

Jacob's Exodus

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[0 : 00] I want to invite you to open up in your Bibles to the book of Genesis chapter 31.

We will read down through verse 21 and then we will work our way through the rest of this passage throughout the course of the sermon.

But we're going to read these first 21 verses here in a moment. But by way of reminder, we are walking through the lives of the patriarchs and we are now in the middle of the life of Jacob, the grandson of Abraham, the son of Isaac.

And this period of Jacob's life has been, for the most part, a period in which Jacob is learning life's lessons the difficult way.

He's in a foreign land. He's had to run away from home because his own brother wants to take his life. He is in a foreign land. While he is in that foreign land, he is forced to serve his father-in-law practically as a slave in order to gain the hand of his wife in marriage, both of his wives.

[1 : 23] He's caused to serve a further six years because he has nothing to call his own. After 14 years of serving his father-in-law, he has nothing to call his own, nothing by which he might support his family apart from his father-in-law's oversight and ultimately control of him in his life.

He has had to learn some difficult lessons in these years in exile in the land of Paddan Aram. But we also saw last week that finally we are beginning to see some positive signs and turns in the life of Jacob.

Finally, we are beginning to see, though he has not yet used the words, my God, when referring to the Lord, he is finally, though, beginning to make some positive movements.

In fact, he said in chapter 30 that he longed to return to the land that had been promised to Abraham and to Isaac and indeed to him as well.

We already know by the time we arrive at chapter 31 that Jacob has a longing to return home. That longing has been delayed by six years as he works so that he might have something to call his own, so that he doesn't have to return back to the land of promise empty handed.

[2 : 40] And that's where we are picking up this morning in chapter 31. So I want to invite you to stand to your feet as we read the first portion of this chapter together. Moses writes, Now Jacob heard that the sons of Laban were saying, Jacob has taken all that was our father's, and from what was our father's he has gained all this wealth.

And Jacob saw that Laban did not regard him with favor as before. Then the Lord said to Jacob, Return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you.

So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah into the field where his flock was and said to them, I see that your father does not regard me with favor as he did before, but the God of my father has been with me.

You know that I have served your father with all my strength, yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times. But God did not permit him to harm me.

If he said the spotted shall be your wages, then the flock bore spotted. And if he said the stripes shall be your wages, then all the flock bore striped. Thus God has taken away the livestock of your father and given them to me.

[3 : 51] In the breeding season of the flock I lifted up my eyes and saw in a dream that the goats that mated with the flock were striped, spotted, and mottled. Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, Jacob, and I said, Here I am.

And he said, Lift up your eyes and see all the goats that mate with the flock are striped, spotted, and mottled, for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. I am the God of Bethel where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me.

Now arise, go out from this land and return to the land of your kindred. Then Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, Is there any portion or inheritance left to us in our father's house? Are we not regarded by him as foreigners? For he has sold us and he has indeed devoured all our money. All the wealth that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and to our children. Now then, whatever God has said to you, do. So Jacob arose and set his sons and his wives on camels. He drove away all his livestock, all his property that he had gained, the livestock in his possession that he had acquired in Paddan Aram, to go to the land of Canaan to his father Isaac. [4 : 59] Laban had gone to shear his sheep. And Rachel stole her father's household gods. And Jacob tricked Laban the Aramean by not telling him that he intended to flee. He fled with all that he had and arose and crossed the Euphrates and set his face toward the hill country of Gilead.

Father, we thank you for this chapter, for what we see about Jacob. But more importantly, we thank you that we can see even in this story, glimpses of the glory of Jesus.

So help us to see those things as we meditate on your word. We ask these things in Christ's name. Amen. You guys take a seat. So recently, a prominent evangelical pastor made a statement in one of his sermons that Christians really need to find a way to unhitch themselves from the Old Testament.

That we need to distance ourselves from the stories of the Old Testament, from the way that God is portrayed in the Old Testament. We need to distance ourselves.

And he said that we need to come to grips with the reality that because God is doing a new thing in Christ and there is a new covenant now, we don't really need to have anything to do with the Old Testament.

[6 : 17] In fact, his argument was that the Old Testament presents a barrier to those who do not know Christ with all of its difficult stories and difficult passages.

And the way that God is presented there, he says that it presents a kind of barrier for many of those who would come to Christ, but they won't because of the God they see in the Old Testament or the way that God is portrayed there.

And so he says we need to let go of the Old Testament. We need to be willing to pivot and turn away from the Old Testament. Now it is true that if you're thinking of the law in particular, and we're thinking of the relationship that the nation of Israel had to the law of Moses, then there has been a fundamental shift in change now that Christ has come, now that he has inaugurated what is called the New Covenant in the New Testament.

