

Genesis Ch. 31

Genesis 30:43 – context.

V: 1 Jealousy and bitterness have taken hold of Laban's sons.

- We're warned to guard against such bitterness of heart:

Hebrews 12:15 “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.”

- Laban's sons are focused on Jacob.
- Laban's sons don't acknowledge or can't see God's hand in Jacob's prosperity.
- Laban had been prospering, benefitting – but Jacob was prospering more.
- Now it appears that Laban's wealth / herds are diminishing while Jacob is flourishing.
- The son's may be motivated by greed as well, seeing their inheritance diminish.
- These are the same son's who probably laughed at the deal / wages that had been agreed upon by Jacob, thinking he was a fool.
- They are ignoring the practical impossibility of the disadvantage that Jacob was in concerning his wages – which Laban greedily agreed to.
- The bottom line is that they are “coveting” Jacob's stuff.

Exodus 20:17 “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.”

V: 2 Jacob observed that Laban's attitude has also changed and that his son's were probably just keying off of him.

- None of them liked seeing Jacob become wealthy – they didn't like seeing get blessed.

V: 3 God is using this situation to prepare Jacob's heart, preparing Jacob to being open to a change.

Philippians 2:13 “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.”

- This process may have begun in **Genesis 30:25** where it appears that Jacob is ready to leave Laban and go home.
- Jacob is being stirred up.

Deuteronomy 32:9-12 ⁹“For the Lord’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. ¹⁰He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. ¹¹As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: ¹²So the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.”

- Now God tells Jacob directly – it’s time to leave
- God re-assures Jacob – *“I will be with thee.”*
- It appears to have been 20 years since Jacob’s last direct communication with God.

Genesis 28:15 “And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.”

Jeremiah 29:11-13 God’s purposes.

- This season is complete, time to move onto another chapter, another lesson.

V: 4-16 Jacob explains not only what God has told him regarding their moving on, but also the real reason for their prosperity.

V: 5 Jacob testifies to God’s faithfulness and protection.

V: 6 Jacob has been a faithful and diligent servant to Laban.

Colossians 3:23 “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;”

Note: Jacob doesn’t throw his 14 years of service for his wives in their face at all, no guilt trips, just testifies to his hard and diligent work.

V: 7 Jacob lays out the facts to his wives:

- Laban has deceived him, given him a taste of his own medicine.

Galatians 6:7-8 ⁷“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. ⁸For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”

- Laban initially told Jacob to name his wages, which he did to his own disadvantage – then apparently Laban changed his wages.
- Doesn't appear to have been a raise.

V: 8 No matter how Laban changed the method of wages. If it was to be the speckled sheep – then God made it so that the sheep only produced speckled lambs.

- If Laban changed it to ringstraked / stripped sheep, then the sheep only produced stripped sheep.
- Part of the change was that initially it started out that all the speckled, stripped, and off color sheep / off spring were to go to Jacob.

V: 9 The rub: *“God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me.”*

- Jacob's focus has changed since he heard God's voice:
 1. V: 5 *“But the God of my father...”*
 2. V: 7 *“But God suffered him not...”*
 3. V: 9 *“Thus God hath taken away...”*

Romans 10:17 *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”*

V: 10-13 Jacob continues in his explanation, after the fact of how God gave him the information to produce stripped or speckled sheep.

- It was never about streaked rods, it was about the blessing of the Lord.
- God tells Jacob three specific things:
 1. I've seen what Laban has done to you.
 2. I'm still your God, the God that you know – your personal God.
 3. Arise, leave this place, return home.

V: 11 Notice: God says “Jacob” – and Jacob responds: “Here sir, how may I serve you?”

John 10:27 *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”*

“The Angel” vs: “an angel” – context (V:13)

V: 14-16 Basically “there is nothing left here for us.”

- Jacob’s 14 years of service for his wives was to have been a dowry, it was to have been set aside in the event it was ever needed.
- Security deposit / alimony in advance / insurance.
- The girls relate that they’ve been treated like strangers / slaves, instead of setting that dowry aside, it was spent just like any other income – in that sense they had been sold like slaves, not treated like daughters.
- On top of all of that, now there’s no inheritance either.
- **Whatever God tells you to do, do it!**

James 3:17 “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.”

- Jacob’s wives have spent 20 years observing God’s blessings upon Jacob and his witness in their midst; all of this in contrast with the behavior of Laban and his sons.

Proverbs 11:14 “Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.”

V: 17-18 Jacob hears God’s voice, he tells his wives what’s up, and he obeys God’s voice, once again stepping out in faith.

- Jacob packs all his stuff, puts his family on their camels, and their off.
- Obedience!

V: 19 Laban is out working; Rachel swipes his pagan idols.

- Rachel shows some of her true colors in this incident; see’s the witness of her husband, desiring the things of the world.

V: 20-21 Jacob stole away, secretly, by stealth – by subtlety...

