

GENESIS

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Genesis chapter 32 as we continue our study through the Word of God. In our last study we saw Jacob obey God's call to leave his uncle Laban's house and go to Bethel, the place where Jacob first encountered God. The problem for Jacob, not God, is that he is unsure of how Laban will react to his departure, so he sneaks away with his family, his servants and all the livestock that was his and gets a three days head start on Laban.

When Laban finds out he is angry and catches up to Jacob but the Lord warned Laban not to touch Jacob, not to say anything good or bad to him. Thus, as they meet they don't trust each other and they part by drawing a line in the sand, they set-up some stones as a boundary line and said if you cross over this line, you are dead! Not only that, but if they can't keep an eye on each other, God will and if you do step out of line, God will crush you! And as Genesis chapter 31 ended we are told, "**And early in the morning Laban arose, and kissed his sons and daughters and blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned to his place.**" Genesis 31:55.

Now, as we move into Genesis chapter 32 this evening, the first encounter is over for Jacob and now he has another one to get through, another one to face and that is his brother Esau. If you remember, Jacob left his family in the land of Canaan because he stole the blessing from Esau and Esau wanted to kill Jacob. Yes, it has been 20 years but Jacob is still not sure if Esau's feelings have changed. That is where we will pick up our study tonight, in Genesis chapter 32, starting in verse 1 as Jacob continues on his journey home.

GENESIS 32**VERSES 1-2**

1. Jacob was fearful of Laban and now he is fearful of his encounter with his brother Esau. Thus, God shows him why he shouldn't be fearful; God has his angels in the camp with him. Thus, Jacob calls the place Mahanaim or "double camp." Not only was Jacob and his group there, but so were the angels of God. Thus, two camps! And these angels of God were there to watch over them, protect them. The ladder Jacob saw in a dream in Genesis chapter 28, at Bethel, and on this ladder he saw angels ascending and descending on this ladder and now here they are, watching over Jacob. In fact, they were always there, but now the Lord shows them this protection. That should have given Jacob great encouragement – not only did the Lord tell Jacob he would return home, but now the Lord's angels are watching over him!

2. In Hebrews 1:14 Paul tells us, "**Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?**" The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, "**Are not the angels all ministering spirits (servants) sent out in the service [of God for the assistance] of those who are to inherit salvation?**" That should bring us great comfort, knowing that God has sent His angels to protect us, to watch over us and some of them have a bigger job than others! Do we see this in our days? You bet we do. Listen to this:

John Paton, a missionary to the New Hebrides Islands, told of how one night hostile natives surrounded his missions headquarters, intent on burning the Patons out and killing them. He and his wife prayed through the entire night, and when daylight finally came, their attackers all left. A year later, the chief of the tribe became a Christian, and Paton asked the man about that night. The chief replied, “Who were all those men you had with you there?” The missionary explained only he and his wife were there. The chief insisted he had seen hundreds of big men with shining garments and swords circling the mission headquarters, so the natives were afraid to attack (Billy Graham in *Angels, God’s Secret Agents*, page 3). That night in the New Hebrides Islands, there certainly was a “double camp”!

3. How is this going to change Jacob’s perspective of meeting his brother Esau, who 20 years earlier wanted to kill him? It should give him the confidence to forge ahead, that God is in control and He is watching over Jacob and his family. Like I said, it should, but let’s read on and see how this encounter affects Jacob’s life.

VERSES 3-6

1. Jacob is still not too sure so he is going to test the waters you might say before he jumps in. He sends his servants to meet up with Esau and explain to him that Jacob doesn’t want or need anything from him and he just wants to work things out.

2. As Jacob's servants go to the land of Seir, where Esau was living and is located east and south of the Dead Sea, and they see Esau coming but things were not looking good. At least it did not look good in their mind. Esau is coming to meet Jacob with 400 of his men! And I believe the text is telling us that Jacob's servants didn't even talk with Esau, they saw this "army," at least that is what they thought, coming and they high tailed it back to Jacob to warn him of the danger. This can't be good!

As fearful as his servants were, not Jacob, right? I mean, the Lord said to Jacob, **"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."**

Genesis 28:15. God would bring him back to Bethel, it was His promise to Jacob. Then, in the land of Haran, with his uncle Laban for 20 years, **"Then the Lord said to Jacob, 'Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you.'"**

Genesis 31:3. And now, on his journey home we just read that God's angels are with him. So Jacob should not be fearful, his faith should see him through this, God promised. Well, let's see how he responds.

