

A Self Made Man - Genesis 31:11-43

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[0 : 00] Genesis 31, so our title today for the message is A Self-Made Man. We've been traveling with Jacob for quite a while now. He has been in Haran with his in-laws, living there for 20 years, living with his daddy-in-law.

What a ride. C.S. Lewis, in writing the book *Screwtape Letters*, I don't know if any of you have ever read that or heard of that, it's written from the perspective of a senior demon instructing a junior demon in how to tempt and trip up a believer.

He has a specific person that is his case that he has to stay on. And C.S. Lewis, in writing that, said it was all itch and bother, just thinking about from the enemy's perspective and having to write that. And that's what it's been like studying Laban, going through this section of scripture with Laban. And it's just all itch and bother. It's just like, ugh. Can't wait to be done with Laban. And I had that thought. I thought, Lord, I can't wait to be done with Laban.

And sometimes you have thoughts and the Lord just puts them in there and you know it's not from your heart. It's from something. It's from the Lord. It's from outside of yourself. And I was just like, I'm ready to be done with Laban. And the Lord just kind of was like this thought.

[1 : 13] And he just said, I'm not. I'm not ready to be done with Laban. I've got a purpose for Laban. I don't give up on a Laban. I was like, oh, Lord. True, true. But there's such a reflection in here of what's going on in my heart, my struggles, the struggles that we have with others that are so Laban-like and Laban-esque.

So as we go through this section of scripture, our outline today is verses 17 through 21. Load up the caravan. Jacob says, all right, ladies, load up the caravan. We're heading back home.

Verses 22 through 25. Laban says, I'm coming too. You can't get rid of me that easy. Verses 26 through 31. He says to Jacob, why did you leave? And verses 32 through 35.

Who took my gods? Why'd you go and why'd you take my gods? And then verse 36 through 43. As they talk, they say, where did the years go? 20 years. And where did they go?

If you remember our theme scripture for this section that we're in, dealing with Jacob and his journey, dealing with Laban. Galatians 6, verses 7 through 9. Be not deceived.

[2 : 19] God is not mocked. For whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. It's a principle in nature. It's a principle in the spirit. You're not going to sow apple seeds and get a plum tree.

It doesn't work that way. For he that sows to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. But he that sows to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

Now that applies to the spirit and the flesh. In due season, we're going to reap. That's going to happen. Whatever you sow to, you will reap. But Paul's writing here and saying, don't give up just because you don't see the harvest coming from the spirit.

Continue to walk in that. And so Jacob, you remember, he's our man of the covenant. Abraham, father of faith. Isaac, the son of promise. Jacob now, the next in line, the man of the covenant.

We looked at a couple weeks ago, how to identify a Laban. When Jacob first showed up in Haran, how do I identify a Laban? We're not going to go back through all that. And then last week we looked at how to live with a Laban.

[3 : 23] How do you do that? And we're not going to go back through all that. But today we're going to look at how do you leave a Laban? How do you leave Laban behind? So let's pick up again in verse 17.

Then Jacob rose up and set his sons and his wives upon camels. And this kind of gives us an idea of how old his sons are. They're young. The oldest, Reuben, would be 13 at this point.

He could be about that. And then the rest of them, they're on down. They're young. They're children. And so he says, let's load up the caravan. It was, I'm sure, a Dodge caravan. And he says, let's go. We're going to go back home. We're leaving.

I don't know if you've ever seen the Norman Rockwell painting. It's what it's called now. Going and Coming, I think. And there's the image of him going. And they're all excited. And everybody's like, woo-hoo.

And Norman Rockwell, he was what, painting in the 50s, I think? It's such an iconic picture of America, of what it was. But I'm like, you look at Grandma in the back. And then there's going.

[4 : 23] Everybody's excited. And then after, you know, oh, boy. Everybody's kind of deflated.

Grandma's just the same in the back. It's just awesome. Such a picture of stability that the family is in what America once was.

And so he says, let's go back home. And Jacob is in Haran. That's the box at the top. He's 300 miles away from where he's going to be heading home, to Bethel, back to the land of promise, back to Israel, back to Canaan, 300 miles.

That's quite a journey with his two wives and his multiplicity of children here that he's heading back home. And so he says, come on, load up the kids.

And he carried away all his cattle and all his goods, which he had gotten, the cattle of his getting, which he had gotten in Paddan Aram, for to go to Isaac, his father, in the land of Canaan. It was time for Jacob to leave.

Proverbs 14, verse 7 says, Go from the presence of a foolish man when you perceive not in him the lips of knowledge. Canaan, I mean Canaan, Laban was definitely that.

[5 : 25] Laban was a foolish man. And yet Jacob didn't just say, you know what, Laban? I'm through with you. I'm out of here. I've been here 20 years with you. You haven't changed a bit. I'm gone. It wasn't for him to decide, was it?

Jacob's duration with Laban was determined by God. So you just saw in verse 13 there where he said, hey, it's time to return. Return to the land of promise, Jacob. And there's a principle here that only the Lord knows when going back is the appropriate path for moving forward.

Scripture tells us that having put our hands to the plow and looking back, no man is worthy. No man is fit for the kingdom of heaven. So if you're, like I said, we don't plow anymore. We don't put our hand to a plow. But when you're cutting that first furrow, there's nothing to go by.

You know, and you're behind the ox and you've got the plow. You have to set your sights in the horizon on the distance or you're going to be all over the place. If you look back, you're going to be really squiggly. Today it's like driving, right?

