

Jacob - Gods Unchanging Grace - Genesis 25 - Sermon 5 of 5

by Roy Hession

Roy Hession's sermon emphasizes God's unchanging grace in Jacob's life and the transformative power of humility and repentance.

Duration: 53:02

Scripture: Genesis 32:28, Genesis 33:17, Genesis 35:5, Genesis 35:9, Genesis 35:14, 1 Chronicles 16:22, Galatians 2:20

Topics: "Grace"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being willing to be overcome and conquered by God in order to receive His grace. He refers to a hymn by George Matheson that speaks about surrendering our will to God in order to prevail and be set free. The preacher also highlights the significance of resigning our own desires and ambitions in order to fully submit to God's plan for our lives. He references the story of Jacob in the Bible, who had to go through various trials and challenges to be conformed to God's purpose. The sermon concludes with the assurance that God works all things together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.

Transcript

Will you turn with me to some further passages in this great story we're looking at together. We want to continue from precisely where we left off yesterday in our reading, Genesis 33. There's been that moving reconciliation between Jacob and Esau.

They're almost quarreling about that present. And sometimes when there's been a deep reconciliation between two people at the cross of Jesus, they can almost start quarreling again as to whose fault it is. It's my fault.

No, no, it's my fault. And that this present. No, no, I don't want it.

You know, you have it. Isn't it true to life? Praise the Lord for those times when we're suddenly become eager to take the blame, both of us. Well, let's read then from verse 12.

And Esau said, let us take our journey together, it means. Let us take our journey together and let us go, and I will go before thee. And he said unto him, my Lord, knoweth that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds with young are with me.

And if men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die. Let my Lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant, and I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that goeth before me, and the children be able to endure, until I come unto my Lord, unto Seir. And Esau said, let now, let me now leave with thee some of the folk that are with me.

And he said, what needeth it? Let me find grace in the sight of my Lord. So Esau returned that day on his way unto Seir. And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him an house, and made booths for his cattle.

Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth. And Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Paddan-Aram and pitched his tent before the city. And then over in chapter 35, verse 1, as a result of pitching his tent at Shechem, and it would seem not going immediately back to his original place of meeting with God in Bethel, he involved himself into a terrible situation.

His boys took vengeance on the city of Shechem, because one of their princes had raped their sister. And Jacob, as a result, found himself in a terrible situation, because as it says in verse 30, ye have troubled me to make me stink among the inhabitants of the land. And he felt his situation very insecure.

And then once again, God in his unchanging grace to this man, who finds himself so often in situations like that, appears again to him. And the Lord, chapter 35, verse 1, And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there, and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee, when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean.

They had brought some of them with them from Panaram, and change your garments. And let us arise, and go up to Bethel. The circuit's going to become complete.

I began there. God said he would bring me back, and here I am, by a devious way, a different man, but he's bringing me back. And let us arise, and go up to Bethel, and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.

And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods, which were in their hand, and all their earrings, which were in their ears. And Jacob hid them under the oak, which is by Shechem. And they journeyed.

And the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them. And they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob. So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan, that is Bethel, he and all the people that were with him.

And he built there an altar, and called the place El Bethel, which means the God of Bethel. That's where the great hymn comes from, O God of Bethel, by whose hand thy people still are led, based on this verse. And he built there an altar, and called the place El Bethel, because God there appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother, verse 9. And God appeared unto Jacob again, the fifth appearance of God to Jacob, this is, when he came out of Paddan Aram, and blessed him.

And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob. Thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall thy name be. And he called his name Israel.

And God said unto him, I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins.

And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land. And God went up from him in the place where he talked with him. And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone.

And he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon. And Jacob called the name of the place where God spoke with him, Bethel. I just want to underline that key verse that formed the crux of our theme yesterday, as I thought back on what we were thinking about together yesterday.

I must say I've longed to, and wished that we could have dwelt longer on all sorts of aspects of that tremendous meeting with God that Jacob had. But just let me underline for you verse 28. Thy name shall not be called Jacob at Israel, for, revised version, thou hast striven with God and with men and hast prevailed.

