

Genesis 32

Read Genesis 32:1-21: We need to find ourselves in this chapter. As Jacob begins to recognize God's hand in his life, he becomes more aware of God ministering servants (his angels) all around him. He sees a camp of angels at Manahaim as he progresses in obedience. This is about 15 miles from Bethel. It was at Bethel, where Jacob saw the stairway to heaven with angels going up and down on it.

Jacob is having a major conscience issue with the way he left things with Esau. Esau wanted to kill him when he left home. Time had healed much in Esau's heart. Esau had his own nation now (Edom). Jacob feared the worst outcome; so he split his family and herds. If Esau killed or stole one; he would still have the other. Jacob also tried to curry favor with Esau by sending gifts of livestock. Jacob sent three groups of animals to win over Esau. In total, Jacob gave Esau 600 female goats, 60 male goats, 600 ewes, 60 rams, 90 milk camels with colts, 120 cows and 30 bulls, 60 donkeys and 30 foals.

Read Genesis 32:22-32: Our past always catches up with us. We can wrestle with our conscience over unfinished business. Jacob's past was haunting him. He is trying every possible means to appease any unresolved anger that Esau may still be holding. Most of the time, anticipation is the worst part. Jacob heard that Esau was bringing 400 men. Jacob mistook that for a military action instead of a protective convoy to accompany his lost brother back home. It was not noble to send his family out front; potentially in harm's way, while he hid in the back by himself.

Once Jacob sent everyone ahead, he wrestled with a *mystery man* until morning. That must have been exhausting. It becomes apparent as you read on that it is God in human flesh (Jesus) who he wrestled with. Was the bigger issue that Jacob had the upper hand over God, or was it more accurate to say that Jacob would not quit resisting even after being pinned down in his circumstances?

Jacob and Esau represent two types of people. Jacob represents the spiritual people and Esau represents natural/earthy people. Even though Jacob represents the spiritual man in transition, there is a lot of his fleshly nature that he still wrestles with. One reason that God has to systematically incapacitate us is that we will resort to whatever we can engineer or force to escape life's dilemmas without

God's help. We really have to exhaust our options to fully surrender to God. In other words, God had to break Jacob so that he could not put up a fight. He had to open his eyes and see a better way of living.

Let God do the driving for a change. Let God resolve your conflicts. That vulnerability is often our last resort.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. ¹³ And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. ¹⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. (Romans 6)

God tells Jacob that his name has been changed to Israel (prince with God). It is counterintuitive to think that we are our strongest and most powerful after we have fully submitted ourselves to God.

One of America's most famous wrestlers was President Abraham Lincoln. He enjoyed wrestling. He often compared his dilemmas to a wrestling match.

Themes Reflecting Wrestling with God

1. Moral Conflict:

- a. Lincoln often grappled with the moral implications of slavery and the Civil War, suggesting an internal struggle akin to Jacob wrestling for clarity and direction.

2. Prayers and Spirituality:

- a. In his speeches, particularly during times of national turmoil, Lincoln spoke about his reliance on divine guidance, indicating a sense of wrestling with God over the nation's fate.

3. The Emancipation Proclamation:

- a. In his decision to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln underwent significant personal and political conflict, paralleling Jacob's struggle for a blessing through perseverance.

More importantly, Jacob represents the average believer. We spend our lives wheeling and dealing by hook or by crook. Then we get pinned down by life, without any other options. People usually do not commit more of their life to God unless they are under stress or in trouble. I used to work in the prayer room at our church. I would pray with whoever responded to the altar call to either receive Christ or request prayer for one thing or another. I never witnessed a person who was doing well to take a step of faith. I only prayed with people who were extremely anxious.