You're driving and look to this left, you look to the right. Okay. But if you try and drive and look behind you, it's not going to last too long. Eventually you're going to be somewhere where you shouldn't be. So no man having put his hand to the wheel and looking back is fit for the kingdom of heaven.

[6 : 34] We're also told that we're to forget that which is behind, forgetting that which is behind and reaching forth under that which is before. I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. I don't hold on to things that are behind me.

I press on and move on. Jesus, when he sent out the disciples, the 12 and then the 70, he said, hey, in whatsoever house that they welcome, you abide there. Stay there. If not, then just leave and move on.

It's like, well, wait a minute, Lord. I think I should make a case for myself. I think I should defend myself. What do you mean just move on? What about that relationship? What about these issues over here? Only the Lord knows when going back is the appropriate path for going forward.

We move forward in Christ. We continue to follow him. And only he knows when it's time to say, hey, we're going to revisit that. That thing that I had you move on from. For Jacob, what was he going back to?

From the natural perspective, he was going back to Esau and Isaac. He was going back to anger because he had stolen the birthright. He was going back to distrust. He'd broken trust with his father and with his brother.

[7 : 39] He was going back to heartbreak. The heartbreak of Isaac, if you remember how sad he was. Esau lifted up his voice and wept. He was going back to loss. He will not see his mother again. Rebecca has died.

To Jacob, he's got Laban behind him and he's got this family mess in front of him. And the Lord says, go back to that. But what the Lord knows from God's perspective, he knows he's going to go back to forgiveness.

God has already worked. He's going back to restoration. He's going back to a father. And he's going back to a promise. That's what's ahead of him. So that's Jacob now.

Jacob is heading out. And in verse 19, we see in Laban, Laban went to shear his sheep. This gives us some context as they're loading up the caravan and heading out. Laban went to shear his sheep and Rachel had stolen the images that were her father's.

Okay, that's some interesting information. Or if you remember, Jacob and Laban had split the flock. He had Jacob's flock and Laban took his and went three days away from Jacob's. He's like, we're not going to mix these at all.

[8 : 36] So Laban's heading out to go and be part of the sheep shearing. It was a long process. And Rachel, it says, had stolen the images of her father. We'll talk about that in a second. But as Jacob gets ready to leave, Laban's presence or absence at this time of Jacob's leaving, it's not going to make any difference.

You could think, well, Jacob, maybe you should say goodbye to Laban. But it's really not going to make any difference because Laban was already absent from this relationship. In his heart, Laban was already long gone.

So Jacob now takes advantage of this moment to head out. If you remember, though, there's something interesting here about Laban's cattle. Back last week, we looked in Genesis 30.

And it tells us that Jacob, through this process of like breeding them out and animal husbandry directed by the Lord, that Laban's cattle were feebler and Jacob's were stronger.

So Jacob hears, oh, Laban's going out to shear his sheep. You know what? I think I'm going to leave now. Because when Laban shows up and says, where's my flock?

[9 : 41] And he sees all these scrawny little sheep running around. It's probably not going to endear him to Jacob at that time. So Jacob said, this is a good time to go. The Lord's called me to leave. Let's go.

But why did Rachel take Laban's gods? Laban has known of the one true God since the unnamed servant sent by Abraham to get Isaac's bride, Rebecca, Jacob's mother.

Laban has known of the one true God since then. The sad thing, by the time, we're not going to finish this chapter this week. By the time we finish chapter 31, Laban's the same guy. 20 plus years. Possibly 40 years. Wait, no. Jacob was 72 when he left Haran. He's been 20 years with Laban. So 90, almost 100 years. The man hasn't changed. He's the same dude.

He hasn't grown at all. Rachel, why are you taking your father's idols? What good did they do him? And at some point, Rachel, you're going to have to deal with these.

[10 : 41] Because idols always have to be dealt with. And they will always cause trouble for the future. Family idols are best left behind. They don't know what your family idols are.

You know, maybe you have that in your family. Maybe there's pressure. Maybe they're only ones that believe in your household. And there's this pressure to act a certain way or to do a certain thing. Leave them behind. But she decides to bring them with her.

And in verse 20, And so Jacob stole away, unawares to Laban the Syrian. Laban didn't know.

Jacob packed up. Says, come on, kids. Let's go. And so he fled with all that he had. And he rose up and passed over the river and set his face toward the Mount Gilead.

We'll go back to our map real quick. That was one verse that covered, I don't know, two weeks of journey. A week and a half of journey. 300 miles. The river that he crossed over is the Jabbok River. We're going to see that eventually when he meets up with Esau. The Jabbok flows. The Jordan flows north and south. Jabbok is a tributary that flows east and west into the Jordan.

[11 : 43] Jabbok means emptying. And that is where Jacob will wrestle with the Lord and truly be emptied of himself. Gilead means hill of witness. And so Jacob has journeyed these 300 miles with his family.

And he's journeyed all the way back to his home. And it says he stole away unawares. You see, for Jacob to interact with Laban at this point would not have been healthy. We're going to find out later Jacob was afraid at this point when he left.

And I don't think he needed to leave in fear. But a false sense of obligation would not have made anything better at this point. A false sense of having some obligation to Laban.

So the question we said in the beginning there as we go through this, how do you leave a Laban? I mean, this guy has like got hooks in everything. How do you leave him? Well, number one, you just leave.

You just leave. There's no right time to leave a Laban. Laban will never be satisfied or appeased. You're not going to work with him. You're not going to figure this out. It's been 20 years and nothing's changed.

[12:43] It's been about 100 years. He's the same guy. You just leave. But you do so at God's direction. You don't just go, I'm out of here. I'm walking out. I'm done with this. And you do so in faith, not in fear.