This, I think, is the deep inner message of the whole of Jacob's life. He who had been striving with God and with men for years, and never getting anywhere, only landing himself in troubles, at last finds the right way to strive with God, and with men, and to prevail, and to be successful in his strivings. How different it is.

The first element we saw, wasn't it, is he had to be willing to be overcome. He had to be willing to be conquered. Only so was he in a place where he qualified for that grace that was available to sinners who admit themselves to be such.

Make me a captive, Lord. And then, I'll only then will I be free. Force me to render up my sword, and I shall conquer thee.

What a hymn that is. What an absolute commentary is George Matheson's hymn on this great incident. My will is not my own, till thou hast made it thine.

If it would reach the monarch's throne, then it must its crown resign. Thank God for that dear man of Calvary who wrestles with us, over this point and that point, until we bend and break at his feet, and are willing to resign our crown. And I tell you, the resigning of your crown isn't merely giving up of this and that.

The deepest thing you and I can give up is our righteousness. We'll fight tooth and nail to be right. God says, admit you're wrong.

Admit you're wrong. There goes the crown. Job fought tooth and nail to tell his friends he was right.

They were wrong in what they said about him. And that's what God dealt with him on. Not about the fancied sins which he hadn't committed, but on this innate tendency to justify himself.

And at last God appeared to him in such a way that he's melted and broken. He says, I've heard of thee by the hearing of the ears. Now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself.

And in the authorized version, myself is in italics, which means it's not there in the Hebrew. The translators have to provide a word to make sense. Have they got the right word? I abhor myself.

I think it's the revised version, that gives us a real flash of light. I abhor my words. What have I been saying? My words, my words.

He didn't repent of sins he hadn't committed, but he did repent of that fierce attitude of self-justification, refusing to be accused of what he hadn't done. He said, should I be willing for that? Jesus was. And my dear friends, if they may have made a mistake on one particular point in accusing you of something which you happen to be innocent of, you only happen to be innocent of it.

There are a whole lot of other things that they don't know about they could well accuse us of. It ill befits any of us sinners to justify ourselves, but we all do it. And there wrestles a man with us, and asks us to resign our crown.

Oh God, you're right, and I am wrong. And then we find, instead of that striving that never got it anywhere, we substitute this faith in that grace that's available to a person like me, which I now see to be in Jesus for me. Oh, that's the right striving.

And you find an argument to be blessed out of your very failures, out of everything you're confessing. You suddenly see the whole of redemption is custom made for a man who's done just what he's done, and he's a sinner's friend. The battle was not so much about what I'd done, but my unwillingness to confess it.

Once that's done, I'm a candidate for Jesus, through grace, for the blood, for his risen life, for him answering my prayers. This is to true striving. And I want to say this, you can let God go at that point, and miss the blessing.

So can I. On the road to Emmaus, Jesus made as if he would have gone further. He wanted to be persuaded. To that Salafination woman, he said, let me alone.

He didn't really want to be left alone, he wanted to encourage this faith, to get her to find some argument, and she got the right one. And he said, oh woman, great is thy faith, be it unto me, even as thou wouldst, you've overcome me. When you start talking to me like that, I'm just helpless, he said, I'm in your hands.

Well, may the Lord teach us and lead us how to strive in this way, how to help ourselves to argument, based on our very unworthiness, the very opposite. We all feel we must be spiritually tidy and acceptable to be blessed. And what a struggle it is to be acceptable.

But oh, when I'm broken to admit how wrong I am, then I see that very need I'm now confessing, is my only title, to be blessed. Thou callest burdened souls, thou callest sinful souls, thou callest hopeless souls to thee, and such are we, Lord am I. That's the way to get through with God again and again. And this is the way to prevail with man.

Oh, how some of us want to prevail with men. We're charged with leadership. Many a minister has to complain that people won't follow his lead.

His deacons won't. But up against him, he's up against them. How do I prevail with men? It is the way.