- Jacob flees away instead of just leaving.
- Jacob lacks faith, not trusting the word of God, that God will protect him.
- Their group was a definite contrast to how he came, not only by faith – but numerically.
- Jacob came by himself and no he goes out a multitude.

V: 22-23 Jacob is discovered on the 3rd day, Laban takes off in hot pursuit and it takes 7 days to catch up, 10 days total.

- Laban travelled light, no women or children, no cattle.
- Laban didn't go un-accompanied, he took his "brethren" with him.
- Could have been immediate family, his sons. Could have been all that and his servants, and neighbors – looking like a force of cavalry as opposed to a re-union party.
- Given the warning that God gives to Laban, and the manner in which Laban and his brethren overtook Jacob, he may very well have had evil intent: harming Jacob in some way, and or taking all of his family back with him to Haran.

V: 24 God appears to Laban in a dream on Jacob's behalf. God warns Laban not to even talk mean to Jacob – watch what you say.

- God is giving Laban a fair chance similar to how God dealt with the two kings Abimelech who each dealt with Abraham and Isaac. (Genesis 20:3-8, 26:7-11)

V: 25-28 Even though Laban is a bit melo-dramatic, he makes a good point, rebuking Jacob for his lack of faith.

- It's always a bummer when we give the world a chance to criticize Christianity because of our sin.

V: 29 It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt – which is what is probably really on his heart.

“But the God of your father...”

- Notice: God of **your father**... as opposed to the “Lord, our God.”
- A further acknowledgment that they do not worship the same God.
- Neither man believes or remembers the words of God on this account:

Genesis 12:3 “And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee:...”

V: 30 I can see you wanting to be with your family, but why did you swipe my gods?

- That is one of the inherent problems with worshipping small gods, they can be stolen.

V: 31 Jacob begins to answer Laban's question from V: 27 "Why did you flee away?"

- It appears that Jacob's fears were in some way warranted.

1 Timothy 1:7 "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

- Laban proves that the last 20 years have been wasted, he should have been able to see that Jacob would have no interest in Laban's little gods.

V: 32-35 According to Hammurabi law anyone who stole "terriphim" / idols were subject to death.

- This may seem extreme to us, but possession of the family "gods" was symbolic of family leadership and blessing. Theft of the above was akin to taking all that a family had, all the inheritance.
- As far as Jacob knew, he wasn't in any peril on this charge, not knowing that Rachel was.
- Laban begins to search: starting with Jacob's stuff (suspect #1), then Leah, then the hand maids, then finally Rachel's tent.
- Rachel lies and conceals the idols, she plays the girl card and it works.

V: 36-42 Jacob is ticked off, and unloads on Laban:

- Knowing that God warned Laban in a dream has perhaps emboldened Jacob.
 1. Jacob calls Laban to task over the theft, show us all the proof, what have you found?
 2. Jacob testifies of his labor, and how Laban prospered.
 3. Jacob testifies that he's kept his part of their bargain.
 4. Jacob recounts how Laban has changed his wages 10 times.
 5. Unless God had been with him, Laban would have sent him away empty-handed.
 6. God Himself rebuked Laban in the dream he had.

V: 37 Let our brethren judge between us.

V: 43 Laban lays claim to all that Jacob has, including his wives, his children, and his cattle.

- Laban does not acknowledge or give any credit to God.
- This is a dangerous and foolish place to be:

Isaiah 42:8 “I am the Lord: that is my name: and My glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.”

- Laban asks the question: “*what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto their children which hey have born?*”

Answer: not a thing!

Romans 8:31 “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?”

Psalms 105:15 “Saying, touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.”

V: 44 Laban wants an agreement with Jacob. Similar to what Abimelech had with Abraham and Isaac – that you will do me no harm.

- It is wholly based on God protection for Jacob, otherwise Laban might do Jacob harm.

V: 45-46 Jacob begins to set up a pillar, a monument or memorial, reminder – then had a meal in front of it.

V: 47 “Witness heap”

V: 48-49 “Mizpah” – Laban invokes the Lord in this oath – as though that means anything to him.

V: 53 Laban puts together the God of Abraham and the god of Nahor.

- We here the phrase “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” commonly – because they are the same God.
- You never hear them along with the God of Nahor – because they are different.
- Jacob take an oath in the name of the fear (God) of his father Isaac – not the god of Nahor, or any other false god.

Joshua 24:2 “And Joshua said unto all the people, thus saith the Lord God of Israel, your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor: and they served other gods.”

V: 54 Jacob offered sacrifices to the Lord – Jacob worshiped God in the presence of his enemies.

Psalm 23:1-6 “¹The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. ²He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters. ³He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. ⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. ⁵Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. ⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

V: 55 The next morning Laban says good by and leaves.

- Laban is an example of a worldly, covetous man who knows about the One True God, but does not accept Him. All of this in spite of the powerful witness laid before him over the last 20 years.