

Case Study: Laban – Your God Won't Allow It

Description

24 But God came to Laban the Syrian [Aramean] in a dream by night and said to
25 Then Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent on the hill, and
26 And Laban said to Jacob, What do you mean stealing away and leaving like th
27 Why did you flee secretly and cheat me and did not tell me, so that I might
28 And why did you not permit me to kiss my sons [grandchildren] and my daught
29 It is in my power to do you harm; but the God of your father spoke to me la

Genesis 31:24-29 AMPC

Laban was the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's mother, thereby making him Jacob's uncle. In addition to that, Laban was the father of Leah and Rachel, Jacob's wives. This double familial relation didn't mean much given that Jacob didn't meet them until he was an adult, and even more, Jacob's value to Laban had become merely financial. I would suggest that you read Genesis chapter 28 through 31 to get a complete picture and background context to what is going on in this scene. Jacob has decided to flee from Laban after 20 total years of service in which Jacob cared for Laban's flocks in exchange for Laban's daughters, and later for his "rejected" livestock. Earlier in chapter 31, Jacob leaves Laban's household without telling him, taking his entire family, and livestock. Once Laban hears about Jacob's actions, he along with his sons and others decide to pursue Jacob with the likely intent of killing him, and taking back his daughters, grandchildren, and livestock that Jacob has acquired. As Laban nears Jacob's camp, God visits Laban in a dream (v24 above) with instructions on how he is to behave towards Jacob.

Be careful that you do not speak from good to bad to Jacob [peaceably, then violently].

Genesis 31:24

God's words to Laban is a foreshadow to a later principle that King David further expounds in 1 Chronicles

Saying, Touch not My anointed, and do My prophets no harm.

1 chronicles 16:22 AMPC

When has God has set you aside for his will and purpose then there is nothing that the enemy can do to disrupt God's will. Like we later see in the book of Job, chapters 1 & 2, God set parameters on what satan could do to Job, and he could not go beyond what God permitted him to do. In the text above, though Laban didn't serve God, the people of that time had a respect for dreams and their meaning. I'd also like to imagine that during the 20 years Jacob served in his household, Laban had observed Jacobs relationship with God, and had heard Jacob speak about the God whom his father and grandfather served for years before he was born. This passage can be a testament to how people can come to recognize and respect/honor that the God that YOU serve as a result of observing you

faithfully serve and honor God. Laban had plotted and was fully desiring to bring about harm to Jacob out of hatred, envy, and jealousy, but GOD! That statement, “but God,” is often used but misunderstood. God oftentimes like in this situation, intervenes on our behalf when we don’t realize it. I believe that you’d be amazed to learn of the attacks that God protects you from that you don’t even realize were plotted, and directed at you. I believe possibly the most powerful part of the passage above is Laban’s words here:

It is in my power to do you harm; but the God of your father spoke to me

genesis 31:29

Laban here is acknowledging his desire and intent to harm Jacob, but he recognizes a power and authority greater than his that won’t allow him to behave as he desires. Jacob didn’t deserve God’s protection in this moment, but aren’t you glad that God doesn’t repay us for our sins as we deserve (psalms 103:10-14). God was working in Jacob’s favor even when he didn’t realize it, because that is what God does. Laban had motive, intent, capability, and even justification for his anger, but all of that means nothing when God is on your side. I want to leave you with this verse that I believe sums up Jacob’s experience with Laban, and as a testament to you for when you find yourself in difficult situations in spite of following God:

When a man’s ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

Proverbs 16:7 ampc

Reflection Time

Do you believe that God is able and willing to protect you? Can you think of a time when God intervened on your behalf when you could not have protected yourself? First I want to encourage you to strive to live a honorable life before God and men at all times, and I want to give you a few scriptures to take with you as you navigate a world that has an enemy that means you no good: Joshua 1:5-9, Psalm: 23, 91, 103, 121, Proverbs 16:7, Isaiah 54:15-17.

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