

Wrestling with God

Genesis 32: 24-31

We are privileged to have the opportunity to look in on a very important moment in the life of Jacob. Most Bible students are familiar with the life of Jacob. He has spent the last 20 years on the run from Esau, his brother, in the land of Padanaram. (Illustrate the trickery, deception, and adversity that Jacob was involved with.)

After 20 years on the run, God had told Jacob it was time to return to the land of his fathers. He was happy to be going home, but the issue with Esau was yet to be resolved. We have picked up there in the story. The preceding verses reveal that Jacob was preparing to meet Esau and the 400 men with him. He knew that God had instructed him to return and yet he was fearful. Jacob devises a plan to divide the family into two bands and send them on across the brook ahead of him, along with an abundance of gifts.

Jacob remained behind by himself and had an encounter with the Lord that would forever change his life. He was making progress spiritually, but he was not yet where he needed to be. The Lord had come to confront Jacob that night and get some things settled in his life.

There is a great application for each of us in this passage. I am convinced that many Christians today know what God desires and where they need to be, but they are unwilling to make that move toward the Lord. We can rest assured that God will confront us concerning our disobedience. Let's look at the eternal truths in these verses as we consider: [Wrestling with God](#). If you are on the run, you can expect a time such as this. It will be:

I. A Time of Conviction (24) – [And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.](#) Jacob thought he was all alone, but the Lord knew where to find him. God knew his condition.

- God may have dealt with you about a need or situation in your life and you have not responded. You may have tried to get away from the Lord and ignore the call, but God has not forgotten. He knows where you are and the condition of your heart. You can rest assured that He will come to you and confront you at some point in your life. It may be when you least expect, but one day the Lord will get you to the place that you have to face His will for your life. [Rom.11:29 – For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.](#)

II. A Time of Preparation (25) – [And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.](#) Over the years Jacob had developed a philosophy for life: when things don't work out the way you want them to, run! He had been on the run from the will of God for 20 years and now it was time to submit to the Lord.

- Jacob was stubborn and unrelenting. I am convinced that he was aware of whom he was wrestling with. We don't encounter the Lord and not recognize His presence. After a long night of struggle, the Lord touched the hollow of his thigh. I don't want us to miss the significance of this. The word touched means "*striking or defeating.*" God went to the source of the problem. He touched Jacob in such a way that he had no choice but to submit. It was futile to fight against the Lord any longer.
- There is a great lesson in this for us. We will never prevail in our struggles with the Lord. He knows how to get our attention! It is always much easier to submit to the Lord willingly rather than forcing the hand of God.
- I also believe that had God not touched Jacob that night, he would've never fully realized his need for the Lord. Sometimes the Lord allows things to come our way, even unpleasant things, so that we see our need for Him.

III. A Time of Determination (26) – And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. (Explain who is speaking.) Jacob had his flaws, as we all do, but this verse reveals something very admirable concerning Jacob. He had been on the run, but when he was finally confronted, he determined in his heart to receive the blessing of God. He was wise enough to know that his life would not prosper without it. I believe this was a turning point in his life.

- Our churches need those with that type of determination. We need those who will fully surrender their lives to the Lord and seek Him with their whole heart, determined to receive His blessing. This is not an attitude of arrogance, but one of commitment. Few are committed and determined enough to seek the Lord and His blessing for their lives.
- I don't know about you, but I am convinced that we could receive much more than what we currently have. We could experience the Lord in such powerful and wonderful ways, but we must be willing to pay the price. I am a candidate for all that He has to offer!

IV. A Time of Examination (27a) – And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. The Lord was not asking because He was unsure who He was dealing with. He knew Jacob better than he knew himself. God asked the question so that Jacob would have to consider just who he was. He wanted Jacob to search his heart and realize where he stood. For many years Jacob had followed a path of deceit. It was time for him to seek out a new path, one that followed the direction of God.

- This is a difficult task to accomplish, but it is necessary and beneficial if we are to be what the Lord desires of us. If we aren't careful we get so caught up in our own lives and way of doing things that we fail to consider just where we stand in regard to the Lord. How long has it

been since you took a good look at the life you are living? If we are unwilling to examine our lives, we will never experience the fullness of God.

