

God's Sovereignty and Human Sin

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Preacher: Vijay Henderson

[0 : 0 0] um chapter 29 uh which we had read to us is the story of boy meets girl and andrew asked me to preach this passage because the girl here is called rachel and my wife is called rachel so uh jacob married falls in love and marries rachel vj falls in love and marries a rachel too but i hope that's where the similarities stop because underneath boy meets girl is a second story of boy gets taste of his own medicine two stories on top of each other and chapter 29 is really important in genesis because so far in this series the main idea is that god chooses scoundrels despite their sin god chooses the scoundrels uh jacob of course being the biggest so far and for christians we're also chosen by god blessed through jesus but does that mean we're okay to keep acting like scoundrels after all doesn't this series teach that god loves rotten raw materials just like us and in one sense that is correct we are chosen despite our sin it is by grace but if we think that god wants us just as we are we're drawing a very wrong conclusion and so in chapter 29 underneath boy meets girl is the real story of boy gets taste of his own medicine to stop chosen ones like jacob like us from presuming we can carry on as scoundrels just as we are so as i said the handout shows you where we're going there's a lot of uh we're going to go all the way to verse 30 but i won't go through every verse in detail i'm just going to pick up the main highlights of the story it's a really fantastic passage so please pay attention point number one you'll remember in this story that jacob is on the run after cheating his brother esau he's also searching for a wife from his mother's family which is like searching for a needle in a 700 mile haystack but in our passage jacob has success after success after success so in verse four he ends up in the right place of haran in verse five the local shepherds know his mother's family he says to them do you know laban that's his uncle nahor's grandson yes we know him brilliant in the right spot in verse six is a girl from the right family in verse nine she is laban's daughter that is rebecca's niece verse 10 she is ravishing rachel the hottie from haran the shepherdess stunner in verse seven and eight the shepherds they're wasting good pasture time because there isn't enough of them to roll the stone of the well away verse eight it's a massive stone and so in verse nine with rachel looking on jacob does what any bloke trying to impress a girl does he flexes his muscles and in verse 10 he rolls the stone away verse 11 he turns on the charm and he kisses the girl and then he weeps out aloud now i'm not sure that is a really good first date strategy i don't know ladies how would you feel if after the fella kisses you he starts weeping out aloud but anyway it must have worked it must have worked because in verse 12 jacob explains to rachel how pleased her father will be to meet him how cocky is that so she goes to fetch him verse 13 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 the engagement is on it is married at first sight last week god said he would watch over jacob wherever he goes even if it's 700

miles away in haran this week success after success it is god keeping his promises but in fact chapter 29 is so similar to how jacob's parents met in chapter 24 we can say that god always keeps his promises so i put a table on your handout comparing chapter 24 about how jacob's parents met to chapter 29 and in both stories of boy meets girl there is a long journey to abraham's homeland there is a beauty there are flocks there is a well and laban is involved if we compare the love stories it's clear god has done it again but the author puts a contrast in the table as well see chapter 24 is full of prayer full of dependence on god and thanks to him for safety and success which means that isaac wanted god to get the glory but in chapter 29 jacob never mentions or thanks god once god's name is not mentioned at all it's amazing that god keeps his promises to ungrateful scoundrels like jacob but we mustn't get carried away because our sin still matters and god normally keeps their cause and effect in his world so in chapter 24 abraham's emissary takes a golden rings and presents and treasure to laban for rebecca's handed marriage the reason laban