And then lastly, without looking back or second guessing. And that's the hard part. You just think, well, should I have done that like that? Was this the right time? Was this the right way? But when it's time to leave a Laban, when God says it's time to go, you follow the Lord.

And that's the hard part. That's where when we look in Luke, where all of those different people who said they're going to follow the Lord. And the Lord said, hey, you know, foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.

You want to come with me, but you're not going to find creature comforts. You want to come with me, but you want everything still to be comfortable at home. Jesus said, I came not to bring peace, but a sword. For a man's foes will be they of his own household.

A father will be set against his son and the son against his father and the father against his son-in-law and son-in-law against his father. And then it goes mother and mother-in-law. The relationships that should be most natural will be divided over Christ.

[13:47] We don't divide because I didn't like how you cooked or because you always wear that same shirt or whatever. We don't divide over that. But Jesus is the priority. And when it's time to leave, we follow him, no matter what kind of trouble it might cause.

In verse 22, when it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob was fled, so remember he's three days away. The flocks we learned before are three days separate from each other. He's three days out shearing his puny sheep.

Probably went really quick. And he took his brethren with him. So Laban comes back. He takes his brethren. He takes his family. And he pursued after him seven days. So Jacob has at least a 10-day head start, but probably longer because there's probably, you know, it said that it was told him on the third day.

So Jacob leaves from Haran. One of Laban's minions goes, oh my word, Jacob just packed up the van and left. And runs three days to Laban and tells him, Laban's got to come three days back. And then he's got to go after Jacob. He's got to get the whole posse together, right? It takes a little while to get a posse together. And so Jacob gets this head start. He makes it all the way down to the northern part of Israel.

[14:56] And it said he overtook him in the Mount Gilead. And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night and said unto him, take heed that you do not speak to Jacob either good or bad.

What a strange dream to have from the Lord. Laban has never heard a word from the Lord all these years. Was it because God wasn't speaking to him? No, it was because Laban didn't want to hear. Remember Laban said to Jacob when Jacob said, I want to go back home six years earlier.

And Laban says, no, no, no, no, don't go. I have perceived God is with you. And as long as you're with me and God's with you, I get blessed. And that's all I really care about. So Laban knew who God was.

But he wasn't interested in having a relationship with him himself. Jacob did not have to deal with Laban. Isn't that interesting? Here he thinks Laban's going to chase him down and here he comes. But by the time he had met face to face, God had used the word of God spoken to Laban to already accomplish his work. God had already dealt with Laban. And the Lord was merciful to Laban, wasn't he?

[16:00] If you remember back in Genesis 12, the Abrahamic covenant, when God first gives his promise to Abraham, he says, God was protecting Laban.

He was being merciful to him, not allowing him to curse Jacob so that a curse would not come upon Laban. But neither was he allowing blessing to come upon Laban either. He said, you're not going to take part in this blessing, Laban.

Those who bless Jacob will be blessed. You're not going to have a part in this. And he wasn't going to be allowed to take any credit for the blessing that God had done in Jacob's life. So Laban shows up and then Laban overtook Jacob.

I think this is funny because it says that Jacob had fled and he pitched his tent there in the mountain. And then Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mount and Laban with his brethren pitched his tent in the mount of Gilead.

Kind of like you look out. Oh no. Honey. Hunnies. Yeah, two eyes. Your dad's here. And he's camping right next to us. Goody. You can't lose a Laban, can you?

[17:07] You leave a Laban and he still comes after you. You just can't lose a Laban. And look what Laban does. Laban makes everything about himself. And Laban said to Jacob, what have you done?

They've stolen away unaware to me and carried away my daughters as captives taken with the sword. Jacob, how could you do this? Now remember how we said it's very easy to second guess when God gives us direction.

And we step in it. We walk in it. It's so easy to second guess. But more important than how we obey. And Laban will always question how we obey. Is that we obey? More important than how we obey is that we obey.

Remember Peter? After the resurrection, Jesus said, I go before you into Galilee. They didn't leave. The disciples hid in the upper room. Right? Jesus appeared to them in the upper room and said, hey, I go before you into Galilee.

Remember that? They're like, okay, okay, now we'll go. Now that we know you're really risen. They get to Galilee. It says they're walking by the shore. And Peter, for whatever reason, he's just like had it at this point. And he looks at the boat and he says, I go fishing.

[18:10] And all the rest of the disciples go, yeah, we go fishing with you. And they all follow him and go fishing too. And they're out and they haven't caught anything. They fished all night. And then someone stands on the shore and he says, little children, have you caught anything?

They said, no. He said, cast your net on the other side of the boat. And they do. And they haul in this great load of fish. And one of the guys there says, it's the master. It's Jesus. Peter, so disheveled, throws his cloak on, his coat on, before diving in the water.

Instead of taking it off, then you're going for a swim. He puts it on and dives in the water, gets to shore. And he's standing on the shore, all dripping wet. And there's Jesus. The rest of the guys come into the boat and they get there. You know, it's like, Peter, you could have just waited.

You know, you didn't have to be so like rash. And look at Peter obeyed. Peter wanted to be with Jesus. It wasn't about how he got there. It was that he got there and he was going to get there.

So soaking wet with his cloak on, whatever, he was going to get there. So Jacob obeyed. And here we see Laban. He's accusing Jacob of what? He says, Jacob, you're a coward.

[19:08] You're a thief. And you're a fool. A Laban will never focus on, or a Laban will want you to focus on your reaction to his actions. A Laban will want to focus on your reaction to his actions.

