

Genesis 30:25 - Genesis 31 • A Tale of Two Deceivers

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We're in Genesis. Open your Bibles, please to Genesis chapter 30 and we're going to continue our study in that chapter. We got through the first 24 verses as we dealt with chapter 29 and the first part of chapter 30 last week. And we dealt with the baby wars that were going on between Leah and Rachel and trying to outdo one another by having children to get Jacob's attention and all the drama that went along with that.

Boy, I tell you, if there was ever a biblical example of why polygamy is a bad idea, that's it right there. You just got to read that passage in Genesis and you ought to stay away from that one as far as you can.

But things kind of begin to change here, 11 of the 12 boys have been born and then you also remember there was one girl. Kind of crazy, isn't it? That after all those boys, just one girl was born and there will be another one after this who will be Benjamin. But we're picking it up in verse 25. Let's pray first and let's get into it.

Father God, open our hearts to the ministry of your Word tonight and use this Word to minister to our hearts and speak to us that we might learn to rightly divide the Word and understand the history of Israel because Lord this just, this so figures into what's going on in the world today and all the things that are happening in Israel.

And we pray, Lord, that you would help us to connect the dots and just have a greater biblical understanding of these events. We ask you to be with us tonight to speak to hearts in Jesus name, amen. Amen.

We're picking it up in verse 25 and it says, *“As soon as Rachel had borne Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, “Send me away, that I may go to my own home and country. ²⁶ Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, that I may go, for you know the service that I have given you.” ²⁷ But Laban said to him, “If I have found favor in your sight, I have learned by divination that the Lord has blessed me because of you.” (ESV)*

Now, you'll notice here if you're following the same Bible translation that I'm reading, the word is divination. He says, *"I have learned by divination."* Now, if you happen to be reading a New King James tonight, your Bible would say, *"I have learned by experience."* And I can understand why they came up with that word, but I don't think they hit the nail on the head. Because the Hebrew word that is used here in the text has a root word that means, to practice divination.

Now it can also speak of observation and that's why they came up with the idea of, I've learned by experience. But there's such a strong connection in this Hebrew word to the idea of divining truth or divination that I think the ESV translators hit it more correctly. And for those of you that may not be aware, divination is essentially the practice of seeking knowledge about life and the future by using supernatural means and there were all kinds of ways that people did it back in Jacob's time.

Today, we have things like tarot cards and Ouija boards and even horoscopes are a means of divining the future. And those things might seem innocent to you, they are not. Because whenever we seek to know something by supernatural means, other than the Lord.

I mean, praying to God for direction is seeking wisdom and knowledge through supernatural means as well. But there's nothing wrong with that because that's what we should be doing. To do it, to bypass God and to try to seek wisdom and understanding and insight through other means is to open oneself up to a spiritual realm that you may not be prepared to confront.

And what I'm talking about are demons and they are real and the spiritual dynamics that go along with them. And I think that a lot of demonic sort of activity begins very innocently with people just simply wanting to know something, I want to know. But you know, the Lord had a powerful word for the nation of Israel through the prophet Isaiah. It's in the 8th chapter, let me show you on the screen. It says,

Isaiah 8:19 (ESV)

...when they say to you, "Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter," should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living?

...when they say to you, "Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers (and a necromancer is someone who consults the dead) who chirp and mutter," (here's the question the Lord asks) should not a people inquire of their God? (and then

He asked this further question) *Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living?*

Have you ever thought about that? People who would approach a necromancer and we would maybe refer to that person just as a medium today. They're trying to consult uncle Bob who died 10 years ago or something like that or my great aunt Irene, who was just a real peach. And I want to see if I can get ahold of her and get some information about my life or whatever.

It's like, wait a minute, Bob and Irene are dead. Why would you consult the dead on behalf of the living? That's the question that the Lord asks here, but the more important question is, "*should not a people inquire of their God?*" Shouldn't you ask God for direction and obviously that's a rhetorical question, well both of them are. But the answer is obvious, yes, you should inquire of God.

I think one of the issues that goes along with inquiring of God is the whole issue of waiting because we're not a people who really like to wait very much. We're not good at waiting, we're impatient and waiting just isn't something we enjoy doing and so we're going to try to find out quickly. And if I have to even resort to something like a Ouija board or even a stupid horoscope, and they write those things so generally they would apply to anybody, and anything, and anywhere, and anytime, and any business. But it's just the way it is.

