

## Genesis, pt2: Crucifying Fear to Walk in Faith. Genesis 31-33

**MPS** Fear drives to exhaustion in sinful condemnation, but faith reconciles us to walk with God in His peace and love.

**OBJ** Every person can understand how fear deceives and destroys by four facts, and how it becomes faith by three steps.

**INTRO** **Do you know how fear has affected you in your life, in this season?** I know that many people are quick to say, “fear has not affected me.”, but in such a season as this, that is simply not true. Fear may not be ruling you, or even challenging you daily, but it has at least affected you. If we are not aware of it, then you are far more likely a slave to it. Today I want to look at how fear ruled Jacob to overwhelm his life, until he handled it the only way fear can be handled, by crucifying it.

**Fear drives to exhaustion in sinful condemnation, but faith reconciles us to walk with God in His peace and love.**

**TRANS** The only thing worse than living to alleviate your own fears (Jacob), is living to sustain someone else’s (Laban). For Jacob, fear wasn’t just about what his father-in-law might do, but what he might not be able to do. And for a self-made man, failure is a far greater threat than defeat. But driven to exhaustion by fear between the two, Jacob can take it no more and decides he must get away from Laban.

31:1-55 Jacob flees. Laban pursues. God intervenes.

[31:1-3] Twenty years into his arrangement with his father-in-law and the time for Jacob’s end is drawing near. Jacob knew his brothers-in-law were talking about him, and he “saw” that Laban no longer favored him. The Lord tells him to return to the land of his father, and promises that He will be with him.(.3) This was hard for Jacob because it meant he had to face the past he had been running and hiding from for the last twenty years. **One thing about a sinful past, it doesn’t just go away. And for Jacob, all the fear and angst he left was larger than ever when he considered his return.**

**TRANS** There is a stark contrast in this chapter between what Jacob kept seeing about his life, and what God tells him to do, “*Lift up your eyes and see*”. Eyes of faith “see” a completely different reality that eyes of fear can never see.

[31:4-16] Jacob takes Rachel and Leah into a field to tell them his plan to leave. He no longer has favor with Laban, but God has been with him and protected him, and is now leading him. He explains how Laban has constantly changed his wages, and how the Lord continued to be with him, reminding him to “lift up your eyes”. God told Jacob that He has seen all that Laban had done, reminded him of His promise, pointed Jacob back to remember the vow he made, and commanded him to go home. Rachel and Leah agree and want to leave as well.

**Jacob’s journey is much like the parable of the prodigal son.** The prodigal’s friends left when the money left. Jacob’s favor with Laban had a shelf life when profits plateaued. Though the prodigal lost everything in a relatively short period of time and Jacob had gained great wealth over his years, he had still come to the end of himself and had nowhere else to turn but the Lord! Trust in man is as fleeting as trust in self. **And though wealth may extend the journey some or hide the pain, poverty and riches without Jesus lead to the same hopeless and helpless end.**

**OBJ** **Jacob reveals four facts about Fear’s influence in us.**

**Fear Fact 1:** **Fear drives us by a false narrative that interprets everything we see according to its center, self.** It blurs a godly perspective by narrowing to “tunnel vision” where what is seen seems only and all pervasive, appears larger, more dominant, more threatening than it really is. It enflames paranoia that strips our ability to trust because of what we see, and fuels a self-centered, counter-narrative that constantly runs in the mind to interpret everything one “sees” in accordance with paranoia. Finally, it justifies and rationalizes actions in accordance with reality its created.



[31:17-21] Jacob got up early and got to his plan. He drove away his flocks, took all his possessions and left for Canaan. Jacob tricked Laban by leaving when he was gone to shear his sheep. And Rachel capitalized on the opportunity by stealing her father's gods. [God's work done in our own way or strength is never a recipe for goodness.](#)

[31:22-35] When Laban found out, he took his men and pursued them. But God told Laban, "*Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.*" When Laban finally caught up to them, he confronted Jacob by asked why he tricked him and took away his daughters, and did not allow him to host a going away party. He threatened him, but told him what God had said, then accused him of stealing his gods. Laban pretends to be a man of honor and blames everything on Jacob as if he is completely innocent, because that's the tactic he had used to keep him there for so long, but he wasn't trustworthy.