Without ever being willing to address his actions. What do I mean by that? Somebody treats you like an absolute jerk. Somebody's just totally uncalled for in your life. And you react to that.

You react to that. And they say, look how you're reacting. You need to have forgiveness. You need to have love. How could you react that way? How could you do that? But they will never address the action that caused that reaction.

Laban will always put on you the cause. You know, he's the victim. A Laban will never acknowledge the action that led to your reaction.

And you see here, Laban is attempting to exercise control over this situation. He's trying to use emotional manipulation in his family relationships by using guilt, isn't he? He says, Jacob, you call yourself a man of God.

[20:12] How could you do this? Verse 29. It was in the power of my hand to do you hurt. But the God of your father spoke unto me yesterday night, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob, either good or bad.

You see, despite all the evidence, to the contrary, it was never actually in Laban's power to hurt Jacob. For 20 years, God had protected Jacob. Psalm 27.10 says, When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.

The Lord had watched over Jacob all these years. In verse 30. And now, thou. And now, though, thou wouldst needs be gone.

So, okay, you need to go home because you soar long after your father's house. Oh, you miss your dad. Okay, go home. Hey, but why have you stolen my gods? And here, Laban, Laban can be very religious when it suits him.

You know, Jacob, I mean, you stole my gods. How could you do that? You thief. Laban's gods suited him perfectly, didn't they? Because they were under his control.

[21 : 17] Laban was happy to have a god, but they were under his control. He didn't want a god who he would have to be under the control of his god. If you remember back in Genesis 24, when the unnamed servant comes and he finds Rebecca at the well, and she runs home, and it says Laban saw the gifts, the jewels, the gold, the nose rings, and he was like, ooh.

And it says he ran back to the well. And he gets there, and he, Laban, said, Oh, come in, thou blessed of the Lord. Why do you stand without? For I have prepared the house and room for the camels.

He's like, oh, blessed of the Lord. Come in. He can be very religious when he wants to. He can talk the talk when he wants to. And now Jacob responds, and he answers Laban in verse 31.

And he said to Laban, Because I was afraid. For I said, Now Jacob's going to speak a lot of hard truth to Laban.

Jacob has grown. Jacob has become a man who has put his trust in God. He's watched as God has protected him. He's watched as God has defeated his Laban. And he begins to speak truth to Laban.

[22 : 24] And it's going to totally unmake Laban. And Jacob says, I was afraid. Now Jacob didn't need to fear. And this is the one thing that I would say, Jacob, you didn't need to fear. You could have just left without fear.

God had your back. And God has our back. 2 Timothy 1.7 says, For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. Does that mean we're never afraid?

No, it doesn't mean that. But it means in those fearful situations, God is there to give us a spirit of power, of love, and a sound mind. It also means God will never lead you by fear. Now the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

We are to fear the Lord. What does that mean? We're to reverence him. We're to honor him. We're to respect him. We're to recognize that God is greater. And God is, I am answerable to him.

But I'm not afraid of him. That I'm terrified of him. That he's going to like, you know, smoke me. In Christ. In Christ. He's my father. So he does not lead us by fear.

[23 : 22] If fear is driving you, I have to do that. I'm afraid if I don't. That's not the Lord. The Lord leads. He doesn't push. He doesn't pressure. Now if God's word calls you to do something, and fear comes in because the enemy attacks with fear, well then you can turn and you can say to that fear, hey, God's word told me it's time for me to walk forward in this.

So I'm going to accept a spirit of power, love, and a sound mind. Trusting that that is the one that God has given me. See, Jacob knew that not only would Laban not agree with his decisions, but he was afraid that Laban might go so far as to wreck his family over it.

He knew, Laban, you're not going to like what I'm going to do. And I am so afraid that you're going to say to me, hey, Jacob, you showed up here with nothing. You go with nothing. I'm not letting you take these. My daughters and grandchildren.

And then Jacob says in verse 32, Look, Laban, with whomsoever you find your gods, let him not live. Okay, we worship the one true God. Ain't nobody here got idols.

Oh, Jacob, so you think. Before our brethren, discern thou what is thine with me and take it to thee. For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them.

[24 : 32] Look at Jacob knows he's righteous before Laban. If you remember back in Genesis 30, when he made that deal with Laban over the cattle in verse 33, he says, So shall my righteousness answer for me in time to come, when it shall come to my hire before your face.

And everyone that is not speckled and spotted among the goats and brown among the sheep, that shall be counted, excuse me, stolen with me. Because remember he said, Laban, you take all the white sheep.

I'll take all the speckled and spotted and brown ones. And then God allowed all the cattle, all the sheep, to just give birth to speckled and spotted and brown. And Jacob says, Look, my

righteousness will answer for me in time to come.

There will be a time where we'll all stand together and you're not going to be able to gainsay me. And this is that time before Laban, before all his brethren. He's like, look it, find it. Go ahead. Look for something that's of your house that I've stolen.

Rachel had stolen the idols. Rachel's decision to withhold information from her husband undermined his credibility and put him in a compromised position. And it placed her in a dangerous position.

[25 : 33] Jacob just said, hey, if you find these gods on someone, that person's not going to live. Rachel's like, and she runs back to her tent. I'm like, I've got to hide these.

But she withheld this information from her husband. We know that dishonesty in marriage is destructive, right? Very destructive. I mean, if you lie to your spouse, that's going to be extremely destructive.

But a lack of communication can result in the same outcome. Rachel chose to withhold this information from Jacob. It resulted in the same outcome as if she had just straight up lied to him. And when we don't communicate in marriage, we can put each other in a compromising position. We can undermine each other's credibility. And we can place one another in dangerous positions in our marriages. Now, those of you who aren't married, that's not going to be a problem for you in your marriage.

