

Genesis Ch29v1-30 - Pride Comes Before A Fall

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[0 : 00] So our reading this morning is Genesis chapter 29, and we're going to be reading verses 1 to 30 as we continue our studies looking at the life of Jacob and all that we can learn from him and his God. So Louise and Kirsty are going to read this morning. Thank you.

Then Jacob continued on his journey and came to the land of the eastern peoples. Then he saw a well in the open country with three flocks of sheep lying near it, because the flocks were watered from that well. The stone over the mouth of the well was large. When all the flocks were gathered there, the shepherds would roll the stone away from the well's mouth and water the sheep. Then they would return the stone to its place over the mouth of the well. Jacob asked his shepherds, My brothers, where are you from? We're from Haran, they replied. He said to them, Do you know Laban, Nahar's grandson? Yes, we know him, they answered.

Then Jacob asked them, Is he well? Yes, he is, they said. And here comes his daughter Rachel with the sheep. Look, he said, the sun is still high, and it is not time for the flocks to be gathered. Water the sheep and then take them back to pasture. We can't, they replied, until all the flocks have been gathered and the stone has been rolled away from the mouth of the well. Then we will water the sheep. While he was still talking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherd. When Jacob saw Rachel's daughter of his uncle Laban and Laban's sheep, he went over and rolled the stone away from the mouth of the well and watered his uncle's sheep. Then Jacob kissed Rachel and began to weep aloud. He had told Rachel that he was a relative of her father and a son of Rebekah. So she ran and told her father. As soon as Laban heard the news about Jacob, his sister's son, he hurried to meet him. He embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his home. And there Jacob told him all these things. Then Laban said to him, you are my own flesh and blood.

After Jacob had stayed with him for a whole month, Laban said to him, just because you are a relative of mine, should you work for me for nothing? Tell me what your wages should be. Now Laban had two daughters. The name of the elder was one Leah and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel had a lovely figure and was beautiful.

Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, I'll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter, Rachel. Laban said, it's better that I give her to you than to some other man.

[3 : 24] Stay here with me. So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her. Then Jacob said to Laban, give me my wife. My time is completed and I want to make love to her. So Laban brought together all the people of the place and gave a feast. But when evening came, he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob. And Jacob made love to her. And Laban gave his servant Zilpah to his daughter as her attendant. When morning came, there was Leah. So Jacob said to Laban, what is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn't I? Why have you deceived me? Laban replied, it is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the elder one. Finish this daughter's bridal week. Then we will give you the younger one also in return for another seven years of work. And Jacob did so. He finished the week with Leah and then Laban gave him his daughter

Rachel to be his wife. Laban gave his servant Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her attendant.

Jacob made love to Rachel also and his love for Rachel was greater than his love for Leah.

And he worked for Laban another seven years. Thanks very much, Louise and Kirsty. Let's keep our Bibles open. As we look at this account together, we're going to pray and ask for God's help. So let's do that now.

Father, again, we thank you for your word. Thank you for its truthfulness. Thank you for its honesty. And we pray that your word would search our hearts so that we would respond as we should in a way that is filled with humility and honours you. Father, would you change us this morning to be a

people who are dependent on you for all things? Amen.

Well, Jacob is on the run, isn't he? Having deceived his father and cheated his brother, he's running for his life. And when we think Jacob is down and out, God in his kindness intervenes. If you go back to chapter 28, God meets Jacob in a vision, in a dream, and he shows him grace and promises Jacob his presence.

[6 : 29] And so with this great vision, Jacob is on a spiritual high. Look at chapter 28, verse 16. When Jacob woke from his sleep, he thought, surely the Lord is in this place, and I wasn't aware of it.

He was afraid and said, how awesome is this place. This is none other than the house of God. This is the gate of heaven. And he called it Bethel, which means house of God. So this great experience that he's had with God has given Jacob a renewed encouragement and hope. And so chapter 29, verse 1, Jacob continued on, Jacob continued on his journey and came to the land of the eastern peoples. We can see him there brightly, jumping along as he walks his journey, perhaps singing a song. His mercy is more.

My sins, they are many. His mercy is more. Well, it seems like we have a new Jacob. God's grace offers him a new beginning and a fresh start. He's a new man.

Well, not so fast. Jacob may have made great progress in his journey, but it seems that change is a slow process. Like Jacob will see that we need to learn that as we journey through life, we are always in need of God's grace. We never move on from grace. You see, pride is never far from us, and pride trips us up.