There has been a fundamental shift in the way that we ought to regard the law, the way that we ought to treat the law of Moses. Paul says over and over that we are no longer under the law. He says that the law was sent as a tutor until Christ should come. And so it is true, it is a reality that we regard the law of Moses, all those commandments in Leviticus and in Deuteronomy and in the book of Exodus, we regard them differently than would a Jew living under the law prior to the coming of Christ.

[7 : 40] That is true. Our relationship to the law has changed. That is true. But to say that we need to unhitch ourselves from the Old Testament in its entirety, though acknowledging it as in some way inspired by God, but then pivoting it away from it as if it serves no more purpose for us, I think is to make a grave mistake, and not merely because I am in the middle of a series in the book of Genesis, and I want to justify what we have been doing for the last few months in Genesis.

I think it is a grave mistake because that is not how Jesus and the apostles thought about and talked about the Old Testament. That is not what they say. That is not what they think.

In fact, I want you to hold your place in Genesis 31 and open up to the New Testament to 2 Timothy chapter 3 to a passage that will be familiar to some of you where the Apostle Paul is writing to Timothy, Timothy being a young convert, and one whom Paul has entrusted a great deal to, one whom Paul is able to send in his behalf and in his stead, Timothy who came under Paul's tutelage already having a knowledge of the gospel because he had been taught by his mother.

He had been taught by his grandmother. Which is a reminder to us now on this Mother's Day of the significance and the importance of the discipling role that moms have with their children, especially when their children are small.

So many of the great heroes of the faith throughout church history would attribute most of their early theological training and their grounding in Christ and in the Word of God to the work of their mom.

[9 : 20] We need to honor that. And the Apostle Paul honors that here when he writes this letter to Timothy. And he says in 2 Timothy 3.14, he says, As for you, continue in what you have learned.

Now note that word continue. Continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you have learned it. And we know that he learned it from his mother and his grandmother, women named Lois and Eunice.

We know that from chapter 1 of this book, that they instructed Timothy faithfully in the things of God. But how did they do that? Note verse 15.

How from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings. What would have been the sacred writings for Timothy? What would his mother and grandmother have clung to?

What is it that they would have read to him as he went to sleep at night? What is it that they would have instructed him in during the day as they taught him to read? What book would they have used to show him?

[10:22] It would have been the Old Testament. After all, the New Testament is still in process of being produced. It's not yet been collated and gathered together into one collection. But the Old Testament has.

And they didn't call it the Old Testament. They just called it the Scriptures or the sacred writings. And Paul is saying to Timothy, you have been taught in the Scriptures.

You have been taught in the sacred writings. And note what he's been taught. He says they are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

I mean, that is mind-blowing. The Old Testament is able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Jesus. Consider that for a moment.

The Old Testament can open your eyes to see Jesus. The Old Testament can show you Christ and lead you to salvation through faith in Him. It can do that.

[11:24] Paul says he did it for Timothy. He says his mother and his grandmother taught him from the sacred writings. But that's not all he says in this passage. He goes on and he says, All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

And once again, if we ask the question, what does he mean by all Scripture? Of course, we can include, looking back, we can't include the New Testament in the idea of all Scripture, because the New Testament is referred to as Scripture.

But what did Paul specifically have in mind at the moment of writing this? The sacred writings by which Timothy had been instructed, the Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible, that's what he has in mind.

And he says it's all breathed out by God. But not only that, it's not that we just recognize it is inspired, it is breathed out by God, it's just for those people over there and not for us today.

But Paul says it is presently profitable. Not only can it make you wise for salvation, but it's good and useful for you. It teaches you, it reproves you, it corrects you, it trains you in righteousness.

[12:40] These are all things that Paul believes the Old Testament to be capable of doing. It can do this. We cannot afford to unhitch ourselves from the Old Testament.

We cannot afford to pivot away from the Old Testament, because in doing that, not only will we be depriving ourselves of the backstory that leads up to the coming of Christ in the world, but we will be depriving ourselves of salvation-giving, sanctifying words that come from God Himself.

That's what the Old Testament is. Of course, the New Testament writers have much more to say about the value of the Old Testament for us than just this.

Paul acknowledges, for instance, in 1 Corinthians, if you turn to 1 Corinthians 10, Paul acknowledges that the events recorded in the Old Testament, events such as the life of Jacob, for instance, that these kinds of events were written down not just for ancient Israel so that they could know their family history, they were written for us.

