

# GENESIS

## 31:1-55

### Genesis 31:1-55

Taught by Simeon Forder on Sunday morning, 24th March 2024 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

**Reading:** Deuteronomy 6:4-9

### Introduction

Previously in our study of Genesis, the first of 66 books in the Bible, we saw Jacob — Isaac's son, and Abraham's grandson — flee the family home, because of his brother's intent to kill him after Jacob had deceived their father, and because Isaac had also instructed him to go to Padan Aram and marry one of Laban's daughters.

And Jacob did just that, encountering God on the way at a place called Bethel (which will be referred to again in this chapter), and instantly falling in love with one of Laban's daughters, Rachel. However, although he was quickly engaged to her, he would be deceived by his uncle Laban, and first marries Rachel's older sister, Leah. But marry Rachel he eventually did, and along came children — first to Leah, then to Rachel's maid, then Leah's maid. And *finally*, to Rachel.

Upon the birth of her firstborn (Joseph), Jacob makes known that he wants to leave Laban's household and return to the land of Canaan where he had grown up, but Laban convinces him to continue working for him, thinking that would be to his own advantage. But what happens is that *Jacob* is the one who prospers, and we'll read in this chapter that it was God who gave the increase.

In fact, he was blessed so much, that jealousy started to kick in from both Laban and his sons, and chapter 31 (which we're going to study this morning) records the tipping point that will ultimately see Laban and Jacob part ways forever.

## Overview of chapter thirty one

Now, so that we know where we're going this morning, and also to help us remember what goes on in this chapter, here is how we can break it down into sections:

### Overview of chapter thirty one

- **v1-21** — No longer in favour with Laban, God tells Jacob to go to Canaan
- **v22-42** — Laban pursues Jacob, but confronts him cautiously
- **v43-55** — Laban makes a covenant with Jacob, and returns home

In the opening 21 verses, we read that Jacob was no longer in favour with his uncle, or male cousins. And at this time God now tells him to return home, where previously we'd only read of Jacob's desire to do so. Jacob then talks with his wives, prepares to his family to go, and leaves without saying goodbye to his uncle. Therefore, when we get to verses 22-42 we see Laban furiously pursues Jacob, but having been warned by God, confronts him cautiously, before in the final 12 verses we see a truce made between these two men, before they go their separate ways.

## Chapter thirty one

So then, as is important to do, let's look at each verse of our chapter this morning, to understand what was going on then, but also what should be going on in our hearts and lives now. But before reading verse 1, let's read the final 3 verses of the prior chapter, as they give us the background:

### Genesis 30:41-43

And it came to pass, whenever the stronger livestock conceived, that Jacob placed the rods before the eyes of the livestock in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods. But when the flocks were feeble, he did not put them in; so the feeble were Laban's and the stronger Jacob's. Thus the man became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks, female and male servants, and camels and donkeys.

Jacob had become exceedingly prosperous. However, that hadn't gone down well, for we read:

### Genesis 31:1

Now Jacob heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, "Jacob has taken away all that was our father's, and from what was our father's he has acquired all this wealth."

Back in verse 35 of the prior chapter, Laban had taken *the male goats that were speckled and spotted, all the female goats that were speckled and spotted, every one that had some white in it, and all the brown ones among the lambs, and gave them into the hand of his sons*. And, evidently, these goats and lambs did not prosper in their hands.

But adding insult to injury, not only had Laban entrusted the care of the majority of his flocks to Jacob, but now the ones that Jacob was entitled to as his wages were the ones the prospered exceedingly! And they become mighty jealous of God's blessing of their cousin, even blaming Jacob for taking what they felt would be theirs by inheritance.

#### **Genesis 31:2**

*And Jacob saw the countenance of Laban, and indeed it was not favourable toward him as before.*

So, Jacob realises he is not in favour with any of his family here – including his father-in-law, Laban. This has become a very uncomfortable situation, and, in a way, God is loosening his attachment to this place, these people, and to this family home, because He is about to call Jacob elsewhere.

