

Lessons from Jacob's Life

by Mack Tomlinson

This sermon focuses on the life of Jacob as a 147-year-old man who died well, highlighting the importance of biography and the value of Christian biography. It emphasizes the need for deep spiritual experiences, brokenness, and continuous growth in faith over the long haul of life. The sermon encourages believers to journey with God, seek deeper experiences, and never stop advancing spiritually, ultimately aiming to die well by blessing others and worshipping God.

Scripture: Hebrews 11:21, James 4:8, 2 Corinthians 4:16, Philippians 3:13, Psalm 119:105, 1 Corinthians 9:24, Romans 12:1, Psalm 51:17, Proverbs 16:9

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Legacy of Faith"

Description

This sermon focuses on the life of Jacob as a 147-year-old man who died well, highlighting the importance of biography and the value of Christian biography. It emphasizes the need for deep spiritual experiences, brokenness, and continuous growth in faith over the long haul of life. The sermon encourages believers to journey with God, seek deeper experiences, and never stop advancing spiritually, ultimately aiming to die well by blessing others and worshipping God.

Transcript

Tonight I'm going to speak on a 147-year-old guy who died well, Jacob. Hebrews 11, one verse, verse 21. The value of biography can't be appreciated enough and if you appreciate biography, right Rami, you appreciate biography, you have a growing appreciation for Christian biography.

And the more you do, the more you benefit. I hope all you guys learn to discipline yourself just to read a biography once in a while. What's your appetite? So one verse, we're looking at this biography of Jacob tonight.

Verse 21, by faith Jacob, when he was dying, so notice this, a lot of these guys in Hebrews 11 get commended for what they did early, for what they did in the middle. Jacob dies by faith. So God, he gets in here because of what he did right at the very end of his life.

By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph and worshipped. This was around his bed, they gathered around his bed. And remember you read in Genesis, he prophesied, remember? I mean, he was speaking by the Holy Spirit.

It wasn't just, the Lord bless you son. You know, you read those prophecies of Jacob, it's amazing, really. I mean, some of them are intricately deep.

Some of them are prophecies of judgment. But anyway, I'm not going to preach on that tonight. He blessed each of the sons of Joseph and worshipped, leaning on the top of his staff.

So by faith Jacob. The value of biography. John Popper said, God is the great biographer.

Because you think about it, a lot of the Bible is biography. 47 of the 50 chapters in Genesis, pure biography. You ever notice that? You get to chapter 4 of Genesis, the rest is biography.

All the way through chapter 50. Exodus, and on further past Exodus, Moses' biography, Aaron's, 1st and 2nd Samuel, 1st and 2nd Kings. You get my point.

Job, 4 books you've heard of, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, biography. Book of Acts, Luke wrote Paul's biography in the Book of Acts. So, here we have Jacob, 147 years old when he dies.

Joseph, his son, how old was he when he died? Huh? 110. How about Isaac? Your phone's on silent please, or you'll have to leave. How old was Isaac when he died? 180.

How about Abraham? 175. Abraham, 175. So, here's these patriarchs.

Now, Methuselah had it over all of them, didn't he? 969. Huh? Barely. Well, barely? Adam would be, what, 960? Yeah, I'm talking about these four guys here.

Sorry. But think about this guys. Abraham buries his wife Sarah.

Some of you will do that, probably. You'll bury your wife, possibly. Isaac buried Rebecca.

And Jacob buried Rachel. All three of those patriarchs buried their wives. And Jacob buried Isaac, his father.

Philip buried his mother and his mother-in-law. I buried my mother. How many years ago was that? Sixteen.

2002, wasn't it? You should remember, I was with you that night. I should remember. But the point is, we're going to bury those we love.

And so when you read these biographies in the Bible, we should let them come alive to us. We should find ourselves in there. And I want you to find yourself in Jacob's life.

We're going to look at high points and principles and realities about him that are gripping, because Jacob lived your life a thousand years ago, and you're living his life now as a believer. Jacob represents Israel, in some ways, the nation. And he represents every believer, but he also represents the solitary man, the man who's in this world, living life, providence unfolds his life, marries, has children, he's working, he's living his life out, younger, middle-aged, older, and he comes to the end of life.

