



WESTMINSTER  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# “SHADOW OF LITTLE ROCK”

John Galbreath  
Bible Study Series

Text: Genesis 32:15-32  
Date: September 29, 1957

About Westminster's Galbreath Bible Study Series:

This lesson is one taken from a sermon preached by John Galbreath at Westminster Presbyterian Church on September 29, 1957.

To complete the lesson, we suggest that you begin by reading the designated Bible passage (Genesis 32:15-32).

Next, review the outline of the sermon. Reflect on the chosen scripture and how you would “fill in” the remainder of the message from the chosen passage.

Then, review the study questions posed about the lesson — whether by yourself or in your small group.

Finally, share your thoughts on the Galbreath Bible Study blog on the Westminster Intranet.

In that day’s bulletin, there was a handwritten note at the call to prayer: “Not as those who are wise and have achieved but as those who are in need do we come. Make open our minds and spirits to receive of Thy guidance and encouragement.” Another note at the prayer of Thanksgiving says: “As Thou has blessed us – so make of us a blessing unto others – even through these our gifts, given in Thy name.”

The theme selected by the Presbyterian and other Protestant churches for Christian Education Sunday and Week was “Learn to Give – Give to Learn.”



## I. Little Rock

### A. Highest priced escort service -- \$250,000

### B. The integration plan

1. In 1954, Supreme Court made integration of all public schools in U.S. mandatory, at the earliest practicable date.
2. Little Rock School Board drew up a plan for gradual integration, to begin September 57 and to be completely integrated in 1963.
3. Suit was brought against the board for the delay.
  - a) *The federal courts upheld the school board, in view of the apparent good faith under which they had [operated]*
4. This fall, the School Board planned to put the plan into effect.

### C. Faubus' role

1. Governor Marvin S. Griffin of Georgia made an inflammatory address to a segregationist group in Little Rock, stating that he would never permit integration in Georgia.
  - a) *"If Georgia isn't going to integrate, why should we?"*
2. Faubus hears rumors of resistance
3. Called out National Guard to prevent integration.

### D. Ike enters picture.

1. At risk of federal prosecution, Faubus withdraws the guard.
2. Integration – for one day.
  - a) *Four Negro reporters beaten up.*
  - b) *Students enter, only by subterfuge.*
3. Papers throughout the world show pictures of Negroes being beaten by a mob, little girls spit upon.
4. Federal troops called in.

## E. Two issues

1. What position does the church take on integration?
  - a) *The Presbyterian Church in its General Assembly of 1954, 56 and 57 has endorsed the action of the Supreme Court and has asked the churches to use their influence to prepare the communities spiritually and psychologically for carrying it out.*
2. The issue of whether those called to enforce the law may choose the law and persons to be protected

## II. Sinai

### A. Our legal system goes back to Sinai.

1. The 10 commandments had been scarcely promulgated before the first test case occurred.

### B. Moses releases Children of Israel from Egyptian slavery

1. To give them a discipline that would sustain peace and justice among them.
2. When they reached Sinai, God spoke from the mountain and gave the Ten Commandments.
3. Moses ascends Sinai to receive the tablets of stone.

### C. Golden calf

1. 10 Commandments were new to the people.
  - a) *They had come from an idolatrous, pagan background.*
2. Moses delays return – people grow restless, request making of an image.
  - a) *Aaron, himself unenthusiastic about the law, and fearful of unrest, not only permitted it, but called the people to bring their gold and jewelry they had “liberated” from the Egyptians.*
3. Moses returns – hears the noise in the camp – fears conflict with other tribes.
4. Moses calls Joshua to task.
  - a) *Moses throws down the commandments, grinds the calf to powder.*
  - b) *Aaron says, “It wasn’t my fault. The people were restless. I told them, give me your rings. And when I threw them in the fire, low and behold, out came a golden calf.*

5. Moses calls in the Levites, who put 3000 to the sword.

6. Moses before God.

*a) Fearing God's vengeance upon the people, Moses goes to prayer, praying for their forgiveness.*

(1) And if you cannot forgive them, blot out me also from your book."

### III. Application

#### A. Shades of Aaron!

1. Aaron panicked at the first signs of resistance – not only did he permit disobedience, but sanctioned lawlessness.

2. Keeping the peace is not a governor's first mandate.

#### B. Strutwear vs. Olson – 1936

1. "No official entrusted with the enforcement of the law can select the laws which he will enforce, nor the citizens he will protect. He has sworn to enforce all laws and to protect all citizens. . . ." "That surrender to the demands of a public enemy in time of war or accession to the demands of insurrectionists or rioters at other times is one way of restoring peace and quelling disorder, no one will deny. It results in the restoration of peace and order, at the sacrifice of law." "Carried to its logical conclusions, the rule would result in the civil authorities suppressing lawlessness by compelling the surrender of the intended victims of lawlessness. The banks could be closed and emptied of cash to prevent bank robberies; the post office locked to prevent mails being robbed; the citizens kept off the streets to prevent hold-ups."