And God graciously does that with us sometimes — whether God is calling us to ministry in a particular place (or different ministry in the same place), or a change of job to work in, or town to live in, He sometimes begins by loosening the attachments or even affections we have to that place. I've seen that in my life when I felt God prompting me over a few months to stop serving as a youth leader. I didn't know exactly what was next, but I went from being in a place where I would have argued to stay, to being OK with stepping back from that ministry work (as enjoyable as it was).

Likewise, in the year or so before Siân and I moved to Deal, she saw so much change within her workplace and church — both of which she'd been at for a long time — that meant staying in the Guildford area would not have felt the same if we had indeed stayed. I know she saw God work graciously in loosening those bonds to those two things, and even in which of her friends lived in the area, that made moving 2 hours away easier. Not necessarily easy. But easier. God was good.

Now, that said, we need to be careful about how we read into things. A bad day, week or month at work doesn't mean you should leave for another job. A difficult conversation or situation in your church family doesn't mean you should move to another fellowship. And a family difficulty doesn't mean you should move several towns (or more!) away from the area. However, we must be open to what God just might be doing in our lives.

Here, Jacob had wanted to leave years before, but didn't have the means. Now he does, for God had blessed him exceedingly. And now, there was even more reason to leave, for he was not in favour with Laban and his sons — and so there was also no reason to stay. Yet, one crucial element remained... and that was what God wanted.

One helpful phrase I learned from Matt some time ago, was regarding decision making – asking *can we, should we, must we*.

- *Can we* – do we have the ability to do so?
- *Should we* – is there a compelling reason we should do so?
- And *must we* – is there no alternative?

In the case of Jacob, he did have the ability and means to leave Laban. And there was a compelling reason to do so. But how could he conclude that he *must* leave? Well, we read in verse 3:

**Genesis 31:3**

Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you."

The *must* we in the life of a Christian, is whether God leads, guides or tells you to (which we should note will never be contrary to what the Bible says). And so now here, Jacob has the means, the reason, and the instruction from the Lord to leave. Furthermore, he has this incredible promise from God Himself that He will be with him. And so Jacob acts:

**Genesis 31:4-5**

So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field, to his flock, and said to them, "I see your father's countenance, that it is not favourable toward me as before; but the God of my father has been with me.

So he calls his wives to him, away from earshot of Laban's sons and servants, and says "Look, our situation here has changed, even though God has not".

**Genesis 31:6-7**

And you know that with all my might I have served your father. Yet your father has deceived me and changed my wages ten times, but God did not allow him to hurt me.

In other words "I've worked honestly, and your father has acted dishonestly. But God has protected me through all of that." And he goes on to explain how Laban had been dishonest:

**Genesis 31:8-10**

If he said thus: 'The speckled shall be your wages,' then all the flocks bore speckled. And if he said thus: 'The streaked shall be your wages,' then all the flocks bore streaked. So God has taken away the livestock of your father and given them to me. "And it happened, at the time when the flocks conceived, that I lifted my eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the rams which leaped upon the flocks were streaked, speckled, and grey-spotted.

So, Jacob is explaining how he had not deceived or stolen from their father, despite the opinion of Rachel & Leah's brothers. Or despite how Laban might have spun things. But furthermore, and importantly, Jacob explains the hand of God in the matter:

**Genesis 31:11-13**

Then the Angel of God spoke to me in a dream, saying, 'Jacob.' And I said, 'Here I am.' And He said, 'Lift your eyes now and see, all the rams which leap on the flocks are streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted; for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar and where you made a vow to Me. Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family.' "

This doesn't say that the rods Jacob used were instructed by God, nor were approved by Him per se. And neither does it say what Jacob did was wrong. We're simply not told. But what we are told is that God was the one who blessed Jacob. It wasn't Jacob's own ingenuity, or any possible superstition, but rather God chose to bless Jacob. And He reminds Jacob that He was the God of Bethel, where He had met Jacob previously.

That is, God was still the God of the house of God, despite Jacob's changing circumstances. And therein is a lesson for us, for God is the same God on Monday mornings when things aren't great at work or school or even in our homes, as He is on Sunday morning's when we are singing his praises, hearing His Word taught, and surrounded by those who love Him. Make a note of that – that God, and His promises and benefits don't somehow fail the moment you walk out of these doors.

