

The God of Jacob

by A.B. Simpson

The sermon explores the character of God as revealed through the life of Jacob, emphasizing His sovereignty, love, and power in using unworthy lives to accomplish His purposes.

Scripture: Genesis 32:28, Isaiah 41:14, Isaiah 49:26, Romans 5:20, 1 Corinthians 1:27-29, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Philippians 3:10, Hebrews 11:21, James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 1:7

Topics: "God's Grace", "Transformation"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the contrast between Jacob, described as a 'worm,' and the 'Mighty One of Jacob,' illustrating how God chooses the weak and unworthy to demonstrate His grace and sufficiency. He highlights Jacob's life as a testament to God's ability to transform and use flawed individuals for His purposes, showing that even the most discouraged can find hope in God's love. Simpson encourages believers to recognize that God sees the potential for good within them, regardless of their past, and that through trials and surrender, they can experience a deeper relationship with Him. Ultimately, the sermon reveals that God's grace is available to all, and He desires to use those who have been transformed by His love.

Transcript

"Fear not, thou worm Jacob." (Isaiah 41:14.)

"I the Lord am your Savior and your Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob." (Isaiah 49:26.)

What a combination! Thou worm Jacob, the Mighty One of Jacob! A worm united to Omnipotence! What so weak and worthless as a worm! What so mighty as the Mighty One of Jacob! This tells the story -- not Jacob, but Jacob's God; not man, but the all-sufficient God displacing man and substituting His own infinite fulness.

We have seen a little of the resources of God in the story of Elijah and Elisha and in the life of Paul. But someone might say that all this might well occur in lives so lofty and sublime, but can I, a weak and worthless man, reach such heights of victory and glory?

Therefore we turn now to the life of a weak and worthless man that we may show that God uses such men to make them the peculiar illustrations of His own grace and sufficiency. The one lesson of Jacob's life is sovereign grace. We have already seen that this was one lesson of Paul's life and that his deepest thought

and highest testimony was "Not I, but Christ lives in me."

If ever there was a man that deserved to be called a worm, it was the supplanting son of Isaac. And yet this was the man whom God selected from among all the patriarchs to be head of Israel's tribes and the real founder of the covenant people to whom was committed the oracles of God. Therefore Jacob is more especially fitted to set forth the grace of God than any other of the Bible characters. Let us look at the lessons which his life illustrates with respect to the resources of our God.

We see in Jacob's life the God who can choose and use unworthy and unattractive lives and characters. Had we been choosing on natural principles between the two sons of Isaac we may have preferred the big-hearted, impulsive Esau. His father did prefer him and tried his best to hold for him the tribal blessing and divine birthright. There was little naturally in Jacob that was attractive. He represented that class of the human race, happily by no means all, who have become the embodiment of the hard, keen, grasping man, the man who seems to have become crystallized into a financial machine and bargain counter. Jacob was intensely selfish and deceitful, disposed to take advantage of another's misfortune. There is no type of human nature that, by the common consent of mankind, is more detestable than the hard, cold, heartless miser. He is lower even than the groveling sensualist in the scale of humanity. And yet God chose this man in order to prove that there is no class of humanity so hard, so hopeless, as not to be within reach of sovereign grace, indeed, that God loves a hard case and that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

If there is a soul reading these lines who is discouraged about himself, remember Jacob, and then remember Jacob's God, the One that could choose a worm and make him a prince with God and with men; the One who is still saying, "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty."

And then the God of Jacob is a God that can discern elements of good and possibilities of the highest things in the most unlikely lives. Back of Jacob's meanness there was something that had in it inherently the elements of power and blessing, and back of Esau's apparent nobility there was something earthborn and incapable of the highest things. Not without reason has God said of these two men, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." What was it in Jacob that God loved and that became a point of contact with His grace? It was that element which we might call the spiritual. It was the peculiar insight into the higher things which discerns and chooses the best. It is a kind of intuition, a spiritual instinct, the germ in fact, of the higher nature. It enabled Jacob to discover, to appreciate, and to desire intensely all that was meant in the divine birthright, while on the other hand the lack of it led Esau to despise this. All he cared for was the gratification of his natural and grosser appetites. He was a splendid animal; that was all. When he was hungry, he wanted food, and he cared not how he got it. He had not the power to comprehend or prize the higher blessing which was his by natural right. In the hour of his extremity we find him exclaiming, "Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" That was the very time when it should have meant most to him, for it secured to him the favor of his covenant God, a part among the covenant people, and the high honor of standing in the front of that line that was to lead up to the promised seed, the coming Messiah. While it had the highest natural dignities and privileges connected with it, it was preeminently spiritual in its meaning and value. And yet Esau, realizing none of these things, recklessly and blindly threw it away for a mess of pottage. The sacred writer crystallizes into a single sentence the meaning of the act, "Thus Esau despised his birthright."

Now what God loved in Jacob was the quality that appreciated, desired and chose the higher things. God loved him for it and God came to meet him and gave him what he desired. "They have their reward," is the awful sentence of Christ on humanity. Men and women generally get what they want. If they are after earthly things they will probably find them. If they "seek . . . first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" "they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness . . . shall be filled."