That's Jacob, and that's you and me. When we read the lives of these patriarchs, or we read the life of a Jim Elliot, or you even read the biography of Balaam, or Judas Iscariot, these biographies, we are inspired by them, we're warned by them, we should be encouraged by them, we should be stirred by them, we should take them to heart, and process, what can I get out of his life? You read the biography of Judas, or

Demas, who started out so well, and didn't end so well. I have friends in my life, spiritually, that I was very close to 40 years ago, who evidenced total godliness, and sound doctrine, and stability, who inspired me, and I wanted to be like them, and they've apostatized.

One guy became a Presbyterian, no offense, I'm not going there, but he went on, his views changed, and we had great fellowship, then he became a high Anglican, and now he's a high Orthodox Christian. He doesn't even have a doctrine of justification. They're worse than the Roman Catholic Church.

And I would have never dreamed that that guy would have gone there. So, people's lives are among us. And so we benefit from the warnings, the bad examples, and the good examples.

We should keep reading the biographies of the Bible and of history. So make sure you're doing that. So Jacob.

When I was thinking about Jacob, and speaking on this, and I thought about, I'm going out to Camp Cocos again. I started coming out here in 1982, 36 years ago. I was at a church retreat here, 36 years ago.

Were you there, Tom? Jackie King and the Health Center Church came up for the weekend? It might have been like 1981, because that's when I met you, and I never got to meet Jackie. Well, we won't evaluate that history. I just couldn't remember if you were there.

But the point is, 37 years I've been coming out here. How long for you? Yeah, so he holds the record. It's like, here we are again.

How did four decades pass so quickly? David, this guy, you once held him in your arms. Let me see you do that now. He could hold you in his arms.

If he was dying, you would. You'd pick him up and do it. So, Jacob.

When you read Jacob's life, it's really like an adventure novel. It's at times like a soap opera. He was a dysfunctional man with a dysfunctional family, with a manipulating wife, a mother and wife.

So, let's just think quickly about his life, because it covers 25 chapters in Genesis. Chapter 25 through Chapter 50. Quite amazing.

There's other people mixed in there. You know that. He was the son of Isaac.

What does Jacob mean? Heel. H-E-E-L. Heel.

We know why. Esau's been coming out of the birth canal and Esau's foot comes out and there's a hand on it. Jacob's got his foot.

He's holding on. And so they named him Jacob because of that heel. And we should remember, first and foremost, he's an ancestor of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He obtained Esau's birthright. He fraudulently, willfully deceived his father with his deceptive mother's help. Rebekah was a manipulator and a deceiver herself.

And Jacob's father Isaac was a weak man in different ways. We can see ourself in Isaac and we should say, Lord God, don't let me be like him at this point. But make me like him in this point.

So, it's a turning point with Jacob because when he gets the birthright, Esau hates him and they're alienated for years. And the acute dysfunction starts happening. Why does this apply to us guys? Because right now in your life, you have extended family, relatives, the relationships are broken, there's dysfunction, and this is real.

And so, Jacob had to escape for his life. He flees to his uncle Laban's. The good, upstanding, upright Laban.

And Rebekah had told Jacob, stay there a few days. A few days becomes how many years? Fourteen years. He loves Rachel and he works.

And it seemed like a few days because of his love for her. And so, wedding night comes. Laban gives Jacob a dose of his own medicine.

I don't know how that happened. You know, that tent stuff and how you get the wrong woman and you don't know what's... I don't know how that happened. But it happened.

And then Laban, oh man, I forgot. I forgot to tell you. The older daughter has to be married first.

So, you know, work for me another seven years. So, you want to laugh, you want to cry. It's real stuff.

And he does. Fourteen years. And then the spiritual reality starts happening.

He finally has to escape and finally get away from Laban. And then these spiritual realities start happening on down in his adulthood. When you read Old Testament saints, don't try to figure out exactly when they were converted.

You can't. You can't figure out that with Job. You can't figure that out with Jacob.

Abraham. Don't try to put that stuff in a box. We do know God awakened them, regenerated them, turned them to Him, revealed Himself to them, gave them a new heart, and they started walking with God and believing in God.

When that happened exactly with Jacob, we don't know, but he had the vision of the ladder. Remember it's mentioned in John. Three angels ascending and descending on the ladder.