But since God was still able to protect Jacob, and indeed exceedingly provide for him here, why did He want Jacob to return to the Land of Canaan? Well, a few reasons. First, that's where his inheritance from Isaac was. Second, it was the land God had already promised to Him. Third, God wanted *Jacob* to lead his house, not Laban. But fourth, and no small part in this I'm sure, He wanted Jacob and his family out from the home and influence of a man who worshipped idols, just He had called Abraham out of a home of idolatry in Ur, many years before.

And perhaps in light of this we would give some thought to what things we need to keep *our* children from, of the many things that could influence them. From what is on TV and streaming services, to what they can access on their phones and computers, to even what is sometimes taught or at least encouraged in our schools – we need to have real wisdom in this area, and be willing to act in our children's interest. That is our responsibility as parents.

Here, now in possession of the facts Jacob shared, Jacob's wives (also no doubt knowing some of this situation beforehand) reply:

#### **Genesis 31:14-16**

Then Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, "Is there still any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? Are we not considered strangers by him? For he has sold us, and also completely consumed our money. For all these riches which God has taken from our father are really ours and our children's; now then, whatever God has said to you, do it."

So then, it seems that the relationship between Laban and his daughters had also broken down. God had perhaps loosened the bond that *they* had to their father with this moment in mind. But furthermore, what a wonderful example of submission to a husband who was following God's lead. No arguing or disputing, simply they were each saying "If God has told you to do this, and to lead me there, then I'm not going to argue over it".

This, of course, should remind us of what we read in Ephesians 5:

#### **Ephesians 5:22-24**

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Saviour of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

Now, the point of this isn't that a wife may be abused or coerced by her husband into anything. But rather, that when a Godly man follows God's ways and God's leading, a Godly wife will get under his mission, will be supportive of him, trusting that God Himself is guiding her husband. And, of course, we can't detach this from the responsibility of the husband to be a Godly one also, willing to give himself for his wife just as Christ died for the church, and to love their wives as their own bodies.

Clearly, this isn't what the modern world wants to hear, but let us consider how the world's ways are working out, and we'll quickly see that what the Bible says is not foolishness, but wisdom.

And here in Genesis, we have an example in how Rachel and Leah say *"whatever God has said to you, do it"*. Not *"whatever you fancy, do it!"* but whatever God has said. And so, obeying God's instruction, and with the support of Rachel and Leah, we read:

#### **Genesis 31:17-18**

Then Jacob rose and set his sons and his wives on camels. And he carried away all his livestock and all his possessions which he had gained, his acquired livestock which he had gained in Padan Aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan.

So, Jacob escapes, leaving Padan Aram with *far* more than the staff (stick) he brought with him (2 wives, 2 maids, 11 sons, 1 daughter, large flocks, female and male servants, camels and donkeys — to be precise), and heads towards his father in the land of Canaan (perhaps of note there's no mention of his mother here, and we do know that she had died by the time he finally returned). And he chooses his timing well, for we next read:

#### **Genesis 31:19**

Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel had stolen the household idols that were her father's.

So while Laban is out of sight, Jacob makes a run for it. At least as much as you can with an entourage including sheep and small children!

But isn't this verse revealing?! For here we not only learn that Laban had household idols, that we'll later find out were *very* dear to him, but we also see the character of Rachel further revealed, as she doesn't want to leave home without these idols. And to make matters worse, she steals them.

Sadly, Rachel was following in her father's footsteps in what she worshipped. So how might we consider that? Well, we might think we'd never worship idols, as if that's only something done in some primitive age. Yet what do our calendars, search history and bank accounts say? We might not worship Bacchus, the Roman god of wine and intoxication, but how much are we willing to abuse alcohol? We might not worship Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love, lust, and pleasure, yet what does our Internet search history reveal? We might not worship Hermes, the Greek god of commerce, yet how often do we prioritise our careers over our marriages, our children, and our service to God?

What our children see us pursue, is likely what they will act out in their lives. Here, that's exactly what's happening, as Rachel steals these idols from her father, despite her support for her husband. And I can't let this pass without warning to any unmarried men here this morning, to beware the pretty girl who worships idols... for she may become the mother of your children and influence them to worship idols too. Choose wisely!

