

Jacob had been sent by his parents to the ancestral home of his mother. He had been sent to find a wife and ended up with four. From these four wives, Leah, Rachel, Bilhah and Zilpah, eleven sons and one daughter were born.

When Jacob finally paid off his marriage debt to his uncle Laban, fourteen years of servitude, his mind turned to home and the great and precious promises, which God had made to him at Bethel.

Genesis 28:13-15

- I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying
- Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth
- All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring
- I am with you and 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 have promised you

Read v.25-27

Through Jacob Laban had been blessed.

But in what way?

Jump down to **v.30**.

Through Jacob... God had materially blessed Laban.

His flocks had increased in number.

Laban's household would have been a very different place were it not for the blessing of God that spilled over onto him because of Jacob.

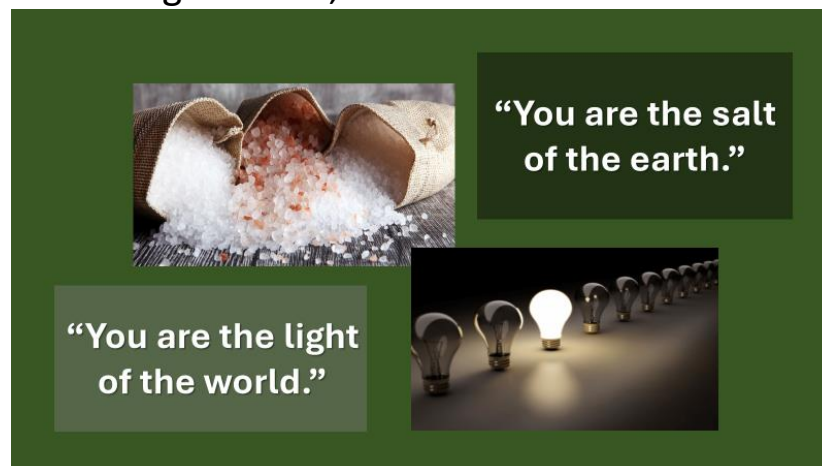
But remember... it is always the intent of God that his experienced goodness and kindness, lead a person to repentance and into relationship with Himself.

In the case of Laban... he had tasted the goodness of the gifts of God, but there is no evidence that he loved or served the Giver of those gifts.

Like Jacob, we too, are blessed by God to be a blessing.

But in what way does God bless people through us?

According to Jesus, Matthew 5:13-14...



The people of God are like salt... that preserves and flavors.

The people of God are like light... that illuminates.

Wherever God's people are... wherever they live... things are better because they are present.

Look at what the LORD said through the prophet Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 29:4-7:

“Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease.

Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile.

Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”

What was true of God’s people in the time of Jeremiah is true in every generation.

God’s people are a people of peace... a reconciling presence because... they are at peace with God.

The Spirit who lives in us... is active to diminish strife through us.

The Spirit who lives in us... overcomes evil with good, Romans 12:21.

The Spirit who lives in us...through our gentleness turns away wrath, Proverbs 15:1.

What was true of God’s people in the time of Jeremiah is true in every generation.

God’s people are a people of prayer who intercede on behalf of others who live among them.

And as God answers our prayers... others see and taste the LORD’s goodness.

These are some of the blessings from God expressed through his people that allow a region and/or a nation to thrive rather than expend all its energies on war.

Read v.28.

A similar offer was made by Laban to Jacob fourteen years earlier, see 29:15.

Read v.29-30.

Jacob wanted to provide for his household.

Read v.31a.

Again, Laban asked the question: what shall I give you?

Read v.31b-33.

What Jacob proposed required no exchange of money.

Jacob simply asked that his wages be the abnormally colored goats and sheep.

Read v.34.

Laban agreed to Jacob's terms.

But look at what Laban did that very same day.

Read v.35-36.

Laban was determined that Jacob have nothing to begin with.

God had told Abraham, 12:3:

Genesis 12:3
**“I will bless
those who bless you
and whoever curses you
I will curse.”**

For fourteen years, Laban had experienced God's goodness and generosity, spilling over onto him... because of Jacob.

Jump down to **31:7.**

During the next six years, Laban did everything he could to cheat Jacob. He changed his wages ten times.

But the more Laban's attempted to cheat Jacob, the more he encountered God's severity, blocking him, again and again, from carrying out his plans.

What did Jacob do in response to what Laban did?

Read v.37-43.

Those three trees, the poplar, the almond and the plane, were used medicinally in the ancient world.

They were thought to enhance the reproduction cycle of animals and produce stronger offspring.

Look again at v.43 – **In this way** the man grew exceedingly prosperous... What is meant by... **"in this way?"**

Was this phrase referring to Jacob's use of the fresh cut branches of the poplar, almond and plane tree in the watering troughs?

Or was it referring to Jacob's selective breeding practices, that separated stronger animals from weaker animals?

Look at what Psalm 127:1 says...



For a house to be built there has to be... a builder.

And for flocks to increase there has to be... a skilled shepherd.

But who gives the increase?

The LORD does.

If He didn't, the work would be done in vain.

Jacob used his skills to the best of his ability.
But it was God who blessed him and gave to him the increase.

After six years, Jacob told Rachel and Leah...

Genesis 31

v.5 – "...the God of my father has been with me."
v.7 – "God has not allowed [Laban] to harm me."
v.9 – "God has taken away your father's livestock
and has given them to me."

God was with Jacob.