We have this natural disposition to go it alone in life, which will only lead to disaster. Sadly, that's what we're going to see this morning. Three things that cause us to fall and show us our desperate need of grace.

[8 : 36] First, tempted by desire. The story begins, doesn't it, with Jacob at a well. And it seems we're to note a particular detail about this well. We see it at the end of verse 2. The stone over the mouth of the well was large. It was a very heavy stone.

So heavy, in fact, verse 3, that when all the flocks were gathered there, the shepherds would roll the stone away from the well's mouth and water the sheep.

So it took a communal effort. This wasn't a one-man job. All the shepherds would push the stone away. Then they would return the stone to its place over the mouth of the well.

What's with this heavy stone? Well, Jacob gets chatting with some of the shepherds who've gathered there, and to his delight, they seem to know his uncle Laban, his mother's brother.

But it seems he's more interested in why all the shepherds are hanging around the well. Why is nobody moving this great big stone? Verse 8.

[9 : 54] We can't, they replied. Until all the flocks are gathered and the stone has been rolled away from the mouth of the well, then we will water the sheep.

Who could they possibly be waiting for? Ah, verse 9. While he was still talking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherd.

They're waiting for Rachel. And as we discover in verse 17, Rachel has a lovely figure and was beautiful. It seems the testosterone levels were hitting 90 at the well.

It's what I observe when I go to the gym. It might look like it, but I do go, yes. And all the lads are there posing in front of the mirror, flexing their pecs.

And they're hovering, waiting for some young damsel who needs help manoeuvring some weights. Well, it seems something similar is happening down at the well.

[11 : 02] They all know that Rachel is going to be arriving soon, but there's no way she's going to move that stone. Opportunity arises, perhaps to earn a date night.

Jacob has been observing, verse 10, when Jacob saw Rachel, daughter of his uncle Laban, and Laban's sheep.

He went over and rolled the stone from the mouth of the well and watered his uncle's sheep. This was meant to be done by many, but here he is, he man himself, a demonstration of great strength. What's going on? Well, back at Bethel, where Jacob had had his vision and dream and his encounter with God, remember God had promised him that he would be a great nation and that he would have a great land.

So when Jacob puts his eyes on Rachel and when he sees the sheep, he sees nation and land.

[12:14] Someone who's going to give him children and someone who has property. Now's his chance. He seizes the opportunity. He steps up and with all his strength, he moves that stone.

I'm going to have my nation and I'm going to have my land. Jacob sees and he wants. He's tempted by desire.

You see, we all have desires, don't we? We're all shaped and motivated by what we want. Desires drive our choices and decisions.

It might not be a nation and a land, but it might be a desire for a partner and a career. Or it might be that we so want a home of our own or a better pension.

We set our eyes on what we want and we will do whatever is required to get what we want. You see, Jacob has a history of seeing and wanting.

[13:23] He saw his brother's blessing and he took it. He sees Rachel and sheep and he's after it. But God's blessings are not to be taken.

They are to be received. God's promises are not to be forced, but to be trusted. They are always given by grace and received by faith.

You would hope that Jacob has learned, but it seems that change is slow. And we need to be careful. Desires that go unchecked are dangerous.

Paul's words to a young Timothy are helpful here. You can read it on the screen. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

So let's ask ourselves the question, what is it that you want? What have you set your eyes on that is controlling you and consuming you?

[14:44] Look at that verse again. Those who want, you fill in the blank for yourself. Those who want fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

Be careful. Jacob saw and wanted, and as we will see, it plunged him into a very destructive life. So as we journey through life, be careful about being tempted by desire.

We are always in need of grace. So, tempted by desire. Second, blinded by love.

The story deepens as Jacob meets Laban. In fact, it becomes very clear to us that Jacob doesn't tell the whole story and Laban doesn't disclose all the story either.

After all the greetings in verse 13, Laban embraced Jacob and kissed him and brought him to his home and there Jacob told him all these things.

[16:03] Now, we're not given any detail. It's just kind of like all these things. You get the impression that Jacob isn't telling the whole story here. He's just telling them the bits he wants them to hear.

I mean, would Laban really have been so happy if he knew the mess Jacob had left behind? Would he want that kind of character hanging around his daughters? Well, it seems Jacob's careful deception has been working.

Look at verse 14. Then Laban said to him, You are my own flesh and blood. You're in the family now.

You're one of us. It seems being economic with the truth can be rather prosperous. It's a bit like altering your grades on your CV or misleading with details of experience.

Rather than be truthful and trust God, we find it more advantageous to deceive so we get what we want. Let's make no mistake.