I don't like it. I hate to have to come down and say I was wrong, to the very people that I was telling, trying to tell which way to go. It's the way.

My dear friend, they'll love you. They'll say, I'll follow that man. I don't know what to do with a man like that.

I know of a certain brother, he wouldn't mind me mentioning this a little bit, I know of his past, of how his deacons wanted him to resign. They were in for, he's in for a difficult time. But he went to a conference, and Jesus met him and wrestled with him.

And when he went to that deacons meeting, he said, now gentlemen, before we start, I want to tell you something. And he gave them his testimony, and asked their forgiveness for various things. They said, you didn't know what we had in store.

They pulled out of the drawer a resolution asking for his resignation. You see, people are just ready to to hit us on the head. But at that moment, we're bowing at Calvary, and the blow doesn't hit us.

If it should hit you, okay Lord, that's just what I deserve. I've been telling you I'm wrong. So let's not think this is a gimmick for avoiding the blow.

You could have that other person wipe their feet on you, about time you said you were sorry. Don't resent that, or you will probably repent of that again, that as well. Because Lord, I said I was all wrong, and if they say yes you are, it's only really reiterating what I myself have been saying.

And by the way, don't resent if you've given a testimony, sort of rub it in. They have done that with me. Well, I should blame me, I'm giving a little humble testimony.

Apparently, they didn't quite see that I had got down that seventh time, perhaps. Accept it, that's the way. This is the way to prevail with men.

You know, we are called some of us to be leaders. We ought to lead the way to the cross. Being the first and the quickest to repent, we often are.

We want everybody else to. We are right. And we think that we would undermine our leadership, our position.

A parent sometimes feels, I can't get right with my children, admit I was wrong when I blew off the handle. I'll lose my authority. Failure to do that is the way not to prevail with our families, with our children.

This is the way. Well, I'm as much in need of this word as any here in this tent. And as a result of this being, which you like, being broken, you may understand the meaning now of the word, now I presume.

He had his name changed. No more Jacob, the striver, and who because he was striving, was crafty, mean, and bargain-loving, but Israel. And that means he who strives with God, the man who knows how to get through with God, the man who knows how to get through with man.

This word can also be translated, a prince of God. And I believe this change of name is wonderfully filled out by, of course, the famous verse, Galatians chapter 2, verse 20. No more Jacob, but Israel.

Galatians 2, 20, I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. No longer I, no longer Jacob, but Israel, the man who's learning to let Jesus live in him.

And it says, you can count yourself as crucified. When I've come again to the cross, God says, right, I'm reckoning that old Jacob as ended at the cross. Not mended, the old man, his circumstances will be mended, but the man himself is to be seen as ended.

And you're not to expect any good from yourself. And if something of the opposite comes from yourself after it, you say, well, of course, I would expect that, that's characteristic of me, and that's the me that's being judged at the cross. And God gives me permission no longer to mourn over that man, or try to make him better, but to accept him as an ended man, and judge him as that, that Christ might live in me.

So, I would suggest that that verse in Genesis 32, no more Jacob, but Israel, is the Old Testament counterpart of Galatians 2, 20. Now, the interesting thing is this. Having given him this new name, God later gave it him again, which we read this morning, Genesis chapter 35, 14, when at last, Genesis 35 verse 9, when at last he'd come back to Bethel, having had this experience at Jabalch, he built his altar there, and God appeared to him again, and said, thy name is Jacob, no more Jacob, but Israel shall thy name be.

Why did God give him that name a second time? Why did he reiterate it? For the simple reason he needed to have it reiterated to him. Because, so like us, in spite of this deep, face-to-face meeting with God, and all that meant to him, he didn't immediately enter in fully into his new name. Jacob, in spite of what God said, no more Jacob, but Israel, didn't cease to operate as Jacob.

And we still see traces of the old Jacob. He's had this great experience, but he's yet to enter in fully into it. It'll take him a little time.

God's yet many things to do with him and for him. This has been the big entrance into something new. But oh, he's got to learn how to enter in.

