



TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

Talk Genesis 32:22-32: Jacob Wrestles the Angel of the Lord

Lesson 74

"And he arose that night and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven sons, and crossed over the ford of Jabbok. 23 He took them, sent them over the brook, and sent over what he had. 24 Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. 25 Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. 26 And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks."

But he said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!"

27 So He said to him, "What is your name?" He said, "Jacob."

28 And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel;^[a] for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed."

29 Then Jacob asked, saying, "Tell me Your name, I pray."

And He said, "Why is it that you ask about My name?" And He blessed him there. 30 So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel:^[b] "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." 31 Just as he crossed over Peniel:^[c] the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip. 32 Therefore to this day the children of Israel do not eat the muscle that shrank, which is on the hip socket, because He touched the socket of Jacob's hip in the muscle that shrank."

Background Notes

When Jacob got word that Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men, he was very afraid. After all, Esau had threatened to kill Jacob twenty years before this time. So Jacob did three things. First, he prayed, which is always a good idea. Second, he divided his company into two camps for security reasons. And third, he sent a very large gift of flocks and herds to Esau.

After Jacob sent Esau's present on ahead, he and his family prepared to camp on the safe side of the Jabbok River to wait for Esau. But during the night, Jacob got up and took his wives and children over the brook, but then he returned to the safe side in order to wait for Esau. What was Jacob doing? Jacob was protecting himself! The area where the ancient road crossed the Jabbok River is not flat, but mountainous, and Jacob probably picked a nice lookout site in order to hide and to wait for Esau. If Jacob saw that Esau's wrath was not appeased by seeing the large gift that Jacob sent on ahead, and he was not appeased by seeing the wives and the young children, than at least Jacob could run.

That is why the wrestling match was so significant: the Lord touched the socket of Jacob's hip and put it out of joint so he **couldn't** run! Not a karate chop, just a touch in the right place. After the Lord touched him, Jacob couldn't run -- he was helpless, he was broken, and he was at the end of himself. All he could do was to desperately cling on and ask for help. And guess what? The Lord blessed Jacob, and there He changed Jacob's name to Israel, which means "struggle with God, and prevailed."

Now where do we get the idea that the LORD wrestled with Jacob? Verse 24 says "a man" wrestled with Jacob, and Hosea 12:4 says that Jacob struggled with "the Angel:" *"Yes, he struggled with the Angel and prevailed; he wept, and sought favor from Him."*

The fact that Jacob referred to this Angel as God (v30), and the fact that this Angel blessed Jacob and changed his name to Israel, would indicate that this Angel was none other than "the Angel of the Lord" -- God Himself --specifically, he was God the Son, in His pre-incarnate form. The Angel of the Lord, who is mentioned only in the Old Testament, is the pre-incarnate Son of God. So the "man" who wrestled with Jacob would be a "theophany" -- God taking on human form, as He did many times in the Old Testament.

When Jacob said that he had seen God face to face and his life was preserved, he was not claiming to have seen the essence of deity. No! For no one can see God at any time (John 1:18): *"No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son,^[a] who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him."* Jacob saw the tangible human form that the Lord took on in order to wrestle Jacob.

By the way, how old do you think Jacob was when he participated in this wrestling match with the Lord? He was about 97 years old! Can you believe it? He was seventy-seven when he left to run away from Esau, and 20 years had passed since he left home for Haran.

Doctrinal Points

1. "Broken before blessed" will be Israel's testimony in the future.

In this wrestling match between God and Jacob, we see a divine principle: God's people must be broken before they can be blessed. This will certainly be true of the nation of Israel in the future. In Romans 11 we read of the spiritual revival of the Jewish people that will take place in Israel's future (Romans 11:26-27) *"And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: " The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; 27 For this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins."*

So a spiritual revival is coming for the nation of Israel in the future, but before that spiritual blessing can come, Israel must be broken of her own strength and her own pride. She must turn to her true Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. In Zachariah 12:10, we see this predicted for Israel in the future: *"And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn."* What a testimony! This experience of Israel is pictured in the wrestling match between Jacob and the Lord.

In Jacob we have a picture of God's dealings with the nation Israel. As Jacob returned home after a long absence, so Israel is returning to her homeland after a long absence of dispersion amongst the nations. As Jacob was in fear for his security, so Israel fears for its national security. As God protected Jacob, so God is protecting Israel today. But as Jacob had to be broken before he was blessed, so must Israel be brought to the place where she is broken before God -- and then blessing will come! The prophetic scriptures indicate that these things will surely take place in the future. "Broken before blessed" will be Israel's testimony in the future.

2. "Broken before blessed" should be the believer's testimony in the present.

Not only is this wrestling match a spiritual picture of God's dealings with Israel, it is a picture of the way God deals with us. God "wrestles" with us to break us of our pride, of our selfishness, of our independence. God must bring us to the end of ourselves so that we learn that His strength is made perfect in weakness: *"He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).*

Notice a couple of points about the wrestling match that apply to the way God wrestles with us. First of all, God wrestled with Jacob when Jacob was alone (v24). We need to spend more time alone with God so that the "broken before blessed" principle can take place. Too many Christians do not spend enough time alone with God.

Secondly, the wrestling match went on all night. God's breaking process is not a five-minute wrestling match. In some areas of our lives the breaking process goes on for years. For example, some Christians have a hard time submitting to spiritual authority. God has ordained spiritual authority in the church, but some Christians refuse to recognize it -- they question it, they try to overthrow it, or they change churches to get out from under it. Sometimes God must wrestle with individuals like this for years until they are finally broken.

A third aspect to note about the wrestling match: Jacob had to own up to who he really was -- Jacob, which means "supplanter" or even "deceiver"! In the same way, you see, when God wrestles with us, we must own up to who we really are, admitting our sinfulness and how far we fall short.

And a fourth point to note is that God broke Jacob down in the area of his greatest strength: *"Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him" (v25).* If you have ever wrestled, you know that the match is over if your hip goes out of joint! In the same way, God may have to touch us in an area of our greatest strength in order to break us down so that we will cling to Him. God may have to touch us in the area of our health. God may have to touch us in the area of our job and career. God may have to touch us in the area of our children. Look at the story of Job! God wrestled with Job and touched him in the areas of his greatest strength. Job was broken -- but then he was blessed! God can overcome us at any time, but He chooses to wrestle with us, and touch us in the areas of our greatest strength, if that is what it takes.

Is God wrestling with you in some area of your life where you have a hard time submitting to God? Have you been broken? Have you been broken to the point of blessing? Remember, "broken before blessed" should be every believer's testimony -- right now, in the present.

Practical Application

1. Are we limping forward?

I love the spiritual picture that we have from this account in verse 31: *"Just as he crossed over Penuel, the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip."*

"Penuel" is another form of "Peniel" (v30), meaning "face of God." The wrestling match is over, the sun is shining on Jacob, he's not running away, he is limping -- but he is limping **forward!** He's been broken, but he has been blessed.

Are we limping forward, or is the wrestling match still going on? It is better to limp forward in God's direction than to run in your own strength in your own direction. Have you gotten to the place in your own Christian life where you have actually thanked God for wrestling with you, and touching you in an area of your natural strength so that you are now limping -- but you are limping **forward!**

You know, Joni got to that point. I am sure you know her story that when she was first paralyzed she was bitter towards God, but now she actually thanks God for touching her in that area because she is now limping forward, and she admits that she would not be moving forward if it was not for that touch of God. Well, it is not always in the physical area, as you know, God can touch us in many areas so that we will limp, but limp forward. Are we limping forward?