[17:12] Jacob is ruthless. He sees what he wants and he's going to get it. Look at verse 15.

Laban said to him, Just because you are a relative of mine, should you work for me for nothing, tell me what your wages should be.

Well, Laban had two daughters. The name of the elder one was Leah. The name of the younger was Rachel. Leah had weak eyes or soft and tender eyes.

They were soft, compassionate eyes. But that's as far as it went. Rachel had a lovely figure and was beautiful.

Jacob was in love with Rachel and he said, I'll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter, Rachel. Now it all seems kind of quite normal, doesn't it?

Jacob is in love with this girl, Rachel, and well, he's going to do whatever it takes. He'll work seven hard years. But isn't this just Jacob pursuing his own agenda?

[18 : 21] Doesn't it strike you that God doesn't enter into the equation? We don't find Jacob here reading his Bible and praying about it.

He doesn't take time out to ask some wiser grey beard, what should I do? He's blinded by love. Verse 20.

So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her. Now you may think that there's something familiar about this story of Jacob because it's very similar to a parallel story of his own father Isaac.

If you go back to chapter 24 with me, we'll see there that Jacob, Jacob's father Isaac, has no wife and his father Abraham sends his servant off to his people to find a suitable partner.

But what I want us to see here is just look at the God involvement in this. We're going to pick it up in verse 12, chapter 24, verse 12.

[19 : 39] So the servant is going out to look for a wife for Isaac and just look at the God involvement. Then he prayed, Lord God of my master Abraham, make me successful today and show kindness to my master Abraham.

See, I am standing beside this spring and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. May it be that when I say to a young woman, please let down your jar that I may have a drink.

And she says, drink and I'll water your camels too. Let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this, I will know that you have shown kindness to my master.

And sure enough, he meets Rebecca. She does everything the servant had prayed about. And when the servant then recounts the whole story back to Rebecca's brother, the same Laban as we're looking at, and to her father, look at verse 50.

Verse 50, Laban and Bethuel answered, this is from the Lord. We can say nothing to you one way or the other. Here is Rebecca.

[20 : 53] Take her and go and let her become the wife of your master son as the Lord directed. You see, in this whole account, there's a humble dependence on God.

They're praying. They're talking. They're committing it all to God. You get the clear impression that they don't trust their own hearts. They're trusting God.

Now let's go back to chapter 29. Do you see the difference? Jacob can't even muster a God, please help me here as I make a decision.

He just dives straight in, blinded by love. Jacob is doing life his way, trying to secure the blessings of God by his own initiative.

Now we too can be blinded by love. Young people, wakey, wakey, listen up.

[22 : 02] Of course, it might be love for you, love for a young man or a young woman. We see and we want.

We don't bother to inquire of what's their Christian faith? What's their commitment to the local church like? Do they give to mission?

Are they devoted to learn from God's word? We just like what we see. I mean, I always knows best. It seems that beautiful figures are more important than godly character. And successful careers are more important than a servant heart.

but for maybe others of us, it's other loves that have blinded us. Love for a job or love for your hobby.

[23 : 04] Love for a comfortable and easy life. Love for money. Love for popularity. Love for what's what's your love? love for God.

You see, our pursuit of these things can just blind us to our true love for God. We just plough on ahead.

My life, my choice. It seems that Proverbs 3 goes out the window. Look at it on the screen.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways submit to him and he will make your path straight.

You see, we do very well not to trust our own hearts. Our hearts are deceitful. It's wise when we submit all things to God.

[24 : 05] And if we are Christians, God has given to us the church he's given to us his word, his Holy Spirit, we would do well not to follow Jacob's path.

Inquire of the Lord. Talk to an old grey beard or grey haired. They have experience. Be accountable to those around you.

Stop making independent decisions. It just might save you a very destructive life. So as we journey through life, be careful that we are not blinded by love.

We are always in need of grace. So, third, tempted by desire, blinded by love, deceived by pride. After seven years of hard work, Jacob and Rachel were ready to get married. Verse 21, Jacob said to Laban, give me my wife, my time is completed and I want to make love to her.

[25 : 15] It's time to consummate the marriage. Let's make it legal and official. But old Laban has grown cunning over the years, hasn't he?

He's got two daughters and he doesn't have any concerns about marrying off Rachel. I mean, she was gorgeous. That's not going to be a problem. Leah, on the other hand, well, she has tender eyes and compassionate eyes, but that's as far as it went.