We want to get the quick answer though but waiting on the Lord is hard. Just this morning, I was reading through Lamentations chapter 3. In fact, I took a verse out of there and put it on my Facebook page. All about waiting and how good it is to wait on the Lord, not easy, but good, it's good to wait on the Lord.

You got an issue? You got a question? You want direction? Wait on the Lord, come to the Lord and then wait on Him for an answer. You know, like David said, he said, morning by morning, I lay my request before you and wait in expectation. (Psalm 5:3) I have expectation and that's probably another big question to ask ourselves.

When I pray, do I pray with expectation? Or do I pray because it's like we're supposed to pray and so I'm going to pray. I mean, after all, God's Word says, you have not because you asked not. (James 4:2) So I'm going to go ahead and ask, but I really am not expecting God to answer me or am I? Are we praying with expectation? Very good, important question to ask yourself in this whole thing.

So anyway Jacob kind of lays out this thing, he says, I want to head home now, I want to go home. Now, Laban responds in verse 28 and he says, *“Name your wages, and I will give it.”* In other words, do you have a price for staying here? And again, Laban wants him to stay there because he knows that he has been the recipient of blessings because God is blessing Jacob.

So Jacob responds here, says to him, *“²⁹... You yourself know how I have served you, and how your livestock has fared with me. ³⁰ For you had little before I came, and it has increased abundantly, and the Lord has blessed you wherever I turned. But now when shall I provide for my own household also?”*

³¹ He said, “What shall I give you?” Jacob said, “You shall not give me anything. If you will do this for me, I will again pasture your flock and keep it: ³² let me pass through all your flock today, removing from it every speckled and spotted sheep and every black lamb, and the spotted and speckled among the goats, and they shall be my wages. ³³ So my honesty will answer for me later, when you come to look into my wages with you. Every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats and black among the lambs, if found with me, shall be counted stolen.” ³⁴ Laban said, “Good! Let it be as you have said.””

Now, notice this in verse 35. *“But that day Laban removed the male goats that were striped and spotted, and all the female goats that were speckled and spotted, every one that had white on it, and every lamb that was black, and put them in the charge of his sons. ³⁶ And he set a distance of three days' journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob pastured the rest of Laban's flock.”* Stop there for just a moment.

You can kind of see what Laban is doing here. He wanted to make it impossible for the speckled and spotted animals to breed with his own unmarked animals. So he took what was essentially going to be given to Jacob and he put it in the charge of his sons and put three days journey distance between that flock and the flock that was now under Jacob's care. Remember, Jacob is taking care of Laban's flock and those are all the pure white sheep and goats and that sort of thing.

So, he's trying to manipulate the situation. Laban is a manipulator, just like Jacob is a manipulator and it's funny here how these guys are going at it with each other. But they're always trying to one up one another and get the better of one another and Laban wants him to stay because he's getting rich because of Jacob being there and so on and so on and so on.

So anyway they're trying to kind of jockey for position and the following verses in verse 37 and following, describes how Jacob is kind of jockeying for position here and he's doing what we would, I suppose, call selective breeding. So here we go.

It says, "Then Jacob took fresh sticks of poplar and almond and plane trees, and peeled white streaks in them, exposing the white of the sticks. ³⁸ He set the sticks that he had peeled in front of the flocks in the troughs, that is, the watering places, where the flocks came to drink. And since they bred when they came to drink, ³⁹ the flocks bred in front of the sticks and so the flocks brought forth striped, speckled, and spotted.

⁴⁰ And Jacob separated the lambs and set the faces of the flocks toward the striped and all the black in the flock of Laban. He put his own droves apart and did not put them with Laban's flock. ⁴¹ Whenever the stronger of the flock were breeding, Jacob would lay the sticks in the troughs before the eyes of the flock, that they might breed among the sticks, ⁴² but for the feebler of the flock he would not lay them there. So the feebler would be Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's. ⁴³ Thus the man increased greatly and had large flocks, female servants and male servants, and camels and donkeys." All right, let's pause there for a moment.

I know that there are some people and I know this because I've gotten notes in email, who believe that what Jacob did actually made a difference, scientifically... Apparently, they say there's some scientific explanation for putting these images in front of these animals when they would breed and that sort of thing and it could actually have an effect on them giving birth to streaked and spotted and speckled animals. I'm dubious, I have very serious doubts about the whole stick with peeled bark thing. I just, I think that's hocus pocus, frankly.

