

EXPOSITION OF GENESIS

Message #72

Genesis 32:13-32

After Jacob's twenty year stint with his uncle Laban, God called Jacob to leave Mesopotamia and get back to the promised land, Canaan (Genesis 31:3). Jacob obeyed and after finally resolving things with Laban, Jacob went on his way (Genesis 31:55-32:1). However, there is still a twenty-one year old matter that needs to be resolved; a twenty-one year old wrong that needs to be made right. Before God will shower His complete blessings on Jacob, there is an old sin issue that needs to be faced. **Jacob's big problem in life has always been self-reliance.** Jacob needed to be broken of this and in this text God literally breaks him and leaves him with a limp that will testify of his need to stop trusting in his own schemes and start depending on God.

THOSE WHO WILL BE GREATLY USED AND BLESSED BY GOD ARE THOSE WHO HUMBLY DEPEND ON GOD AND OBEY HIS WORD AND NOT THOSE WHO PROUDLY DEPEND ON THEMSELVES AND GOD HAS HIS SPECIAL WAYS OF BRINGING A PERSON TO THE POINT HE/SHE UNDERSTANDS THIS.

TEXTUAL MESSAGE #1 - No person will ever resolve anything relying on self . 32:13-23

In the aftermath of Jacob's beautiful prayer (32:9-12), instead of waiting on God, we find him scheming and planning his own method of deliverance. The conjunction "so" which begins verse 13 continues the story in a consecutive sequence which informs us that soon after the prayer of Jacob, he was back to his old ways, reliance upon himself. **Although Jacob's prayer was theologically wonderful, it was not personally applicable.**

Jacob's plan was a simple one - "I'll buy my brother's forgiveness." **Verses 14-15** inform us Jacob took well over 550 animals (200 female goats + 20 male goats + 200 ewes + 20 rams + 30 milking camels and their colts + 40 cows + 10 bulls + 20 female donkeys + 10 male donkeys), and he gave them to his servants, spaced them out and told them when they encountered Esau, each servant was to inform him that these were presents from Jacob (32:18).

Verse 20 informs us that Jacob is doing this because he thinks it will "appease" Esau. That Hebrew Word "appease" is one that means to obtain forgiveness by covering over some sin (Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 411). Jacob truly believed it was within his power to buy forgiveness with these presents; he truly thinks this will cover up all the things he has done wrong in regard to Esau. He is totally relying upon his own resources, strength and plan rather than depending on God.

Derek Kidner said, "Jacob's sacrificial terms unconsciously illustrate the gulf between man's thinking and God's. The pagan approaches his deity as Jacob now approached Esau, reckoning that 'a man's gift maketh room for him' (Proverbs 18:16). But in the Old Testament, a man's gift is first God's gift to him, before it is his to God (Leviticus 17:11). As Jacob would soon discover, grace, not negotiation, is the only solvent of guilt" (Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, p. 168). **When it comes to salvation most in this world try to come up with their own scheme to get to heaven but rather than scheming, they need to start surrendering to the Grace of God.**

The Jabbok (32:22) was a tributary that was about 60 miles long which flows into the Jordan, a little more than twenty miles north of the Dead Sea. It was a natural boundary and part of the land promised to Israel (Numbers 21:24; Deuteronomy 3:16). Jacob sent everyone but himself over the river, but he, himself, remained alone on the north side (**Genesis 32:22-24a**). According to various passages in the Word of God, if a brother, offends a brother, he, himself, is to go make it right (Matthew 5:23-24). Jacob is doing everything but that.

TEXTUAL MESSAGE #2 – Matters are resolved by relying upon and obeying God.
32:24-29

Some observations we may make:

- 1) The reason why this wrestling match occurs is because of opposition between Jacob's will and God's will. God wanted Jacob to face Esau first and Jacob wanted everyone else to face him first and he face him last (32:20 / 33:3).
- 2) God could have, at any moment, defeated Jacob and in fact could have executed him. This point is clear from the fact that just one touch physically impairs him (32:25) and it is also clear from Jacob's own testimony (32:30). The fact that God had anything to do at all with Jacob is a tremendous demonstration of grace.
- 3) This episode was orchestrated by God, not by Jacob. Notice carefully the Word order - "a man wrestled with him" (32:24). God chose to wrestle with Jacob, Jacob did not choose to wrestle with God.
- 4) The purpose of this wrestling match is to humble Jacob and bring him to the place where he will do God's will to the point that this matter with Esau may be fully resolved so God may fully bless him.

Verse 24 says "a man wrestled" with Jacob. We know from **verse 30** that this man was a member of the Godhead, and we learn from Hosea's account that he was an angel. (Hosea 12:4). We know that the Person who appears in the O.T. as the angel is none other than the second member of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, prior to His incarnation. **So Jacob is in a wrestling match with Jesus Christ.** '

The Hebrew word "wrestle" (v. 24) would suggest that there is real pounding taking place and dust is flying. In fact, the Hebrew Word literally means to pound, to make small like dust (*Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 9). This is critical to understanding what is actually happening - God is trying to humble Jacob to the point where he will stop relying on himself and his schemes and start depending on Him. His entire life has been scheming and self-sufficiency and to humbly rely upon God is something for Jacob that literally causes a war to take place with God. The biggest war you will ever have will be the war between you and the Holy Spirit. There are some God must totally break in order to get them to yield to Him; He must as it were, pound them into submission.

The wrestling match went on through the night and as it was nearing daybreak, Jacob had still not given into the will of God (Genesis 32:25). **This man had known God for over twenty years and still God was not reigning in his life.** The angel touched Jacob on the thigh, thus demonstrating how powerful He truly was. This one touch left Jacob limping, probably for the rest of his life. One of the reasons Christ wanted to get away from Jacob before daybreak (32:26) was because at daybreak Christ could be seen face to face and as Dr. Allen Ross said, “Seeing God was something no one survived” (Exodus 19:21) (*Creation & Blessing*, p. 556).

Years later when Jacob would refer to this episode he would say that the angel redeemed him from all evil (Genesis 48:16). It was at this very moment that Jacob became a new man in the sight of God and God changed Jacob’s name to “Israel” (**Genesis 32:27-28**).

In the postscript of the narrative, there are two results:

Result #1 - The transformation of Jacob. 32:30-31

After this encounter, Jacob was a changed man. Three actions prove it:

(**Action #1**) - Jacob demonstrated his humility by a new name. 32:30

The name “Peniel” literally means the face of God.

(**Action #2**) - Jacob demonstrated his humility by a new limp. 32:31

This limp would remind Jacob to rely on God not himself. When God gets control of a person’s life, He Will cripple the old man so that it can no longer dominate.

(**Action #3**) - Jacob demonstrated his humility by a new obedience. 33:1-3

Result #2 - The worship of Israel. 32:32

Israel incorporated a reminder of this into the feasts, which were not even a required part of the law. She purposely refused to eat the “sinew of the hip” of an animal to honor the fact that this was the place where God touched Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel.

Perhaps you have been trying to secure God’s blessings by your own efforts, schemes and plans. Learn Jacob’s lesson, God’s blessings only come to one who has humbled himself to God and submitted to His Word and Will.

Are you clinging to Jesus Christ and His righteousness or your own? Are you wrestling with God? Do you typically yield to Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit or do you typically wrestle against Him? The person who will be greatly blessed by God is one who will humble himself to God and that was a lesson Jacob had to learn the hard way.