1 Corinthians 10, verse 6. Now these things, referring back to the written account of the Exodus event, now these things took place as examples for us that we might not desire evil as they did.

[14:10] They took place as examples for us believers today. And then move down to verse 11.

These things happened to them, the ancient Israelites, as an example, but, now note carefully, they were written down for our instruction on whom the end of the ages has come.

Who are those upon whom the end of the ages has come? It's New Covenant believers. It's followers of Jesus. It's you. It's me. These things were written down for us.

Not for simply ancient Israel. Not just for the descendants of Abraham. But they're written down for us and for our instruction. Why?

Why are they written down to instruct us? Why have they been preserved through all of these centuries? What is God doing with the Bible? He is, as He says, making us wise for salvation. Yes, even with the Old Testament. I want you to listen carefully and note what the Apostle Peter has to say. Peter says this in 1 Peter 1, verse 10.

[15:24] He says, concerning this salvation, the great salvation that he's been talking about. Then he says, the prophets who prophesied, so that's people like Isaiah or Jeremiah, Moses.

The prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours, searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

And he says, it was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves, but you. So when the prophets wrote, who were they serving? Not ancient Israel.

Not fully. They're mainly serving us today. Believers today. They're serving us by writing down the things that God revealed to them.

So the Old Testament is written for our instruction to make us wise for salvation. And it is written chiefly for that purpose. It's a dangerous thing to turn your attention away from the Old Testament because you will not hear the goodness of the Gospel as it is displayed in its variegated colors throughout the Old Testament witness.

[16:38] It is good. Of course, it's not just the apostles that say these kinds of things. Jesus Himself, after His resurrection, in Luke chapter 24, speaking to some of His disciples, He says, O foolish ones and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

And then He says, was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter His glory? And then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

Beginning with Moses, that would be Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The book's written by Moses. What we're studying now. Starting with Moses, all the prophets, so the whole Old Testament, Jesus sits with these disciples and He interprets to them all the things concerning Himself.

So when Jesus teaches the Old Testament to His followers, He doesn't teach it as the history of Israel. He teaches it as a book about Himself. Let me show you all the ways in which this entire book is ultimately about Me.

The problem is, is that as we read the Old Testament, as we walk through the lives of Abraham or Isaac or even Jacob, we don't see it so often.

[18:06] And so we grow impatient with the Old Testament. Why is it so long? Why are there so many genealogies? Why all of these laws?

You try to do your read through the Bible in a year program and you get through Genesis and Exodus because they're at least entertaining stories and then somewhere in Leviticus you fall away because of all the detailed laws or somewhere in Numbers you fall away because of all the genealogies and it just gets burdensome and difficult because we have a hard time seeing the glory of Jesus displayed in the Old Testament.

So we start to ask ourselves, why is that the case? What is happening? What is preventing me from being able to rejoice in God's revelation of Himself through the Old Testament prophets?

What stands in the way? Well, it could be a number of things. But Paul, for instance, is not ignorant of the reality that the vast majority of people who pick up the Old Testament or in his mind the Scriptures and read them will not be able to see the glory of Jesus as it shines forth from those documents that most people can't see it.

Paul knows that. So if you look, for instance, in 2 Corinthians, he addresses this very issue in 2 Corinthians 3.

[19:30] He speaks of non-believing Jews who possess the Scriptures and they read them on a regular basis. In 2 Corinthians 3.14, he says, to this day, when they read the Old Covenant, that same veil remains unlifted because only through Christ is it taken away.

Yes, to this day, whenever Moses is read... Now, pause for a moment and remember, what we are studying now is Moses. Right?

Genesis is in this category. To this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts. So one of the causes of our blindness to the glory of Jesus in the Old Testament, particularly in the book of Genesis, is the fact that for some of us, a veil remains.

There is something blocking our eyes. We are unable to see it because something stands in the way. And what stands in the way is our own hearts. The beginning of verse 14 said, their minds were hardened.

So our minds or our hearts are hardened apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, apart from faith in Jesus. They are hardened. We are unable to see the glory of Jesus in the Old Testament many times because our hearts prevent us from doing so.

[20 : 54] It's no wonder that a heart that is dead to the things of God, Paul says, you were dead in your trespasses and sins. It is no wonder that it cannot see the gift of life as it is portrayed in the Old Testament.

But then Paul does say at the end of the passage we read, verse 16, when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. It's taken away and now our eyes can see.

Which begs the question, so then why do so many believers have a difficult time with the Old Testament? Why do so many followers of Jesus fail to see the glory of Jesus in the Old Testament? Well, I don't think it's unlike the disciples of Jesus on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24. These are followers of Jesus. These are believers in Christ.