It is often true that the worst and the best are closely akin in human nature. The most discouraged and sinful man is often so because the devil has seen his folly and has perverted the bud into a thorn. God sees everything through the crust of evil, and He comes to meet and satisfy the yet undimmed jewel of some deep and earnest longing for better things. It is comforting to know that we have a God who is not looking for the evil in us but for the good that is trying to find some point of contact with better things, looking in every human soul for some place where the chain of mercy can fasten and lift us to the skies. Dear friend, if you are far away from God and conscious of utter unworthiness, there is one question we would ask you, Would you have God's love for your heart? Would you choose His will if it were offered to you? Would you part with everything to have the best and highest things? Then you have that which God loved in Jacob and that which will feel after God until it finds Him.

In the third instance, we see in Jacob's God one who can reveal Himself to a soul that is utterly ignorant of Him. When Jacob went out from his father's house and his mother's arms he had indeed set his heart on the highest things so far as he knew them and won by a very unworthy transaction the covenant, but as yet he knew nothing of God in his own experience. We see this in his confession in Bethel's cave, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not."

We see also the lack of all filial love and confidence. "How dreadful is this place!" It was a raw, unenlightened, natural heart shrinking from the presence of God, knowing nothing of trust and love. But to that poor, dark, lonely heart God came and made Himself known by that vision of divine light and revelation, which became, not only to him, but to all coming generations, a ladder reaching to heaven from the lowest, loneliest spot. Well do I remember the day that I rode along the bridle path that leads to the ruins of ancient Bethel, stopping from time to time at the numerous caves along the road and wondering in which of them Jacob lay down with a stone for his pillow on the first night of his absence from his home. My guide pointed across the valley, and he said, "This is the cave where Jacob slept, because yonder you can see on the rock hillside the great ledges of stone rising one above the other like mighty steps, and in the dim moonlight, you know, it seemed to Jacob like a ladder that reached to heaven." You see my guide was an accomplished higher critic. He thought he could explain the Bible without any supernatural element. I told him I knew better. The ladder Jacob saw was not even that bold ledge of ascending rocks, but it was that invisible stair which your faith and mine has often seen since, reaching from our helplessness to His high heaven and bringing down the angels of God with messages of help and blessing. That was the time when Jacob first met with God.

There comes such an hour in every redeemed life. You had known about Him, you had chosen Him, you had set your heart upon Him, but He had never yet become a real fact in your experience. But one night of loneliness, one hour of deep trouble, some crisis when you were forced to pray, you found God and He became revealed to you henceforth the greatest fact in your life, the One with whom you have to do, your covenant God and Friend, saying to you as He did to Jacob, "Behold, I am with you, and will keep you in all places wheresoever you go . . . for I will not leave you, until I have done that which I have spoken to you of." It is yours to choose Him. It is His to make Himself known, and it is His eternal promise: "Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord."

In the fourth place, the God of Jacob is one that follows His children even through years of imperfection and wandering while they are often far from Him. For Jacob went forth from that Bethel vision a new man and a man of God but still full of the old selfish, supplanting spirit. And so we see him following his own devices, fighting his own battles, intriguing with Laban and trying to match his cunning with equal cunning. We see him bargaining for a wife and losing in the first transaction. We see him later getting the better of his uncle, and finally, through deep strategy leaving the land of his temporary adoption possessed of boundless riches; and yet he was the same old Jacob in many ways. He had not forsaken God. He had prayed often. He had asked God to prosper him in his business contrivances and schemes. But still it was Jacob, the worm Jacob, the selfish, supplanting man. But God did not leave him all these years. He followed him, loved him, blessed him, prospered him, and in due time called him back to better things.

And so, dear child of God, He has followed you even amid your wanderings. He has not wanted you where you were; but He has not left you alone. As He went with Israel through the wilderness, so He has gone with you on the weary round. In all your affliction He has been afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence has saved you and has led you all your days. Thus God still loves His imperfect children. He does not forsake them in their mistakes and follies, but He is still a God of infinite longsuffering, boundless patience and tender, fatherly pity. This should not encourage us to live short of our highest privileges, but it should lead us by grateful love to follow Him more closely and choose His highest will.

Then, we see in Jacob's God one who at last knew how to bring the pressure that led Jacob to the crisis of his life. The time had come for a new and deeper experience, so God led him back toward his ancient home. It is the old Jacob coming back. He is enlarged with flocks and herds and a great household, but we see Jacob all through his wise forethought, his infinite contriving to protect his family and his flocks, and when he finds his incensed brother Esau coming to meet him with an armed band, he exhausts all the resources of his skill and invention to forestall him or defend himself from him. He divides his family and his flocks into little bands so that if one is stricken the other will escape. At last he realizes how vain it all is, and he is thrown absolutely and helplessly upon the mercy and power of God.