runs out to meet jacob in chapter 29 is because last time the mad cousins from the east came laban was set up for life the cousins from the east are mad but they are rich but jacob wasn't sent out in the same way he can't offer gold and flocks as a dowry for rachel because of his sin remember he's on the run from his family he cheated his brother esau and that means he has nothing because god normally keeps the cause and effect of sin in his world our sin really matters so yes god sovereignly chooses jacob he makes sure that rachel comes to the well at just the right moment he gives this mummy's boy the strength of 10 shepherds as he rolls the stone away and god will continue to bless jacob with many descendants in chapter 30 and onwards but in our passage instead of jacob miraculously stumbling upon a gold mine or some flocks to offer laban he arrives with nothing because his sin still has a consequence still has an effect in this world it still matters and so when it comes to a marriage arrangement he arrives already in debt to laban because god's sovereignty cannot be divorced from the normal cause of sin and effect in his world and christians need to know that if we hurt people on monday we will have damaged relationships on tuesday if we are lazy at work on a wednesday we will lose our jobs on a thursday if we make poor life decisions sinful decisions in the 90s or earlier we will probably still be paying for those decisions today chosen and forgiven yes blessed of course on the way to heaven for sure but even amongst chosen ones god normally keeps cause and effect of sin in his world our sin really matters and that may be a shock to you if you've been paying attention to our series because so far we've said that god chooses to bless scoundrels despite their sin can't we say that god wants sinners like us can't we say that we're free to act like scoundrels at home and at work and with our families but that isn't quite true you see yes god chooses us but god doesn't want us you see god wants jesus he chooses sinners like us so he can change us to be the people he wants us to be people like jesus on wednesday night in our winter doctrine series andrew moody said this he said thinking that god wants us as we are mostly holy is like thinking that we would like our drinking water mostly free of sewage or our coffee mostly free of cyanide god doesn't want us mostly as we are his plan is to change us to make us like christ you see this is a chapter about a man looking for a bride but really it's about god looking for a bride for his son jesus us together the church the chosen people of god yes we're the chosen ones but god needs to change us into a bride suitable for the son ultimately holy and without blemish and the way he's going to change us is by disciplining us which in chapter 29 is giving us a dose of our own medicine so point one god always keeps his promises point two god promises to discipline us to make us more like jesus so uh from our second reading uh we had hebrews chapter 12 which is on the screen please corinne i think it's a slide there there it is there so this is 12 verse 10 from hebrews and this helps us to understand the story of jacob god disciplines us for our good in order that we may share in his holiness hebrews goes on to say that discipline hurts uh most of the time which is quite realistic but it's for our good so scoundrels like us can become more holy more like jesus thanks corinne and so far jacob is the chosen one we've said that many times he has the blessing and the birthright which means jacob is the ruler he will rule his brother esau he will go on to rule a family dynasty which is what the rest of genesis is all about but before jacob can do any ruling in chapter 29 he needs to be disciplined first it's a really important chapter because ever since we met jacob he's anything but holy he's a liar and a deceiver in chapter 29 he's an arrogant charmer he comes back to his mother's homeland he never thanks god once never mentions him at all uh he in verse 7 and 8 he starts ordering the local country bumpkins around and then he flexes his muscles to show off to rachel and jacob spends the next seven years playing the role of the dashing self-assured ruler getting his own life sorted for himself i'll marry the beauty queen inherit half of laban's treasures then i'll go home and kick sand and esau's face and live with my mum but all the while laban has been laughing at him verse 15 have a look at verse 15 laban said to him just because you're a relative of mine should you work for me for nothing tell me what your wages should be and that sounds like a really nice gesture doesn't it let me pay you for your work jacob but in their world work is a slavery word and in verse 16 the narrator gives us a clue as to what laban's plotting now laban had two daughters the name of the older was Leah and the name of the younger was Rachel Leah had weak eyes but Rachel had a lovely figure and was beautiful you see laban is met by a man from the right family with no dowry to offer and he's got an unattractive daughter that no one wants and so the cogs start ticking away in his mind his plan is in motion we're told that Leah had weak eyes uh which is really hard to translate i don't think it's bad eyesight because my eyes are getting worse and i'm still a catch but anyway i'm only joking i'm only joking um maybe it is that Leah was so ugly she hurt the eyes of people when they looked at

her but that's pretty terrible as well anyway the point is she is no princess Leah that's the point but it isn't just her eyes the contrast in verse 17 is this Leah had weak eyes but Rachel had a lovely figure and was beautiful so without being too pious about this she was a hottie okay a beautiful face a great figure and in verse 18 Jacob is so besotted by her that he can't he doesn't suspect Laban of anything he says I'll work for you for seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel and we're told in verse 20 so Jacob served seven years to get to Rachel but they seem like only a few days to him because of his love for her no isn't that sweet can you imagine them for seven years flirting and laughing and playing talking of their future marriage together speaking on the phone you hang up no you hang up no you hang up get a room you two and in verse 22 we finally come to the wedding day where it says Laban gave a feast but in their culture or the word for feast comes from the word to drink which means it's a drunken party verse 23 tells us it's evening time which means it's dark and Laban's trap is now set because Jacob is probably drunk and brides in their culture wore veils and so Jacob is the one with weak eyes now or beer goggles if you like and so verse 23 Laban took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob and Jacob made love to her boom the next day Jacob rolls over to greet his beautiful trophy wife verse 25 when morning came there was Leah which is better translated like this in the morning look she Leah verse 25 what is this you have done to me I served you for Rachel didn't I why have you deceived me and this is the important bit for five chapters Jacob has been the deceiver but today he's met his match and it's not Rachel and it's not poor old Leah it is Laban the arch deceiver who's giving Jacob a taste of his own medicine Jacob is still in love with Rachel but he's stuck with Leah now and so in verse 29 like any good mafia man Laban makes him an offer he can't refuse another seven years work for the one he loves