VERSES 7-8

1. Why was Jacob so fearful? Because 20 years earlier his mother Rebekah told him, **“Now therefore, my son, obey my voice: arise, flee to my brother Laban in Haran. And stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury turns away, until your brother's anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him; then I will send and bring you from there. Why should I be bereaved also of you both in one day?”** Genesis 27:43-45. Rebekah never sent word to Jacob that all is well, that Esau was not angry and he can return home. Thus, he still must be angry and wants Jacob dead! So Jacob, the schemer, is coming up with a plan to protect what was his by dividing the camp into two companies. Thus, Esau may be able to get one but not both of the camps. But remember what Jacob saw earlier, there was already two companies in the camp, his and the angels of God who were there to protect him, who were watching over them. He should have said, “I don’t know if my brother Esau is coming in peace or if he wants to kill me. I hope for peace but if not, the Lord is with me and He will protect me!” But he did not do that!

VERSES 9-12

1. Jacob was fearful, he did not believe he would survive this situation and that lead him to prayer, and that is a great place to go. Bring your fears, your hurts, your pain, your sorrow before the Lord. First Jacob stood upon the Words of God – **“the Lord who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you.’”** Genesis 32:9. Folks, we too need to stand upon God’s Word, His promises to us, as Jacob was doing here.

Then Jacob sees his unworthiness before a holy and righteous God. He doesn't deserve anything from God and yet, in His grace, in His mercy God extends His love to Jacob and to us. Folks, we are not worthy to receive anything from God and yet, He blesses us exceedingly abundantly above all that we could ask or think.

And then Jacob goes to his petition – **“Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me and the mother with the children.”** Genesis 32:11. Folks, once again God is waiting to hear from us, to bring our requests before Him and lay them at His feet, that is what Jacob is doing here.

And lastly, Jacob stood on the promises of God – **“For You said, ‘I will surely treat you well, and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.’”** Genesis 32:12. Jacob remembered God's Word to him. And so, with a humble heart he asked God to answer his prayer.

2. George Mueller was a great man of faith and a great man of prayer and one day he was asked about his prayers. He was asked what was the most important part of prayer. His answer is interesting and I think correct. He said, “The 15 minutes after I have said, ‘Amen.’” You see, as you finish praying your faith will be seen in what you do! Let's see how Jacob does after he prays, does his actions reflect his belief?

VERSES 13-21

1. Just in case his prayer didn't work, his back-up plan was to appease Esau with these gifts. And Jacob has five herds that are going to be sent out with a distance between them and the servants overseeing them. And they will present these gifts to Esau, a gift from his brother Jacob. If Jacob truly trusted God, he would have been in front to meet Esau and not send these gifts on ahead. Folks, faith grows as we exercise it, we put it into practice. I see Jacob's actions here as nothing more than a carnal attempt to save his life by attempting to buy his brother Esau's good favor.

2. Here's the thing. Jacob was willing to surrender his goats, all his rams, his camels, his cows and-so-on to his brother Esau but he was not willing to surrender his life to the Lord! Do you see that? Do you understand that? Do you trust in your ability to do things apart from God? That is what Jacob was doing here and now the Lord is going to get his attention!

VERSES 22-23

1. Can you imagine what was going through his mind? There is all this turmoil inside of him. He has 11 sons and 1 daughter and they were young, the oldest maybe 13 and the youngest maybe 6 and they are competing for his attention. “Hey dad, lets go camel racing!” “No dad, lets go sand boarding!” And the list can go on-and-on. Maybe his wives were complaining, “Honey, you said you would fix that hole in the tent!” And now Esau is in pursuit of him with 400 of his men. Thus, he separates himself by placing them on the other side of the river and he remained on the east side of the river, all alone for the night. And now, in the quiet of the night, the Lord is going to get Jacob’s attention!

VERSES 24-25

1. Who is this man that wrestled with Jacob? It is an Old Testament appearance of Jesus. Now, if this man is Jesus, how in the world could Jacob fight all night and it seems to be evenly matched? Folks, Jesus could have ended it at any time, He let it go on because He was waiting for Jacob to come to the end of himself. But like many, he refused to give in and the Lord touched the socket of his hip and crippled him. It is at this point that Jacob realizes that he can’t run anymore, he can’t scheme and lie and try to solve things on his own.

