

Genesis 32:1-32

The Dawning Of A New Day

Jumping back into Jacob's journey. This man is on the edge of an encounter w/God that will change him forever & he doesn't even see it coming. Oh, he's *saved*, but he's about to be *subdued*. He's received *salvation*, but he's about to learn the meaning of *consecration*.

The God who makes all things new, is about to give him a new name & as you know a new name points to a new beginning. That's why adoptive parents get so excited when they finally have the adoption certificate. That's why young ladies excitedly practice writing their fiancés last name again & again. Because a new name speaks of new life, a fresh start, a clean slate & a new beginning.

The interesting thing is the circumstances that bring him to this point. If you didn't know the story you might think, "God must've been blessing him so overwhelmingly that he just couldn't deny God's goodness any longer & so he submitted fully to God & lived happily ever after." However the fact of the matter is that the turnaround in Jacob's life began like it did in so many of our lives... w/a crisis.

Listen, a crisis doesn't make a man; it shows what a man is made of. Jacob was a man who'd lived a long time & had a bad habit of burning bridges. He'd just left his father-in-law Laban on pretty bad terms (you know, the, "you come back this way & you're taking your life into your own hands" kind of terms). So he's burned that bridge, can't go back. Yet in front of him is his brother Esau who 20 yrs earlier swore to *kill him* which is why he went to Laban's in the 1st place. So here he is, stuck between the proverbial rock & a hard place. He can't go back, he can't really go forward & so what could he do? He did exactly what any of us would do if we were stuck & afraid; he prayed.

How many of you realize that there are times that God will drop us right square in the middle of a crisis so that we might turn our attention back to Him? Now the circumstances were of Jacob's own doing, but God would use them to get him to turn his heart *toward* Him & call *upon* Him once again. You guys, that's the grace & mercy of God. It can be difficult to realize but sometimes, *hard times* can be a gift of God's grace upon our lives... If ultimately through it our heart turns *to* Him, bringing times of renewing *from* Him... That's the goodness of God toward our lives.

Vs 1-2

It seems strange doesn't it? That something so radical would be given so little attention.

Somehow & in some way the angels of God manifested themselves *to* him, interacted *w/him* & it barely gets a mention. We don't know what they were doing, or in what way they ministered to him, but they were there.

They were *around* him, going *before* him; he may've been outside the *land* of promise but he was never beyond the *hand* of promise. God is assuring him that He's not left him, He's not forsaken him, he may be in a difficult situation but God is still with him.

However I do love the fact that this incredible revelation of God's presence & care only came to him after he finally separated from Laban; the worldly man. Once he'd made a clean break from the ways of the world, God revealed Himself & gave spiritual insight to him. Family, separation from the world will always result a greater spiritual insight.

Jacob recognized that he wasn't alone; & so he named the place "double camp". His camp was there, but there was also a camp of angels all around him... Now I think we do well to acknowledge that it wasn't as if the angels of God *just joined* him. Undoubtedly they've been *w/him* the entire time; however now he had insight into what was happening around him which no doubt encouraged him.

This is reminiscent of what happened in 2nd Kings Ch 6 when Elisha's servant had *his* eyes opened to the army of angels that was there *w/them*. He was given the insight to realize that regardless of how things looked physically; in reality God was *w/him*.

What's the application here? The bible says, "*The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, And delivers them.*"¹ & Again in Heb Ch 1 in regard to the angels the author says, "*Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?*"² Listen, you may find yourself in a season of difficulty. You feel trapped between a rock & a hard place. For you it feels as if there's no way out. But God is with you, He has not forsaken you. Now He may be waiting *on* you to call *upon* Him that you might find renewal/refreshment *in* Him. But He is *w/you*, encamped all around you.

20 yrs earlier Jacob saw the angels of God on his way out of the land; now he's visited again on his way back into the land.

Vs 3-6

Now the bible says, "*A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, And contentions are like the bars of a castle.*"³ As far as Jacob is concerned Esau has waited for 20 yrs to kill him, so he takes measures to humble himself & sends a message *to* him.