Visions of God's spiritual reality progressively coming to him. And this happens in our lives, man, progressively. You're stirred about the things of God.

Right, Chance? And you can't put it all together. Chance and I were visiting earlier. What I'm preaching on, I didn't change my message.

You might think I did, but it's all right here. We don't even understand or interpret the spiritual realities that God starts doing in us. But it's a process.

And here's the title of my message. The long process of grace that works in a man for decades to let him walk with God until he dies. It's a much shorter title than Jonathan Edwards' sermon.

The long process of grace that works in a man over decades to make him walk with God until he dies. That's my sermon tonight. These divine encounters.

Jacob meets these angels on his journey. And you get to chapter 32. It's right there.

But there's the big angel that shows up. And much has happened in Jacob's heart. His deceptiveness, reaping the consequences, hard things.

And he begins to come out of that. And God is working behind the scenes and in front of the scenes and with the scenes and invisibly, visibly, probably audibly at times to the conscience, to the heart. The stirrings of God are deep.

A lot of this is in the Old Testament. And we have to read between the lines to realize that it's there. The working of grace.

It's invisible, but effectual and irresistible and continual and sometimes monumentally experiential and sometimes so gradually quiet and you don't even realize the wind is blowing. But you have to watch the leaf and you see a little flicker. Yeah, there's breeze.

So, we can't interpret the long-term working of God's grace, but we are recipients of it. To take us from where you are, where I am, to where we want to be when like Jacob, we want to be when we're dying, blessing our family and worshipping. So, Jacob, he wrestles with this angel.

It's the Lord Jesus Christ, the angel of the covenant. He dreads meeting Esau and he still tries to manipulate things. He's got it all mapped out.

He sends children. He sends two or three caravans on ahead to soften Esau up. He's afraid to meet him.

We would be too. Esau was quite a guy. I mean, he was a skillful hunter.

He would have looked like the... What did you say earlier? He was so hairy, he would have looked like a... Yeah, I mean... Yeah, so, you get my point. We would have dreaded meeting Esau too. And then, remember there in the wrestling.

Let's just turn there to Genesis 32. In the wrestling, the angel... We know he lets Jacob win. Chapter 32.

Here we pick this up. Jacob's been on his journey. He's ending here in 31 on his relationship with Laban.

And they have this agreement with a pillar, with a monument. It's a witness between them that we won't ever mistreat each other. We won't violate.

We're both moving on. That's chapter 31. And then 32.

So, this big transition. Jacob went on his way. And now he meets something bigger than Laban.

The angels of God. He moves from the earthly, the physical relationships. God's taken him into the spiritual realm now.

And he meets the angels of God. That would have been more scary than Esau. But when Jacob saw them, he said, this is God's camp.

This ain't Camp Copas. This is God's camp. So he named the place.

Then Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau. So, he knows he's going to meet him. And he's still afraid.

So he has this plan. He carries it out. Verse 7, So Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed.

And then he continues his plan of manipulation. He's always been a supplanter. He's always been able to work it out, handle it, and he's doing that.

But notice verse 9. He's gotten so desperate that it's time to pray. So we're going to come back to that. Stay right there.

And we'll just realize what happens in a minute. In this event of the angel, when he wrestles with the angel, something big happens. Brokenness and name change.

How Jacob became Israel. How Jacob went from being deceiver, supplanter, manipulator, a man that functioned in mediocrity, really at best, to becoming a prince with God and prevailing. And that gives any of us hope.

So, he wrestles with God and prevails. Then he becomes a wealthy patriarch as he was a sojourner. And we know the thing he so greatly feared was going to be a great blessing.

Esau's been prepared. They're reconciled. They weep.

And then after Jacob is reconciled with Esau, where does he go? What does he do? Well, the Bible says he journeys onto Succoth and onto then a city called Shalem. S-H-A-L-E-M. And on the way, he's building altars and he's setting up monuments and he's worshipping.

And he journeys on to Ephrath, which became Bethlehem. And as they're journeying toward the site of Bethlehem, Rachel goes into labor and she dies in childbirth. And baby Benjamin is born.

And Jacob buries Rachel en route to Bethlehem. And he sets up a pillar on her grave, a monument. And then he's got to keep journeying.