2. In "Little Red Robin Hood," the villain is the woodsman, for the wolf was all set to have a peaceful lunch, with Riding Hood served as entrée until the peace was shattered.

*a) Like the wolf, the sheriff, spitting a hawker of tobacco, said "We'd be all right if they would only leave us alone."*

*b) The woodsman caused all kinds of violence but Little Red Riding Hood went home to her mother.*

### C. Why should we be concerned?

1. As American, the very basis of our democracy lies in the enforcement of the law.
  - a) *There can be no safety if enforcement is at the personal discretion of the officer.*
2. We have seen law left to gangsters before.
  - a) *Hitler Germany turned over to mobsters.*
  - b) *"Decent" people frowned upon Buchenwald and Dachau but did nothing.*
  - c) *Church was told, "This is none of your business."*
  - d) *The intelligent would not take part in the atrocities, but was not against the results – elimination of the Jew.*
    - (1) By inaction, they could feel superior by frowning on it, yet be gratified, for others were doing what their grossest instincts dictated.
3. As Christians, we are concerned.
  - a) *Paul was quite explicit as to the demand upon the Christian to support law – placing the lector as the minister of God.*
    - (1) He had, himself, been the victim of lawlessness.
    - (2) We enter a period – for Little Rock is just the beginning – when the power of our government to enforce the law of the land will meet its most severe test in a century.

### IV. Conclusion

*A case came before a Roman judge about 1900 years ago. The defendant was one of a hated race. And the population was getting ugly. And Rome would never hear. So he washed his hands, turned Him over to the mob – and they crucified Jesus Christ.*

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## Study Questions -- Part I

*Bible Reading:* Genesis 32:15-32

Genesis 32:15 through 21 says: <sup>15</sup> thirty milking camels and their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. <sup>16</sup> He delivered *them* into the hand of his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, "Pass on before me, and put a space between droves." <sup>17</sup> He commanded the one in front, saying, "When my brother Esau meets you and asks you, saying, 'To whom do you belong, and where are you going, and to whom do these *animals* in front of you belong?' <sup>18</sup> then you shall say, 'These belong to your servant Jacob; it is a present sent to my lord Esau. And behold, he also is behind us.'" <sup>19</sup> Then he commanded also the second and the third, and all those who followed the droves, saying, "After this manner you shall speak to Esau when you find him; <sup>20</sup> and you shall say, 'Behold, your servant Jacob also is behind us.'" For he said, "I will appease him with the present that goes before me. Then afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me." <sup>21</sup> So the present passed on before him, while he himself spent that night in the camp.

- Imagine living this kind of life. What would be your primary concerns?

Genesis 32:22 and 23 says: <sup>22</sup> Now he arose that same night and took his two wives and his two maids and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. <sup>23</sup> He took them and sent them across the stream. And he sent across whatever he had.

- What would this type of journey have entailed? How would someone prepare to take it?

<sup>24</sup> Then Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. <sup>25</sup> When he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he touched the socket of his thigh; so the socket of Jacob's thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with him. <sup>26</sup> Then he said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking." But he said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." <sup>27</sup> So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." <sup>28</sup> He said, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed." <sup>29</sup> Then Jacob asked him and said, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And he blessed him there. <sup>30</sup> So Jacob named the place Peniel, for *he said*, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved." <sup>31</sup> Now the sun rose upon him just as he crossed over Peniel, and he was limping on his thigh. <sup>32</sup> Therefore, to this day the sons of Israel do not eat the sinew of the hip which is on the socket of the thigh, because he touched the socket of Jacob's thigh in the sinew of the hip.

- Why do you think the writer noted that Jacob was injured?
- Why do you think Jacob was given a new name?



## Study Questions -- Part II

### *Sermon :*

I -- This sermon was delivered in the month in which integration was to begin in Little Rock. How much do you think the people of Upper St. Clair knew about the court ruling? What do you think their views might have been about it? What might it have been if Upper St. Clair was the district to be integrated?

I.C. – How do you think these politicians were viewed at the time? How do we view them today?

I.C.2. – There is a handwritten note: Mansfield Plan

I.D. – Do you think Eisenhower’s role as a hero of the Second World War generated support for his actions? What did he risk by supporting the courts?

I.E.1. – How do you view the statement of the General Assembly? Do you believe it went too far? Do you believe it went far enough?

I.E.1. – On what issues would you like the Presbyterian Church to be taking a stand today? On what issues would you prefer it remain neutral?

II.C. – What “golden calves” do we make for ourselves today? What can we do to avoid those temptations?

III.A.2. – What should the governors have done in 1957?

III.B.1. – What is your reaction to the court’s ruling?

III.C. – Why do you think the people of Upper St. Clair should have been concerned about what was happening in Little Rock? What should we be concerned about in other parts of the country today? In the world?

III.C.3. – What can you do this week to show your concern?