But they need instruction. They're capable of seeing if they've trusted in Christ. But they need to be taught. They need to be shown.

[22 : 05] And then, once they begin to understand, once they begin to see what Christ looks like as He shines forth through the Old Testament, suddenly you begin to see Him everywhere.

You begin to see Him in every corner. And not in some strange allegorical sense where you have to say that every time you see the color red that must be about the blood of Jesus. Not in that sort of artificial way, but in a real authentic way you see all these different ways in which the Old Testament is revealing Jesus to be glorious and worthy of believing.

But we have to be taught those things. We have to be shown the glory of Christ in the Old Covenant Scriptures. And that's why we spend time walking through a book like Genesis.

That's why we don't just run roughshod through it and pass over the difficult passages as quickly as we possibly can as if they're not there because they're confusing and we don't want to get distracted.

That's why we don't do that. That's why we take our time because I want you to be able as you sit down to read your Bible at your dining room table, I want you to be able to read Genesis or Exodus or Ecclesiastes or the Psalms and begin to see the glory of Jesus as it shines through the pages of your Old Testament.

[23 : 31] I want you to be able to do that. So I try as best I can as we walk slowly through the Old Testament. I try to give you glimpses, to point the way, to show you how we can arrive at certain conclusions.

I don't always just say this is what the text means. It would make for shorter sermons. I get that. But I'd like to show you this is why the text means what I'm telling you it means because I want you to possess the skills to be able, already having the veil removed, to be able to see the glory of Jesus in the pages of the Old Testament.

We won't unhitch ourselves from this book. We will glory in this book if we see Jesus in it. So with that in mind, we'll go back to Genesis and we'll think through how we're seeing Jesus on display in the story of the life of Jacob.

Now last week, I told you that in many ways, the life of Jacob foreshadows, it mirrors the life of the nation of Israel.

That's not accidental. This is Jacob who one chapter from now will have his name changed to Israel. The leaders of the 12 tribes of Israel from whom they get their names, they are the sons of Jacob.

[24 : 55] So it's not accidental that we see all these similarities between the life of Jacob and the early history of the nation of Israel. That shouldn't be surprising at all. That's intentional.

That's God providentially arranging history and then inspiring Moses to record what happened in such a way that we can begin to see some connections from one part of the Bible to another part of the Bible.

And one of the key connections, if you want to get to being able to see Christ through this deceiver Jacob, one of the key connections is to see that connection between Jacob, the man Israel, and Jacob's descendants, the nation Israel.

And so last week, we looked at chapter 30 and we noted some of those parallels. We noted some of that foreshadowing. Jacob is driven from the promised land and he sits in a foreign land where he is in servitude, practical slavery to Laban.

Israel is driven from the promised land because of a famine. They are forced to live in Egypt or eventually they come under slavery to Pharaoh. Parallels are intentional.

[26 : 08] It's no accident. But they continue beyond that. We see in this chapter, we see the exodus of Jacob from the land of Paddan Aram.

We see Jacob escaping the fury of his father-in-law who does not want him to be able to leave. Jacob leaving that land because God has come and told him, go back to the land that I promised to your fathers.

And that is exactly what God did with Israel. God said to Israel through Moses, you will return to the land that I promised to your fathers. That's where you're going to go. But it wasn't easy.

It wasn't easy at all. You had all of the plagues and even after the plagues, Pharaoh still pursued them into the wilderness and into the desert all the way to the Red Sea where Pharaoh's army perished.

It wasn't easy. And what we're going to see in this chapter is the exodus of Jacob from the land of Paddan Aram is not easy. It is not simple.

[27 : 11] He is pursued by his father-in-law. There are some other parallels that we will encounter as we finish the story of Jacob in the next two to three weeks. There is, for instance, Jacob's encounter with God in the wilderness where a fundamental change takes place in the life of Jacob.

Israel, of course, encountered God at Mount Sinai in the wilderness. There was a fundamental change in their relationship with the God of their fathers. So the parallels will continue.

But I want us to note as we look at this chapter this morning, some of those parallels between Israel and Israel's history and Jacob's flight, his exodus, out of the land of Paddan Aram.

Now, in the portion of the chapter that we just read, we already talked about it a bit last week because it serves us, the first 21 verses, the first half, really, of this chapter is kind of like a bridge between chapter 30 and the second half of chapter 31 because in many ways it is interpreting the events of chapter 30.

So we read chapter 30 and we are given sort of the man's eye view, right, of the events of Jacob acquiring all of this wealth. And we see that Jacob acquired that wealth by some schemes and some trickery, all the while his father-in-law is scheming against him and we see all these things unfold.