this self-confidence lying cheating heel grabber is now trapped God has done this let me show you the elegance of God's sovereignty here as he gives Jacob a taste of his own medicine this is the second table so when Jacob took Esau's blessings the younger was switched for the older here Laban switches the older for the younger Rebecca disguised rival sibling siblings to steal the prize here Laban disguises rival rival siblings to steal the prize Jacob tricked his family with a bad eyesight stew and a goat skin Laban tricks Jacob almost identically with darkness alcohol and a veil sell me your birthright Jacob said to his brother Esau but now he is the one sold into another seven years of slavery you could imagine an unloved ugly Leah or poor Rachel locked away in a barn on her own wedding day Laban is a real nasty piece of work but Laban is only a reflection of Jacob Jacob is chosen despite his sin but God doesn't want him as he is and so he sovereignly brings him to Laban to be disciplined with a dose of his own medicine can you imagine Jacob sitting uh for the remaining seven days of that wedding feast uh listening having to put up with uh Laban and his drunken mates telling the joke about how they deceived him you see lying and deceit were always handy tools for Jacob in getting him what he wanted but in Laban he recognizes them as the sins that they are and is repulsed by them see underneath boy meets girl is a dark comedy we're supposed to laugh and cheer when uh Laban uh gives Jacob a dose of his own medicine God has done this this passage has lots of mentions of servants so two maids two daughters and of course now Jacob God has done this to his ruler he's going to discipline him to learn holiness as a servant until one day he becomes like Jesus the true servant ruler and the saga of Jacob's life continues for the rest of Genesis pretty much please uh watch out for his transformation the author isn't done with him he's not a finished article yet but do watch out over the next few weeks to see if he becomes the man that God wants him to be the one like Jesus for us here as we apply this uh think about your favorite sins you see as good Christians we're supposed to pray that God would discipline and change us but if you're like me you don't want God to change you just yet see I love my sins too much they're really handy tools in getting me what I want I'm afraid that without my sins I'll end up just another boring dull Christian I don't want God to discipline and change my anger I really love it it's great for blowing off steam on other people I don't want God to discipline my sexual immorality because it's fun and exciting at the moment or to discipline my materialism just yet it gives me such security in this life or to discipline and change my ego it feels good not to listen to other people and always want to be the center of things and I don't want God to discipline my lying and my deceiving just

[20 : 10] yet because like Jacob they're really handy in getting me what I want Hebrews 12 says that like a father God disciplines us for our good in order that we may share in his holiness wouldn't you think it good to be less sinful to be more holy more like Jesus haven't you had enough a bad effect of sins in your life wouldn't our lives and relationships be much more good if we resembled

the lord jesus after some discipline from god it's true that discipline feels painful at the time hebrews is honest about that but it says over and over again that god only disciplines his real children that is only the real chosen ones of god have the privilege of being disciplined by him we mustn't think that discipline is always some sort of smack like we are when we're naughty discipline can be a good thing it can just be a hemming us in rather than always being some sort of punishment discipline from the lord is good for our holiness and so for tomorrow why not do a review of the year so far do a review of 2019 reflect on the areas of your life that god is changing and disciplining rebuking that's the language of hebrews 12 and as you look back in these areas you might stumble upon bad effects in your life see if you can trace them back to a sin if there is one there and repent of that sin when you find it it won't stop that those effects still happening in your life but it will make uh stop things from getting worse as you look back on your journey as you look back on this year maybe you'll easily come across a scoundrel in your life maybe just maybe god is giving you a taste of your own medicine by showing you your sin in another the way he did with laban to jacob it is good of god to love us enough to discipline us in these ways let's take time to recognize it and to thank him for it i know we're going to do that right now let's pray father god we are nervous of your discipline because we love our sin we love that you chose us but we confess that we don't don't always want you to change us please father help us reflect in our lives to see your discipline as a good thing to want to change to become more holy like the lord jesus we need your help with this because we're so stubborn in jesus name amen