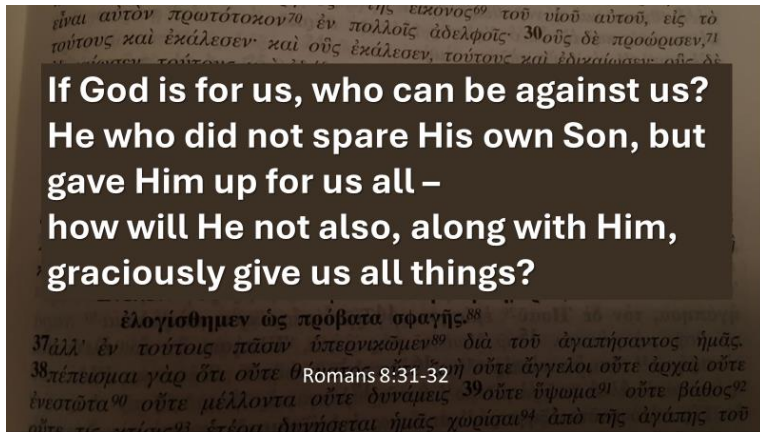
The promises made to him at Bethel were being fulfilled... God was with him and God was watching over him.

Genesis 28:13-15

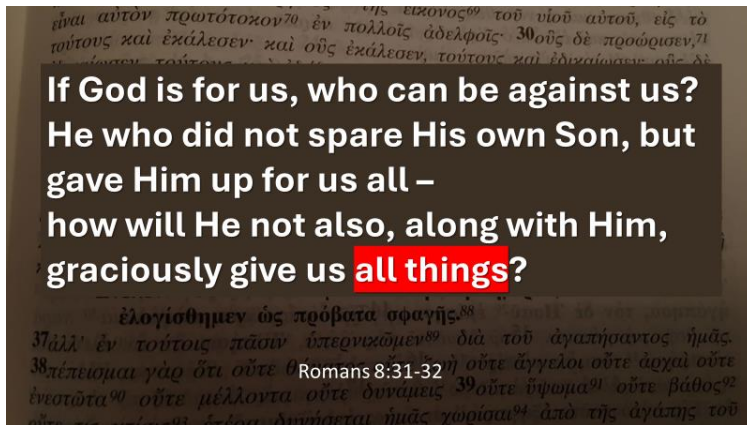
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This is why nothing Laban purposed to do against Jacob succeeded.

You and I follow the God of Jacob.
Look at his promises to us.



The cross of Jesus is the definitive enduring assurance by God that he is for us and is with us.



But what are the “all things” spoken of in this verse? Jesus said...



Earlier in Matthew 6 Jesus had explained in v.25 – that the “all things” pertain to what we eat, what we drink, what we wear.

Jesus promised his followers, based on evidence from God's care and provision for the creation and its creatures... that his Father would provide for his people's material needs... if... they seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Peter in his second letter explained that the Father's provision for his people is not just material, but also spiritual, 1:3...

**His divine power has granted
to us all things that pertain
to life and godliness.**

2 PETER 1:3

We must let these words register on our heart and mind.

Read them with me.

One more time... slowly.

Jacob was not blessed because he was a perfect man.

He was flawed.

But he had been chosen by God... and though Jacob did so haltingly and at times feebly, he nonetheless was a man of faith... and like Abraham, he too was credited with righteousness.

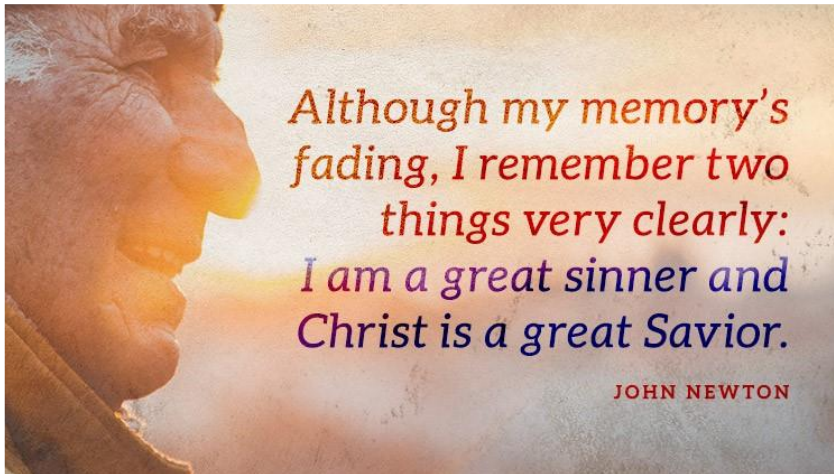
The entire Bible, not just the book of Genesis impresses upon the reader that all of God's people were flawed by sin.

- Noah got crazy drunk.
- Joseph was a brat.
- Moses wanted God to choose somebody else.
- Miriam was a gossip.
- Rahab was a prostitute.
- Gideon was extremely fearful.

- Samson was a braggart.
- Elijah and Jonah were moody.
- King David was an adulterer and a murderer.

But here's what amazing about the God of every grace.
While we were sinners Christ died for us.

Near the end of his life, John Newton wrote:



The stories of those who lived before us... give us hope.
In what way?

Not that we are flawed like they were.

But that along with them...we too have a great Savior.

The God of Jacob is our God.

He is for us.

Which means there is no one who can frustrate God's intent to bless us
in order to bless others through us.