¹ The New King James Version. (1982). (Ps 34:7). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² The New King James Version. (1982). (Heb 1:14). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ The New King James Version. (1982). (Pr 18:19). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

What's the message? "Hey, I know I kinda took advantage you in getting the birthright & I deceived dad in getting the blessing & he said that you would serve me & I would be master over you & all... (lol!) But listen, a lot of time has gone by, & I've become incredibly rich, so about all that... whad'ya say we just let bygones be bygones?"

He wants him to know that he's not coming to try & take anything or usurp him, he has no need of anything that's in Esau's possession. The messengers come back & tell Jacob, "Hey, when he heard you were in the area he opted to come out & see you for himself... kinda weird though, he's bringing 400 men w/him."

Now a guilty conscience will cause us to paint the worst possible picture. "400 men! Holy smokes, he's coming to kill me!"

Vs 7-8

Perhaps he's hoping for the best, but it's obvious that he's preparing for the worst. Notice the string of verbs heightening the urgency of his reaction, "greatly afraid," "distressed", "divided". His past was preparing to catch up to him & he was freaking out. He couldn't take the idea of seeing Esau face to face. Why? Because he'd sworn to kill him! It's amazing how a person's *past* can paralyze them & make them afraid to move forward in the *present*.

But Jacob is a different man now; you're a new creation in Christ. God is w/you. It's as if he's already forgotten about the company of angels that surround him. So rather than trusting God to protect him, he moves in the wisdom of man & divides his company into 2 camps. In his mind, should Esau begin to attack one company, than at least the other 1/2 might escape.

Vs 9-12

He'd requested *peace* w/Esau. Then he reacted in *panic*, now Jacob resorts to *prayer*. Having said that I should say this; it's a great prayer. It's a prayer that basically says, "God, You have made a *promise* to me, You have said that You have a *purpose* for me, so please... *protect* me."

When we study God's word we discover principles, precepts, lessons. Both in what *to* do, & in what *not* to do; Jacob gives us each in this passage. What we *don't* want to do is follow his example of fear, or scheming, or jumping to conclusions. What we *do* want to do is emulate the principles by which he prayed. He claimed God's promises, remembered God's goodness, and rested completely on God's character and covenant. His confidence in coming to God was predicated upon the covenant that God had established with him.

Even so, the confidence that *you* have in coming to God is predicated upon the covenant that He's established w/*you*. The new covenant based upon the blood of J.C.

Notice that Jacob didn't try to come to God on the basis of how great he was, he knew better. He humbled himself before God & said, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies & of all the truth which You have shown Your servant." This wasn't a general statement, "Hey, nobody's perfect." This was a very personal statement, "I am not worthy of Your mercies oh God." Now it may've taken him being between & rock & hard place to come to this point whereby he was willing to humble himself & cry out to God like this, but that's the goodness of God. It's not a general realization of no one's perfect that drives an individual to Jesus; it's the specific conviction, "I am not worthy", "I am a sinner who needs a Savior." We need the crisis of conviction in our lives...

It's crazy how many believers have trouble humbling themselves & acknowledging to God that they're sinners in need of mercy. Yet we need to acknowledge our *total dependency upon God.*

Now take note of a couple things here. #1 Jacob's prayer included God's Word. "God, *You said*, 'return to your country, & I will deal well w/*you*'. *You said*, 'I will surely treat you well & make your descendants as the sand of the sea which cannot be #d.'"#

I think that there are times that our prayers fall short because we don't utilize God's word in them. & Many times there's none of God's word in our prayers because there's very little of God's word in us. Jacob remembered God's word.