And he was acting around about that time, other than as Israel, still in some matters which we shall see like Jacob. And God had to say, Jacob, I've told you, and I have to tell you again, your name is no more Jacob. Haven't you learnt this lesson? You're to be Israel, the man who knows how to prevail with me, and with man.

And so it is with us, we often think, I did, I have time, but I've had a very deep meeting with God. Well, I said, now I've got it. I believe at the time when I wrote Calvary Road, I thought I'd seen the whole thing.

I fully entered in. I tell you, I have to learn those very lessons that are in that book again and again. Indeed, I remember when I was battling and I was unbroken over something with regard to my brother William Negenda and Joe Church.

I remember them coming into my bedroom in the middle of this conference and William had a copy of Calvary Road and he turned to a certain page and said, Roy, did you write that? And although we may see things in a new way here at Clevedon, although maybe you've given in to this man who's been wrestling with you and you've come by faith in grace to the fullness of the blessing as you feel, you may not always be living in that experience. And you may, and you and I may not be entering into this new name all the time as we should. And God has to come again and again and reiterate those lessons we first learned.

And in his mercy, give us that new name, that is your name. Go back to what you've learned and go that way. It's interesting to see the Jacob nature still persisting in this man.

That nature which can't trust God but must have a plan of its own. Sometimes an unworthy plan. You see that immediately after his reconciliation with Esau.

Wonderful reconciliation and generous-hearted Esau said, now let us take our journey together. Well, it's a bit awkward, he said, you know, with the children and the flocks. Oh, he's excusing it.

He doesn't relish too much close association with this brother. I believe God intended these brothers to be real close. And sometimes with me I put a thing right but I don't realize that God was really deeply one with it.

But put it right and I won't have too much too close. I might get some more battles. Glad to put it right and then please, not too much.

Isn't that true to experience? And so he found some excuse for not going with Esau. Not really trusting that God was in this thing. Theory.

And giving excuses. And then when Esau in his generosity, well, let me leave some of my men with you. No, no, I'd rather not have them, thanks very much.

He didn't want to be beholden to Esau. There was a bit of part, he was only partial, perhaps. Do you think so? In his relationship with Esau.

Oh, he'd come down, he'd bowed seven times, but it doesn't mean a matter of putting a thing right and that's it. You go your separate ways. So often God's intention is there should be a fellowship, a oneness between you and that person.

Far greater than it ever was before sin came and spawned it. But sometimes we are a bit scared and we don't want too much. Well, there's a little bit of the old Jacob nature.

And then in 33, yes, the same chapter, 33, 17, it's quite evident that God intended him to come out of the land of Paten Aram and return to that place of his first meeting with Bethel. But because of this thing, he didn't want to go as far as that, at least not then, that would have meant going with Esau. And he stopped and pitched his his tent at Shechem.

And because of that stopping short, that theory, that not letting God have everything, resorting to some little plan of his own, he involved himself in a terrible thing about which to which I've already referred. How his daughter was raped and how their her brothers took terrible vengeance on that city and made Jacob stink in the nostrils of all the nations around. And anything could have happened.

They could almost have been exterminated. Yes, there's still something of the Jacob nature. And he's still involving himself in his troubles in measure.

But the grace of God is still unchanging toward him. I'm amazed when I read that, first of all, that God says, Jacob, you go back to Bethel. You're in a jam.

Go back to Bethel. Once again, there was no great censure of what had happened. This patience and grace of God.

And then what do you think? When he began to go back to Bethel, where he should have gone immediately, the terror of God was upon the cities, verse 5. Chapter 35, verse 5. And they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob. And there you have again this God putting the mantle of his protection over this still erring child of his. The mantle of his protection, of his forgiveness, and not letting them.

Touch not mine anointed, God was saying, and do my prophets no harm. I know they're not right. They're not for you to talk about.

That's a domestic matter. Until it's my time to go deeper yet with this man, he's my man. I think that's helpful.