Now, breeding strong animals with strong animals? That's smart, I mean, that's just selective breeding, nothing wrong with that. You got a weak animal, you set it aside and only allow it to breed with another weak animal, and you're probably going to breed that weakness into those animals over a period of time. But the whole tree thing...

Here's the point. Regardless of what you may think, whether or not you think there's any validity to Jacob's methods here. All of what he's doing, all of his efforts go to prove that he's still up to his old ways. And what I mean by that is that just like Laban, Jacob is trying to manipulate the circumstances in his own favor, rather than completely relying on the Lord.

Now we're going to see in Jacob's life, and I've talked to you about this before, we're going to see how he changes his attitude as he grows and matures in his relationship with God. And he comes to a greater revelation and understanding of the blessing of the Lord as it relates to the way he himself has been given an abundance.

And he begins to think less of his own methods as time goes on and you'll see that in his language, in fact very shortly here. But at this particular time, he's still doing this on his own, he's still working hard on his own to make it work and to make things better and to manipulate circumstances and so forth.

So, this is just Jacob, this is his m.o., this is his demeanor, his attitude, it's his way. This is Jacob, but it's also Laban. So, interesting, isn't it? That Jacob is a certain way and God put him with someone who is that exact same way.

Chapter 31, *“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.”² And Jacob saw that Laban did not regard him with favor as before.³ Then the Lord said to Jacob, “Return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you.”*”

Now, I want to pause here for just a moment and tell you that as Jacob begins to speak to Leah and Rachel about going back home. I want you to hear as he speaks, how even in the interim time, whatever time there was now between the end of chapter 30 and where we are here in chapter 31, Jacob has matured. He's come to a greater understanding of the Lord's work in his life and so I want you to just listen to what he says.

Verse 4, *“So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah into the field where his flock was⁵ 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.”* That's the first statement that we hear Jacob making. Now, this could be in direct response to the fact that God just told him, I want you to go back to your homeland and I will be with you. Jacob is realizing God has always been with him and so he begins to say that to these women.

He says in verse 6, *“You know that I have served your father with all my strength,⁷ yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times. (now, listen to this) But God did not permit him to harm me.”* Do you hear what Jacob is doing? Do you hear the turnaround here? Rather than him bragging about his own ability, yeah, but I outwitted him, I grabbed some sticks and pulled the bark back, and I threw..., and all this other stuff. He could have

been bragging on himself, but he's not, there's a change in his tune. He says here very clearly, God did not permit Laban to harm me.

Verse 8, *“If he said, ‘The spotted shall be your wages,’ then all the flock bore spotted; and if he said, ‘The striped shall be your wages,’ then all the flock bore striped.”* And here it comes again, listen to this. Verse 9, *“Thus God has taken away the livestock of your father and given them to me.”*

Isn't that something? Isn't it cool to see people growing up? I mean, when they begin to mature and they begin to see. Do you know, this is part of what it means also to grow up in our Christian faith, to begin to see the Lord. And we've talked in the past about how many Christians today are what I call circumstantial Christians. They live their lives based on circumstance, they have a relationship with God based on circumstance. If the circumstances are good, their relationship with God is good, their outlook of God is good. But if their life is going bad, their view of God just tanks and they're like well, God, what's God ever done for me?

And God's just really, and they say all kinds of things, but it's all based on circumstances. And we were never told in the Word to base our understanding of God or our view of God on circumstances. We're to base it on the revelation of God and we're to understand that God's ways are so much higher than our ways as to be incomprehensible. And what that means is, when I'm going through a hard time where I've prayed about something and I'm not getting an answer, my attitude is, well, I don't know what God's up to, but I'm going to choose to trust Him.

That's it, I'm going to choose to trust Him. This is hard, this is painful, I hate it, I wish I wasn't going through this. I'm praying against it but I'm going to trust Him. Do you see the difference? That's maturity, that's simple Christian maturity. It's learning to grow up and realize that God works all things together for the good of those that love Him and are called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)

And not just being able to quote that verse, but believe it. Really, truly believe it, that's maturity, right? So we see this maturity taking hold. Now it doesn't mean he's a perfect man by any stretch of the imagination, but he's growing up. Notice what he goes on to say and I believe that what we read here in verse 10 and following is really, largely how Jacob began to change his attitude.

