s agenda is for Jacob to marry a believer in the Messianic promise to Abraham, have children who will become the nation Israel – God works His plan in spite of the bad choices we make

* 28:1-4, 13-14 don’t marry an idolatrous woman; marry a believer; monogamy; your descendants

1. The devil’s agenda is for Jacob to marry & have children by multiple women, creating a polygamous family situation that fosters anger, jealousy, hatred & murder.
2. Jacob’s human agenda is to marry a woman he loves & raise a family of children – Rachel was seen as more attractive than Leah & Jacob loved/wanted Rachel but not Leah.
3. In spite of Jacob’s personal desires or Laban & Leah’s deceptions, Leah was the best partner for him

* She gave Jacob 6 sons (Levi & Judah) that became primary in Israel **fulfilling God’s purpose**

**In Love**: “*Love Drugged*” We decide to attach our hunger/thirst to a person believing that their high regard for us will fill our empty hearts (only partially legit) & prove to ourselves that we are worthy of love.

**Brain**: releases dopamine (similar to euphoria from drugs), oxytocin (love hormone – bonding), adrenalin makes heart race & intensifies emotion – “Falling in love” drugs your brain, making you act out mating rituals.

* The experience of being “love drugged” **blinds us** to the realities & difficulties of marriage so that we are inevitably surprised and often disappointed by our partner’s selfishness & sinful relational patterns
* Character flaws & self-centered behavior patterns are overlooked or excused while love drugged but become unavoidably obvious over time – Jacob would have done anything for Rachel, even marry Leah
* Many people claim to have been deceived because they didn’t really know their mate until years into marriage & perhaps at times some people do hide problems that appear in the marriage.
* The great challenge is to accept that God allowed you, a flawed person to marry this other flawed person, to focus on God’s good in it & avoid bitterness from what often feels like unfairness.

1. **Jacob came from a family of deceivers, people who lied & manipulated to get what they wanted.**

**Abraham** – lied about Sarah being his sister; **Isaac** - played the same deception game with Rebekah

**Rebekah** - deceived Isaac to give the firstborn blessing to Jacob – Jacob helped; **Laban** - deceives Jacob many ways; **Leah** – deceives Jacob, making him think she was Rachel

1. In marriage, simply discovering each other’s deep flaws & inconsistencies can seem like we were deceived by the other person hiding their flaws.
2. If a marriage begins with actual deception like Jacob being deceived by Laban & Leah (at least) & who else could have known how that was being set up, the temptation to suspicion & bitterness is strong

**Gen 29:26** – it is not our custom to marry the younger before the older – you couldn’t have told me that?

* Everyone knew that Jacob was working for Rachel but that their custom wouldn’t allow him Rachel
* What was Leah thinking on the wedding night while she was pretending to be Rachel?

1. Leah & Rachel were very competitive with each other for his affections & about having children

**29:30** – loved Rachel more than Leah; **30:1**- Rachel is jealous of Leah – children; **30:3, 9** – gave him servant girls; **30**:**15 –** Rachel took away my husband (Leah’s narrative); women review conversations.

* Narrative: story you tell yourself/others to avoid facing the truth & therefore seek real solutions
* Leah pretends she was Jacob’s choice & Rachel is the deceiver who stole his affections
* Old Man: system of pretense images presented as reality to win love & approval – image is everything

1. **One of the believer’s objectives is to peacefully accept the difficulties of human life (surrender human agenda) so that we can embrace with joy God’s purpose & agenda for your life.**

**Eph 5:20** giving thanks for all things at all times; **Jam 1:2-4** consider your adversities to be pure joy; **Phil 2:14** do all things w/out complaining;

1. Human agenda: we want our circumstances to work out according to our earthly desires & plans
2. Divine agenda: God uses our conflicts & difficulties to accomplish His purposes & plan
3. Jacob’s marriage(s) didn’t work out anything like he envisioned & planned with Rachel
4. Was he able to realize that God was using his difficult marriage & family situation for His purpose?

* Someone taught Joseph the truth about how God makes good from what is meant for evil.

1. **Christian Marriage in the Church Age.**
2. **Purpose:**

**Eph 5:25-32** create an image of Christ & the Church through submitting to the Lord in the assigned roles

**1Pt 3:1; Eph 5:25-28** create a mutually spiritually edifying relationship to help one another grow in the Lord.

**Heb 13:4** create a stable environment for the expression of love & giving boundaries for sexuality

**Eph 6:1-4** create a stable 2 parent environment for children to see Christ/church & be trained in the Lord.

1. **Challenges:**

**Col 3:18-19** recognizing God’s higher purposes for your marriage regardless of your personal experience

**Col 3:12-14** forbearing & forgiving one another for flaws, character defects & sinful expressions daily

**Gal 5:22-24** serving to edify your mate through UL, fruit of the Spirit & personal examples of faith

* Clash of competing human agendas, the denial of both human agendas tempts us to choose MAS in reaction to being denied what we want & what we believe we need to be fulfilled.
* Anger, bitterness, jealousy, fear, hatred, dissatisfied, disappointed

1. **Methods**

**Gal 5:16-17** attach desire to the Spirit’s image of what your life should be, not your human agenda (flesh)

**Rom 12:2** reject worldly thinking & renew your thinking with the divine will of God.

**Eph 4:22-24** reject & remove the logic of your human agenda – replace it with the thinking of Christ

1. **We can’t control other people’s choices nor our outside circumstances, so the focus of God’s attention and will in on our own choices about what we believe, think, feel, say & do.**
2. Jacob couldn’t control Laban & Leah’s deceptions but he didn’t have to marry Rachel – polygamy
3. Jacob couldn’t control the women’s jealousy & competing agendas that divided his family but he could have rejected the temptation to play favorites among his children.
4. You can’t control the pretenses & defenses fighting within your mate or family, but you can forgive them/self, remain faithful to the institutions while working on your own beliefs & behaviors.
5. Consider how the Lord might be using your situation to teach angels about faithfulness & obedience even when your situation is difficult

**1 Cor 10:13** No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.