Now think about that, guys. Burying the one you loved so much and she worked for her deceiving father for 14 years. And you lose her in childbirth and you've got to bury her and you've got to keep going.

So, what does he do? He returns to his father's city Arba and then he's dwelling in the land of Canaan. And then the more familiar stuff begins to happen. All his sons and his partiality toward Joseph surfaces.

And this is the thing we remember a lot. And the jealousy of the sons develops. And Jacob's grief over the supposed loss of Joseph.

And then, ultimately, he and his sons go down to Egypt because of the providential famine because God is ordering a reunion. And they live there. And Genesis 48 and 49 speak of Jacob's end, 147 years old.

And the last word in the Bible about him is the text we read in Hebrews 11. So, major themes of Jacob's life. Big sin.

Big mess-ups. Big regrets. Deep issues of struggle.

Personal dysfunction. Family dysfunction. Mistakes.

Carnal choices. Big fears that are overwhelming that he cannot escape. The lonely work of God in the soul that nobody sees except God.

And the man who's the subject of that deep, lonely work of God can't figure it all out and he can't escape it. The life of a needy man who becomes a prince with God. Wife problems.

Children problems. Living out life long term. As he had a slow pace.

Tried and failed. Tried and failed. And he learned to slowly, progressively walk with God.

It wasn't a quick deal. He didn't excel like some guys do, just rocket to growth like William Borden of Yale or Hudson Taylor. We've never seen their struggles.

We don't know about them really. But over the long haul, decades, Jacob began to walk with God. Think about it, brothers.

The Bible says Enoch walked with God for 300 years. 300 years he walked with God. And he had the testimony that he pleased God.

And we don't know if there was any major exciting event, mountaintop stuff, but we do know 300 years, three centuries of walking with God and he pleased God. That's astounding. Jacob represents Israel, represents every believer, and represents the individual man.

He is a picture of you. And he's a picture of me. A solitary life.

Because even when you're in a church, you live a solitary life. Joel has to live his life. And Jared has to live his life.

And Jake has to live his life. And Mac has to live his life. You have to live your life.

Nobody can live it for you. Nobody can be spiritual for you. Nobody can be mature for you.

Nobody can lead your wife but you. Nobody can make your choices but you. Nobody can determine what kind of man of God you're going to become but you.

A solitary life. A real life. Lived out.

And for Jacob, it's lived out. It speeds by. Living life is almost as fast as you can read his life in Genesis.

How quick is 20 years of Christian? 21 for you. 23. Hadn't it passed fast? David? It's like a blur.

It speeds by. It winds down. And then we're gone the way of all the earth.

Jacob, a life. Lived for God. Lee died a life.

A man who lived for God. Ethan Burr, a younger man who's lived for God a while and he continues to. Ron and Mac, older guys.

Older. Not old. Living for God.

Ron Pulaski. 80. And a legitimately old man.

Now Linda would not like me saying that. She says nobody's old until they're 80 and they shouldn't be called old. So, don't tell her, please.

Jacob, we are Him. He was you as a believer. You are Him now in some very real ways.

His life is recorded for our example and our admonition. James says, what is your life? Let's see ourselves tonight in Jacob. The working of the grace of God in a real and needy man with a long process, a hard process to produce decades of godliness and to die well.

I don't want to die poorly. I don't want you to die poorly. I have a friend in the nursing home on North Carroll.

Tom, you remember Sweeney Hudgens? He has full dementia. He doesn't know anybody. The sweetest guy.

He's my age. He did evangelism in this town for years. Humble servant.

Loved fellowship. He's up there. Didn't know anybody.

I told Linda this week, I'm going to go see him. He won't know me. But brothers, every one of us are heading there.

We are. You and I are in the process right now of pursuing, we hope, decades of living for Christ. And it's a long and it's a hard process for years to ripen and deepen and to grow more fragrant and more otherworldly.

You can grow a squash plant in six months. Grow an oak tree. I came from a small town in West Texas.

If you were coordinated at all, you made the athletic teams. Because there were 40 in my high school. I mean in my class.

So I was an all-conference basketball player. I wasn't as good as Philip Neeley was. I was a conference champion tennis player.