It says, *“In the breeding season of the flock I lifted up my eyes and saw in a dream (so he's telling them about a dream the Lord gave him) that the goats*

that mated with the flock were striped, spotted, and mottled. ¹¹ Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob,' and I said, 'Here I am!'

¹² 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. ¹³ 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.'

So what is the Lord doing here to Jacob? Well, He's telling him, this was me, this was me behind all of this. Lift up your eyes and see, look at the blessing that I have poured out for you. And what Jacob saw was all these animals that were striped and spotted and speckled and whatever and that were his...

He says, God is saying, look what I've done because I'm the God who met you on the way and you remember you made that kind of dumb vow when you were... He doesn't chastise him for it but we talked about how that vow was really came from an attitude of immaturity. God, if you do this, I'll do this, if you bless me, then I'll let you be my God. We kind of talked about that when we went through that chapter.

Well, God is basically coming back here and saying, yeah, I kind of kept my end of the bargain, didn't I? And the blessing has been upon you and you've seen that blessing being poured out all these years. And you thought that all this striped bark and pulling back these bark on these branches was going to make all this difference and this was me. I'm in control of your life, He says, *"I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed that pillar."*

Well, it says, *"¹⁴ Then Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, 'Is there any portion or inheritance left to us in our father's house? ¹⁵ Are we not regarded by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and he has indeed devoured our money. ¹⁶ 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.'"*

I read this passage right here and I thought, what an encouragement it must have been for Jacob to hear Leah and Rachel just express their agreement and their connectedness to him and their willingness to go wherever. I just think that must have just been real encouraging for his heart.

So in verse 17, it says, *"So Jacob arose and set his sons and his wives on camels. ¹⁸ 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."*

Now you can imagine if the Lord's blessing has been on Jacob and he's got all these flocks and herds and camels and sheep and goats and he's got a big family and he's got servants and all these things, and they've got to carry all their stuff that they're going to use along the way. All their tents and supplies and so forth, they're not going to move quickly. So he's, in a sense, he's running away, but he's not going to get very far because he just can't move very quickly at all.

Now he chose a time when Laban was gone, you'll see that in verse 19, it says, "*Laban had gone to shear his sheep, ...*" So he wasn't home at the time and then we're told this also in verse 19, "*...and Rachel stole her father's household gods.*" Okay, this probably needs a little explanation.

First of all, it tells you something about the character of both of these people; both Rachel and Laban. First of all, Laban, we've been getting a character sketch about Laban for several chapters now and we knew way back when we first met Laban that he was a shyster and he was a man who was impressed by money and fine things and goods and that sort of thing and we see that here.

It's why he wanted Jacob to stay. He knew that he was being blessed because of Jacob being there so we see the kind of a man he is. We also saw that Laban was the kind of a man who would promise one of his daughters in marriage and give the other unbeknownst to the bridegroom and we saw that happen.

Jacob worked seven years to marry Rachel and Laban gave him Leah on their wedding night and then made him do more work to have Rachel and so on and so forth. So we see the kind of a man he is. Well, now we see also that he's a full blown pagan, he's got household gods.

Now you have to understand something about these household idols and that's what they were, they were idols. They had a meaning attached to them. The possessor of these household idols would be in possession of the leadership of the family. Does that make sense? What I'm saying is, whoever had these idols, in his home, in his tent or whatever, that signified that he was the patriarch. He was the man in charge, the estate was his, all that... and these guys would believe that.

It didn't really matter whether you had what you have and I have what I have. If I'm the patriarch with the idols, then everything you have, I have, it's all mine and Laban believed it and I think Rachel also believed it. Because you have to ask yourself the question, why did she steal these dumb things? Well, I think she probably believed in the meaning that was behind it, the paganistic meaning that was behind it. And she was doing this for her husband, so that he might be

the one who possessed the idols, and in fact was the man in charge, the man who owned it all.

And I think she recognized to some degree that God had indeed blessed her husband. She's had seen that over the years, but somehow she merged the idea of Jacob's understanding of God's blessing and the idea of these, of possessing these idols into a single belief system. And you guys do know that's possible, right?

To take biblical Christianity, even today, and merge it with paganism. It happens, it has happened, it is happening. There are people who have merged worldly, paganistic belief systems into Christianity and I hear about this all the time, frankly, from, especially from people in other continents. I get regular notes from people in the continent of Africa.