Now, we read on in verse 20:

#### **Genesis 31:20-23**

And Jacob stole away, unknown to Laban the Syrian, in that he did not tell him that he intended to flee. So he fled with all that he had. He arose and crossed the river, and headed toward the mountains of Gilead. And Laban was told on the third day that Jacob had fled. Then he took his brethren with him and pursued him for seven days' journey, and he overtook him in the mountains of Gilead.

So, Laban is not happy about this at all (to put it mildly), and pursues Jacob, catching and passing him within a week, despite the 3 day head start. After all, Jacob and his entourage would have been easy to spot, and certainly slower than Laban could have travelled with his band of men. But before he was able to confront Jacob, we read:

#### **Genesis 31:24**

But God had come to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said to him, "Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad."

As God had spoken to Abimelech years before in the situation with Sarah, warning *him*, so God spoke to Laban here, making it clear that he was not to harm Jacob — to basically be very careful in how he treated him.

#### **Genesis 31:25-28**

So Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mountains, and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mountains of Gilead. And Laban said to Jacob: "What have you done, that you have stolen away unknown to me, and carried away my daughters like captives taken with the sword? Why did you flee away secretly, and steal away from me, and not tell me; for I might have sent you away with joy and songs, with timbrel and harp? And you did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters. Now you have done foolishly in so doing.

Laban, then, appeals to Jacob as a father and grandfather, saying "why have you left without even saying goodbye?". Even going on to say that he might have thrown a party for them! Sure, Laban, sure! I think we'll find the key word in that sentence is *might*! And he takes no responsibility for how he has treated them, putting blame for this squarely at Jacob's feet. And he goes on...

#### **Genesis 31:29-30**

It is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad.' And now you have surely gone because you greatly long for your father's house, but why did you steal my gods?"

Clearly demonstrating how angry he is, Laban tells Jacob he could harm him if he wanted to, and only isn't because God spoke to him. Which of course it's good he showed this respect for God's command. But the problem is he misses how powerful God is, for he could not have laid a finger on Jacob, unless God permitted it. Why does he miss this? Because he only knows *about* God, and doesn't actually *know* Him — as evidenced in him calling Him *the God of your father*, rather than saying "*my God*" or "*our God*".



And then it is revealed who *is* his god... for as he perhaps sympathises just a little, that Jacob would want to see his father again, he demands to know why Jacob had stolen his gods.

So, Jacob answers these accusations in order:

#### **Genesis 31:31**

Then Jacob answered and said to Laban, "Because I was afraid, for I said, 'Perhaps you would take your daughters from me by force.'

This shows how broken the relationship was, that Jacob thought his father-in-law would have forcibly taken his wives from him, let alone his possessions, had he announced he was leaving for Canaan. And then he deals with the second accusation:

#### **Genesis 31:32**

With whomever you find your gods, do not let him live. In the presence of our brethren, identify what I have of yours and take it with you." For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.

Jacob is acting in honesty, but speaking rashly, for while he knew he had not taken the idols himself (having no interest in them) he hadn't realised that Rachel was responsible. And so Laban has carte blanche to check throughout all Jacob's possessions, throughout his whole camp, with Jacob even saying that the thief could be put to death by Laban.

The warning for us, then, is to be very careful in accusing anyone of anything, or saying how someone who has sinned should be punished. Indeed, we only need to look to how Nathan later in the Bible confronted King David, who was furious that someone should act in the way Nathan described, only for Nathan to say "that man is you!". Remember, our sin always looks worse on other people. Always. Of course, we must not be soft on sin. But we must not forget the grace which God has shown us. And here, Jacob dangles the prospect of a death sentence over the head of his second wife, Rachel. So, what would become of her? We read:

#### **Genesis 31:33**

And Laban went into Jacob's tent, into Leah's tent, and into the two maids' tents, but he did not find them. Then he went out of Leah's tent and entered Rachel's tent.

So, surely she is going to be found out, right?

#### **Genesis 31:34-35**

Now Rachel had taken the household idols, put them in the camel's saddle, and sat on them. And Laban searched all about the tent but did not find them. And she said to her father, "Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise before you, for the manner of women is with me." And he searched but did not find the household idols.

What we see then, is that Rachel *plays* dumb, but is actually being pretty smart here. Remember there were no sanitary products for women in those days. And so Laban doesn't for a moment challenge this, not realising he is being deceived. Oh, how she has learned from her father!