2. Folks, we do the same thing with God as Jacob did. In fact, Boice makes this interesting comments on this, “How did Jacob ever manage to keep up his struggle throughout the entire night? I do not know. But I do know that his determination to hang in there was no greater than our frequent determination to have our own way and eventually win out over God.” Here’s the thing folk’s. You can’t fight against God and win and if you think about it, if you could win, you would really lose because God has what is best for our life, just as He does with Jacob here!

VERSE 26

1. As you read this and picture in your mind how Jacob is holding onto Jesus, it seems like Jacob is the one in control and he refuses to let go until God blesses him. And, believe it or not, there are some who teach this, that you have to wrestle with God until He blesses you! That is garbage and that is not what is going on here. In Hosea 12:3-5 we see that Jacob was not the one in control here. Hosea tells us, **“He took his brother by the heel in the womb, And in his strength he struggled with God. 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.”**

You see, Jacob was defeated, he was weeping and in this broken state he surrendered his life to God and was asking his Lord to bless him in his journey! And truly what we are seeing here is God answering the prayer of Jacob back in Genesis 32:9-12, but before the Lord was going to deliver Jacob from the hand of his brother Esau, he had to be broken of his self-will and self-reliance! Folks, isn't that true in our own lives? We look outward at the enemy when in reality, the biggest enemy is from within, our flesh, which has to be conquered by God but it will not be until we are willing to surrender it to Him! Tragically there are some, so-called Christians, who believe that the real problem is that man has a low self-esteem. No, not a low self-esteem but we think too highly of ourselves, as Jacob did and God will break us so that we may rest in him and not in ourselves! Paul tells us in Romans 12:3, **“For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.”** That is the way we are to look at ourselves, not exalting self, but the Lord!

VERSES 27-29

1. Think about this. 20 years ago when his father Isaac asked him his name, he lied and said that it was Esau so that he could get the blessing by deception. Now, 20 years later the Lord asks him and he says that his name is Jacob or con man, schemer. You see, he saw himself as he really was. But now the Lord changes his name to Israel or “Governed by God” or “God rules.” Do you see the difference? One is self-centered and the other is God-centered!

2. What is interesting here and is true in our own lives many times, is that there is still enough of that “old man” in him that he is called Jacob twice as much as he is called Israel after his name is changed. How about you? Have you crucified the old man, have you put to death that flesh nature? Or is it still resurrecting itself more than you like? Paul, in Romans 6:6 tells us, “**knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.**” If you are struggling, Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:17-24, “**This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.**” You see, give the old life to God that you may be filled with the new. Surrender your life to Him and crucify the flesh nature, that old man!

Again, in Colossians 3:8-17 Paul picks up on this and tells us, **“But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”** May we do that and be Christ-centered instead of self-centered!

3. How did Jacob prevail against God? When he recognized that he lost, that is when he won! He died to self and surrendered to God and truly that is the only way we can prevail against God, through weakness, through surrender! We are strong through weakness because we are not trusting in ourselves but the Lord!

4. When Jacob asked the Lord his name, why did he respond by saying, “. . . **‘Why is it that you ask about My name?’ And He blessed him there.**” Genesis 32:29. Because the Lord’s name does not change as did Jacob’s, depending on his actions. We are told in Hebrews 13:8, **“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”** Thus, Jacob knew His name already because the Lord’s name is unchanging because His nature, His character does not change!

VERSES 30-32

1. The name, **“Peniel”** means “face of God.” Thus, he had seen not only the face of God, but he wrestled with God and won by losing, by surrendering his life to Him!
2. The limp that Jacob received was a reminder to him of how he had to be broken before he would surrender. He could no longer run away from his problems but now he had to rest in the Lord as he was governed by God!
3. Now as great as this encounter was, Jacob still struggled with this surrender and resting in the Lord as we will see in the next chapter, chapter 33 of Genesis!

GENESIS 33**VERSES 1-2**

1. As Jacob prepares to meet his brother Esau, he lines up his family. He put the maidservants and their children first, then Leah and her children and finally Rachel and her child. And I think the idea here is that he loved Rachel the most, saving the best for last, then Leah and then, of course his maidservants.

