

The Mightiest Prayer in the Bible

by Bill McLeod

Bill McLeod emphasizes the power of waiting on God through the transformative story of Jacob's encounter with Him in prayer.

Duration: 35:53

Scripture: Psalm 62:1

Topics: "Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the story of Jacob from the Bible. Jacob was in a desperate situation with no way out, but he chose to rely on God alone. He wrestled with an angel of God in prayer all night, refusing to let go until he received a blessing. Through this encounter, Jacob's name and character were transformed, and he became a world-renowned evangelist, leading many people to Christ. The speaker emphasizes the importance of spending time studying the word of God to understand His ways and encourages listeners to seek a personal encounter with God through prayer.

Transcript

Well, good morning. That's better than the last time I was here. Thank you.

I want to read from Psalm 62, verse 1. It begins with the word truly, and I notice the marginal reading is only. My soul waits only upon God. From Him comes my salvation.

He only is my rock and my salvation. He is my defense. I shall not be greatly moved.

How long will you imagine mischief against a man? You shall be slain, all of you, as a bowing wall shall you be, and as a tottering fence. They only consult to cast him down from His excellency. They delight in lies.

They bust with their mouths, but they curse inwardly. My soul waits only upon God, for my expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation.

He is my defense. I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory.

The rock of my strength and my refuge is in God. Trust in Him at all times, you people. Pour out your heart before Him.

God is a refuge for us. The word only occurs five times. I want to read verse 5 again.

My soul waits only upon God, for my expectation is from Him. One of the mightiest prayers in the Bible is found in Genesis chapter 32, when Jacob got in trouble for his past sins and deeds and was facing death. It's a great story and certainly speaks to us today.

What had happened was, his brother Esau came one day. He'd been hunting apparently. He was very hungry and Jacob was making some soup of some kind.

And Esau asked, if you could have some, would you believe it? He had to pay for it. Jacob made his brother pay for it. And Esau actually gave up his birthright, which was an extremely selfish, not selfish, but silly thing for him to do.

But he was hungry. I can't imagine, I just can't get it, how Jacob could force his brother to pay for something to eat when he was hungry. But Jacob had that kind of a heart at the time and was changed mightily by God later on.

We know that Jacob allowed his mother to talk him into lying to his father. Don't allow anybody, no matter how close they may be to you, to talk you into lying about anything or anybody. When King Esau found out that Meachah, his mother, the queen, had made an idol in a grove, he didn't call a committee meeting.

He kicked her off the throne and he busted the idol to pieces and that was the end of it. But not so with Jacob. He actually went so far as to pretend to be his brother Esau and to lie to his dad.

And of course, he already had the birthright that Esau should have had, which he'd paid for the food that particular day. Well, finally, when it was all over, Jacob's mother hears that Esau is planning to murder him. You know, people sometimes ask the question, I heard somebody ask it recently, why do people murder other people? Well, I don't know, there's a thousand reasons perhaps, but here is one.

Esau felt his brother had really cheated him and certainly lied to his father and all of that and was planning to kill him. So instead of dealing with the problem and going to his brother and making things right, he ran away. I guess he thought God never had a clock.

God's clock is always ticking. It's running and there's an alarm on it and sometimes we don't hear it. So he thought, well, I'll get away and Esau will forget, not come back later on.

He had it all figured out. And you know, he went to work for a man named Laban. Remember the fellow called Nabal? Well, that's the same word spelled backward, you know, Nabal, Laban.

And the Laban was just like Jacob, that is, he was a very, very sharp, distant man. You know what God does sometimes to you and me? If there are some strange quirks in our character that we're not dealing with, he will bring us into close contact with somebody just like ourself. You hear what I'm saying? And you'll have to put up with yourself in a sense.

Well, Jacob had to put up with Laban for 20 years. And finally it got so bad he decided to make us for home. And he left without telling Laban.

And had God not come to Laban in a dream at night, Jacob might have been killed. At least I'm sure his family would have been taken away from him and he would have been left with nothing. He ran away.

Now he's coming back. Now, of course, Jacob thought 20 years, oh, Esau, he'll have forgotten all about this. He won't remember what happened, I'm sure.