I was the quarterback of the football team. Probably because nobody else could throw it 20 yards. And guess what? Now I can't run a full run, a full pace, a full whatever you call it.

Horses gallop. What do men do? I can't run fast. Two open heart surgeries.

Two back surgeries. 65 years old. That's where you're heading.

What happens in 45 or 50 years is life quickly speeds and is gone. And the outward man's decaying. My mind can't take mental stress the last three years I've noticed.

The more I have to think about it, the harder things are to handle. Brothers, it's too quick. Life is too quick.

We live in the moment because the moment is so important with raising children and doing your job and all you have to do. We live in the moment and we are still blinded about seeing the long and the end. We're still blinded about it.

You're young fathers. Can you picture your children grown and married? It's hard to, isn't it? Really. But you've got to do it.

You've got to try to do it. Picture your sons or your daughters, grown young women. Picture them.

And they're getting married. And you and your wife, it's going to be you two together. Can you picture it? So you've got to have this long view of life.

Don't be blinded by the immediate. Don't be blinded by the pressures of these little children now and you can't see beyond a year, five years. We have to develop this perspective on life that it's long term.

That we're passing through this world. We're not long for this world. I buried a daughter.

I buried a mother. I don't know if my wife will bury me or I'll bury her, but it's coming. Unless we die in a plane crash together.

Then Neely will bury us both. Or all these guys will. Linda and I won't care.

Single guys, it's hard for you to see yourself like us married guys. To see yourself married. To see yourself ten years from now just living the mundane.

I never looked when I was younger. I didn't learn to look five years ahead. Where will I be five years from now? What would I like to be like five years from now? I never looked ten years ahead or twenty years ahead.

I didn't think that way to pray and envision what God would have. I wasn't told to. I didn't know to.

I had nobody to mentor me. I had nobody to help me live with the perspective. I remember there was an old... One of Keith Green's early friends was named Randy Stonehill.

Anybody remember Randy Stonehill? He had this song. You could listen to it. Turning 30.

He thought it was like, I'm getting old. It's kind of a neat song to listen to. But, brothers, do you ever think in five years, in ten years I'll be this age? I may live to be 50 or 75 or 90.

How do I think of life? And how do I think of living to get where I would want to be spiritually between now and then? I didn't know as a young Christian to obtain and shape a view of living long term. And it's right for us to think I could die anytime and I've got to be ready to go. That's right.

But we also have to have a view. We're not going to live to 147. I don't know if Jacob thought that way.

He probably did. He could have said, well, Isaac, he made 180, so maybe I've got 50 more. And he was 130.

You know, I don't know. But the point is, we have to have a view. God may have me live until I'm 70 or 80 or 90.

Some of you had that in your genes. It'll probably happen. But what's your life going to be like spiritually until then? What are your goals? Are you lazy about it? Are you passive about it? From the days of John the Baptist till now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence.

And the violent, the spiritually violent, take it by force. Man, we've got to learn to be more spiritually violent about pursuing things long term that really matter. So, continuous grace for decades of walking with God.

Jacob was on the long haul process. Lynn and I and some of our grandchildren and one daughter. The first year the Fellowship Conference in New England started, how many years ago was that? Four, five? My wife, sometimes it's good to listen to your wife and sometimes it's not.

She said, Honey, why don't we drive to New England? It'll be fun. So, I bought into it. 4,400 miles around trip.

And I drove and then I got there dead dog tired and I had to leave the conference and preach. And then I had to drive home. A little driving was shared.

But I made a deep commitment. Never will I drive it again. I've flown ever since.

But see, the long haul process, it's a long haul to drive to Portland, Maine from Texas. The Christian life is a long haul process. It's mapped out.

And we have a working GPS. This deal is a long process that's deep and real where God deals with carnal areas He wants to root out. That was kind of Jacob's big deal in a way.

Real humbling has to happen at times because none of us know what we think we know. None of us are probably where we would want to think we are spiritually. Maybe some are.

But it means hard providences. It means God doing things that we can't even control. A few days becomes 14 years.

Testedness. Charles Leiter likes the word testedness. I like that word.

Because grace for the long haul to enter into maturity doesn't just come by reading books. It doesn't just come from being in a church. It comes from years of experience.