[28 : 34] But Jacob is victorious and so when you arrive at the end of that chapter you find that he increased greatly. He had large flocks. He had female servants, male servants, camels and donkeys. So Jacob is able to gain great wealth in chapter 30.

But chapter 31 looked back on those events and gave us sort of the God's eye view which amazingly enough comes from the mouth of Jacob. Jacob. This period in which Jacob became wealthy we realize was a six year long period in his life.

It wasn't something that happened in the course of one breeding season with the animals. It happened over a period of several years. And from Jacob's, from his perspective now at the end of those six years, he begins to see, like I said, we're seeing some really positive turns at Jacob. He begins to see this was God's doing. This was God fulfilling his promises to me because God told me on my way here that he would be with me. That he would take care of me.

And I told God, if that's true, if you prove yourself to be with me and you make sure that I have something to eat and something to drink, then sure, I will serve you. And God has gone so far above and beyond what Jacob required of him to prove himself faithful to his promises.

[29 : 51] He didn't just give him something to eat and drink. At the end of these six years and the twenty years as a whole, Jacob is now more wealthy than his father-in-law. How does that happen?

That's like the owner of a restaurant, of one particular restaurant in a franchise, like McDonald's or something like that. It's like one particular owner becoming more wealthy than the entire corporation of McDonald's.

That's what Jacob has accomplished. He has not stolen wealth, but he has gained wealth and all that is because of God's faithfulness to his promises.

That's what happened to Israel in the land of Egypt. Yes, they were subservient. Yes, they were slaves as Jacob continues to be even as we enter chapter 31. That's why he has to sneak away.

But they increase greatly. Their numbers multiply. There are tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands from this family that numbered only 70 when they went to Egypt.

[30 : 57] God has greatly blessed them in an amazing way, just as he blessed Jacob. And Jacob can now begin to see at the end of this period of prosperity and blessing from the hand of God, oh, this was God at work.

But more than that, God didn't just provide goods for him and children for him, but God was actually protecting him. Look at verse 7. Though he was cheated several times by Laban, his father-in-law, in the middle of verse 7, Jacob recognizes, but God did not permit him to harm me.

God has been with him. God has been protecting him. He has not allowed Laban or anyone else to bring ultimate harm to Jacob. Has God Himself disciplined Jacob? Yes, He has.

Has God Himself put Jacob through the fire? Yes, He has. But God has not permitted Laban ultimately to do any harm to Jacob. God has proven Himself faithful to all of His promises.

Even to the point at which Jacob's wives, the daughters of Laban, side with Jacob in this great dispute between Laban and Jacob.

[32 : 11] Because even they understand our father has cheated him and He has cheated us by cheating our husband. We too now lie without any kind of inheritance, without any kind of money.

He has cheated us as well. And our only hope now is our husband. He's our only hope. We can't trust our father. He's devious and deceitful and He doesn't really care for us at all.

So now at the end of all of these years, God has been so good to Jacob and protected him that not only has he flourished in material wealth, not only has God protected him, but now we see God has even turned the hearts of His wives to be more attached to Him than they are to their own father.

It might not surprise you with Rachel, but Rachel and Leah even are of one accord and of one mind on this matter. They speak together with one voice. God has shown Himself faithful to Jacob during His time of exile in the land of Paddan Aram.

But Jacob, of course, recognizes that the trouble here, which is set up in the first three verses of the chapter, is that Jacob's brothers-in-law, these brothers of his wives, are now complaining and they're accusing Jacob of having stolen all of his wealth.

[33 : 31] Oh, you stole our father's wealth. Because in their minds, Jacob should not be more wealthy than their father. Their inheritance is whatever their father has. And their brother-in-law now has more than what they stand to gain.

They can't have this. So they influence their father Laban. They turn his heart even more against Jacob so that Laban himself, literally it says that his face turned against Jacob.

Most English translations say that his countenance changed, but it's this idea of he's turning away from Jacob. He doesn't want anything to do now with his son-in-law. He's angry.

He aims to set things right in his own mind. And so Jacob does what Jacob thinks is the only thing that he can do is he, in the middle of the night, he packs up his family and he takes off and he's headed back home.

He needs to get away from his father-in-law before his father-in-law exacts some sort of revenge upon him for something that he himself has not done. Now Laban, as we find out, as we read on, Laban finds about him leaving and Laban chases after him.

[34 : 38] Verse 22, when it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob had fled, he took his kinsmen with him and pursued him for seven days, followed close after him into the hill country of Gilead.