I believe I discovered myself a tendency to make heavy weather sometimes of being right. Lord, only yesterday morning I spent more time than I should in my personal time of study and devotion, trying to bring out to the light something I was aware in my heart. And the Lord said, look, you're striving even about that.

You ought to be getting on with the subject you've got to prepare. You see, you can strive even about trying to find something you want to put right. Listen, just the Lord, I know there's something a bit wrong here.

I don't quite see the ins and outs of it, but I'm not going to strive. You see, the reason of our striving is unless I get everything right, I won't have God with me. We're making a work of getting everything right.

Lord, you've got a funny person on your hand, but I'm your man, and I'm going to counter the fact that I can't see everything that goes wrong in my heart always. I'm going out with the mantle of your forgiveness and protection. Now, that does not have the effect of making us loose in our relationship with God.

Seeing God to be that sort of God makes you the more open. Say, Lord, you have to show me some time. Maybe it's not your time just now.

And because you see him to be that sort of God for you, we're all the more open to what he has to say. We can afford to be open with such a God. And so we see in spite of that fact, God's still putting the mantle of his protection.

What a comfort for us. So easy coming out of law to grace somehow to get into another sort of law. But somehow in this way, seeing God to be this sort of God, you're more open to what he has to say.

You can afford to let him speak. This is the one who loves me, and isn't taking a stick to me, and who's not going to allow my frailties to thwart that very purpose that he's made for me, for the simple reason when he made it, he made it in view of the fact that I was that sort of person. Please turn the cassette over now.

Do not fast wind it in either direction. And who's not going to allow my frailties to thwart that very purpose that he's made for me, for the simple reason when he made it, he made it in view of the fact that I was that sort of person. And that conception really opens me up to him as nothing else does.

But God is still greeting with him. The God who dealt with him at Jabbok and gave him that new name is still intent that this man shall enter in fully to the meaning of that new name. And how does he continue thus to deal with him? Through troubles, through sadness, through many tears.

But it's all to this one purpose. He wants Jacob ready to be Israel. And of course you know the troubles.

Did ever man shed more tears and have bigger troubles to face than Jacob as he got on in years? When his own precious Joseph appeared to be killed, and when his other sons deceived him as he before had deceived his own father, in chapter 37, 35, and 34. And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his sons many days. And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him.

But he refused to be comforted. He said, for I will go down unto the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him many days.

Maybe he never smiled again. Not until God showed him how it was going to turn out. So much so, when things went from bad to worse, when sending his children down to Egypt, he has to, they have to leave

Simeon behind.

And then he's told, and we can't get any more caught until we bring Benjamin. Poor Joseph is at the bottom of things. Poor Jacob is at the bottom of things.

Chapter 42, verse 36. And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children. Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take away Benjamin.

Have you got it there? 42, 36. Listen to this word. All these things are against me.

And they certainly appeared. If it isn't one thing, it's another. First of all, Joseph.

And now Simeon. And I know what's going to happen to Benjamin. The same is going to happen.

All these things are against me. And you know, God and his love for us is going to permit us to go through real tests, real trials, real losses, real calamities. And you may come to the place where you say with Jacob, all these things are against me.

They appear so. They appeared absolutely so to Jacob. And it may seem to be us.

An unmitigated loss, an unmitigated calamity, unmitigated, so wanton, so needy. We've all had that. All these things are against me.

Who hasn't felt that sometimes? But they weren't against him. They weren't against him. They were working together for a greater good than he could see.

Joseph was still alive. Simeon was soon going to come out of prison. Benjamin was going to be loved and honoured by Joseph.

And they were going to be brought into a place of wealth that they never would have had in famine-stricken Canyon at that time. But he didn't see it. And we don't, at first.

But that great word stands true for us. Put it opposite to what Jacob said. Romans 8.28. Romans 8.28. And we know that all things work together for good.

How many things? All things work together for good to them who love God, or go further back than that, to them who are the called according to his purpose, who were loved in their sins, loved in Christ before they ever loved Christ. And because gracious purposes of infinite grace were made for them, were in due time called, and God wills only good for those that he has given to the Lord Jesus Christ to be his own. For whom he did forenone, he did predestinate, to be to conform to the image of his Son.