Testedness. Provenness. And God hammering out your life and knocking off the rough edges and maturing areas that are immature, changing areas that are carnal, delivering you from sins that are besetting sins, stripping and loss and tears and heartache.

And God forcing, like He did with Jacob, forcing us to face what we really are in ourselves and who we truly are. His flesh and Jacob's propensities to control and manipulate. The long, deep process for Jacob and in us will be private.

Things can go on spiritually. Nobody even knows what's going on in our life. And we don't even know how to communicate it with others.

Deep stirrings. The ongoing work of God is very private. It's personal.

It's painful. It can be pivotal. It's drastic.

It's deep. It's demanding. It's drawn out sometimes.

It's refining and purifying. And that hurts. It's like God quarries us deep in the recesses.

He does the work of a miner and quarries us deep to pull out and eliminate the dross and get to the pure gold. And it's radical. It was in Jacob for God's great purposes of grace for 147 years in one man's life.

You are one man like Him living out your life. What will it be in 5 years, in 10, in 20, in 40 years? Now, right now, will shape them. Yes, absolutely.

Our choices spiritually, daily, weekly, monthly, week in and week out, month after month. Our choices will determine spiritually where we are 5 years from now, 10 years from now, a year from now. So, back to chapter 32 quickly and I'm almost done.

Jacob's praying. Look at chapter 32 where we referred. Verse 9. Jacob begins to get real here in prayer.

He's at a crossroads. And this is a breaking moment for Jacob. It's like it's a watershed.

It's a crossroads. And he says, O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the Lord who said to me, and here he quotes a promise God spoke. You said to me, return to your country and to your family and I will deal well with you.

And now he begins to get somewhere in prayer. I'm not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth you've shown your servant. For I crossed over this Jordan with my staff and now I have become two companies.

So he claims God's promise in prayer. He confesses he doesn't deserve one bit of mercy. And then he begins to pray for mercy.

To deliver me. Verse 11. Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother because I fear him.

Absolute, honest, transparent prayer. Lord, here's where I am. I'm afraid of my brother.

Please deliver me. Do we get real with God in prayer? Really, really, really real. I felt that way in these elections this time for some reason.

And in the last weeks, I began to pray against wicked politicians. Lord, defeat them. Don't let him, don't let her get elected.

Please defeat them. We've just got to get real with God about our own souls. Real with each other when it's time to.

Jacob does that here. Really, it seemed like for the first time. And then he says, verse 12, For you said, I will surely treat you well and make your descendants as a son of the sea which cannot be numbered.

So he keeps praying. And verse 13 kind of takes up the continuing saga. So he's having these supernatural experiences.

They begin to come. Deep, real spiritual things happen. Visitation of angels.

Wrestling with the angel. He begins to cry out in prayer. And look at verses 22 through 24.

There's further separation from the past and deeper experience. Verse 22, He arose that night, took His two wives and His two female servants, His eleven sons, and crossed over the fort of Jabbok. He sent them over the brook and sent over what He had done.

Verse 24, Then He was left alone. Spiritual solitude. Aloneness with God where God has to deal with a man.

And He's not doing it in your wife even. What He's doing in you. They don't know what's going on.

They can't interpret it. Jacob was left alone and a man wrestled with him. The man Christ Jesus until the breaking of day.

It's the night season. The dark night of the soul. It's the night season.

Wrestling all night. Can you imagine? Can we imagine? Jesus could append him. The Lord graciously lets him wrestle.

And He wants to draw out of Jacob desperation and seriousness and I will not let you go. I've got to have you. I've got to know you.

I've got to conquer. I've got to break through. Verse 25, And when He saw that it did not prevail against Him, He, that is the angel, touched the socket of His hip and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him.

And He said, Let Me go for the day breaks. But He, Jacob, said, I will not let you go unless you bless Me. Many of us aren't even there.

You're satisfied not to get an answer. You're satisfied with spiritual mediocrity. You're satisfied with where you are.

Satisfied with the fruit you've got. You're satisfied with the breakthroughs you've got and you don't need anymore. I will not, Lord, let you go until I have victory in this area.

I will not stop until this happens spiritually. So He said to him, What's your name? Deceiver. Supplanter.

Manipulator. Deceiver. Cheat.

Liar. Fraud. Willful deceiver of my own father.