So he's determined to catch up with him and bring him back. You're not going to get away from me. No. Why would he do that? Well, on the one hand, it's a power play and an issue of jealousy, but on the other hand, Laban has already been shown in chapter 30 through some sort of divination.

We don't really know exactly what happened there, but Laban has already been shown through some supernatural means that even the gains that he has had and the wealth that he has accumulated as Jacob has been there, that's because the God of Jacob was blessing Laban on Jacob's behalf.

It shouldn't surprise us readers of Genesis. God has said through all the families of the earth, we bless through Abraham and Abraham's offspring. That's happening. Laban is close to Jacob so he gets to prosper.

And so he understands and knows also that his days of prosperity are over if Jacob is gone. He cannot have that. So he's going to pursue after him to overtake him and to bring him back.

[35 : 51] And you can even catch a glimpse of his attitude later on in the text. Verse 26, Laban said to Jacob, What have you done that you've tricked me and driven away my daughters like captives of the sword?

They're not captives of the sword, Laban. Jacob called them out in the field and said, I think we should leave. And they said, Absolutely. But in Laban's mind, you kidnapped my daughters. No, they left willingly because they want nothing to do with you. They see you for who you are. But in his mind, no. Verse 27, Why did you flee secretly and trick me?

What are you doing? You should have told me. God has sent you away with the tambourine, with love. No, no. That's not his purpose here. His purpose is to track him down, to bring him back. So, as the story unfolds, what we realize is that that does not happen. Clearly, he catches up with him. And yet, he doesn't bring Jacob and Jacob's wives back.

[36 : 53] If you look at the very end of the story, verse 55, Early in the morning, Laban arose, kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned home. So, by the end of the story, God has continued to remain faithful.

And Laban does not take them captive. He does not haul them back home and force Jacob to continue in submission and servitude to him. But why? Did Jacob show himself powerful? Was he too difficult to overcome? Absolutely not. He may be more wealthy than his father-in-law, but he's not stronger. He doesn't have manpower. He's got his wives. He's got his children. And that's all. Laban has manpower. He's got an entire family to call upon. No, Jacob's not so strong that Laban leaves him alone.

You have to rewind to earlier in the story to verse 24. As Laban is pursuing Jacob, But God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream by night and said to him, Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.

[37 : 58] In other words, don't touch him. Do not touch him. Leave him alone. God has continually, even when Jacob is unaware, even when Jacob does not know, God has continually rescued him.

Look down at Laban's words in verse 29. He tells him, It is in my power to do you harm. That's what Laban tells Jacob. Why don't you? But the God of your father spoke to me last night saying, Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.

I'd hurt you, but your God had a chat with me last night. And now I can't. God has been so good and faithful to Jacob.

Just as God was good and faithful to Israel in Egypt. He prospered them though they were under slavery. He caused them to multiply though they were in slavery.

And what's more, even as they left the country of Egypt, we are told that they plundered the Egyptians. They plundered them. They gained from the Egyptians great wealth.

[39 : 06] Which is interesting because we are told that as they leave, that Rachel plunders her father's, what the text tells us are household gods.

Verse 19, Laban had gone to shear his sheep and Rachel stole, and it's the same word, plundered her father's household gods. The strange detail of the story that we'll get to in a moment, but the parallels are striking.

As they leave, they plunder him. As the Israelites leave, they plunder the nation of Egypt. So these are not accidental connections that Moses is helping us to see between Jacob and Israel.

These are intentional connections that we need to see, that we have got to be able to see. Why? Because that's how you get to Christ in the life of Jacob.

Jacob foreshadows both the failings of Israel and the faithfulness of God in the midst of their failings.

[40 : 16] That's what he foreshadows. Jacob is not an ideal biblical figure. He's not the kind of person that you would want to pattern your life after. Paul says, imitate me as I imitate Christ.

Jacob could never say something like that. No. He's not that kind of person. In all the ways that Israel finds itself struggling and failing and rebelling and going back to their old ways, so Jacob finds himself struggling and failing and oftentimes rebelling and going back to his old ways of trickery and deceit.

Because that's who he is until God fundamentally transforms and changes him. And that's who Israel was throughout their history until Christ should come.

That's who they were. And even this strange detail about the plundering of the gods, the household gods of Laban, it draws us and pulls us back into the history of Israel.

Now we read through that bit of the story and we think, well that's a strange thing that she would take those. We don't even know for sure what they are. They were probably like some little carved figurines in all likelihood.

[41 : 27] These little carved figurines that Laban probably would pray toward, offer incense toward. In all likelihood even when it says that he learned by divination, he was probably doing some sort of pagan ritual regarding these household gods.