And these things that Jacob went through were merely to conform him to the pattern God had, and so for us. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called, them he justified, and they're almost in glory right away. And whom he justified, them he also glorified.

The simple fact is this. A divine love is behind this universe. And that for everybody.

A love that is active in turning apparent evil into good. And his intention is to do that for everybody if they'd let him. Sometimes people say, why doesn't God stop suffering? Why doesn't God stop terrible calamities? I might have thought, why didn't God stop that accident on the portway two years ago? The answer is this.

He doesn't need to. He doesn't need to. I don't think we need to talk about God sending these things.

In effect, in a sense, it seems from one point of view, he lets them happen because he knows he can afford to. Because all the time this divine love is turning apparent evil and calamity into good. That's what he wants to do for everybody.

And it's amazing how he does it even for widows who don't even know him. I'm amazed when I see this kindly providence that cares for the widow, even if she's not a believer. But if a man is rebellious, a woman's rebellious at what happened, and angry, and doesn't see there's a God of love behind the door, then she or he thwarts it.

But this is God's purpose. And how much more for those whom he's foreknown and predestinated to be conformed to the image of his son. He doesn't need to stop these things.

He can turn everything to infinite good. I believe we've got to see this divine love as the ultimate. Through the love of God our Saviour, listen, all will be well.

How much? All. Free and changeless is his favour. All will be well.

Judge ye fearful saints. Fresh courage take. The crowds you so much dread are big with mercy and will break in blessings on your head.

This is characteristic of our God. The God who loved the world, that's to give his son for it. Surely he's not going to be niggling with everything else.

Of course he isn't. And that lovely hymn of William Cowper, and he knew what he was saying. Again and again he lost his reason.

To recover it, only to lose it again. Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust him for his grace behind a frowning providence. He hides a smiling face.

The ultimate is the smiling face. His anger, it says, for a moment. His favour for a lifetime.

This is Jacob's God. Our God. And when it turned out, he couldn't believe it.

He couldn't believe it. Jacob, yet alive, governor of all Egypt. And we read Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not.

Dear one, as God begins to work out through those things which we think are against us, his plan, you'll hardly be able to believe it. This is characteristic of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. I never thought, oh, if I know how to bring to Jesus my Jacob attitude, all things are against me.

My doubting, if I see that I'm listening to gloomy thoughts about the future. Gloomy thoughts come from Satan. Optimistic thoughts, confident thoughts, are from God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But, oh, how we do. You may think that I am thinking mostly in this about losing revel. But, oh, I had bigger tests after that.

When God brought Pam and me together, and how Satan threatened us, we wept in the valley. Because we thought there would be something desperately wrong with her. We'd never get married.

Might have had some terrible operation, extraordinary symptoms. And, oh, we were believing the Word. And, oh, this wonderful hymn helped us.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust him for his grace behind a frowning providence. He hides a smiling face. I said, Pam, I don't know what it is medically, but I tell you this, I'm certain of this.

There's a smell of sulfur about this thing. Satan. Sulfur.

I said, he's trying to malign the love of God. He's giving us a cup to drink. Only, just as he gets on it, to dash it away.

That's not the God I know. And we struggled back to faith that behind that frowning providence there was a smiling face. And so it proved to be.

It was sulfur. I really don't know what's happened. It's not there now.

Oh, the good thing he's doing. He was doing for Jacob and for each one of us. And as it begins to mature, you say, I can hardly believe it.

Of course, the final good thing that he's doing for us through our veil of tears is to land us in glory. And, my dear friends, when you get there, through the path of suffering you may have had to travel there, you won't be able to believe it. Your heart will faint.

You'll be overwhelmed. That's what Paul meant when he said, I deem that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. And I like that word glory.

It's a good word. It comprises something. I'm going to glory.

And you're not going to hardly be able to believe it. And me too. And we're going to say all the way, my Savior led me.