He's my brother. Everything will be okay. And you know, when Laban caught up with him and balled him out, he was able to sail Guana's way only, as I say, because God visited Laban at night in a dream.

And then right after that, would you believe it, as he's journeying for home, he sees a group of angels. So it looks to him as if things are really going well. I got away from Laban.

I saw a bunch of angels. How can anything bad happen to me? So he sends a message home that he's coming. And the messenger comes back and he says, Esau's coming to meet you with 400 men.

And, of course, Jacob knew what that meant. His brother hadn't forgotten. So Jacob was in a quandary and he started a number of plans on his own.

He humbled himself to begin with, because he sent a messenger. And the messenger was to say to Esau, your Lord, no, your humble servant or your servant Jacob. And he addressed Esau as my Lord.

So it was a little bit of a humble there, you know, humbling. I guess he thought that might be enough, but it wasn't. So he had another plan and he divided his wives and families into two groups.

His thought was, if Esau smites one group, the other group will get away. I guess, though, as he thought about it, he must have realized he might get both groups. So the second plan wasn't working well either.

Then, verses 9 to 13, he stood on the promises of God and reminded God that God had promised him great things. And I guess it made him feel better for a while, but not for long. It wasn't really enough.

He had one more plan and he worked that plan. It didn't work either. He actually gave Esau a great gift of 540 cattle beasts, sheep and oxen, 540.

That must have killed Jacob. You know, he was a grasping, covetous person, great in business and poor in spiritual things. But he reminded God he did all these things.

So he tried four plans. And then, you know what the Bible says? Jacob was left alone. He didn't have any more.

There was no way out now. But up, what was he going to do? And he had a meeting with God. And he wrestled in prayer an entire night with an angel of God.

He had nothing else, nobody else but God. Isn't that an awful place to be in? Is it? It's the best place you could be in. Nobody else but God.

So the angel finally said, the day is breaking, let me go. And he said, I will not let you go unless you bless me. Now, his name Jacob meant supplanter or deceiver.

That wasn't a very good name. I think it described him well. After the angel blessed him, answered his prayer and blessed him, his name was changed from Jacob to Israel, which meant prince of God.

He was completely transformed. From that point on, it says, he had power with God and power with men. And he was no longer afraid.

Before, when they were traveling to meet Esau, he was in behind and everything else was in front, all his family. Now, he was up in front of the whole group to meet Esau himself. No longer afraid.

And when Esau saw him, he ran to meet him and wept on his shoulder. And they were reconciled. You know, he didn't really, from what we might say from our understanding, he didn't really make restitution.

He tried to buy them all, but it wasn't, that's not restitution. And we might say he didn't handle it right. Well, he must have handled it right because it came out right.

It couldn't have come out right if he'd handled it wrongly. And God brings us, dear people, at times to a place where there's no way out but up. Where all our plans fail.

And God does it deliberately to drive us to himself. To seek him. To be satisfied with nothing less than God himself.

I will not let you go unless you bless me. Don't be surprised should God lead you to a place like that. It'll be good.

It'll turn out well as it turned out for him. Well, a great character change, not just a name change. God changes us by his power.

And he can. He can make a new person out of us. Nicholson, that great Irish evangelist, accepted Christ as his savior.

But he discovered that he still had a liking for liquor. He still had a dirty mouth sometimes. And he really wasn't much changed.

He was somewhat changed. He wanted to go deeper. He didn't know how.

Then he heard about some deeper life meanings. And he attended them. And he made the astonishing discovery, astonishing to him, that you not only receive Christ as your savior, but you receive him as your Lord.

And he made the Lord the Lord of his life. And we don't have time to go into details as to what happened after that. An extremely exciting story of how God led him.

After he met with God that second time and gave his whole life into God's hands, he became a world-renowned evangelist, led thousands of people to Christ. He didn't get that and didn't have that until he did like Jacob did and prayed through and met with God. It says of Jacob that he prayed with tears.

And sometimes we need to pray that way, too. I mean, remember, it says of Jesus in Hebrews 5 that he prayed with strong crying and tears. And there are times when we need to pray that way.

Forget. Forget it even if others in the family may hear. Let them hear.

Maybe they need to cry, too. But don't be ashamed of your tears. Remember, I say it again, Christ prayed with strong crying and tears.