We see those kinds of rituals in other places in the Old Testament. That's probably what he was doing. But these household gods also signified the rights of the inheritance and the wealth of the family. Whoever possesses them possesses the right of inheritance.

So we begin to see kind of what's going on in Rachel's mind as she steals these household gods. It's almost as if she's mocking her brothers and her father as they leave. And then she mocks them further when they come searching for the stolen goods.

They come and they accuse Jacob of stealing them. Jacob doesn't know anything about that. So Jacob says in verse 32, Anyone with whom you find your gods shall not live. In the presence of our kinsmen, point out what I have that is yours and take it.

And then it says, but Jacob didn't know that Rachel had stolen them. There's some tension in the story here. Verse 33, So Laban went into Jacob's tent, into Leah's tent, into the tent of the two female servants, but he couldn't find them.

[42 : 36] And he went out of Leah's tent, entered Rachel's. Now Rachel had taken the household gods and put them in the camel's saddle and she sat on the saddle. She sat on them. Laban felt all about the tent, but he couldn't find them.

And she said to her father, Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise before you for the way of women is upon me. So he searched, but he did not find the household gods. So she makes a mockery of her father as she steals them.

She makes a mockery of her father as she hides them. This entire incident, I think, probably is Rachel's way of getting one last dig in toward her father before she leaves because we've already seen that she and Leah are angry and they are bitter toward him.

But even sort of behind that and beneath that, as Jacob flees and he goes to be in the land of promise, the land given to him by God, we see the dragging along with him by means of his wives, these pagan deities.

And the same thing recurs over and over throughout the history of Israel. Israel is continually drawn away to worship false gods. And more often than not, it's because the men of the nation of Israel mixed with Canaanite, non-Israelite, pagan women and they brought their gods into the household of Israel.

[43 : 59] And here we're seeing, I believe, a foreshadowing of those events even in the life of Jacob himself. Over and over there are these parallels. And as we begin to see how much Jacob points us toward the failures of ancient Israel, we are reminded of this great truth that Jesus himself is the true son of Abraham.

He is the spiritual Israel. And in all the ways in which Israel and Jacob failed, Jesus succeeds. Jesus, driven into the wilderness, never gives in to temptation.

Jesus' entire life was a kind of exile. He made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant and being made in human likeness.

He was submissive to the Father's will. Not just until he got back to the promised land. He was submissive all the way to the point of death.

Jacob reminds us in his unfaithfulness of the faithfulness of Jesus. Jacob reminds us in his failures of the success of Jesus in the place of Jacob and in the place of all those who would trust in the promises of God realized in Christ.

[45 : 18] Now Jacob is pushing us and we're seeing him move so that he can be included among those who trust in the promises. He still keeps referring over and over to God is the God of my father, the God of Abraham.

He still keeps speaking in those terms, but there's one more detail from this chapter that I think we need to notice before we're done and that's at the end of the chapter Laban and Jacob they make a kind of treaty of sorts.

They make a covenant with one another. They have arrived, Jacob has stopped and Laban has caught up with Jacob at what you might call the border of the promised land. The border between

the land of Aramea which will later be a part of Syria and the northern border of the land of Israel later on in Israel's history.

That's where they are. They're at a crossroads. They're at a border there. And Laban, knowing that he cannot overtake Jacob, knowing that he cannot win because God is on Jacob's side, decides I need to make some sort of deal with this guy because if I come against him I can't win.

I mean I don't even know where my gods are and his God is speaking to me in dreams and warning me. So he decides to make a covenant with him. But it's the language that these two men use as they make this covenant that I think is interesting and it shows us that though Jacob is not yet there he will wrestle with God in chapter 32 and come out a changed man.

[46 : 45] He's not quite there. God has been doing, has been showing himself so faithful that he cannot resist seeing the power of God and the faithfulness of God.

Let's take a look down in verse 44. Laban says come now let us make a covenant you and I and let it be a witness between you and me.

So Jacob took a stone and he set it up as a pillar and Jacob said to his kinsmen gather stones and they took stones they made a heap and they ate there by the heap. Laban called it Jagar Sahadatha but Jacob called it Galid.

Now that's significant. Laban is speaking Aramaic whereas Jacob is speaking Hebrew. Hebrew. He's going home to the land of his fathers and now he begins to speak the language of his fathers. It's also a foreshadowing of the key difference between Israel and their enemies to the north. Those who speak Aramaic in the biblical in the Old Testament period and those who speak Hebrew down in the land of Canaan.