Christians, who will tell me, that they are told in their churches that they must sacrifice animals to be free from certain things in life. Various things, to be free from..., it's just..., I won't even get into all the details. So they're merging cultural, traditional, really pagan based ideas in their biblical Christianity. And it just, it happens. I believe that's what Rachel is doing here by taking these idols, she's kind of ensuring, through the possession of these idols, that Jacob has a real claim to her father's estate in this way.

So, verse 20, it says, “*And (in addition to all that) Jacob tricked Laban the Aramean, by not telling him that he intended to flee.*”²¹ *He fled with all that he had and arose and crossed the Euphrates, and set his face toward the hill country of Gilead.*

²² *When it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob had fled,* ²³ *he took his kinsmen with him and pursued him for seven days and followed close after him into the hill country of Gilead. (check this out)* ²⁴ *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.””*

Now, I believe that the fact that the Lord appeared to Laban in a dream before he met with Jacob is proof, or at least it suggests the proof, that Laban had violent intentions. In fact, he's going to say as much in just a moment, so keep that in mind. I believe Laban probably went there with the intention of doing Jacob bodily harm and taking his daughters and all the possessions back. I think that's the kind of man Laban was but the Lord met him and said, hands off.

So, in verse 25, it says that, *“And Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country, and Laban with his kinsmen pitched tents in the hill country of Gilead.”*²⁶ *And Laban said to Jacob, “What have you done, that you have tricked me and driven away my daughters like captives of the sword?”*²⁷ *Why did you flee secretly and trick me, and did not tell me, so that I might have sent you away with mirth and songs, with tambourine and lyre?”*

Ha Ha Ha Ha! I'll tell you who the liar is, I think it's Laban. I don't think he had any intention of sending him away that way, but that's the story and he's sticking to it. *“²⁸ And why did you not permit me to kiss my sons and my daughters farewell? Now you have done foolishly.”* And I want you to notice here in verse 29, here's where Laban admits his original intentions.

He says, *“It is in my power to do you harm.”* There it is. He says, He's saying, I can hurt you if I want and I think that's what he came to do. *“²⁹ ...But the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, ‘Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.’*

³⁰ And now you have gone away because you longed greatly for your father's house, but why did you steal my gods?” So he basically accuses him of leaving without saying anything and taking his household idols. By the way, if your god can be stolen, get a new god, yeah.

Okay, verse 31. *“Jacob answered and said to Laban, “Because I was afraid, for I thought that you would take your daughters from me by force.”* Huh? Yeah, I think that's exactly what he would have done. Had Jacob said, I'm going to leave, I'm leaving now. He said, I was afraid so he literally feared for his life.

“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 it tells us here, kind of parenthetically, that) *Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen (the household gods) them.*³³ *So Laban went into Jacob's tent and into Leah's tent and into the tent of the two female servants, but he did not find them. And he went out of Leah's tent and entered Rachel's.*

*³⁴ Now Rachel had taken the household gods and put them in the camel's saddle and sat on them. Laban felt all about the tent, but did not find them.*³⁵ *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.”*” And she's referring to her menstrual cycle. So she's basically saying, I got cramps and I can't get up so just..., yeah. I don't mean to belittle that whole thing at all. But anyway, so it tells us the end of verse 35, that, *“...he searched but did not find the household gods.”*

Verse 36, *“Then Jacob became angry and berated Laban. Jacob said to Laban, “What is my offense? What is my sin, that you have hotly pursued me? ³⁷ For you have felt through all my goods; what have you found of all your household goods? Set it here before my kinsmen and your kinsmen, that they may decide between us two.”* All I can say is it's a good thing they didn't find those things, right?

“³⁸ These twenty years I have been with you. Your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried, and I have not eaten the rams of your flocks. ³⁹ What was torn by wild beasts I did not bring to you. I bore the loss of it myself. From my hand you required it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. ⁴⁰ There I was: by day the heat consumed me, and the cold by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes.

⁴¹ These twenty years I have been in your house. I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times. ⁴² If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been on my side, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed.” Now there's another statement of maturity, isn't it? You can see what he's understanding now. If God had not helped me, I would have been broke, I would have been busted.