And he was heard in that he feared God. The supplanter, the deceiver, a prince of God. Let me say it again.

He now had power with God and with men. And it's always in that order. You don't have power with men unless you first have power with God.

Get that straight. Power comes from God. The verse says that power comes from God.

Power belongs to God, you might put it. So, to get power, I have to get God. And it may be costly, but I'll be blessed as it was for him, for Jacob.

Go back for a moment now with me to Psalm 62. And please notice the tremendous emphasis on the word only. Verse 1, the marginal reading, Only my soul, or my soul waits only upon God.

He only is my rock and my salvation. He is my defense. I shall not be greatly moved.

Jacob discovered that God was his defense. And he went to Him to get that kind of blessing. And then in verse 5, My soul wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.

There's that word again. And verse 6, He only is my rock and my salvation. He is my defense.

I shall not be moved. So, wait only upon God. My expectation is from Him.

So, quit trying to do it yourself. Find out what God has in mind and pursue that. And then, my soul, wait thou only upon God.

Don't try and help God out. Let God do it. And here's where we so often go wrong because maybe we think at least it isn't moving fast enough.

So, we try to hurry God up. Then, the plan God had goes wrong. It doesn't work that way.

My soul, wait thou only upon God. My expectation is from Him. I will cry unto God most high because He performs all things for me.

So, we read in Psalm 57, I believe. Only on God. My expectation from Him.

In Zephaniah 3.9, we're told to wait only God said upon me. There's that thought only again. Wait only on me.

Habakkuk 2.3, Though the vision tarries, wait for it. Wait for it. Don't try and hurry it up.

Just wait. God will take care of it at the right time. They that wait upon the Lord shall do what? They'll mount up with wings like eagles.

They'll run and not be weary. They'll walk and not faint. So, wait.

But wait on God. Forget about your plans. I'm not saying we shouldn't make plans.

I'm just saying don't depend on them. Depend on God in His way. And often He turns our plans upside down.

And we wonder what's going on here. In preaching on the subject of committal, which I've done before, I sometimes would point out, listen, when you commit a problem to God, the problem may immediately get worse. Don't panic.

It probably has to get worse before it gets better. Don't take it back from God when it gets worse. Just let it go.

We, over the years, we've not just read, we've met with people, heard testimonies of people who learned what it meant. This Word only. It isn't God plus something.

It's only God. Defense, rock, high tower, salvation, refuge, all these words associated with the word only. Now, there's an official commentary by God in Hosea chapter 12 on Jacob.

Just a very short commentary. And it says, Therefore, wait thou upon God. Wait on your God continually, it said.

It talks about keeping mercy and judgment and then just waiting on God and giving God the glory and letting God do it His way. Wait on your God, it says, continually. Night and day.

And I say again, don't panic because He's not walking in paths you thought He would. You can't outthink God and you can't outwit God. You don't have a better plan.

He's got the only plan that's worthwhile. That's why we need to spend more time searching His Word to learn His ways. His ways are paths finding out.

That's if you don't have the Bible to guide you. With the Bible, we have things made very clear, very plain. Ways that God works.

Paths that God walks in. So, we can find out by studying the Word of God. We can find out how He works.

We can't perhaps know how He works to perfection. But all we need to know as a human being living in a sinful world. So, we're to wait on God.

And I'm sure most of us as believers are convinced that we certainly need a nationwide revival. We might say a worldwide awakening. For violence and immorality, they're abounding in every country.

And very little can be done by the governments because often it's their own leaders that are the chief offenders. We're getting to that point where we're going to be like Jacob when he heard Esau was coming with 400 armed men. And then there's no way out but up.

There's no other plan but God. But you know to me, it's a very sweet thing to stop and think and know. I don't have to worry.

I may have some concern, yes, but I certainly don't have to worry. If I'm waiting on God, there will be a day, a time when God will answer. And remember this, one day with God is like a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.

So give Him time. And never tell God, hey, you're taking too long. I've got to have this fixed up right away.

Well, you may lose Him at that point. I'm not saying you lose Him entirely, but you may lose God's blessing on your life if you ever get to the point where you're intimate and perhaps more than just Him, but maybe tell God He isn't doing it right. That's an awful mistake to make.