But it can be in your relationships. All relationship requires truth, requires sacrifice of yourself. Relationship is continual sacrifice. Do you realize that?

[26 : 31] Like, if I'm going to hang out and talk with Eddie, he's got to sacrifice to listen to me go on and on and on and on, right? Then I got to be quiet and sacrifice and listen to him, right?

There's sacrifices, give and take. A one-sided relationship is not a relationship. So now Laban, Laban's lack of trust and respect for Jacob is going to be on full display in front of the entire family here.

Laban runs into Jacob's tent. So Laban went into Jacob's tent. Well, he didn't find anything. Did you find anything? Laban? No. I'm going to check Leah's tent. Did you find anything, Laban? Nope. He goes into the two maidservants' tent, but he found them not.

And then from Leah's tent, he goes into Rachel's tent, last. Can you tell who's daddy's favorite? Surely it wouldn't be with Rachel. Now, Rachel had taken the images and she'd put them in the camel's furniture.

She put them in the saddlebags. And she sat on them. And Laban searched all the tent, but found them not. And she said to her father, and this is just kind of sickening.

[27 : 29] Look how she talks with him and look how he expects her to react. This is like the interaction I mean. Look how he expects her to treat him. And she said to her father, let it not displease my Lord that I cannot rise up before thee.

When dad comes into the room, you stand. Like, seriously? Come on. What? It's a sad relationship that is what it's broken down into, what it's become.

She says, let it not displease my Lord that I cannot rise up before thee for the custom of women is upon me. She wasn't feeling good. She says, I'm not getting up. And he's got two girls.

He's like, I know how that goes. Don't get up. Stay there. And he searched, but found not the images. See, Rachel might have thought at this point that she was getting back at Laban. I'm gonna hide these.

He's not gonna get them. I'm gonna get back at him. Maybe she thought she was helping Jacob, helping her husband. But this dishonesty right now is gonna put a wedge between her and her husband. She can't go to Jacob and say, I got the idols.

[28 : 30] Yeah, you gotta kill me now. I mean, it's just, this is completely driven a wedge. See, what started out as just information she withheld, just a lack of communication, has become dishonesty, has become a wedge, and is just gonna lead to further problems down the line.

But for you and I, how do you know if you have a false god? Laban had a bunch of false gods. How do you know you have a false god? Well, first, you know you have a false god when your god can be taken, okay? If anybody takes your god from you, it's like, gosh, shoot.

It wasn't as strong as I thought it was. If anyone can take your god, what is your god? Is it your joy, your peace, your composure? Is it your own free time?

Is it your hobby? Is it whatever? And someone takes that from you? You know you have a false god if your god can be hidden, if you can't find your god. Or even worse, if you can hide your god from someone else.

I don't want anyone to know about that. I'm just gonna keep this over here. What is an idol? An idol is something that takes the place of the one true god. It's something that I put in the place of something that god should have.

[29 : 34] This is god's time. I'm gonna give it to this instead. That's an idol. Oh, I should worship god. I'm gonna give it to this instead. Well, that's an idol. And then you know you have a false god when your god can be sat on.

In other words, your god has no power, right? I mean, if these gods are even somewhat real, had some power, you'd think they'd be like, Laban, Laban, she's sitting at us, you know?

Completely false. You know you have a false god when it has no power at all and someone can just take it and go, and there's your god. Now Jacob, understandably, gets a little hot under the collar.

And Jacob was wroth and he chode with Laban. Just means like he just went at him. And Jacob answered and said to Laban, what is my trespass?

Literally rebellion. I've never rebelled against you. What is my sin? My misstep? My slip up? I've never slipped up, Laban, that you have so hotly pursued after me.

[30 : 33] That word hotly pursued literally means to burn to flame. Laban was on fire coming to take out Jacob. He says, what have I done to you? You've so hotly pursued after me.

Wherefore, thou hast searched all my stuff. And what hast thou found of all thy household stuff? Set it here before my brethren and thy brethren that they may judge betwixt us.

This is a reckoning for Laban. This man has walked this way for a hundred years. He's an old guy who's used and abused people and now Jacob's like, here we are.

We're all here. You found nothing. You have nothing. For Jacob, you see, Laban had run out of excuses at this point and Jacob is calling him on it. The sad thing is Laban should have known the man Jacob had become.

He should have known that. Jacob, the man who at one time used deception as his means for gain, had now learned the value of integrity. 20 years with Laban, he's like, dude, I'm not going to be like this guy.

[31 : 35] I might have once been like it. I am not going to be a Laban. Honeys, his two wives, Rachel and Leah, girls, I'm not going to be like your dad. There's no way I'm going to be like this guy.

You see, Jacob was a Laban when he left home, when he deceived Isaac, when he deceived Esau. And he gets to Laban and he has never once misstepped with Laban.

He's never rebelled against Laban. And yet Laban is holding over Jacob his past. Laban wasn't even a part of it, but he's like, I heard that you're a deceiver. And he's holding his past over him. That's what a Laban does.

But Jacob now had learned the value of integrity. What is integrity? It means honest, whole, nothing to hide. I'm in civil engineering, so we do construction.

And you look at a situation like, well, that building has to have integrity. Right? In other words, it has to be whole. It has to withstand something. It has to be complete. And I think for Jacob here, nothing to hide.

[32 : 33] He's like, I got nothing to hide, Laban, and you know it. You've searched everything. And Jacob had learned what Paul would tell us in Ephesians 4, 28. It says, let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands, the thing which is good, he may have to give to him that needs.