And with Laban coming up short on evidence, and Jacob also unaware Rachel had stolen these idols, Jacob is now emboldened to rebuke his father-in-law:



**Genesis 31:36-37**

Then Jacob was angry and rebuked Laban, and Jacob answered and said to Laban: "What is my trespass? What is my sin, that you have so hotly pursued me? Although you have searched all my things, what part of your household things have you found? Set it here before my brethren and your brethren, that they may judge between us both!

Laban must be feeling a little red-faced at this point. But Jacob doesn't stop, now calling Laban's treatment of him back home into question:

**Genesis 31:38-42**

These twenty years I have been with you; your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried their young, and I have not eaten the rams of your flock. That which was torn by beasts I did not bring to you; I bore the loss of it. You required it from my hand, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. There I was! In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from my eyes. Thus I have been in your house twenty years; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times. Unless the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God has seen my affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked you last night."

Jacob, then, had wisely held his peace until the search was over. And on the assumption that nothing had been stolen, he was entirely fair to rebuke Laban. Of course, he didn't know the whole picture, just we never do, and we can see how his rebuke of Laban wasn't as well founded as he thought. This is a good example to bring to mind before we speak out, that there's always at least one more thing we don't know about any given situation.

But when it comes to Laban's poor treatment of him over the years, Jacob is not wrong, for Laban had dealt with him most unfairly, especially given that he was his uncle! On the contrary, Jacob states how he had worked hard, been honest in his service to him, and covered the cost of any losses himself.

And finally, Jacob not only makes the point that God is on his side, but even mentions his father, Isaac, whom Laban also must have recognised was not only alive, but a powerful and wealthy man, able to take vengeance if his son were harmed. And so, despite his anger in this moment, Laban must think of his own future, even if it is without his daughters by his side. And so, he relents somewhat. We read:

**Genesis 31:43-44**

And Laban answered and said to Jacob, "These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and this flock is my flock; all that you see is mine. But what can I do this day to these my daughters or to their children whom they have borne? Now therefore, come, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it be a witness between you and me."

Laban, then, is having a tough time letting go of his daughters which he had already given away in marriage — and that, at the benefit to him of 14 years of hard work from Jacob. But, the nature of giving something away is that it is no longer yours. Just as we can't give someone a birthday or Christmas present, but then expect that it still belongs to us to do with as we please. That would be unreasonable.

But, I do think there is a risk we can do this with our tithing, in that we give to God, but then expect to determine how it is used. Of course, to some extent there *should* be understanding of how it is used, but it is not for us to say "I'm only going to tithe if my money is used for children's ministry or flower arranging" yet not be willing to tithe when the need is to pay the energy or water bills, or to renew the church insurance, or to support a ministry that we don't directly benefit from ourselves. Our giving must be giving, not lending. We must be prepared to let go, for it is not ours any more.

Here, Laban, is not willing to concede in his heart that his daughters whom he has given away are no longer part of his household. He is still aggrieved at the situation. However, he isn't going to deprive his daughters of their husband, or his grandchildren of their father. And instead, he calls for peace.

#### **Genesis 31:45-46**

So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. Then Jacob said to his brethren, "Gather stones." And they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there on the heap.

First then, they all gathered stones to make a visual reminder of the covenant that Laban was about to make with Jacob. And then they ate together, to symbolise that they were friends, rather than enemies (though the term *friends* might be stretching it a bit far, as we'll see). Next:

#### **Genesis 31:47**

Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed.

Both meaning "heap of witnesses" – Laban's name for it in Aramaic, and Jacob's name for it in the Hebrew language.

#### **Genesis 31:48-49**

And Laban said, "This heap is a witness between you and me this day." Therefore its name was called Galeed, also Mizpah, because he said, "May the LORD watch between you and me when we are absent one from another.

And some have taken this as a cute, even romantic phrase to share between loved ones. But that is taking it out of context. Jon Courson puts it rather directly, saying: *While that's a sweet sentiment, the fact of the matter is that what's being said here is, "You scoundrel. I don't trust you as far as I can spit. But even though I can't keep my eye on you, God will be watching you."* It's a slightly different tone, in context!

