

Genesis 32:22-32 – Stop Fighting With God

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Our text deals with Jacob on his way back to Canaan – the Promised Land –after spending time at Laban’s house. He was going back to Canaan because God told him to. God wanted him in Canaan to preserve that line of promise, that line from which Christ would come. As evening came, Jacob has some issues to work out...rather, **God had some issues to work out in Jacob.** **God needed to free Jacob from himself** so that he would be most productive in Canaan. God had to make him dependent. This is the text for today.

Our headings are:

The Wrestling

The Clinging

The Testimony

Our goals are: **That you will learn how you need to be free of yourself and to cling to Christ to be successful in your Christian life.**

The Wrestling

24 Then Jacob was **left alone**; and **a Man wrestled** 摔跤 **with him** until the breaking of day.

1. Jacob, a covenant child, loved by God, separated himself in the cool of that evening from his

family and reflected on his plans. He had met there with God when fleeing from Esau 20 years before. At that time he was single. He was alone – estranged 疏远 from his father and brother. He was needy. He was going for help from people he did not know. So God gave him many promises of protection, prosperity, and peoples. So he named that place Bethel and worshipped God there. **Now he was going back home.** God had fulfilled his promise. As he crossed over Ford Jabbok—now the Zerka - he had 2 full camps. He was no longer the lonely traveler as he was 20 years ago. Seeing God fulfill some of his promises to him (faith had become sight) his faith should have been strong.

Genesis 28: 14 "Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. 15 "Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you."

2. But Jacob had a problem in front of him. His name was Esau. So Jacob prayed that God would work in his brother that Esau would not seek to harm him. (Verse 11) His success in life did not make him feel too powerful to pray. **But he tried to do God’s work by trying to buy his brother’s love back.** He sent his servants ahead of him with two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty milk camels with their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten foals. **He did not ask for forgiveness.**

Genesis 32:20 "and also say, ‘Behold, your servant Jacob is behind us.’" For he said, "**I will appease** 和解 **him** with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me."

He was going to trick his brother just as he had done 20 years before. His greatest wealth was God's promises, but he did not use them. He used animals instead.

3. After he finished praying Jesus appeared and Jacob started wrestling with him. How do we know it was Jesus?

- a. Neither the Father nor the Spirit takes on human form. Only Jesus takes human form.
- b. Jacob demanding a blessing from him. (V26) Angels don't bless. The Lord blessed Jacob. V29.
- c. V28 says that he was struggling 挣扎 with God.
- d. In V30, Jacob testified that he had met with God 20 years earlier and named the place to show that he had indeed met with God. He named it "Bethel." This meant "house of God." Hosea confirmed that he wrestled with God:

Hosea 12:4-5 - Yes, he struggled with the Angel and prevailed; He wept, and sought favor from Him. **He found Him in Bethel,** And there He spoke to us—**That is, the LORD God of hosts.** The LORD is His memorable name.

Jesus Christ frequently appeared in the Old Testament as a token and pledge of his future incarnation 道成肉身.

4. Why did Jacob wrestle with Jesus? This **was not** an example of God teaching Jacob to wrestle to prepare him for spiritual wrestling. That might be good preaching point, but that was not the intention of this passage. This was God teaching him to stop wrestling 停止挣扎 Jacob fought because **he wanted his will instead of God's.** He wanted to use his methods to appease Esau in conjunction with God. So he wasn't just wrestling physically. His physical wrestling was only the manifestation of his mental and spiritual wrestling – as Hosea pointed out above. You see a similar case of fighting with the Lord when Peter thought he knew best how Christ should work and that he should not suffer and die.

Mark 8:32-33 - He spoke this word openly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, "Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

25 Now when He saw that **He did not prevail** 胜过 **against him,** He **touch** **ed the socket of his hip;** and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him.

5. Now when the Lord Jesus saw that Jacob was not submitting, he touched his hip socket, probably dislocating his hip. Similarly, God gave Apostle Paul a thorn 刺 **in his side in order to keep him humble.**

2Corinthians 12:9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Like the Apostle Paul, this reminded Jacob that he needed to depend upon God alone when he would face his lions. And by the way, look at the grace of God here! Instead of killing him, God was patient.

6. Isn't God sometimes please to wrestle with you till you submit? He has the right to kill you for rebellion – or leave you in your foolish actions, but he doesn't. He wishes to rule over your whole全部 character and life that he may fill you with his blessing in his way – not your way. To do this, he **sometimes has to touch the source of our strength** and break it...making it wither. Sometimes he may have to take away a job. Sometimes he has to take away your child. Sometimes you home. God loves you so much that he will do what you need to get you to stop wrestling with him.