Let him that steals, steal no more. Jacob had learned that. He's like, I'm not going to steal anymore. Then I like this proverb. Proverbs 11, 3. The integrity of the upright shall guide them, but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.

Is that not like Jacob and Laban in that verse? The integrity of the upright shall guide them. Jacob had chosen the path of integrity and God was guiding him. But the perverseness, the twistedness, the deceit of transgressors, it's going to eventually, just like we read, you're going to reap what you sow.

It will destroy them. And here we see, where have the years gone? Verse 38. It says, this 20 years have I been with you. Laban, I've lived with you 20 years.

I've served you. I've loved you. I've tried to do the best by you. Your ewes and your she goats have not cast their young and the rams of the flock have I not eaten. Jacob says, I was a true shepherd. [33 : 48] A true shepherd does not use his position to take advantage of the flock. He's like, I didn't use my position as shepherd to take advantage of your flock. I was a good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.

Jacob, the man of the covenant as we looked at before, like a picture of the good shepherd, our good shepherd, Jesus, who gives his life for the sheep, who doesn't use his position as shepherd to take advantage of the flock, but feeds us and cares for us.

And Jacob says, that which was torn in verse 39, that which was torn of the beasts, any of your flock, Laban, that got attacked or injured or killed, I didn't bring it to you but I bear the loss of it. Of my hand did you require it. Laban, that was one of the deals you made with me. You said, hey, by the way, anything happens under your watch, you break it, you buy it. Of my hand did you require it, whether stolen by day, I mean, yeah, stolen by day or stolen by night.

Thus was I in the day, drought consumed me and the frost by night and my sleep departed from my eyes. You see, Laban could accuse, he could manipulate, he could defraud but what he could not do, he could not deny the man of integrity that Jacob had become.

[35 : 01] 1 Peter 2.15 says, for so is the will of God that with well doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. That our well doing, they're just walking by faith, walking in the spirit, puts to silence the ignorance of the foolish men.

Jacob bore this weight of integrity. It wasn't easy. It cost him. There is a weight to integrity. There is a cost. It's not an easy road to go it alone. Jesus said, broad is the way that leads to destruction, narrow is the way that leads to life and few there be that find it.

It's a narrow road. Road. What is the weight of integrity? Well, I think Jacob just told us what it was. The weight of integrity, being a man of integrity, a woman of integrity, it's carrying the weight of sacrifice.

He says, that which was torn of the beast, I didn't bring it to you. I sacrificed that myself. I took that out of my own wages. It's the weight of loss. I bore the loss, Laban. The weight of integrity is to bear the weight of trials.

He says, man, the drought consumed me by day. I was freezing cold at night. And then lastly, the weight of care and sleep departed from my eyes. I couldn't even go to sleep. I was so worried about what was going to happen to those sheep.

[36 : 13] He said, Laban, that's the man I was. I was with you for 20 years and you know who I was. Paul will tell us, or he'll write to the Galatians when they're kind of questioning, you know, he's giving credence to his apostleship.

He says this in verse 17 of chapter 6. It's kind of like a mic drop for him. He's like, look it, from now on, let no man trouble me for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. You don't think I'm a true apostle?

Oh, let me show you the scars on my back. Let me show you the whipping I got. I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Jacob could say, Laban, I bear in my body the person I've been towards you.

In verse 41, thus have I been 20 years in your house. I served you 14 years for your two daughters, six years for your cattle, and you, you've changed my wages 10 times.

Laban, you have been anything but faithful and consistent. Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac had been with me. Surely thou hath sent me away empty.

[37 : 16] But God has seen mine affliction and the labor of my hands and rebuked you yesternight. Laban's like, oh, the God of your father has appeared to me in a dream. I'm spiritual too. He's like, no, Laban, God rebuked you. Here we see Jacob, a man of integrity, a man of God, having spiritual discernment and able to speak truth into Laban's life.

You know, Jesus, at the Last Supper, you know, next week's Palm Sunday and then the week after we celebrate Easter, after Judas had left the room and had gone to do what he was going to do, Jesus begins to speak truth to his disciples that they had not yet heard before.

And one of the things he says in John 14, starting verse 7, he says, if you'd known me, you should have known my father also. And from henceforth, you know him and have seen him.

Hey, do you know Jesus? Say, oh, I'd like to know God. You know Jesus? You know God. And Philip, one of his disciples, said unto him, oh, Lord, show us the father and it suffices us. He's like,

yes, show us the father.

I know Peter, James, and John, they got to go on the Mount of Transfiguration with you. They saw Moses and Elijah. But if you show us the father, that'd be really cool. And Jesus said unto him, have I been so long a time with you and yet you've not known me, Philip?

[38 : 31] Man, they were with Jesus' whole ministry and Jesus says, you don't know me? I can spend time with Jesus. I can follow Jesus. I can be a disciple of Jesus and not really know the character and nature of Jesus.

He that has seen me has seen the father. And how sayeth thou then, show us the father? He says, you know me. You've been with me and you know me. We know Jesus. We know the heart he has for us.

Here Laban, completely clueless to the fact that the man of the covenant, the one who was blessed by God, carrying God's covenant and promise, had lived among him.

All he could see was what he could benefit from it. Let's move on to verse 43. And Laban answered and said unto Jacob.

And I think Laban just absolutely loses it at this point. You see, up to this point, Laban has never had respect for Jacob as head of his house. These are my children, my daughters, my stuff.

[39 : 32] He's never respected Jacob. And Jacob has just stood up to him in truth, in the truth of God's word, in his integrity. And Laban now just in front of everybody comes undone.

