

Leaning

by Anton Bosch

The sermon emphasizes the importance of leaning on God for strength and support rather than relying on our own abilities or false supports.

Scripture: Leviticus 21:18

Topics: "Dependence On God", "Spiritual Strength"

Description

Anton Bosch delves into the story of Jacob being crippled after wrestling with the Lord, emphasizing the spiritual lesson of learning to lean on God rather than relying on our own strength and abilities. He highlights how being dependent on God is a source of strength and blessedness, contrasting it with the world's view of needing God as a sign of weakness. The sermon explores the dangers of leaning on worldly supports like Egypt's military might or other temporary crutches that ultimately fail in times of crisis, stressing the importance of fully leaning on the Lord for true support and strength.

Transcript

When David wanted to put a terrible curse on Joab for murdering Abner, David said, amongst other things, that there should always be one of Joab's descendants who would lean on his staff. Buy this he meant that there would always be a cripple or someone who has weak legs and needs a stick to lean on (2Samuel 3:29). Leviticus 21:18 prohibits any who is lame from serving at the Lord's altar and thereby classifies cripples as unclean.

Obviously, at a time when the main form of transport was walking, to be dependant on a stick would be a much worse disability than it is today. Against this background we read about Jacob who, when he was dying, leaned upon his staff (Hebrews 11:21). Jacob was crippled because he wrestled with the Lord and the Lord touched his hip (Genesis 32:32). Thus when Hebrews refers to him as leaning on his staff, it reminds us that Jacob was a cripple.

How could the Lord do this to Jacob when it had such profound spiritual and practical implications? I believe it was so that Jacob would learn to lean on his staff and be dependant on God and not to trust in his own ability. In those days, men would trust in their feet and legs to not only carry them from place to place, but to support them in battle as well as in their daily work. But the Lord "does not delight in the strength of the horse; He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man" (Psalm 147:10). So the thing that men rely on is the very thing that God takes no pleasure in because it makes men self-sufficient and not dependant on the Lord. Even today we speak of someone as "standing on his own two feet", meaning that

he his independent and self-reliant. This may be a good attribute in the world, but to the true believer it is the opposite. Even though Solomon did not follow his own advice, he warned: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5).

The Lord wanted Jacob to forever remember the day he met with God, but also to recognize that his blessings did not come from his own cleverness, schemes and abilities, but from the Lord. Thus while being a cripple was a curse, severe disability and defilement, when it caused Jacob to lean on the Lord, it became the source of his strength and blessedness.

Unbelievers mock Christians who believe in God because they "need a crutch". The problem is that everyone needs a crutch, but very few recognize that fact. Others have a crutch or a staff on which they lean, but they don't recognize it for what it is. Some lean on therapy, drugs, medicine, alcohol, friends and a thousand other supports. The problem is that these supports are weak and ineffectual. A reed is a very weak, but deceptive thing. It is like a cardboard tube which appears to be strong and which one can actually lean on but which breaks without warning. When a reed breaks it shatters into a dozen or so very sharp slivers that each cut like a knife. To lean on a reed is very dangerous because it will support you for a while, but when you really put pressure on it, it breaks and cuts your hand. Any support outside of the Lord is like a reed which will seem to be useful, but will hurt you when you really need it.

There was a time when Israel put their confidence in the military might of Egypt, rather than in the Lord. Even a Gentile king mocked them saying: "You are trusting in the staff of this broken reed, Egypt, on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who trust in him." (Isaiah 36:6).

So, we can be in one of three positions. Either we think we have it made and stand on our own feet, or we may be leaning on something other than the Lord, or we are actually leaning on Him. There are very few who fall into the last category. But there can be no other option for the true child of God. He is the only support that will hold us up and that will not fail in a time of crises.

To the world it may be a sign of weakness, but to the believer, the Lord is the only source of true support and strength. But, unfortunately, many do not think they need to lean on the Lord. Jacob thought he had everything worked out. He knew how to work the system and in a few years he had become very wealthy, however when he had to face his brother, he recognized that he needed the Lord. You may be able to handle your life quite well without the Lord, but sooner or later, you will face a crisis that will throw you off your feet. Then you will have to scramble to find the Lord and begin to lean on Him. Sadly, even in a crisis, some still refuse to lean on the Lord and in their pride would rather crawl than lean on the Almighty.

There can be no greater blessedness than to realize that we are weak and that we need to lean on Him. He is the only One who will never let us down, fail or disappoint. David said "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4).

We often get frustrated with people who are needy and demand too much from us, but the Lord actually wants us to lean on Him. "The Lord upholds all who fall, And raises up all who are bowed down" (Psalm 145:14).

What a fellowship, what a joy divine,

leaning on the everlasting arms;
what a blessedness, what a peace is mine,
leaning on the everlasting arms.
Leaning, leaning,
safe and secure from all alarms;
leaning, leaning,
leaning on the everlasting arms.

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