

January 2008 Newsletter

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SALVATION

If you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, or aren't sure and would like to become one, then you need to believe that Jesus Christ was and is the Son of God, that he was God who became a man, that he lived a sinless and perfect life, keeping the Law of God perfect in every way, that he kept faith perfectly, and that he was crucified on that cruel cross for your sins, mine and the entire world- he died for our sins! His death on the cross paid the penalty fully, one time for all sins that we have ever committed and that we will ever commit. He died; he went down into the bowels of the earth, even into Hell, and was raised from the dead on the third day in a resurrected, eternal body. He ascended back into heaven, was seated at the right hand of God, and is now Lord over heaven and earth. He is coming again to judge the world, to raise the dead, where he will give an eternal, resurrected, glorified body to everyone that has believed on him as their Lord and Savior, and to establish his kingdom one earth.

You come become a Christian right now as you read this, by personally placing your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior; believing that he is God's only begotten Son, that he died on the cross for you and that he was raised from the dead and is now seated in heaven at the right hand of God the Father. *"Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.."* Acts 16:31a And when you do trust Christ, and Christ alone, as your Lord and Savior, then go to God the Father in heaven in prayer and tell him so. Tell him that you have believed on his Son, thank him for his Son, and thank him for forgiving your sins and saving you! *"That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord", and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."* Romans 10:9,10 *"For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* Romans 10:13 *"Therefore, being justified by faith (declared righteous), we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."* Romans 5:1

The word used for *weary* here is *qotz*, **קֹץ**. *Qotz* referred to a spiny plant, a plant with thorns and was used of the thistle. Now this could be used literally of the thistle plant and it could be used figuratively of cursing, judgment, punishment, of things that are of no value, a type of the old sin nature, the original curse, something that makes life painful and miserable, futility, no production, hard work and a wasted life.

Now when a believer used this word in connection to their life they could be saying that they think that God is punishing them, or that they're under punishment or discipline. Or they could be saying that life is one of pain and misery. Or that **their life has ended up being wasted**. After years and years of hard work and pouring yourself into the things in life that matter to you, in this case raising a son, then it all ended up for naught.

The first thing we want to note about this is that not every believer on earth has the same life experience! Some have great lives full of fun, productivity, prosperity and going on from one adventure to another. Other people's lives are often humdrum. While still other people's lives are full of testing, trials, difficulties and sufferings.

These words are the expression of the heart of a believer in Jesus Christ, who has put much of her life into raising her two sons. She raised them unto the Lord, as we would say today, but the older son went out to do everything he could do to spite his parents. Now how did this impact Rebekah? Sad, extremely discouraged and frustrated she felt that her life was a waste, that it wasn't worth living. To put everything that she had into her two sons to have it turn out this way would make one feel that her life's work was a waste of time.

We have to remember the context of an agrarian society. These were people who lived close to the land and their way of thinking was in the context of land, crops, etc.. And when they talked about thistles they were talking about something that was the bane of every farmer, their vexation in life.

When a man considered a field for planting, he had to expend a great amount of time, energy, hard work and often money just to clear the stones from the field. Then the farmer would have to go through all that again just to plow the field, maybe even buying an ox to do the job. Now he was able to plant the seed, more time and work involved again, and he might have to spend money to buy the seed if he didn't have it. Now he has to sweat it out to see if there is going to be the proper rain, not too much, not too little, to make it grow. And then there's the problem of droughts, pestilence, etc..

And he survives all that to find that **thistles had taken over his entire field!** The thistles had not only choked out the crop, so that little or nothing grew, but what was there was difficult to harvest because of the thistles. So all that work was for nothing!

So this was the sentiment of Rebekah when looking at her two sons. All that work in raising them for forty years and look what it got her – no where! Many the believer has felt that way about their children, or business, or lives.

E. Lessons Learned.

Now we know that Jacob was smitten by Rachel and loving her deeply he wanted to take her as his wife. So he made an agreement with Laban to work for him for seven years to get her. *“And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter. And Laban said, It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man: abide with me. And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.”* Genesis 29:18-20

He worked the seven years, but when it came time to get Rachel for his wife, Laban instead gave him Leah! Jacob protested saying that the agreement was for Rachel, not Leah! Laban goes on to talk about the customs in his country and then tells him that if he wants Rachel, then he's going to have to work for her another seven years!