Matthew 12, 34, Jesus speaking to the Pharisees says, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. All of Laban's pretenses and facades have been broken down. And now in verse 43, Laban answers and says to Jacob, these daughters are my daughters and these children are my children and these cattle are my cattle and all that you see is mine.

What can I do unto these my daughters this day or unto their children which they have born? Laban reveals his heart. It's all about him.

You know, up to this point Laban's not respected Jacob and now Jacob has stood up to him in truth and Laban now realizes way too late that he has lost everything.

Laban's lost his wealth, his family and he lost his gods. And Laban thinks he has this relationship with his family. He's like, you didn't let me say goodbye to my children and I'm sure, oh, and these are my children and these are my daughters.

[40 : 40] A relationship is more than proximity and family ties, isn't it? Laban had lived 20 years with Jacob, Rachel and Leah and their children. 20 years he lived close to them.

20 years they had family ties and after 20 years he has no relationship with them whatsoever.

Makes me think of in 1 Samuel 26 verses 17 through 19, David sneaks down into Saul's camp and says that the Lord put a deep sleep on them.

Saul's seeking David to kill him. Saul is David's father-in-law and David is the anointed king but Saul is holding on to that kingship and so God puts a deep sleep over the camp of Israel and David and Abishai, one of his generals, they sneak into the camp and they grab Saul's watering jug and his spear from next to his head and then they kind of run up to the other side of like this cliff where they're way up out of reach of him and in Israel you have these like deep canyons, these wadis that are cut by when the water, when it rains, it cuts them deep and so you can stand on one side and someone on the other side and it might take them hours to get down and to get back up.

So David knows he's safe and he calls out to Saul and Saul knew David's voice and said, is this the voice, my son David, this thy voice? And David said, it is my voice, my Lord, O King.

And he said, wherefore does my Lord thus pursue after his servant? For what have I done? Or what evil is in my hand? Now therefore I pray thee, let my Lord the King hear the words of his servant.

[42 : 08] If the Lord have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering. Look, if I've done something wrong, I'll make amends. But if it be the children of men that have stirred thee up against me, cursed be they before the Lord, for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord, saying, go serve other gods.

Laban, you've brought this on yourself. You had an opportunity to have Jacob and his family there and the blessing that came from that, but you have forced Jacob out. You should have known the man that he was.

And here we see Laban attributing the blessings of God. He said, these are my children. These are my daughters. This is my stuff. He's attributing the blessing of God to his own self-efforts.

And the Labans of our life may not be a person. You know, when I say you need to leave a Laban, look, you can't, if you're married, you can't look at your spouse and go, Laban, I'm out of here and leave him. That's not what I'm talking about.

The best way to leave a Laban is to leave him in God's hands. We place him in the Lord's hands and let him deal with him. There's Labans in our lives. There's a Laban of the flesh that continually tries to hound me.

[43 : 14] No matter how many times I leave it, it follows me. It's there again. It's always questioning my obedience and saying, oh, you call yourself a Christian. You've got a false God over here. How could you respond that way to that person?

There's a Laban of the flesh that's there. There's a Laban of the world, which is always there. Always there to chase us down and say, hey, you don't need to go home. Six years ago, Jacob wanted to go home.

He says, you don't need to go home. Stay here. I'll make a deal with you. It'll work out good. You're not going to get anything from that deal. It's going to change your wages ten times and you're going to go away empty. Laban is attributing the blessings of God to his self-efforts.

But self-effort does something very unique. Self-effort, our self-effort between us and God, you know, a self-made man, it separates us. It leaves us empty and it removes us away from God. Romans 11, verse 6 says that we're saved by grace. And if by grace, then it is no more works, otherwise grace is no more grace. This is Paul using some very kindergarten logic here.

[44 : 15] Okay? If the block is square, it's not round. If the block is round, it's not square. That's what he just said. If it's grace, it's not works. Otherwise, it can't be grace because they're mutually exclusive.

And then he says, if it's works, then it can't be grace because then work is no more work. We do not come to God on self-effort. Whenever we bring in self-effort into our relationship with God, we snuff out the grace.

Not the grace that God is like, oh, you're not saved. But on our walk with the Lord, we're now trying to walk with the Lord through self-effort. We're now trying to obtain God's promises that he gives freely through some means that I'm doing or something that I hope God's going to be pleased with. Maybe then he'll reward me. Maybe then he'll pay me. Maybe then I'll... 1 Corinthians 1, verse 29 says that no flesh should glory in his presence. Now that's a longer section that he then gets into and he ends by saying the purpose is that no flesh should glory in God's presence.

That God uses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise so that no flesh is going to stand before God. No man is going to stand before God and say, I did it. I was a self-made man and I made it. No, we're not.

[45 : 25] Self-effort. What did it do for Laban? Self-effort had led Laban to seek control in his family, his world, and his gods. I'm going to control my family. I'm going to control my whole world.

My employer. My employees. My riches. My wealth. I'm going to secure my future. My 401k. Oh, and I'm also going to control my gods. I'm not going to have a God telling me what to do. Man, that's self.

That's flesh. That's self-effort. I don't want God telling me what to do. I may want God's blessing, but I want to determine what I'm going to do. Proverbs 29, verse 1 says, He that being often reproved, hardening his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy.

Look at that. That long process. He that being often, continually reproved. God's speaking to you saying, turn back. Turn back from that. It's going to end in destruction. Please.

I love you. You're free. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away. All things have become new. Christ came to set us free. Just came to set us free. And he who the Son sets free is free indeed.