- God did not ask this of Jacob to belittle or hurt him. He asked it so that Jacob might realize the failures of life and seek the right path. God never seeks to bring harm to those who belong to Him. He always seeks our good, but sometimes that is painful. I am glad the Lord loves us too much to allow us to continue in a way that is not pleasing to Him or beneficial to us.

V. A Time of Confession (27b) – And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. Taking a long look was a good start, but that in itself wasn't enough. Jacob had to admit to God who he was. He had to confess to the Lord that he was a trickster, a man of deceit. In essence, Jacob had to confess his sin and failures to the Lord. Once again, God already knew exactly who Jacob was, but He wanted Jacob to be honest with himself and the Lord. Just knowing his need wasn't enough; he had to make a change!

- This is likely one of the most needed elements in the lives of Christians today. Many times our lives don't measure up to what God expects, but we are unwilling to admit that, much less do anything about it. The Holy Spirit convicts us for a purpose. God reveals the needs in our lives so that we will address them. He loves us too much to leave us in our sin and disobedience. Holy conviction is a blessing of God.
- Have you been wrestling with the Lord as He reveals things in your life that need to change? You already know where you stand, but are you willing to be honest with God and seek beneficial change? Just being aware of what we need to do is of no value unless we act upon our convictions!

VI. A Time of Transformation (28, 31) – And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. [31] And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. Jacob's encounter with the Lord was not without consequence. He had been in the presence of the Almighty; it would have been impossible to walk away from this encounter unchanged.

- The same holds true in our lives as well. We cannot encounter the Lord and leave the same as we were before. It is very serious to enter the presence of the Lord. Granted we don't always obey the will of God, but it is impossible to be in His presence and remain the same. We will either draw nigh to Him or we will find ourselves colder and much more distant. The Lord's presence brings about change.
- Notice the definite change in Jacob's life. He received:

A. A New Name – He would no longer be recognized as the “trickster or supplanter” a man of deceit; he would be known as Israel, the “prince of God.” This would also affect the way others recognized and addressed him.

- I rejoice in the day that I too received a new name! I was once known as a sinner, one who rebelled against God, separated from Him. Now I am known as a son, adopted into His royal family.
- We also need to see that submitting to the will of God will identify us in a different light. Even though many are Christians, they are known for disobedience and lack of surrender. Many are recognized as lazy or complacent concerning their service to the Lord. When the Lord really touches your life, you will not be perceived the way you were before. What does the Lord see as He looks at you? How do those around you perceive your relationship with Christ?

B. A Different Walk – And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. Jacob’s walk was changed for life. Every step he took from that moment on reminded him of his encounter with God.

- When we encounter the Lord and submit to Him our walk will be different. We will no longer walk the same way or in the same paths.
- It is interesting to note that as he passed over the brook, the sun rose upon him. This was a sign of things to come. Submission had brought the favor of God. If we want the Son to shine upon us, we must submit our lives to Him and walk in His ways.

VII. A Time of Celebration (30) – And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. Jacob was well aware that something great and wonderful had just happened in his life and it brought a sense of worship. He acknowledged the blessing and presence of God. His troubles were not over, but he had the confidence that the Lord would walk with him each step of the way. No doubt he never forgot this life altering encounter.

- A heart of submission will create worship when we encounter the Lord. We will not leave the same way we came. I have been blessed to encounter the Lord a few times and I can assure you that those moments changed my life. I still remember those times and I likely always will. We need to set up a stone at those places for we will likely need to draw strength from them in the future.

I am certain that we can all identify with the passage we have considered. The Lord will manifest Himself in our lives. There will be moments when we encounter Him, that, in and of itself is a miracle.

No doubt He has spoken to hearts in this service. Surely there are those who are wrestling with God right now. Maybe it is in regard to His will for your life. Maybe it is in regard to salvation. Whatever it is, I would encourage you to submit to the Lord and seek Him. His ways are always best. There is no need to continue to resist. You will only regret it later. Why not come right now as the Lord speaks to you?