7. How is it that the Scriptures say that Jacob prevailed against God? Did he really beat God? No. He did not win a victory like winning a race. He won a victory of stubbornness倔强 He would not give in to God's will. **So this was not a fight to boast about.** He prevailed in his stubbornness.

The Clinging

26 And He said, "**Let Me go**, for the day breaks." But he said, "**I will not let You go unless** You bless me!" 27 So He said to him, "What is your name?" He said, "Jacob." 28 And He said, "Your **name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel;** for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed."

1. After Jacob's hip was dislocated and he couldn't fight anymore, Jacob was then changed from being a wrestler to being a clinger. He started to hold on to Jesus knowing his way was wrong and that Jesus was the only way of blessing. It is interesting that God touched his hip. **That would have limited his ability to walk and reminded him that he needed to be dependent.** And every day he would be reminded that to conquer the land he needed the sustenance of God.

2. But why did God give Jacob a new name?

a. **First of all; it was an additional name; he still kept his old name.** You can read it this way: "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob only, but Israel also." God called him Jacob later.

b. **God gave him this new name to encourage him in his present challenges.** His old name meant "heel holder," "supplanter," or "tripper." His new name, Israel, meant "God prevails." This new name further shows that his wrestling was sinful. He prevailed in stubbornness but then God supplanted取代 him. And then God wanted him to be encouraged as he faced his brother, etc.

3. Recognizing that God prevails over you and your enemy and that you do not do so by your own strength is the greatest wealth that you could accumulate. (And Jacob had much wealth!) Knowing that God overcomes the world takes away worry and gives you cause to praise him. **And this wealth would come in handy.** Jacob would face challenges from Esau. He would face wicked sons...the men of Shechem...Pharaoh...and he would need to know that God prevails and he wouldn't have to take any short cuts. Ultimately his greatest enemy was the Devil, and God would prevail over him on the cross. Jacob's strength meant nothing. His wealth meant nothing. His 11 sons meant nothing – nothing in the grand scheme of life. He needed God. If God is your friend, you are well-off富裕 Put in another way: The best way to prevail with men is to prevail with God. The best way to prevail with God is by holding on to him with a stubborn trust.

The Testimony

29 Then Jacob asked, saying, "Tell me Your name, I pray." And He said, "Why is it that you ask about My name?" And He blessed him there.

1. Jacob then asked to know the name of the Lord. His request was denied. Why? Jacob **should have known** who the wrestler was...just like Jesus rebuked Nicodemus who **should have known** how to be saved. **God had mentioned his name to Jacob when he was fleeing and before sending him back.**

Genesis 31:13 `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.'"

But in spite of Jacob's ignorance, the Lord blessed him with hope and spiritual prosperity 属灵富足. Isn't God good? Even when you forget him, he doesn't forget you. He holds you by his righteous right hand because you are his children through Jesus Christ.

30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

2. With the Lord humbling Jacob and teaching him dependence on Jehovah, Jacob then testified of God's goodness. He named the place Peniel, which means "facing God," or "God hath looked upon me." He then knew that he had wrestled with one vastly superior to himself and could have easily crushed him. With God's preservation, Jacob then had no reason to fear his brother on any other challenges. His God was bigger than all his troubles. And all of what Jacob tried to do to bribe his brother was in vain 徒劳无功

31 Just as he crossed over Peniel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip.

3. The sunrise is noted. This showed that the soul that meets with God has the light of day on himself.

Malachi 4:2 But to you who fear My name The **Sun of Righteousness** shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves.

4. Then he went limping. This was a daily reminder that Jacob had to continuously depend upon God.

32 Therefore to this day the children of Israel do not eat the muscle that shrank, which is on the hip socket, because He touched the socket of Jacob's hip in the muscle that shrank.

5. Israel continued to remember the humbling work of God on their father.

Conclusion:

What a lesson this was for Father Jacob. He had to face many trials in his future, but he had to stop fighting in his own strength. If he fought in his own strength, he would lose. If he clung to Christ, he would win.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ, the warning is true for you today. You belong to Christ. He paid for your freedom. He has a vested interest in you. It makes no sense to trust in yourself. Look where trusting in yourself leads: discouragement, depression, and death. Instead, hold to the promises of Jesus and walk in his truth. And when you face all

your challenges in life –like when you are tempted to fear, you will not look at the waves, as Peter, but you will keep your eyes on Jesus and he will take you by the hand.

Finally, if you are not in covenant盟约 with God you have no hope of anything truly good in your future. So how can you come into covenant with him? You must embrace your covenant keeper who lived and died for sinners. May you do so today!