"And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah: and he said to Laban, What is this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me? And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years. And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also." Genesis 29:25-28

Now doesn't this sound familiar? Jacob was deceived, cheated and robbed of what was rightfully his by Laban! What was being done to him was what he did to his brother Esau! He was receiving back what he did to someone else! The principle of sowing what you reap is found throughout the Bible. *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."* Galatians 6:7

Jacob was being taught a valuable lesson about how our wrongful actions in life impact other people negatively; how they hurt other people, not just in their feelings, but also in many other ways including their pocket books. Now he knows what Esau was going through when he did that to Esau.

The Bible tells us that we are to love our brothers and that love is to manifest itself in how we treat them, yet many believers act out of their old sin natures and do things that really hurt the other person. **But mark this well: God is watching and he will deal with you accordingly. We don't get away with anything!**

Jacob is a case in point, for Laban not only deceived and cheated him over Rachel, he also did it over his wages. What do you think? Do you think that Jacob learned a life lesson in all this? Of course he did. How does it feel to be cheated? How does it feel to be deceived? How does it feel to be taken advantage of? How does it feel to work so hard for something, just to have it taken away? How does it feel to get your hopes up only to have them dashed? God is watching all of us and he will repay! *"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."* Romans 12:9

Over the years Esau had let his bitter anger go, but Jacob was still concerned about whether Esau was still mad at him, but when the two brothers met many years later he found just the opposite. *"And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and **they wept.**"* Genesis 33:4

Time and God's grace had healed their wounds of soul, but oh how many years had gone by. How many years have we all wasted in unforgiveness, bitterness, grief, feeling of guilt over something that we did years before, or something we did that hurt others? How many children have been alienated from their parents, or how many siblings have been alienated from each other over bitter rivalry and an unforgiving heart?

How our pride and our lusts have done so much damage, not only to ourselves, but to those around us that we love. But God is still there working his grace in our lives to teach us these valuable lessons. Hopefully we will learn these lessons before we waste our entire lives.

So after twenty years Jacob was about to meet the brother he had cheated out of his inheritance; the one who wanted to kill him. So what was Jacob's spiritual and emotional state? And what was his confidence level?

To begin with Jacob was afraid when he heard that Esau was coming with four hundred men. You see his fear was connected with his wrong doing that took place over twenty years ago; he was afraid that Esau was still bent on revenge. *"Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands;"* Genesis 32:7

So Jacob resorted to scheming again. He decided to send two hundred female goats and twenty male goats ahead of him as a gift, or a peace offering; then two hundred ewes and twenty rams; then thirty female camels with their young; then forty cows and ten bulls; then twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys, each in their own herd, each separated by some distance, each led by servants. Genesis 32:13-16

His human view point reasoning was to have wave after wave of gifts sent ahead of him to soften Esau's anger. *"And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will **appease** him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me."* Genesis 32:20

But Jacob was still frightened over the whole thing, so he decided to first send the maidservants with their children, then Leah with her children, then Rachel and Joseph ahead of him. *"And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost."* Genesis 33:2

The wrongdoing that Jacob had done to his brother had been with him ever since. And this wrongdoing led to a feeling of guilt and this guilt led to the emotion of fear; a fear of reprisal. This is why Jacob did what he did in this matter. And this is why it's so important for us to live lives of doctrinal integrity.

F. Afraid to face our past.

Jacob had sent every thing he owned; every thing he loved in this life; everything that meant anything to him; everything that he had accumulated his entire life, over to the other side, **but he wouldn't go!** *“And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had.”* Genesis 32:23

And there Jacob sat **alone**. *“And Jacob was left alone;”* Genesis 32:24a The question is **why? Why, after he had done all that, did he refuse to go over to the other side? He didn't want to go over because he was afraid to face his past!** This is not just the story of Jacob, but of all of us. How many of us have been running from something that we did in the past? From some deep seated fear, or guilt, or anger? How many of us fight with every fiber of our being just to keep from dealing with it?