Jacob tells him that he was afraid of how he would react, keeping his daughters or swindling his livestock. Due to the way Laban had acted, this was not an unreasonable position. But knowing he had not taken his gods he makes a strong statement that the person who had taken them will die. Jacob did not know Rachel had taken them. Laban searches everywhere and does not find them.

**Fear Fact 2: Fear infects others around us to sin.** Rachel lived the last twenty years striving for her husband's love and with her sister. The insecurity of her relationships left her looking for love, acceptance and security in other places. We do not and cannot know how it will affect others, especially those closest to us. When we live in or out of our fear, allowing it to drive us instead of confessing it, we drive others to do the same. Jacob thought he was managing his fear, though that was a false hope, but he could never manage how fear would fuel more sin in others. His fear fueled Rachel, which drove her to false hope and desires that produced her own sin, seeking security and comfort by coveting her father's idols. Jacob didn't see it and Laban didn't see it, but both were deceived by it. Sight is a deceptive foundation for understanding. Only faith in God's Word can tell us what we really see, or don't see.

TRANS When he returns Jacob loses it.

[31:36-42] **A life fueled by one's sin, twenty years for Jacob, creates an anger that cannot be contained.** He confronts Laban over this accusation and search, then walks through his every offense over the last twenty years. He recounts every way that he served Laban, the ways he profited Laban, and the ways he protected Laban by personally taking the losses. Jacob recognizes that God is the one who protected him all these years(.41-42): "*These twenty years I have been in your house. I served you... <sup>42</sup>If the God of my father, ...had not been on my side, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God saw my affliction and the labor of my hands and rebuked you last night.*" Jacob comes to his senses.

**Fear Fact 3: Fear fills with angst, anxiousness and anger from exhaustion.** Jacob is exhausted because he's been trying to do it all in his strength, and that's the problem. He knew what God had promised and commanded him, but he is exhausted from trying to do God's Work in his own way and strength. Fear is a merciless slave-master, driving us to the end of self. Jacob was exhausted because having done all he could do, for an extended period of time, he was not satisfied with what he had. But not even exhaustion from nor recognition of our own fear actually breaks its hold nor relieves us from its hold. This leads to a fourth fear fact.

**Fear Fact 4: Fear fuels sin because it works to protect self.** Fear is not only about what and how you run or hide, but about how you build and proceed by guarding certain areas of life. Fear is as evident in how we spend money, or not, to build our lives, as it is in living distanced or removed to guard our hearts / lives. [Building our lives is as susceptible to being fear-driven as hiding in life.](#)

[31:43-55] There is a measure of breakthrough between the two men and they agree to a truce. Laban wants to say goodbye to his family, and Jacob wants to move on to follow the Lord. But the peace that came with Laban was superficial, at best. Sin between them was still hidden, animosity toward one another still simmered, and confession and forgiveness still absent. They build a heap of stones as witness of their truce, something they can both "see" to remind and serve as a watchpost of their truce and invoke God as their witness. Two swindlers and twenty years of ceaseless swindling over the most precious and important parts of life left both men exhausted and unable to trust.



**TRANS** **What's really going on?** Fear is taking its full effect and its deception and destruction is being revealed.

[32:1-8] Jacob travels on and is met by God's angels. He recognizes them and knows this means he will meet his brother Esau. **How does Jacob know this?** The same way we do, Holy Spirit conviction. He knew he had to deal with the sin that defined his life, and he was about to come face to face with it in Esau. He was overcome with fear and anxiety but knows it must occur. He knew Esau was coming and it was time to come clean. He prepares his family and possessions for protection, not knowing how Esau will respond. Then, Jacob prays. **A man can't walk with God as long as he is at odds with others and remains in unrepentant sin. Getting right with God always involves laboring to be right with others.**

**OBJ** These four facts haunt us until fear no longer has its affect in us. Fear cannot be managed and will not allow faith; it must be crucified for faith to break through. Let's follow the **three-step path where fear becomes faith.**

**Step 1: Surrender your All to the Lord** Genesis 32:9–12

*And Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O LORD who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your kindred, that I may do you good,' <sup>10</sup>I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps. <sup>11</sup>Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, that he may come and attack me, the mothers with the children. <sup>12</sup>But you said, 'I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.'" **Genesis 32:9-12***

**Isolated and on his own, Jacob prays to the Lord.** Better to start with prayer instead of using it as a last resort. But no matter when you get there, get all the way there in prayer! **This prayer is effective for one reason; Jacob surrenders himself to the purpose and work of God, in the way of God.** He confesses he is not worthy of God's steadfast love shown to him.