Who's going to marry Leah? Laban has a plan. Verse 22, Laban brought together all the people of that place and gave a feast.

It's wedding time. Plenty of food, plenty of wine. But when evening came, under the cover of darkness and after the wine had taken its effect, he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob.

Well, he hadn't got a clue. Jacob made love to her. And Laban gave his servant Zilpah to his daughter as her attendant. When morning came, there was Leah.

[26 : 32] What? This can't be. Talk about sobering up. My goodness me, what's happened? Then it dawned, verse 25, So Jacob said to Laban, what is this you have done to me?

I have served you for Rachel, didn't I? Why have you deceived me? Well, Jacob couldn't see the irony in it all, could he?

He's been deceiving all his life. Now he's outraged that someone close to him, even his own father-in-law, would do such a thing.

Could he really be angry and annoyed after all he had done? You see, Jacob's desires and loves have not satisfied him or fulfilled him.

Yes, he got Rachel, but it came at a price. It took another seven years hard labor, and he got another wife he doesn't love, verse 30.

[27 : 36] Jacob made love to Rachel also, and his love for Rachel was greater than his love for Leah. It's stronger than that, it's he had no love for Leah, and he worked for Laban another seven years.

Anyone could see that marrying two sisters was never going to work out. It's not going to be a happy home, and as we'll see in the coming weeks, it's an absolute mess.

Yeah, we could argue, and you might point out that Laban was the one who deceived Jacob, which he did, but at the same time, let's not lose the fact that Jacob is deceived by his own pride.

He's to blame for the whole fiasco. The effects of his selfish choices and stubborn pride have come home with disastrous consequences. We like to point the finger and blame others.

He said, she did, they always, why have you deceived me? But the reality is, Jacob only has to blame himself, as Proverbs reminds us.

[28 : 51] There it is on the screen. Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. You see, it could have been so very different.

Remember back to Jacob's encounter with God? Look what God promised. Chapter 28, verse 15. Remember what God had promised Jacob back then?

I am with you. I'll watch over you wherever you go. I'll bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.

All of this I'm for you, Jacob. All Jacob needed to do was to ask and to trust. The sad thing is, Jacob never talked to God.

He never asked God. He never inquires of God. In fact, in the whole text that we read, there's no mention of God. God is absent. It's as if Jacob has left God back in Bethel and headed off on his own.

[30 : 01] I can do life my way. Jacob had been promised God's presence, but he ignores it. Well, how quickly we forget the privilege we have as brothers and sisters of the Lord Jesus Christ.

How we've been given access to our generous, kind Father in heaven, the God who made us, who has promised us every spiritual blessing in Christ, wisdom, grace, mercy, strength, it's all yours, but we don't ask.

Instead, we follow our desires, we pursue our loves, we take pride in our self dependence. Like Jacob, we need God's continued grace.

And thankfully, God doesn't give up on us. We have a saviour, Jesus, who followed not his own desires, but followed the desire of his Father in heaven, who didn't chase his own loves, but pursues us in love.

Who comes to deal with our pride by dying our death, taking our punishment so that we can depend upon him. In Christ, our desires are fulfilled.

[31 : 38] In Christ, our loves are satisfied. In Christ, we receive grace for the journey. we have a generous and kind father who loves to give good gifts to his children.

All we need to do is to be humble and ask and not full of pride. We're going to pray. As we do, I'm going to read three verses from scripture.

As I read them, just listen to their invitation. And maybe there's one that you want to respond to.

Let's just take a moment to reflect on what we hear as we need God's grace. Listen to the invitation of the Lord.

Matthew 11. Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

[32 : 51] Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Hebrews 4. Let us approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and grace to help us in our time of need.

And James 4. But he gives us more grace. That is why scripture says, God opposes the proud, but shows favor or grace to the humble.

Come near to God, and he will come near to you. Humble yourselves, and he will lift you up. Father, we come to you because we need you.

Our desires, our loves, are so often twisted. We are deceived by our own pride.

[34 : 19] How we need your grace and mercy. How we need your help. Thank you, generous Father, that you now give us what we need for our journey.

You withhold no good thing from those who love you and trust you. So please help us as we now ask. Give us what we need.

That we may follow you all the days of our life, trusting in your grace alone, knowing that will be sufficient. thank you, Jesus.

Thank you that you are enough for us today. Amen. Amen. We're going to sing.

Christ is my reward and all of my devotion. This is our true desire, our true love. This song helps us to express our trust for our need of Christ.

[35 : 28] If you're able to, I invite you to stand as we sing our song together. Amen. Amen.