

*Then Jesus answered and said to them... “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life;”*

## “And These Are They Which Testify of Me”

Sermons on Genesis  
Bye-Bye Bad Master  
Genesis 30:25-31:55

*With Study Questions*

*Pastor Paul Viggiano  
Branch of Hope Church  
2370 W. Carson Street, #100  
Torrance, CA 90501  
(310) 212-6999  
7/8/2001*

# Bye-Bye Bad Master

*Genesis 30:25-31:55*

## **I. Serving His Deceiver**

**Now it came about when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, “Send me away, that I may go to my own place and to my own country. <sup>26</sup> Give *me* my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me depart; for you yourself know my service which I have rendered you” (Genesis 30:25,26).**

### **Serving His Deceiver**

In chapters thirty and thirty-one of Genesis we see Jacob desperately seeking to rid himself of a bad master. He had deceived his father, betrayed his brother and ended up on the run. Jacob found himself caught in his own snare. He had betrayed his firstborn brother and ends up on the other end of a betrayal and finds himself—unwittingly—married to a firstborn against his choosing. He had deceived his father and ends up serving his own deceiver for twenty years. Paul writes, **“We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin” (Romans 7:14).**

### **Everyone is a Slave**

Enslavement to sin is the inevitable consequence of humanity. We may delude ourselves into thinking we have no master over us, but it is a delusion indeed. And though there are a variety of guesses as to how we ended up in this quandary of enslavement (though only one answer is cogent), there is no denying the present condition of mankind. He cannot escape from the sin around and within him. And he certainly cannot escape from the ultimate consequence of sin, which is death.

### **Comfortable Enslavement**

And by the way, enslavement doesn't necessarily mean continual discomfort. Jacob, in his twenty years of enslavement had many good things happen to him. It is even conceivable that one might choose the comforts of enslavement over the difficulty of freedom. In the recent blockbuster, *Matrix*, one of the characters living in the real world chose the comfort of the false world of the Matrix because he was simply tired of the battle. But there are, at least, two things that shouldn't escape our attention: 1) that bowing before the deceiver may grant us temporary comfort, but it consigns our progeny to continual enslavement; and, 2) the temporary comfort is just that—temporary. Eternity still must be faced. And the evil master grants no enjoyment in the eternal state.

## **Name Your Price**

But Laban wants him to stay and bids him to name his wages (30:28). One can't but think of the temptation of Jesus.

**Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. <sup>9</sup>“All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me” (Matthew 4:8).**

## **A Rescue Mission**

Seldom do people offer a legitimate argument against the Christian faith. We generally decide what we like then figure out why it is okay for us to have it. The world, the enemy, and our own natures court us to remain betrothed to the deceiver. With all this against us, who can possibly deliver us? This is why the Christian faith is to be thought of more as a rescue mission than a mere decision. Truly, decisions are to be made. But if I were left to the decision making capacity of my own desperately wicked heart, how would I ever find deliverance? No wonder it is within the context of salvation that Jesus says with men it is impossible.

**And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, “Who then can be saved?” <sup>27</sup>And Jesus looking upon them saith, “With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible” (Mark 10:26, 27).**

## **Maneuvering Livestock**

Jacob actually does name his wage. But like the unjust steward (Luke 16) he begins to prepare his present surroundings to be more suitable to his future surroundings. In verse twenty-nine through forty-three we see Jacob make a deal with Laban regarding the livestock. Apparently God had furnished Jacob with a dream (Genesis 31:8, 9) whereby which Jacob maneuvered the livestock in such a way that Laban thought he would get Jacob for free, when Jacob would actually end up with far more than Laban.

## **A Defeated Enemy**

The deceiver has now lost what he had usurped. Laban then pursues Jacob for revenge. God appears to Laban in a dream and warns him to keep his hands off of Jacob, which he does. But this didn't stop Laban altogether. He pursues Jacob and seeks to court him some more.

**“Why did you flee secretly and deceive me, and did not tell me, so that I might have sent you away with joy and with songs, with timbrel and with lyre; <sup>28</sup>and did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters? Now you have done foolishly” (Genesis 31:27, 28).**

Christians can be comforted by knowing that the devil is a defeated enemy.

**And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, <sup>14</sup>having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us *and* which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. <sup>15</sup>When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him (Colossians 2:13-15).**

But this does not mean the devil (and whatever remains under his dominion) is not still an enemy. We are still warned regarding his craftiness. Paul writes, **“But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2).**

### **Stolen Gods**

We learn a great deal from verse thirty.

**“And now you have indeed gone away because you longed greatly for your father’s house; *but* why did you steal my gods” (Genesis 31:30).**

It should not surprise us that a house so full of deceit would also be full of false gods. And how pathetic...how can you call a god a god when it can be stolen? If it can't protect itself from being taken, how can it protect you? But of course, modern man is much too sophisticated to serve a god who can be stolen or destroyed. Or is he? Let us all consider the feeble nature of that which men hold precious. What is there, other than God Himself, which cannot be stolen or destroyed in a moment?

**And He told them a parable, saying, “The land of a certain rich man was very productive. <sup>17</sup>And he began reasoning to himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?’ <sup>18</sup>And he said, ‘This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. <sup>19</sup>And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.”’ <sup>20</sup>But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’ <sup>21</sup>So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:16-21).**

## **Angry With Prior Deceivers**

The story ends with Jacob venting upon Laban. He worked very hard for the deceiver, yet the deceiver remained a deceiver. It is quite easy for those of us who now recognize a prior enslavement to be brought to anger when we consider our former state. We may be angry with the foolishness of the world or the error of Rome or the naiveté of modern evangelicalism. We must be careful to control our anger.

I had a brief conversation with a gentleman just recently and sought to bless him with what I thought was correct thinking about religion. Afterward I asked my wife to give me a quick review of what she thought. “He seemed nice. You were a bit aggressive.” I don’t say this in jest. It grieves me deeply when I find I have represented my Lord in an unloving manner.

## **A Covenant With Laban**

This portion of the story ends with a covenant made between Jacob and Laban. Illustrations are, of course, merely illustrations and we should not think this means we should make a covenant with the devil. But we also should (as far as it depends upon us) be at peace with all men (Romans 12:8). It is an earmark of the people of God that they have favor with all the people (Acts 2:47, Exodus 12:36). As one theologian put it, “The gospel is offensive enough without us adding to it.” Too often I have seen Christians be arrogant and offensive and chalk up the anger leveled toward them as persecution. Persecution is usually religious or political. If you find your persecution being social, there may be a different problem.

## **The Good Master**

Jesus was referred to as Master (Luke 5:5). But He is quite a different kind of master. He did not come to be served but to serve and give His life as a ransom. You will have a master. To deny this fact is overtly self-delusional. You will either have a master who will use and destroy you—or a master who will serve you and who died for you. May God grant us the wisdom, by His grace, to choose wisely.

## Questions for Study

1. In what respect are men slaves (page 1)?
2. How can enslavement be more comfortable than freedom (page 1, 2)? What are the dangers here?
3. What wages do you see the devil offering those who will serve him (page 2)?
4. Why should the Christian faith be considered a rescue mission rather than a mere decision (page 2)?
5. If the devil is a defeated enemy, why are we warned about him (page 3)?
6. What are some modern gods? How easily can they be lost (pages 3, 4)?
7. How must we be careful when we consider our former captors (page 4)?
8. To what extent should we pursue peace with men (page 4)?
9. How is Jesus a different kind of Master (page 4)?