[46 : 28] But man, if you persist and you persist and you harden your heart, you harden your neck, you say, no, I'm going to do it my way. Well, then suddenly, you will reap what you sow.

Suddenly and without remedy, it will crash down upon you. A self-made man is a man who ultimately has nothing to show for himself. Has absolutely nothing to show for himself.

Jesus said in Matthew 16, verses 24 through 26, Jesus speaking to his disciples said, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it. And whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. If you try to hold on to your life, you're going to lose it because you can't hold on to it.

It's not meant to be held on to. Whoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. Literally, that means for the sake of Christ, I fling it away. I'm not going to try to do this on my own because I can't.

[47 : 25] I'm not good enough. He will find it. Literally, he will stumble upon it. All of a sudden, we realize, I didn't lose anything. I gained everything. By giving up self, I gained everything.

I gained peace and joy. I gained Jesus in eternity. I gained the family of God. I gained everything.

For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?

Or what shall a man gain or give in exchange for his soul? What are you going to give in exchange for your soul? What's worth your soul, your eternity? What's worth that? What's it worth if you gain the whole world and you live like kings and you die and go to hell?

That's a valid point, but this is speaking to his disciples here. This is speaking to those who are following Jesus. And Jesus would say to those that are following him, what is a man profited if he gained the whole world and lose his own soul?

That word soul there is like psyche, meaning life. Like, what did you gain? You lost your entire life. Laban gets to the end of his life and looks back and says, I have nothing. I gained everything but lost everything, didn't I?

[48 : 30] What are you going to give in exchange for that? Told you it was all itch and bother, wasn't it? It was just Laban, a self-made man as one who ultimately has nothing to show for it.

But a Christ-made man? A Christ-made man is one who has found something so much greater than himself. A Christ-made man is one who has found something he never could have found in his own effort.

2 Corinthians 5, verses 16 and 17 say, Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh. It's not about our self-effort. We're not going to any longer look at people on the terms of their nature and their flesh.

Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he's a new creation. Old things are passed away. Behold, all things have become new. All things. And then when we looked at 1 Corinthians 1, 29, that no flesh should glory in his presence, that's not a bad thing because look what we get to glory in.

But of him, of God, are you in Christ Jesus, freely. God has placed you in Jesus by his grace. Of God are you in Christ Jesus. It's a free gift. And then, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

[49 : 48] We've been placed in Christ freely by God, and then freely God has made Jesus be to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. You can't get those on your own.

You can't get those through self-effort. But in Christ, through the free gift of his grace and salvation, you can leave Laban behind. You can leave the Laban of yourself behind.

You don't have to try and constantly manipulate situations and work things out for your control. He can let it go. And you can walk forward with Jesus in wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

That according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. Man, we have so much to glory. We have Jesus.

God has defeated every Laban of our lives. Sin, the flesh, the world, the devil, they're gone. Now they can try and hunt us down. It doesn't matter. The word of God deals with them.

[50 : 48] No matter how many times they show up in our lives, the word of God has already dealt with them. So Laban shows up and the Lord's like, hey, Jacob, I already took care of this. I already took care of this. Don't worry about it.

Laban's gonna go back. I mean, Jacob's gonna go back to this family situation that's like, he doesn't know how to handle it. The Lord's already gone ahead of him in that. So today, as we close, man, I just encourage you, give it up.

How do you leave a Laban? You just leave. Just leave it. It's scary because you don't know what's next. Man, I've chosen to follow Jesus. What am I gonna do now?

I don't just keep following. He'll take care of it. It's a scary thing to step out in faith, not knowing how your decision to follow Christ is gonna affect your family relationships.

Not knowing how getting up and leaving the family idols, the family gods, is gonna affect a relationship. but as we do that, we glory in what the Lord has done.

[51 : 48] He has placed us freely in Christ. We are new creations. So Father, we're gonna pray and we're just gonna sit with you now, Lord. We wanna receive again, Lord, the promises of God.

We wanna receive in our life, Lord, the grace of God. But Lord, to do that, we've kinda gotta stop and leave behind these self-efforts.

Lord, it is all itch and bother, the life of the flesh, trying to work things out on my own, trying to figure out life on my own. You know what? Those 20 years go by real quick.

Those 40 years go by real fast. Those 100 years, we're not gonna live 100 years. They go by really fast. And we all must come to our end and we must be reckoned with before God.

But we don't have to come on our own terms. I don't have to try and convince you when I know I've already fallen short. I can come to Jesus, the man of the covenant, the good shepherd, and receive freely from his grace.

[52 : 49] So Lord, I pray if there's anyone here who doesn't know you, who has not chosen to follow the good shepherd, who's not gotten up and left behind whatever, their sin, their flesh, to follow Jesus, that they would do that today.

They wouldn't worry about the future because it's in your hands and it's a blessing. They wouldn't worry about the past. It's because you've already spoken your word into it and taken care of it. And Lord, for those of us who know you, Lord, we just stop trying so hard to please you when you're already pleased with us.

It is of Christ that we are made unto you wisdom and righteousness and justification, redemption. I don't have to do this on my own. I'm so glad for that. And I pray that you would minister among us now, Lord, by your Holy Spirit, that the gifts would be working among us.

And just like Laban had to hear the truth and it wasn't always comfortable, Lord, as you've spoken the truth to our hearts, let us not be like Laban who hardens his heart. But today, Lord, maybe we've hardened our heart every time.

Maybe today, Lord, will be the day that we'll say, okay, I'm headed for destruction. Lord, will you turn me back today? We love you, Jesus. Minister your grace to us, we pray.

[54 : 01] In Jesus' name, Amen.