The School of Hard Knocks
PART I  
Genesis 29:1-30

Main Thought  God enrolls Jacob in the school of hard knocks for 20 years to prepare him for his future (1 Cor. 9:25; 1 Tim 2:5).

INTRODUCTION – In this school the PRINCIPAL is God, the TEACHER is Laban, the STUDENT is Jacob, and the CLASSMATES are Rachel and Leah.


· THE SHEPHERDS (1-8) – The well was where Eliezer met Rebekah (24:15), Moses met Zipporah (Ex. 2:18-19), Jesus met the Samaritan woman (John 4:6-7). These three shepherds (3 flocks) were waiting for more men to arrive in order to move the stone. They know Laban and identify his daughter Rachel, the shepherdess, as she arrives.

· RACHEL (9-12) – she providentially appears like Ruth (Ruth 2:3). Jacob, in a feat of strength, moves the STONE (2, 10; 28:18) by himself showing his industry compared to the laziness of the shepherds. Jacob displays his passion (unlike Laban who is “flat” [WALTKE] in character) by weeping after finding his family.

· LABAN (13-14a) – As the gold jewelry had attracted Laban’s attention (24:30), now it is Jacob’s strength. “A workman is on his way who is worth his weight in gold” (FOKKELMAN).

JACOB MARRIES (14b-30). Jacob arrives with no money or prayerful dependancy upon God. How unlike Eliezer (24:12, 22). Jacob would be transformed during these 20 years to become Israel (32:28).

· THE FIRST SEVEN YEARS – LEAH (14b-20) – Laban makes Jacob work for 7 years to obtain Rachel as his wife. This foreshadows Israel’s future bondage in Egypt as slaves. Because of his love to Rachel it seemed like only a few days.

· THE SECOND SEVEN YEARS – RACHEL (21-30) – In an ironic deception (Jacob means deceiver), Jacob is deceived by Laban and is married to Leah. Just as Jacob deceived blind Isaac, now he would be deceived as he was blinded by Leah’s veil (Gal. 6:7). God stands in the shadow of providence as Jacob is transformed. Jacob worked another 7 years for Rachel as he loved her more. Jacob was loved more by his mother Rebekah and Joseph would be loved more by Jacob (37:3).