But then Jesus Christ enters into the picture. *“And there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.”* Genesis 32:24b Christ wants Jacob go forward and face his brother; he wants him to face his past. But Jacob doesn't want to! In fact, he refuses to! So now the two battle it out all night long. How many of us have fought with the Lord, or are still fighting with the Lord to not deal with some scar on the soul, or garbage in the soul left there from the past?? **A picture of the flesh battling the spirit.**

How many of us are afraid and will do anything in the world to keep from facing the truth about ourselves? How many of us put layers of things before us to buffer or distract what is going on? We've turned over a new leaf, so we think. We've comforted ourselves in that we've become good people. We don't do those things any more, we tell ourselves. Yet the truth about ourselves is buried deep down in our souls behind the layers of self righteousness and human good and there are things down there that we don't want to see.

Jacob didn't want to deal with his past on a face to face basis. But actually his fears about all of it were far worse than the reality. As a matter of fact, Esau had forgiven it all. **All we see from Esau is him just wanting to see his brother.** *“And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.”* Genesis 33:4 The fact that they both wept said it all.

The question arises, has not Christ paid the penalty for all our sins? And if he has, then all our sins are forgiven aren't they? Yes he has and yes they are forgiven. But what is going on is a part of the human condition. Nothing is dealt with until it is dealt with doctrinally. **And running away from ourselves and the past is not dealing with it; it's running away to avoid dealing with it!**

Jacob hadn't dealt with it because his fear of Esau was still governing his life. We see this evidenced by him not wanting to go face Esau and fighting Jesus Christ over the matter. **But when he was finally compelled to go and face his fear over something in the past, and some guilt over wrongdoing, then he had victory over it.** And as we see from the story **it was the Lord who forced him to go on**, to keep moving forward, and face his past and **when he did he had victory.**

When Jacob went up to work for Laban we saw that he ended up in a similar situation in that he was cheated by Laban over the agreement for Rachel. But we will find that there was another parallel situation that would go on in the area of sibling rivalry.

Jacob was in love with Rachel who was beautiful in looks and form; it was Rachel that he agreed to work for seven years to have her be his wife. But she had a sister, Leah, who was not the beauty that Rachel was. Genesis 29:16-18

Now we know the story of how Leah became Jacob's wife instead of Rachel because of their custom, but there was another story going on here. Leah knew that she had been traded off, she knew that Jacob really loved Rachel and not her, and she knew that she was not beautiful as her sister was; a fact that she had to live with everyday of her life.

But enter God into the picture. The Lord knew that she was not loved, so he opened her womb and she got pregnant with a son, **Reuben!** *“And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren.”* Genesis 29:31 And again with **Simeon!** And again with **Levi!** And again with **Judah!**

This was too much for Rachel. You see for all these years she was the center of attention; she was the beautiful daughter. But now we see that she was just a beautiful woman who was barren. Bitterness, anger, self pity and jealousy driven by her pride raised its ugly head and she puts a demand on Jacob to give her a child or she'll *just die!* *“And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die.”* Genesis 30:1

As if it was Jacob's fault or that he could do anything about it. So Jacob lashed out in anger at Rachel, the one he was in love with, setting the record straight. *“And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?”* Genesis 30:2

Here he was caught in the middle of sibling rivalry; only this time it's not about him and his brother, Esau, but about his two wives. Being married all these years to the two women he was well familiar with what was going on and was tired of it all. So he straightened Rachel out tersely.

It sounds like Jacob is learning some things later on in life in an *on the job training* concept that he didn't learn growing up. Spiritual principles and applications learned in a teaching format versus the *school of hard knocks*. God's people, for the most part, learn the things that God wants us to know, the things of wisdom, sooner or later in life. We can learn them the easy way or the hard way; the choice is ours.

God caused things to work out just fine and Jacob grew from all the things that he went through in life and became the man God wanted him to be. Time, grace, God's patience and his Word transformed Jacob as they transform all of his people as they walk with him.

Isaac married Rebekah when he was forty years old and they were without children for many years. Then one day he prayed for her to have children because she was barren. The Lord answered his prayer and she became pregnant. But during her pregnancy she noticed that there was a lot of struggling going on inside her womb, so she went to the Lord to inquire as to why this was happening. To which the Lord replied that two nations were in her womb and that the older would serve the younger.