**HYMN** Rock of Ages (Baptist Hymnal, 285) | v2: Nothing in my hands I bring; simply to the cross I cling; Naked, come to Thee for dress; Helpless, look to Thee for grace: Foul, I to the fountain fly, wash me, Savior, or I die.

Jacob has done all he knows to do and the life that he has built now stands divided, and even that for protection, but his fear remains. At the end of himself, the Lord has become Jacob's only hope. **When you get to the end of your rope, the Lord will prove sufficient as your only hope! Cry out to Him for help, for He will hear and come near. Trust the promise of the Savior, and surrender your all to Him.**

**Step 2: Submit Your Whole Life to His Way** Genesis 32:20, 22-32

*And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. <sup>25</sup>When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. <sup>26</sup>Then he said, "Let me go, for the day has broken." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." <sup>27</sup>And he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." <sup>28</sup>Then he said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed." <sup>29</sup>Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. <sup>30</sup>So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered." **Genesis 32:24-30***

**ILLUS** Alone (Reality Series). 10 people dropped alone into the most remote parts of the world with only a few items to survive, among all the threats and dangers, the greatest of all of which is their own thoughts.

Jacob was alone, and there he met with God; just a man, his exhaustion from fear and inability to stop it, and God. Jacob's desperation in wrestling with God was NOT to prove his superiority, but to make sure the Lord was superior in his life. He would not want to settle for a lesser dose of God. He knew he had to be fully broken or there could be no blessing. **Jacob was bruised THEN blessed from meeting with God. He was not bothered by his bruise because he wanted to be marked by God's blessing.**



**Jacob's brokenness was obvious, he limped.** To others it meant something was wrong. To Jacob, it meant everything was finally right. His life was fully emptied of self and submitted to God so He could be filled up by God and blessed. How often we think for God to use us He must heal us. But God is not looking for our strength, but our surrender and submission to Him. God doesn't need your ability; He's looking for your availability. It's not about what you can do, but what He can do because you are fully submitted to let Him work IN and THROUGH you! **And when Jacob got up, he limped away full of joy and peace from God.**

**How many of us stay a safe distance from God because while we want the blessing, we fear the 'limp'?** Jesus went alone to the cross to bear the curse of our sin once for all. Alone, the Father laid on Him what was ours. And because of Him we do not bear the curse of our sin. But God measures out His grace to us to refine and sanctify for His purpose and work. The ONLY thing God ever bruises or breaks in us is that which is already killing us, sin. Paul testifies of it in this way:

***If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.***

*<sup>7</sup>So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. <sup>8</sup>Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. <sup>9</sup>But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. <sup>10</sup>For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong." **2 Corinthians 11:30; 12:7-10***

What most call "weakness" Christians know to be our "strength"; a life of blessing, full of joy and peace from God.

**Step 3: Serve to Obey the Lord's Will** Genesis 33:1f

*"And Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked,"*

When Jacob started walking with the Lord, he began to see everything differently, as God sees it (according to HOW God said it)! Jacob met Esau and it was a reunion of brothers. Esau ran to meet him, hugged and kissed him, and they wept. What a joyful reunion was had between two brothers, like none ever had before. Peace had come to their house. After a time, they bless one another and each goes his own way, reconciled.

**Fear drives to exhaustion in sinful condemnation, but faith reconciles us to walk with God in His peace and love.**

**CLOSE** Fear becomes faith when we surrender to God, His will, His work and His way. You can't go and do before you believe, or all your doing will only be your doing because you are not trusting. God showed up in Jacob's aloneness and marked his life for His glory. He will do the same if you will dare to lay your fear before Him, and trust Him.