What have I to ask behind? And all the time there was a smiling face behind that frowning providence. But the good thing that God was working out for Jacob was not merely that he would go down and live in the favored part of Egypt in Goshen and all the rest. The bigger thing was what he was doing in Jacob himself.

He was showing Jacob in the event how it turned out, how faithful God was, how unchanging was his grace, and how little need there was to doubt and fear and think up a plan. Actually Jacob couldn't think up a plan. He would have thought of one had he been able to, but he just couldn't.

All he went down was to enter into depression. And he learned when God makes a promise and speaks good, you don't need to plan and scheme and strive to help God out. And don't you see what he was doing? He was bringing this man into his Israel name.

And I believe we need these experiences. That the name that was given us at Clevedon, that new name, when you broke, when you saw Jesus, when you saw the fountain, when you saw grace flowing like a river, and you were blessed, and you got right with somebody else, and you were given a new name. We need these things in order that we might enter in to that new name.

And God used it. And Jacob came out of that experience a rested man. He knew God.

And all you can see now, traces of the Israel nature coming up. It's very interesting that after Jabbok, he's not immediately called Israel in the narrative, only occasionally. Jacob this, Jacob that, sometimes Israel, but often Jacob.

But from now onwards, the name by which Jacob is known is far more often Israel. Israel did this, Israel said the other. Oh, it's Israel speaking, it's Israel acting.

And he never would have entered in. But for those long, difficult years, when he was tested, and he found God to be true, all he knows is God now. No need to strive, no need to scheme, no need to make a bargain.

Just look, as we close, at some of the traces of the Israel nature coming through. Look at chapter 46 verse 1. Oh, he's a new man. He knows God to be true.

And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac. And God spake unto Israel, Israel notice, in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, here am I. And he said, I am the God, I am God, the God of thy father.

Fear not to go down into Egypt, for I will there make of thee a great nation. And I will go down with thee into Egypt, and I also will surely bring thee up again, and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes. Why did he need a vision to say, don't go down to Egypt? Why, this was the normal course of action that would have appealed to the old Jacob.

Ah, this is it, obvious. Famine here, plenty there, and my son is governor. Come on boys, off we go.

I couldn't have thought this one up if I tried. No, he said, no, I'm a bit worried about going down to Egypt. I know it all looks very favorable, but I seem to remember that my father Abraham made one of the biggest mistakes of his life, when he left the promised land, the Canaan.

He's not going to go under the old fleshly impulses that used to govern him. And he needed God to say, all right Jacob, I'm going with you. You needn't worry, there's no mistake in this.

That's a real new thing for some of us. When the main chance comes, we used to take it. But we may remember that others have made shipwreck along certain lines, and we wait for God, and we need him to show us.

That's wonderful, isn't it? When the coveted thing you want so much, you're learning not to grab even at that. When it seems to have come from heaven, without God saying, that's all right, it'll be safe. Something of the Jacob nature coming through.

Chapter 47, verse 10. The moving scene when Joseph brings his aged father, 130 years old, into Pharaoh's presence. And verse 8, and Pharaoh says unto Jacob, how old art thou? And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, the days of the years of my pilgrimage are 130 years.

Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage. Yes, granted, not very cheerful. But he knows what he's been through, more than Abraham had.

And as yet, he's not as old as Abraham was. But there's an atmosphere of royalty about this aged man. There are two kings in that room.

Pharaoh, the earthly king. Israel, God's king. And we read, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh.

And as it says in Hebrews, without contradiction, the less is blessed of the greater. And even Pharaoh recognized the moral and spiritual superiority of this man, and was only too happy to have him blessed. I believe there's a little trace of this royalty that's coming upon Jacob.

He's learned, he doesn't need to strive, he knows how to prevail with God, and let God keep his promises. And then perhaps clearest of all, is in chapter 48, verse 21. And here we have Israel again, and Israel said, he's in his bedroom, these are some of his last words.

And Israel said unto Joseph, behold I die, but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your father. The old Jacob would have said, now look here Joseph, I want you to think this out. What can we do? It's all right to be here, when you've made plenty of money, and got all the good you can out of the land of Goshen.