But so sweet, Christ said, Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me. And learn what? What did He say? And learn of Me, for I am

meek and lowly in heart.

And you shall find rest unto your souls, for My yoke is easy. One translation says, My yoke is sweet, and My burden is light. Christ wants us to yoke up with Him.

Jacob didn't know about Christ, but I think he came to a place where he understood what it meant to be yoked up with God. Something he hadn't known for years, had never known before. My yoke is easy, My burden is light.

So let me emphasize this in that context in Matthew 11. Learn of Me. I say, learn what? Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.

That's what He wants us to learn, is meekness and lowliness. They need to see Mother better than themselves in Philippians 2. And Paul speaks often of humility and lowliness. That's what Christ wants us to learn.

I read a phrase once, that was called, the terrible meek. Meek people are terrible in the sense that they're above and beyond the most of humanity. Most people are not meek and lowly.

They don't think those are good things to pursue. You've got to be forward. Let people know who you are and what you know, what you've done, what you can do.

No, no. We're here to emphasize Christ who He is, what He has done, what He can do. That's why we're here.

Come, He said, take, learn. Come, take, learn. I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest to your souls.

Jacob found rest by wrestling with God, meeting with God. I guess for the first time in his life, getting honest with God. We don't know all He said.

I'm sure God dealt with his sin and it was a time of confession. I mean, He wasn't just mouthing some prayer when He spent a whole night in prayer. I'm sure God went to the depths of his soul and talked to him about his lying, his perfidy, his covetousness, and all these things that abounded in his life.

He was supposed to be God's man and he wasn't. He was Jacob's man, his own man, until God broke him with His plan. He only had one plan, that is God had just one.

That's all he needed. And we need to be honest with God and ask Him, show me Your plan for my life. And then let Him lead you.

And He will do that. And He will lead you. His paths are pleasant, we're told.

The way of the Lord is right, always. So my soul, wait thou only upon God. My expectation is from Him.

And we should, as Christian believers, try to find out. It isn't difficult. It's certainly not impossible.

But it will take time. And honesty, when God puts His finger on some part of my life, He expects me to deal with it. And deal with it as rapidly as we possibly can.

My expectation, it's a heavy thought in my heart today. My expectation is from Him. Always from Him.

And only from Him. Speak, Lord. Thy servant is listening.

Samuel said as a little child. So instructed by Eli the priest. Speak, Lord.

Your servant is listening. Listening. Not fussing.

Not questioning. But listening. Then obeying.

To the glory of God. So, my soul, wait thou only upon God. For my expectation is from Him.

He only is my rock and my salvation. He is my defense. I shall not be moved.

Father, we said before, this is a mighty prayer, one of the mightiest in the Bible. And I think it is. Thank you, Father, for giving us this example.

Jacob never knew that his life story would be written in a book called the Bible. And millions would read it. And see his covetous spirit and business-like ways and all of that.

And then see what happened after a night, Father, alone with You. So, thank you for giving us this story. What things Paul said were written before, he is referring to the Old Testament.

What things were written before were written for our learning. So, what do we learn from this? Well, we have to leave that up to the individual. We will learn what we need to learn.

And God will show us what those things are. So, bless each person, Father, in this room this morning. Anybody needing Christ, maybe find Him.

Seek You, me, and You shall live. That's how it goes. And then if there is a Christian father or maybe like Jacob was, there is a change needed.

The change will come when we pay the price. O God, according to Your guidance, You will never lead us in a way that will hurt us. It may hurt the old man.

Dear God, it may help the old sinful nature we have, but never hurt us. And for this, we thank You. Gracious God, as we read, God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.

Every time we think of it, we shake our heads. We wonder how this could be. That You died on a cross for people, that Your Word declares are grasshoppers, and in the same 40th chapter of Isaiah declares, we're like grass in a field.

Grass are grasshoppers. Nothing. Yet You paid a terrible price, dear Lord, for our sin.

Thank You. And bless us, Lord. Lead us from here.

Let us never stand still. You said let us go on unto perfection. Not laying again the foundations.

We're going on unto perfection. Thank You, God, for blessing us. In Christ's name, Amen.

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