

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study

“GOD’S SOVEREIGN GRACE: SURPRISING AND STUNNING”

For individual study or discussion

In Romans 12:12, we’re told to be “joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.” Yet often joy can be elusive, hope seems unachievable, and we get impatient, even angry, when hard times don’t end soon. Praying faithfully day after day, especially when no answer seems to come, is no easy task either.

Rebekah, like her mother-in-law Sarah, was barren. But Isaac “prayed to the LORD for his wife” and “the LORD granted his prayer.” (v. 21) Rebekah conceived not one child, but twins. A double blessing. This kind of answer to prayer is easy to like. We pray and God not only answers—he gives even more than we hoped for or expected. We find out a few verses later the patience, endurance, and faithful praying that was required. Isaac and Rebekah waited twenty years for the prayer for a child to be answered. Twenty years! In circumstances like this, how do we live by faith, not by sight?

- 1) Unlike Sarah, Rebekah did not try to find another way to get a baby (see Gen. 16:1-6), but manipulation and cunning turn up in other parts of this story.
 - Why did Sarah and Rebekah, Jacob and Esau, so often strategize to get what they really wanted? Why do we do the same? And what does such manipulation and cunning reveal about our faith and trust in God?
 - A popular hymn from the late 1800s titled “Oh, to be Nothing” emphasizes the need for Christians to be nothing more than broken and emptied vessels, “emptied that he might fill me.” The second verse of it begins with this line, “Oh, to be nothing, nothing, only as led by his hand.”¹ Is this what Rebekah, Jacob, and Esau should have been like? Emptied and waiting? How do we determine when to plan and put our plans into action and when to wait patiently on the Lord?
- 2) God’s gracious choice of Jacob is referred to by Paul in his letter to the Romans: “As it is written, ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.’” (Rom. 9:13)
 - The story of Jacob and Esau makes abundantly clear that there is no favoritism with God and that salvation is all of grace from start to finish. What are the most common objections to these truths, and why are those objections made? And what is the great joy of knowing that the essence of our theology is unmerited grace? (See Eph. 1:3-14.)
 - What are the alternatives to God’s free grace in salvation? In other words, in what other ways do people think they can be saved? Are these other ways arguably more just or not, and could you explain your reasoning to an unbeliever? Can you point out the ramifications of the following ideas?
 - ◇ Everyone is saved (universalism).
 - ◇ “Good people” go to heaven.



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

DATE: April 25, 2021

SPEAKER: Joe/Brian

SERIES: The Life of Jacob

PASSAGE: Gen. 25:19-34

Family Dinner Table

During Jesus’ ministry on earth, he often used stories called parables to help people understand what the Kingdom of heaven is like. One parable that he told described a single day in a vineyard. You can find this story in Matthew 20:1-16. The man in charge needed workers. He hired some workers to start first thing in the morning for a fair day’s wage. About three hours after that, he hired some more. And then three more times during the day, he hired even more workers. The last group he hired started working an hour before quitting time.

When everyone lined up for their pay, the owner of the vineyard paid all of them the exact same amount, not one coin more or less. Now the ones who started work at the beginning of the day had agreed to work for a certain amount of money, and they got that, but they were super angry that all the others got the same amount also, even the ones who had worked for only an hour.

In the Kingdom of heaven, God shows grace to people who haven’t earned it and don’t deserve it. Jacob didn’t earn God’s favor, just like the laborers who worked for only an hour didn’t deserve a full day’s wage. Can you explain why this is incredibly wonderful?

PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS

PCA Missions to North America

PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS

Christine H., supported missionary partner

¹Gospel Hymns Nos. 1 to 6, Ira Sankey et al., eds. (New York, 1894).