The way narrows to a lone path where only two can walk, God and Jacob. There just across the brook Jabbok and under the solemn stars of the Orient, Jacob came face to face with the crisis of his life. He must either go down or go higher. It is either God or ruin. And so the religious instinct turns heavenward. Jacob prays as he has never prayed before.

But there is another conflict. God is wrestling with Jacob more than Jacob is wrestling with God. We are told significantly that "there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." It was the Son of Man. It was the Angel of the Covenant. It was God in human form pressing down and pressing out the old Jacob life, and before the morning broke God had prevailed and Jacob fell with his thigh dislocated. But as he fell, he fell into the arms of God and there he clung and wrestled too until the blessing came, and the new life was born and he arose from the earthly to the heavenly, the human to the divine, the natural to the supernatural, and as he went forth that morning he was a weak and broken man, but God was there instead and the heavenly voice proclaimed, "Your name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince have you power with God and with men, and have prevailed."

Beloved, this must ever be a typical scene in every transformed life. There comes a crisis hour to each of us if God has called us to the highest and best. When all our resources fail, when we face either ruin or something higher than we ever dreamed, when we must have infinite help from God and yet before we can have it we must let something go; we must surrender completely, we must cease from our own

wisdom, strength and righteousness and become crucified with Christ and alive in Him. God knows how to lead us up to this crisis and He knows how to lead us through. Beloved, is He leading you thus? Is this the meaning of your deep trial, of your difficult surroundings, of that impossible situation, or that trying place through which you cannot go without Him and yet you have not enough of Him to give you victory? Oh, turn to Jacob's God. Cast yourself helplessly at His feet. Die to your strength and wisdom and in His loving arms and rise like Jacob into His strength and all-sufficiency. There is no way out of your hard and narrow place but at the top. You must get deliverance by rising higher and coming into a new experience with God. Oh, may it bring you into all that is meant by the revelation of the Mighty One of Jacob.

In the sixth place we see in Jacob's God the God who knows how to finish His work by the slow discipline of suffering. That experience at Jabbok was the real crisis; but the completion of the work required the years that followed. There are some things which God can only do through time. There are processes of grace that need to be carried through long years of discipline. There is a slow fire which dissolves and consumes as no fierce furnace heat can ever do in a moment of time. There is One that sits as a Refiner and Purifier of silver through the long years, finishing His work until He can see His image in the molten metal. This is the God of Jacob. And so, through the forty years that followed, He led Jacob through the longest, slowest, hardest trials. And how keen the pain! How sensitive the spirit that He touched!

So He comes to you, beloved, in the place that hurts you most. Often it is our heart's deepest affections. Rachel died; his family pride was wounded in the dishonor of his daughter; Joseph, Rachel's son, was torn from his presence amid scenes and associations of unspeakable horror. The years dragged out their slow length with that haunting shadow of suspense and agony, until at last he cried, "All these things are against me." But all the while Jacob was being burned up and God burned in. And when at last we meet him in the calm sunset of his life, we hear the rash, self-confident man saying something he could not have learned otherwise, "I have waited for Your salvation, O Lord." And we see the sorrow at last turned into joy. We see the shadows pass away and the rainbow arch surmount their frowning masses. We hear the evening song of a victorious life, "The God which fed me all my life long . . . the Angel which redeemed me from all evil." We see even Joseph given back and all the sorrow turned into joy while its blessed spiritual lesson remains forevermore in the transformed life of the venerable patriarch and the established saint. Thus the God of Jacob knows how to try us and how to deliver us out of trial. "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you," but, "that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

The seventh point we will consider is that the God of Jacob is a God that loves to use the instrument that He has thus prepared. It was not Abraham the mighty believer, it was not Isaac, the meek and gentle son; but it was Jacob, the transformed supplanter, that God chose to be the head of Israel's tribes and the founder of the chosen people, who, on his dying bed, pronounced the prophetic blessing upon his seed which all the ages since then have been fulfilling. To this day the nation bears the name of Israel and the seed of Jacob.

And so God will take our lives when He has prepared them in proportion to what they have cost Him. The degree of power that comes out of an element is measured by the degree that goes into it. The mighty power that ran the steamer and the train came out of yonder coal mine, but all that power was put in the coal mine ages ago, when God burned up by fiery heat of primeval times the vast forest of vegetation that covered the world and turned them into coal. It first came down from heaven into the mines of earth and then went out from the mines of earth in another form of the same power.

And so after God has pressed into a life by long and hard processes of trial and discipline the influences of His grace and the power of His transforming Spirit, then He loves to take out of that life the same power and expend it upon others. Power never can be lost, and so if we receive of God's fulness we can no more help giving it out than the sun can stop shining. And so the God of Jacob, if we will let Him have us, hold us, fill us, will surely use us, and whether it be as the silent salt that penetrates the air with its wholesome savor, or the glorious light that more positively radiates over earth and sky, we shall become forces for good and instruments for the glory of God and the blessing of our fellow man, and all flesh shall know "that I, the Lord, am your Savior and Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob."

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ab-simpson/the-god-of-jacob/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net