

Saturday, June 27, 2020 ▫ Read Genesis 29:1–12

Questions from the Scripture text: To where does Jacob come in v1? What does he see in v2? What would happen there (v3)? What kinds of things is he asking about in vv4–6? What does he tell them to do, once they have identified Rachel to him (v7)? Why do they say that they can't (v8)? What happens in v9? What does Jacob do (all by himself?!), when he sees Rachel (v10)? How does he respond to her personally in v11? What does he tell her in v12? Whom does she tell? What does Laban do in v13? How does Jacob answer him? What, then, does Laban say to Jacob in v14?

We are coming into a section of Genesis in which God is going to do His people much good, especially through events that are rife with their own sin. This emphasis will continue all the way into the last chapter, where we see Joseph say, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good" (50:20).

By making His appearance to Jacob immediately before these events, **God underscores that what brings about the blessing of Jacob in the coming chapters is not Jacob's ingenuity or ability, but God's faithfulness, wisdom, and power.**

And it is important for us to see the emphasis here upon the sovereign providence of God, so that in the next passage we neither excuse or imitate the sin that He overrules for good.

That sovereign providence is the theme of this passage.

God moves His servant's feet... the heart of a man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps. v1 literally tells us that Jacob "lifted his feet." It's the only place the Hebrew Bible uses that language about going on a journey, and it underscores Jacob's smallness and weakness. We are reminded by the name of the destination "the land of the people of the east," and the interview in v4–6, that Jacob hasn't been here before and isn't exactly sure where he is going.

God strengthens His servant's hands... God strengthens him beyond expectation. The implication of v8 is that moving the stone is not a one-man job. But when Rachel arrives, Jacob matter-of-factly does it all by himself! Is the weakling of Isaac's family as strong as multiple men of Haran? Did Jacob somehow employ cleverness to be able to do it? The text is silent on the "how" as far as Jacob himself goes. The intention is for us to see that God is with Jacob just as he had promised at Bethel.

God sustains His servant's heart... in the relief and gush of emotion, we see how great was the pressure upon Jacob through which God had carried him. Sometimes, in the moment, we put on a brave face. Or, perhaps, we are too preoccupied with the situation in front of us to reflect upon how it is affecting us psychologically and emotionally. For Jacob, this is really the first moment of relief since Mama slapped the goatskins on his arms, and it all comes gushing out in v11. In light of 28:10–22 and the other aspects of 29:1–12, we can see that the Holy Spirit is highlighting that it is the Lord who has sustained him and held him together.

God has worked similarly before (Isaac), and will work similarly again (Moses). It is useful to see parallels in God's other work, not because we should be always figuring out "what God is doing" in our situation, but because we should be remembering "what God Himself is like" in every situation, and that the God who was working then and is working now is doing it all as part of the same plan to glorify Himself in Christ through the gospel!

Believers go places in life where they are unfamiliar, and even where they end up in a different place than they intended. Believers come through situations in which they look forward and don't know how they're going to make it, then look back and don't know how they could have. Believers are often under such pressure that only divine strength holds them together. **Passages like this one encourage us on the front end by pointing us to the sovereign providence and grace of our Lord, and humble us on the back end, reminding us that to Him belongs all the praise.**

In what current situation do you need to remember that the primary story in all of it is God's wisdom and power, as He faithfully carries out His plan and promises in Christ?

Suggested songs: ARP181 "God Our Only Good" or TPH446 "Be Thou My Vision"