He says, *“⁴² ... “God saw my affliction and the labor of my hands and rebuked you last night.” ⁴³ Then Laban answered and said to Jacob, (okay, here's the pagan thinking, right?) “The daughters are my daughters, the children are my children, the flocks are my flocks, and all that you see is mine.”*

Isn't that great? Wouldn't you love to be with a guy like that? This is the way they thought, this is the way they thought. I don't know who's got my household gods, but technically, they're still mine and you know what that means? All this is mine, all that you see is mine and that's what he truly believed.

“⁴³ ... But what can I do this day for these my daughters or for their children whom they have borne? ⁴⁴ Come now, let us make a covenant, you and I. And let it be a witness between you and me.” ⁴⁵ So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. ⁴⁶ And Jacob said to his kinsmen, “Gather stones.” And they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there by the heap. ⁴⁷ Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed. ⁴⁸ Laban said, “This heap is a witness between you and me today.” Therefore he named it Galeed, ⁴⁹ and Mizpah, for he said, “The Lord watch between you and me, when we are out of one another's sight. ⁵⁰ If you oppress my daughters, or if you take wives besides

my daughters, although no one is with us, see, God is witness between you and me.”

⁵¹ Then Laban said to Jacob, “See this heap and the pillar, which I have set between you and me. ⁵² This 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. ⁵³ The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us.” So Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac, ⁵⁴ and Jacob offered a sacrifice in the hill country and called his kinsmen to eat bread. They ate bread and spent the night in the hill country.”

Wow! What do you think about that covenant? I mean, there's all kinds of covenants that people can make. What do you think about this one? This is an interesting covenant, isn't it? I mean, it's not what you would call a peace agreement. It's really kind of a non-aggression sort of an agreement rather than a peace agreement.

They're not saying, may we live in peace with one another, you know what they're saying? May God watch over you and if you step out of line, may He strike you dead where you stand, that's what they're saying. This is not a friendly covenant, this is an adversarial covenant.

They're basically saying, if you do something while my back is turned, may God see it and punish you. So you can tell there's just absolute, total mistrust between these two men. My mother used to say, she'd say, I can trust him as far as I can throw him and I wasn't ever really sure what she meant by that, but I kind of assumed that she couldn't throw people very far. It takes quite a bit to heave somebody like, you know, football. So I'm assuming she was saying, I can't trust them very far.

And that's what these men are saying to one another. I can't trust you and so may God watch over and if you do something dastardly while my back is turned and God's going to see it, He's going to get you.

Verse 55, chapter ends by saying, *“Early in the morning Laban arose and kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned home.”*

Now, that's where we're going to stop for tonight, but we're going to move on to chapter 32 as we get into our study further next time and remember, we're not meeting next Wednesday.

But when we come back and take up Genesis once again, we're going to deal with one of the darkest challenges that Jacob is ever going to face. And he is going to be faced with a fear that is just numbing and we're going to see how he dealt with and how more importantly, how the Lord dealt with Jacob. And that's the most important thing that we're going to see and I love the next couple of chapters. I'm excited to go through the next couple of chapters because there's so much the Lord has to say about how we deal with the unknown, how we deal with our fears, how we deal with situations that are just out of our control.

And every so often we face situations that are out of our control, there's just nothing you can do about it and you've got to face it. One way or another, you have to face it and we're going to see how the Lord worked in Jacob's life to help him learn to face things, not in the power of Jacob, but in the power and strength of the Lord God Himself. And that's a very important lesson that all of us have to learn at some point in our lives. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you so much for the lesson that we've been able to go through tonight and the things that we learn here about growing up in our faith, and not being the kind of people who feel the need to manipulate circumstances or manipulate people in order to get our way or secure a blessing, but to trust the Lord.

And we see Lord, here in the life of Jacob, how he grew and matured in his faith to the point of recognizing your hand for what it was. And I pray my Father, God, that the same would happen in our lives, that we would learn to recognize the hand of God.

We've done many things in our lives and we give ourselves the credit, but Lord, if we really knew, if we really knew who was behind it, we would see that your hand has been with us and your blessing has been guiding us and that it is you who walk with us every day, every step of the way.

Lord, I pray that you would open our eyes just like you did Jacob to recognize the blessing of the Lord, to see the goodness of the hand of the Lord, our God, and that might draw us to a deeper expression of worship and praise and thanksgiving.

We rejoice in you, Father God, for who you are and how much you love us. And thank you, Father, for the greatest expression of that love in the giving of your Son to die on the cross and to bear the punishment of our sin. We will spend eternity expressing our thanks. We praise you and worship you, and it is in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, that we pray, amen.