Yeah, that's who you are. And I'm changing you here tonight. Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel.

For you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed. So, I love verse 31. The night's over.

He's been changed by His experience and in His name, a new identity. And I love this picture. Just as He crossed over Peniel, the sun rose and He limped on His hip.

He's not a big, strong, independent guy anymore. He can't play tennis, basketball, football. He can't run track anymore.

One day you guys that can do all that stuff, you'll be like me if you live. Maybe. Maybe.

But the dark night of Jacob's soul is over. It's a new day dawning. And in His weakness, He's walking with God.

And He's at a completely different level. Christ's experience came for Him. We need real experiences with God at times to take us on to a new level.

It's not always just steady growth, new information, new knowledge. No, we need sometimes to wrestle with God and let God take us with deeper experiences. I remember too that it happened to me that there were times of brokenness.

Because this was a time of brokenness with Jacob. He was broken by God deeply to become who he was meant to be. Ask yourself this question.

When have I ever truly had a season of real brokenness where the Holy Spirit just smashed me and I was broken and I was just nothing before Him? In 1977, I went to hear Leonard Ravenhill preach. And one night, the Holy Spirit just exposed to me my carnality, my pride, my desire to be somebody. I was a theological student and I was pastoring a little Baptist church.

And all these bad motives and all this immaturity and this pride, it was like having cancer or leprosy and I saw it for the first time about me. And I was so grieved and I was so embarrassed before myself and before God. I was just shattered.

And God stripped it all away. And I didn't care. I didn't care about being anything starting that fall of 1977.

And it began to be refined and stripped away because I saw it for what it was. Fast forward, 1995, I was at a Baptist church in Fort Worth in some meetings. Linda and I had moved back to Texas from living up north.

And we had had deep discouragements. We had had heartbreaking experiences in the early 90's. And we tried to move on and the pain wouldn't let us move on.

And so we moved back to Texas and I was in these meetings. And all of a sudden, they had this room set aside just for prayer. People wanted to go pray.

And suddenly, I began to cry. And what I felt was sadness over my regrets, sadness over my mistakes, sadness over wasted time, and I was overwhelmed. I took off for that prayer room and I got alone and I just broke down sobbing.

And I couldn't even utter words. And all of that regret and all of that wastedness and the carnality was kind of just washing out of me. And I felt so sad over it that for whatever part in me was responsible for that, I couldn't even separate what God's sovereignty was in it and what was my blow in it, but the Lord just washed it out of me.

It was just a real brokenness. Sometimes, brothers, we just need to ask the Holy Spirit, Lord, let me be broken to the point I need to deal with pride and to deal with anything that hinders me from advancing. Do in me what you did in Jacob at whatever level you have to.

So, chapter 33, look quickly. Verse 17 says, and these words speak volumes, and Jacob journeyed. That's what you're doing.

That's what I'm doing. And Jacob journeyed. Verse 18, then Jacob came safely.

He was kept by God, kept by grace, preserved. We're kept by the power of God through faith. We're journeying.

We're kept by God. And then look at verse 20. Then he erected an altar.

What did those patriarchs do when they erected altars? They renewed their covenant with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Israel, and they worshipped God. They worshipped. He journeyed.

He was kept by God, and he worshipped. And that's what we're called to do. So, brothers, think of this.

The further Jacob went along, the better things got. As he journeyed, and as he did those things, and as he sought God, and as he was broken. We should never, never, never retreat or slow down or turn back.

We must always advance deeper, deeper, onward, upward. Never throw in the towel. Never stop doing what's right because always doing what's right biblically and spiritually.

We do it because of God Himself. And we do it because it's right. And we do it because there's no other answer but to do it.

We should never believe the lie that comes, you know, I'm so weary in this, I don't think there's any more benefit in doing this anymore. We keep doing what's right. Paul said this at the end of his life, I have fought, I have finished, I have kept.

What did he fight? I fought the good fight of faith. What did he finish? Scores. What did he keep? The faith.

Never, never stop. Jacob didn't. Demas did apparently.

Judas did. People you've known spiritually in the past, they have, some men start out good and then they become mediocre and then they become worse. Some men, like Jacob, are worse, they start out bad, bad, then they become mediocre, then they get better and better and better.