I want you to be sure you go back, and it was a bit difficult, well I've got this, that, and the other suggestion for you. Not now, because God's going to do it. Days of my struggling, and planning, and scheming, I know him.

He's broken me, but he's had to teach me these things more deeply. God's going to do it. Impossible as it may seem, God's going to bring you forth, and don't you bury me here in Egypt.

I want to be buried with my fathers, because by faith I see myself surrounded with millions of my sons in coming centuries. Oh, what a new confidence. This is it.

You're letting God do it now. The Israel nature is coming through. And then, in that same chapter, and the following chapter, you see something new about this man.

We read in chapter two, verse two of chapter 48, the last sentence, and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon his bed. And he begins to speak with such an authority, such an assurance, about the destiny of his children, the two sons of Joseph. And in the next chapter, he has understandings of a future role of all his family.

He's not thinking it up. He's Israel. He knows.

He understands. He can give a word to others. He can give counsel to others that need it.

Oh, I tell you, he became, he entered in, did he not, in a very real way, ultimately, to his name Israel. Well, I hope we don't have to wait entirely to our deathbed to enter in. It's a wonderful thing to see a man growing in grace as he gets older.

It doesn't always happen. It doesn't always happen. In fact, without the Lord Jesus Christ, without his deep workings in our hearts, without a vision, this sort of vision of Jesus, and of grace, and our need to be broken at his dear feet at the cross, and enter into this fullness, your old age and mine won't be a sweet one.

You know our other old people. This man, he grew more and more, not in goodness, but in the knowledge of grace, in the knowledge of his God. But I do hope I don't have to wait too long.

My goodness, I've had to have that name reiterated to me again and again. I've had to see traces, more than traces sometimes, of the old Jacob way of doing things. I've had to humble myself again.

I'm sure you have. But he's not going to leave me until he's completed the work of his grace in my heart and in yours. That is perfect.

And no matter what things he may have to use, behind that frowning providence, a smiling face, love is the ultimate, and love is going to win. If somebody's going through it, don't believe those gloomy thoughts, those dark thoughts of God, those fears. You may not have a concrete answer for them, but you say, I know they're not from him.

I know they're not. This maligning the character of my God is not the Spirit's work, but Satan's work. And sure enough, you'll find it true.

What a beautiful thing he's working out. I just praise the Lord for what he's given me. In a sense, it seems almost more than he took, not only in the person, but in all that's come.

And it's going to be so for every one of us. But best of all, he's concerned about us, about our holiness. He takes infinite pains.

Nothing is too much trouble to deal with Jacob in you. And it isn't only by new breakings. Oh no, it's by mighty encouragements.

God's a great encourager of faith. And I've always said, Lord, you'll have to encourage my faith. I haven't got any.

And he knows how to just do this little thing and that thing. He says, my, it's true. This is the God I adore.

He knows how to encourage, accomplish, build us up. We need it. And even though we're slow to learn, he's always putting the mantle of his protection over us.

Marvellously helping us with regard to our own mistakes. Meantime, he leaves himself free to go on blessing us. Until in some small measure, we are entering into that name, Israel.

Not the old striver, not the old shifty one, not the one who wasn't prepared to face the truth. Always trying to avoid it, the one who knows how good it is to face the truth at the cross, where Jesus is. And we find ourselves moving in to what he had planned for us.

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, we do want to thank thee for being so faithful with us, for being that man who wrestles with us. Thank you, Lord, for showing us a little bit of the way to prevail with thee and with others.

Thank you, Lord, that you're not going to leave us until you've achieved that destiny, conforming us in some measure to the image of thy son. Now, Lord, the fact of this grace leaves us, in a sense, more open to thee than anything else. Lord, we can afford to be open.

We can afford to let down our barriers with such a wonderful God, such a wonderful Saviour as thou art, Lord Jesus. Please interpret all these things to each one of us individually in our varying circumstances. We ask this in thy dear name.

Amen.

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