It's good to utilize the promises *of* God in our prayers *to* God. "God, You said that You would provide all my needs according to Your riches in glory." "God, You have said that if any of us lack wisdom that we can ask of You & You will give liberally & w/out reproach. I need wisdom in this situation." Why is that good to do? Because it encourages my faith. The bible declares that, "...faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."⁴ & Again, "...without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."⁵ God wants to move through your prayer life, but you've got to trust in Him. Be assured of Him & the *promise* of His word. That's hard to do if you don't *know* His word... Again & again throughout the psalms we read of meditating upon the word of God. Committing it to heart & to memory; Jacob's prayer was predicated upon the promise of God's word. (& The basis of God's covenant)

⁴ The New King James Version. (1982). (Ro 10:17). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ The New King James Version. (1982). (Heb 11:6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Vs 13-21

George Mueller was once asked what the most important part of prayer was. He said: "The 15 minutes after I have said, 'Amen.'" The point being, it doesn't matter how great the prayer was, the faith will be seen in what happens afterward.

It seems to me that Jacob did what we so often do. Pour out our heart to God, give the situation to Him, then say, "amen" & take it back.

If he was moving in faith you'd think he'd lead the pack, not give 550 animals (not including the colts) to his brother in successive droves hoping to soften him up by the time he sees him face to face! (Btw, you get some idea of how wealthy he'd become when he gives 550 [plus colts] animals away as a gift).

Jacob (much like us) seemed to be willing to surrender just about anything but himself...

Vs 22-23

The idea being (as we'll see) that Jacob was now left alone. As for why he wanted to be alone we don't know. Did he want a good night's rest, did he want to get alone & pray? Your guess is as good as mine. But what we'll discover is that ultimately this is God's sovereignty at work. *God* wanted to get Jacob alone so that He could deal w/him. You know when we're surrounded w/friends, family or work associates we can busy & distract ourselves w/a million different things. But once we're alone it's like; God gets our full attention.

It's been said that solitude is, "the audience-chamber of God," we can't escape into any other distraction. 20 yrs ago Jacob was alone & God revealed Himself to him at Bethel, now here he is again & God has a further work He wants to do in his life. So He gets Jacob alone & He goes to work.

Vs 24-25

Jacob was a tough old bird, wasn't he? Wrestling around w/his hip out of socket... Allow me to break the suspense for you; this "Man" whom he was wrestling (as we'll see) was none other than the pre-incarnate Christ. God came to him that night in the form of a Man & engaged him, picked a fight w/him. Sounds crazy doesn't it? Yet I suspect that at some point God has picked a fight w/each of us who know Him & brought us (by His grace) to the point whereby we surrendered to J.C.

God meets us right where we're at. Abraham was a pilgrim, He appeared to him as a traveler. Joshua was a warrior, to him He came as a soldier (Josh 5:13-15).

Jacob had spent his whole life wrestling w/& resisting people. His brother, his dad, his uncle, his wives, he's wrestled w/God's will; now God is going to wrestle w/him. The psalmist said it like this, *"With the pure You will show Yourself pure; And with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd."*⁶

Jacob is about to discover that the only way to true *victory* w/God is through surrender; that the way up is down. Jesus said, *"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."*⁷ Before a man can be raised up, he is 1st brought low; he has to realize his utter dependency upon the Lord. A.W. Tozer said, "The Lord cannot fully bless a man until He has first conquered him." Jacob is about to be conquered by God, once & for all.

We need to notice here that Jacob didn't wrestle the Man, the Man wrestled Jacob. Jacob wasn't looking for a fight. He had Laban behind him, Esau in front of him, the *last* thing he was looking for was a 3rd opponent. Jacob didn't begin by wanting anything from God, God began by wanting something from Jacob. He was after his self-sufficiency, his fleshly strategies; He was looking for his total dependency. & He was gonna get it (if need be) by force...tonight.