VERSE 3

1. Interestingly enough, Jacob leads the way to meet Esau. But if you think about it, if Jacob did not get in the way 20 years ago by stealing the blessing from his brother Esau that was really his, given to him by God, he would not have been placed in the mess he is in now. What a great lesson for us, to stay out of the way of God!

VERSES 4-7

1. I'm not sure what Jacob was thinking as Esau was running towards him. But after the warm embrace, the past was forgotten. Esau let it go. What a great lesson for us to learn. To let those things go, the wrongs that were done to us and embrace family and friends in the love of Christ. I know, it is not easy but if it was, you wouldn't need God to help you! Think about it, Jacob needed God because it was not easy and so do we!

Paul makes this very clear when he tells us in Ephesians 4:30-32, “**And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.**” This is not a suggestion!

VERSES 8-11

1. Why was this so important for Esau to take these gifts, those 580 animals from Jacob? Because, in that culture you would never accept a gift from an enemy, thus, if Esau received these gifts, it was saying that he forgave his brother Jacob because to accept that gift was to accept the friendship!

VERSES 12-17

1. I get the idea here that Jacob is happy to be reconciled with Esau but he is still a little unsure of him and thus, wants to keep his distance. What is sad is that Jacob comes shinning through instead of Israel. He said he couldn't keep up with Esau, which was true, but he would meet up with him in Mount Seir, which was untrue. You see, as soon as Esau was a few days out, instead of heading south, Jacob goes north to Succoth.

2. Do you think it is possible to be Israel and Jacob at the same time, a kind of Israe-ob? I don't believe so. You are either governed by God or governed by the flesh and here we see him governed and guided by his flesh, his own plans, his own ideas, his own ways and not God's – JACOB instead of ISRAEL!

VERSES 18-20

1. First of all he stops outside the land of Canaan, the Promise Land in Succoth and by the text it seems that he stays there a while. He Makes booths for his livestock and a house for himself! But again, he is not where he needs to be, in the land of Canaan as God instructed him!

2. Secondly, he stops in Shechem! What did the Lord tell Jacob back in 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.”** God, I believe, called Jacob to go to Bethel and he stops in Shechem. Yes, it was in the Promise Land but it is not where God wanted him to be! He is about 20 or 30 miles away from Bethel, yes, close but no cigar! One example I can give you in my life is God calling me to Wisconsin. He spoke to my heart some 12 years before He brought it to pass and during that time I was offered a senior pastor’s position in a church that was in Illinois, but very close to the boarder of Wisconsin. And as intriguing as it was, it was not Wisconsin so I did not even apply for the position, and I told them why. Could I have taken it? Yes, but it was not the place that God wanted me, He wanted me in Wisconsin and specifically Manitowoc! Jacob did not obey what the Lord was showing him, where He told Jacob to go!

3. Here in Shechem Jacob builds God and altar and calls the place, **“El Elohe Israel”** or “God, the God of Israel.” Okay, so he is not where he should be but look at the sacrifice he made for God, won’t God accept this? I don’t believe so. You see, God wants obedience before sacrifice!

In I Samuel 15:22-23 we see the disobedience of king Saul and how the Lord looked upon it. We are told, **“So Samuel said: ‘Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king.’”** God takes obedience very seriously!

If you doubt this, listen to what Peter tells us in I Peter 3:7, **“Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.”** In other words, if you don’t treat your wife as God has said, your prayers will not be heard by God, or more correctly, they will not be answered by God until you repent and treat your wife as God has said! God does take obedience very seriously!

And David, after his sin with Bathsheba said in Psalm 51:16-17, **“For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart — These, O God, You will not despise.”** And The Amplified Bible put it like this, **“For You delight not in sacrifice, or else would I give it; You find no pleasure in burnt offering. [1 Sam 15:22.] My sacrifice [the sacrifice acceptable] to God is a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart [broken down with sorrow for sin and humbly and thoroughly penitent], such, O God, You will not despise.”**

God does desire our obedience and then He will accept our sacrifice. For Jacob, he was not in the place that God wanted him to be and he will bear the fruit of his disobedience until he goes back to Bethel, the house of God, the place God called him to. Folks, may we not waste our time because we are not in the place God wants us to be, may we learn the lesson and walk in obedience to the Lord and see the blessings that God will pour down upon us! Jacob will learn this and so should we!