Indeed, Laban continues, saying:

#### **Genesis 31:50**

If you afflict my daughters, or if you take other wives besides my daughters, although no man is with us—see, God is witness between you and me!"

Certainly, the trust between these two is utterly broken. And it might seem surprising to take two positives out of this moment, but there are two things to note.

First, Laban, though an idol worshipper, speaks of the one true God — **e1ôhîym** — being the ultimate witness of their behaviour. And indeed He is. God knows all that we say, do, and even think. And that should be a sobering thought to us in how we treat others.

Second, Laban, for all his faults, takes the care of his daughters seriously, saying God will judge Jacob if he either hurts or neglects them. And that same fatherly protection should be evident in us fathers. I would say of all our children, but especially of daughters. We should be protective of them, given all this world wants to do to them, and influence them in. We should also raise daughters to choose a Godly man who will treat her right. And finally, we should ensure any man worthy of marrying one of our daughters knows his responsibility to her.

I can't tell you how much I appreciate, love and respect my father-in-law in this regard. The very first weekend we met, he spoke to me one-on-one, and on one hand said he was pleased to see how I treated Siân, but also clearly said, that if there were a time I decided the relationship would not end in marriage, that I must be very clear with Siân, and in no way mess her around. That takes courage to say, but it also takes love. That's a good and Godly example, dads. Let us take note.

And while Siân is now my wife, I know I still have a responsibility to care for her, and an expectation to do that from my father-in-law. And rightly so.

Now, Laban isn't done yet, for we read in verse 51:

#### **Genesis 31:51-53**

Then Laban said to Jacob, "Here is this heap and here is this pillar, which I have placed between you and me. This heap is a witness, and this pillar is a witness, that I will not pass beyond this heap to you, and you will not pass beyond this heap and this pillar to me, for harm. The God of Abraham, the God of Nahor, and the God of their father judge between us." And Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac.

Effectively, then, Laban is drawing a line in the sand — saying, "Jacob, you stay on your side, and I'll stay on mine". And he calls God as his witness — once again, despite his idolatry, recognising the fair and just nature of the one true God.

As an aside, it's interesting to see that Laban notes that God wasn't only the God of Abraham, and his own grandfather (Nahor), but also of Abraham's *own* father, meaning Terah must have come to know the Lord as his God sometime *after* Abraham had left him to follow God's calling.

But back here in chapter 31, we read Jacob's following actions:

#### **Genesis 31:54**

Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and called his brethren to eat bread. And they ate bread and stayed all night on the mountain.

And so once again, we see Jacob worship the Lord with this sacrifice, but also this demonstration of friendship, eating together, where enemies never would. But Laban it seems, was going through the motions, for in the final verse of this chapter we read:

#### **Genesis 31:55**

And early in the morning Laban arose, and kissed his sons and daughters and blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned to his place.

It's easy to miss, that while Laban kisses Rachel and Leah, and his grandsons and granddaughter, blessing them too, he shows no such affection to Jacob, and simply leaves to return home.

And from hereon in, we'll only see Laban mentioned in passing and in family trees; we'll see no more details of his life recorded as he steps off the stage. And what a sad departure of someone so involved in the lineage of the nation of Israel, ultimately through his own doing.

## Conclusion

We have such helpful examples — good and bad ones — in this book of Genesis. And it's very real, right? It's not like everything is sugar-coated. We have family feuds, deceit, jealousy, envy and more laid bare in front of us. These things though, are not there merely for some sort of entertainment; to make an interesting story, for example. Rather these things were written down by Moses that we might learn from them, as Paul noted in his letter to the Christians in Rome, saying:

### **Romans 15:4**

For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

So then, what *are* we going to learn from this, or indeed any of these chapters? If we're going to learn anything it requires not only listening, but action on our part. We need to actively think about what we read here, and how we can apply it to our lives.

So then, here are just a few things to consider and to ask ourselves, from our study of this chapter this morning:

## Application questions

- What might God be loosening our ties to?
- What should we be actively keeping our children from? Are we as protective as we should be?
- Do our marriages model submission and sacrifice as the Bible instructs?
- What are the idols in our lives, and in our homes?

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