“And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padanaram, the sister to Laban the Syrian. And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the LORD. And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.” Genesis 25:20-23

Forty years later we see Esau marrying two Hittite women, *Judith*, daughter of Beerli, and *Basemath*, the daughter of Elon. This situation was a source of never ending grief for Isaac and Rebekah. But this was no surprise to Esau because he knew that the values and lifestyles of the Hittites were just the opposite of those his parents had. And then there was the matter of him despising his birthright by selling it to Jacob for a bowl of stew. All this points to Esau's attitude toward his parents and the things of the Lord and how he married these women out of spite for his parents.

Now all this time he was being raised in a home of believing parents who loved the Lord, who were in covenant with God and were the recipients of God's blessings on them and the whole family. They were parents who walked in the way of Abraham who kept God's decrees and laws. *“Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.” Genesis 26:5*

Esau was a problem for Isaac and Rebekah during his childhood and much more of a problem in his adult life, as evidenced by him marrying the two Hittite women. Their problem with Esau was now compounded by the two women he brought home. One can only imagine what the children would be like.

But when their problem with Esau grew to the place that he was going to murder his brother, then **something had to be done** about it! They would not only be losing a son, but the heir of the promise that God made to them. **Not to mention the fact that Jacob might give up waiting for the right woman and end up marrying the wrong woman, or wrong women as Esau had done!**

Esau's hateful attitude toward his parents and God was brought out in Genesis 28:8,9 by the fact that when he saw how displeasing the Canaanite women were to his father, he went out and married another one! *“And Esau seeing that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father; Then went Esau unto Ishmael, and took unto the wives which he had Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son, the sister of Mothballed, to be his wife.”*

We know how Rebekah had Isaac send Jacob up to live with their relatives to preserve Jacob's life and to get a wife for himself from their people, and that there was the sense of urgency because of the situation, **but it was also an act of faith**. Forty years before this the Lord had prophesied to her about this son, (Jacob), that was in her womb. It was a prophecy and it was a promise, and it was something that she believed then and believed all during Jacob's life while he was growing up. But now there was a threat to all this and the threat came from within her own family. **So she acted in faith!**

It's of epidemic proportions in America today of our young people turning away from the things of the Lord to embrace the things of the world system, or to flock to religious centers for socializing and entertainment. Just about everything one can find in society is more important to them than the values their parents tried to teach them in the home and the teachings of God's Word. Some are drawn away by their lusts and emotions, while others go out in spite to do things to hurt their parents.

This has created a rash of destroyed lives and souls; lives destroyed by debt, by drugs and alcohol, by their own criminal actions, by them marrying the wrong person, by divorce, or by general rebellion against the Word. Thus bringing much misery on themselves and into their parents lives and homes. Not to mention it has brought divine discipline upon our country due to their negative volition to Bible Doctrine.

So how does this affect the parents? Because of the personal element the parents end up with hurt, disappointment, pain, grief, financial loss, despair, discouragement, depression, misery; they can get to the place of Isaac and Rebekah where she said that she was weary of **her** life! They love their children, but their children have become a grief to them.

But there is a solution for both the parents and the children. Now if the children don't want to apply God's solutions to their life, which has been the problem all along as with Esau, then the parents can still apply the teaching of the Word of God to their life to deal with the situation and solve the problem! Esau didn't change, but Isaac and Rebekah changed the situation when they made a decision to act in faith.

When we decide to apply a doctrinal principle in our lives in faith; when we decide to stand on the Word of God in our homes, instead of moaning about the situation, then positive things will begin to happen. Now it's preferable if a believer acts upon a doctrinal principle for the principle's sake, but if they're motivated out of self interest, or in the interest and well being of other members of the family, or in the interest of their own financial survival, is still acceptable, as long as they apply the Word of God to the situation. Which is what God is waiting for us to do!

God will let us "*stew in our own mess*", until we get to the place that we take a stand on his Word in our own homes, make a doctrinal decision and then act in faith! Until that takes place things will not get better. As a matter of fact, by our non action we have become enablers for our children and their evil behavior!

Pastor Mike