I think the fact that Jacob wrestled all night speaks of something too. This is a man who refuses to give up. If you've ever wrestled w/someone for even a few minutes, you know how exhausting it can be. Now imagine it going on for hours & hours & hours. God was meeting him where he was at, letting him wrestle for all he was worth, in his own strength. *I believe that God kept the match intentionally even just seeking to break Jacob's will. But Jacob wouldn't break (again a lot like us)... How long are you gonna wrestle w/God before you just give up & give in? Because you're gonna lose, it's not a matter of "if" it's only a matter of "when". Finally God "touched" him, & he would never be the same, threw his hip out of socket, notice.*

Vs 26

What a great place to be, Jacob is no longer fighting w/Him, he's just clinging desperately *to* him. Listen, when you finally come to the place whereby you're done fighting against God & you're just holding on (desperate & broken) *to* God, welcome home. You're finally where you need to be & God can do a great work in your life, you've prevailed.

Now don't be confused here, Jacob didn't demand a blessing from a greater/dominant position.

⁶ The New King James Version, (1982). (Ps 18:26). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁷ The New King James Version, (1982). (Mt 16:25). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

He was acknowledging that this Man was greater; it's the lesser that's blessed by the greater (the bible is clear) Jacob was a humbled & broken man. Hosea tells us of this night, *"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."*⁸ Jacob wasn't dictating, he was desperate, he was broken & weeping, begging for a blessing (now the fact that he believes this "Man" can render him a blessing indicates that at this point, he knows who he's been grappling with).

Vs 27-29

In other words, "You know who I am..." Now God knew his name, why did he have him confess it? Because to state your name was to identify your character. The last time Jacob was asked about his name, he lied. He said, "I am Esau" to his father. It's like God is saying, "Let's try again; who are you?" "I am heel-catcher, schemer, deceiver." That's what we're getting at here. He wanted the Lord's blessing upon his life, but he 1st had to realize who he was, confess his true nature & humble himself in the sight of God (the same as each & every one of us).

God was saying, "It's time for the pattern of your life to change once & for all. No longer will you be called 'Jacob', but 'Israel'". No longer self sufficient, but "ruled, or governed by God." A new lease on life, out of the old (Jacob) & into the new (Israel). You see, God could've pinned Jacob's shoulders at anytime, but that wouldn't have submitted his will. Now he's ready to yield his *will* to God.

Vs 30-32

You see, he knew exactly who he'd been wrestling with, "Peniel", "I have seen God face to face & lived to tell the tale." Of course this is how we know it was the pre-incarnate Christ, because the bible is clear that no man has seen God, but the only begotten Son, He has declared Him. He's the brightness of His glory, the express image of His person.

As the sun rose upon Jacob that morning, a new day was dawning in his life. He would be different from this point forward as demonstrated by his "walk". Now he limped, he was literally broken by God, & in his weakness God's strength would be make perfect. No longer relying on his own ability, he would walk by faith.

W/every step he'd remember God's touch upon his life, that God had to take him & break him so that he might be the man God was calling him to be.

The real enemy wasn't Esau, it was his own carnal self... Often times we want to blame anything & everything around us, when in reality the problem lies w/in us. It's our own flesh, our own pride, or our own ways & will. God doesn't want us fighting *against* Him, but broken *before* Him, clinging desperately *to* Him.

Then God will bless you, a new day will dawn in your life & your walk w/Him will never be the same.

Prayer Points:

God touch our lives, change our walk, may we be sober to the fact that when we think we're strong, we're to take heed lest we fall, but in our weakness Your strength is made perfect. Forgive us for our arrogance, our self-reliance, what we consider intelligence swelling our pride before You. We want to cling desperately *to* You, broken & contrite in spirit *before* You, that we might be changed *by* You. God have You way in our lives, in this place.

Listen, perhaps today God has been wrestling w/your heart, wrestling w/your spirit. What is your name? Who are you truly? Perhaps your name is liar, deceiver, schemer, lustful, or hateful, perhaps your problem is that uncontrollable temper. Or maybe something else but God is confronting you, wrestling w/you. Quit fighting, surrender, come before Him humbly, openly, in transparency & tell Him who you are (a sinner). Let Him wash you clean by the blood of J.C. & make you new today.