And at the end, they're at their best. They get their name in Hebrews 11. The end of life goal.

Jacob, by faith, when he was dying, he wasn't thinking about himself. His heart was toward the sons of Joseph. His heart was toward the saints of God.

His heart was heavenly minded. It was about kingdom things. He blessed, he blessed, he blessed, and he worshiped in his old age.

Martin Lloyd Jones said toward the end of life, you mainly ought to start preparing to die and concentrate on worship. Life, you get older, you've lived most of your life. I really feel like in my heart, I've got a small window of time.

I feel it. Some of you don't feel that and you can't work it up. But when you feel life is limited, you've lived most of your life and you have this... In junior high, I ran the mile relay.

I guess that's what it's called. And I ran the third leg. And it's a gut race.

Did you run that stuff? Well, I had to because they made me. So that's a gut race because you have to sprint. It's not like an 880.

Anyway, the point is, I didn't think I could make it. But I remember coming around about 330 yards, turning, and I saw the guy I had to hand off to. I said, there's the goal.

I can make it. And I kept running. And I'd always get there.

And so, brothers, you've got to see the end. Remember Joel Beeky's words? His coach said, look at me, just set your eyes on me. That's what we have to do.

Some of us, there's two of us in here who knew a guy named Nick McCormick. You knew Nick, didn't you? Tom and I knew Nick McCormick. Let me tell you about Nick McCormick.

Hittin' guy. Young married guy. Who would he be in here be like, kind of like? Kind of like Ian Leiter.

Young guy. Good wife. Three children.

Four children, young children. He's a timid guy. He didn't have much say.

He kept it quiet. But he was faithful in church. Always faithful.

He gets cancer suddenly. What kind of cancer was it? So, cancer treatment in Dallas. Nick in Dallas.

And what happened with Nick when he got sick, he spiritually came alive. He stopped being timid. And withdrawn.

He got serious about God. He got pumped about church. He said, Mac, I want to start going with you to the Leonard Reverend Prayer Meeting.

And we'd pick him up on Friday in Dallas at the cancer treatment. And Friday afternoon, we'd drive straight to Lindale. And he was so excited.

And I remember driving one afternoon. Beautiful sunny day. Dallas.

We were heading to Lindale. I think John Frank was driving the car. Nips in the front seat.

Bald-headed. Cancer was taking all his hair. I'm sitting behind him.

And it dawned on me, he's going to die soon. Going to leave Susan, those young children. And tears started running down my cheeks because I buried him.

I did his funeral. And I said, Lord, in that moment when I was thinking about him, looking at him, I said, I'm so glad he's finishing well with you. And he'd go to the prayer meeting.

Ravenhill had this profound effect on him. And Leonard never knew it. I don't think Nip had the courage to even introduce himself.

But you talk about a guy that just was spiritually alive. Do you remember much of it, Tom? He was just spiritually alive and joyful and sharing. So he says to Susan, let's take a cruise together.

Let's go take a trip. He knew what was coming. So they go to Florida.

They take a cruise. I get a call. Nip collapsed on the ship.

They air flighted him to Miami. And I flew down there, sat by his bed. He was unconscious.

The next morning, he dies. And I said, not a 147-year-old guy, a 28-year-old. I said, dying.

He blessed others. In dying, he worshipped. And I've missed him all these years.

Brothers, we've got a race to run. And how you run it affects your wife. Some of you guys, your wife is waiting on you to lead more and you're not doing it enough.

Some of you are leading well. Some of us, we need to evaluate. Take inventory.

And get before God and say, Lord, like You did with Jacob, deal with everything in my life and my soul. The things I'm blind to, what I see not, show me. Deal with everything.

Don't let any stone go unturned. It needs to be turned for me to become the man You want me to die as. Let's pray.

Lord, whatever You've said in this message, use it. Would You plow deep? Would You quarry us deep? Would You do the work that's necessary? Would You let the process be real and ongoing? And Lord, we do praise You that unlike Jacob, we have a group of saints to walk with in the midst of living a solitary life where You want to work deeply in each of us to bring us to the place of having decades of godliness until we die. Hear us and do this in us for Jesus' sake.

Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/KUGIYMz6i74.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/mack-tomlinson/lessons-from-jacobs-life/>

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