[47 : 50] But as we move further through it they begin to make this covenant between one another and the essential terms of the covenant are you don't come into my land this is the border you don't come across it to me to cause me harm I won't chase after you anymore and try to cause you harm.

Basically Laban is saying let's just be done with each other because he wants nothing to do with Jacob's God. Let's be done with each other go our separate ways let's just agree that this mountainous region is a border and neither of it is going to cross it to cause the other harm.

We won't do that we won't bother one another verse 51 then Laban said to Jacob see this heap and the pillar which I have set up between you and me the heap is a witness and the pillar is a witness that I will not pass over this heap to you and you will not pass over this heap and this pillar to me to do harm the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor the God of their father judged between us now I need to make what I think is an important correction here in the way that most of our English versions render these phrases the God of Abraham I think that's good and right capital G but then I think we need to switch to lower case G the God of Nahor because we know that Abraham and Abraham's kinsmen Nahor would be numbered among them did not have the same God but moreover the verb that is used in this is a plural verb not singular so we're not talking about the same God so it's like saying they we can't have they if you've just got one singular subject so we need to say the God of Abraham big G and the God little g of Nahor and indeed the gods plural here that's plural and the gods of their father judged between us so he's just calling everybody's gods to the fore right that's Laban's idea why not he's got his little household gods that are missing right now

Jacob's God has appeared to him in a dream and he's scared of him let's just call everybody to witness just bring them all together we get the God of Abraham we'll get the God of Nahor we'll even get we can get those other gods of our forefathers bring them in and they're going to bear witness to this covenant that we're making they're going to make sure we hold our end of the deal now the turn in Jacob so Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac now this chapter contains that phrase the fear of his father on more than one occasion and we even see it coming from Jacob's own lips he refers to God as the fear of my father Isaac this is the only chapter in the entire Bible where God is referred to by that particular name why?

there are multiple reasons but I think the most important the most significant reasons are that Jacob now he understands who this God is he's not some tribal deity he's not like the figurines that can be stolen from the household of his father-in-law this God told him wherever you go I will be with you I am not confined to the land of your fathers I do not live in the land of Canaan wherever you go I will be there Jacob has learned that so he cannot swear by some other gods there is one God and he knows it and he understands it and it's not just the stories that his mother and father told him growing up he's beginning to see and understand this guy with all of his other gods fears my

father's God he understands he understands that this God is not one to be trifled with literally the text says the terror of Isaac the one who brings terror and fear to those who come into his presence now Jacob is beginning to get the picture here and it's almost as if he drives the knife in to Laban [52 : 03] I will swear by the one you fear the God of my father this is this is a remarkable turn in the life of Jacob though though he's not had that wrestling moment he has seen the faithfulness of God he has seen the power of God in such subtle ways he knows now that God causes sheep to be born whenever way he wants and in whatever color and shape and form that he wants he knows now that God prospers those whom he wants to prosper and he doesn't prosper those whom he doesn't want to prosper he knows now that God is the only true God and he is the one worthy of our fear and terror as we stand before him Jacob is learning something he's learning he's getting the picture but he is still a sinner he still needs to wrestle with God and even after his wrestling with God we will see that he remains flawed just as Israel following their moments of idolatry repent and they turn back for a time but another generation comes along and they they dive headlong back into sin and we continually see this cycle of seeing

God for who he is and repenting and falling back into sin and God has to do something else miraculous or marvelous or frightening and they repent again and cycle continues over and over and over until the true Israel comes until the true Israel comes who is without sin and who knew no sin and it is only because of the work of the true Israel that Jacob can be saved from his sinful ways you see when Jacob wrestles in the wilderness that's not Jacob prevailing over anyone that's Jacob's eyes being opened just as Paul says you want to understand these events you want to see these things you want to understand these things well you can't see right now you've got a veil that covers your face and you cannot see the glory of Jesus not in the scriptures and probably not anywhere else you can't see you can't understand what is needed is a new heart what is needed as Paul says in the verses that follow that in 2nd

Corinthians what is needed is for God to shine the light of the gospel of the glory of God in the face of Christ so that him who said let there be light might cause light to shine in us and give us sight to see the glory of Jesus all of our study of the Bible is not about knowledge it's not about academics it's not about piling up more information in our head so that we can win the debate with someone it's not what it's about this book doesn't exist to puff us up and make our brains more full this book exists to show Jesus to us on every single page if you haven't seen him there yet you need to bend your knee and bow to him and confess he alone is Lord he alone can save you he alone has walked the path that we all walk and fail and he has succeeded in every way let's pray do you
Thank you.