

The Peaceable Fruit

by Watchman Nee

Watchman Nee's sermon explores Jacob's transformation from a scheming individual to a spiritually mature patriarch, highlighting the role of God's discipline and the importance of fellowship in the process.

Scripture: Genesis 32:28, Genesis 35:10, Genesis 37:33, Genesis 43:11

Topics: "Transformation", "Fellowship in Christ"

Description

Watchman Nee explores the transformative journey of Jacob, illustrating how God's discipline reshaped him from a self-serving schemer into a loving and mature individual. Through encounters at Peniel and Bethel, Jacob learns the importance of weakness, fellowship, and reliance on God, ultimately leading to a fruitful life characterized by grace and humility. As Jacob faces numerous trials, he becomes a more compassionate father, demonstrating growth in character and spiritual insight. By the end of his life, Jacob, now Israel, embodies the fruit of the Spirit and serves as a testament to God's redemptive work in flawed humanity. Nee emphasizes that if God can transform Jacob, He can also work in our lives for His purpose.

Transcript

It is now time to glance over the latter part of Jacob's history and see the evidences of the fruitfulness in him of all this inward discipline by the Spirit of God. Already when Jacob met Esau he was different. We find him uncertain, hesitant, not quite knowing what to do, though clearly he still has in him a good deal of his old nature. Genesis 33. 4 tells us that he wept. Jacob did not weep easily. People with plenty of plans do not; but Peniel had already weakened him.

At Peniel Jacob's name was changed, and as we have just seen, the same thing was repeated at Bethel. Between the two there was a period of weakness and confusion, and this often happens after God has once touched us. We have to learn to walk gently and very carefully with God, and the lesson is not easy. Peniel therefore represents weakness, whereas Bethel stands for cleanness and purity with no mixture at all. Moving from Peniel to Bethel we pass through a strange town, Shechem. We are weakened, and we do not know quite where we are, nor whether if we move again we shall go wrong once more. But praise God, His work has begun, and the foundation has been laid. There is no way now of not being a cripple!

We shall always be learning, but at some point we shall each learn that fundamental lesson, after which nothing can be the same again. From that point there begins a knowledge of God beyond anything we have ever dreamed. With it we enter upon a new experience of the life of the Body, drawing us together

with all His own. This is a setting in which the fruit of the Holy Spirit's inward working readily manifests itself. Thus from Bethel we are told that 'Jacob came unto Isaac his father to Mamre, to Kiriath-arba (the same is Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac sojourned' (35. 27). Hebron represents fellowship, mutuality, the place where nothing can be done individually and in isolation. Until the flesh has been dealt with we do not value fellowship. We find it easy and natural to go it alone. But now we find the significance of being 'together'.

Fellowship means among other things that we are ready to receive of Christ from others. Other believers minister Christ to me, and I am ready to receive. This may be an important lesson, for some are born teachers who are always preaching to others and have no use at all for receiving from anyone else. If I am like that, I surely need to meet my Peniel. Then only can I come to Bethel and Hebron. But when we have come there, we know in our hearts that we cannot live without others, that alone by ourselves we have no place, no ground to stand upon. The Body is a divine fact. Just as no member of our body can live without all the rest, just as the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee, or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you, so is the body of Christ a sphere of interdependence. How significant, then, when Jacob at length reached Hebron and was restored to the fellowship of his home!

This is not to say that Jacob no longer needed God's discipline after Peniel. He did, and he got it. At Shechem he was put in fear of his life (34. 30). At Bethel Rebekah's nurse Deborah died (35. 8). On the way to Bethlehem his beloved Rachel herself was taken from him (35. 19). At Eder Jacob had more trouble with his sons, this time with Reuben (35. 22). He reached Hebron to find his mother already dead, and here at length Isaac himself ended his days (35. 29). God was disciplining Jacob, working in him a new character, changing him into a different person.

From Genesis 37 onwards is Jacob's brightest period. During these remaining thirty years he is full of grace. We need not consider his last days as days of decline; they were certainly not that, and compare quite favourably with those of Peter and Paul and John. In the Old Testament it is Solomon whose last days are days of declension, but these should not be taken as the experience of others. David's end was better even than his beginning, for he was planning and preparing for the building of the Temple. In the same way, Jacob in his last days became gracious and lovable. Comparing his end with that of Abraham and Isaac we cannot fail to see that his is the best. They faded away, as it were, whereas Jacob bore fruit. God revealed Himself in this unpromising man.

From Genesis 37, that is from the time Joseph was seventeen, Jacob retired into the background. Before that he had always been on the go, always active, as though he had an internal combustion engine driving him! He always had some project on hand, and always seemed to have reserves of strength to carry it out. From the day of his birth you could not stop him doing and talking, you could not arrest his perpetual busy-ness.

But when he reached Hebron, he retired. Sometimes he came forward to speak or to act, but it was just sometimes. He had nothing any longer driving him to this incessant doing. Seeing what Jacob-was-for remember, he was himself quite unable to let off the pressure-this was a most remarkable thing. But Jacob no", is a very lovely character. He is quietly, blessedly fruitful.

Isaac is a type of Christ; but Jacob is a type of the natural man. So Jacob must stop his incessant driving. The Isaac side, the spiritual strength, must go on, but the natural strength must come to a halt. Now Jacob is in the background; there is no other place suitable for him. The movement of the flesh has to cease

when God has dealt with it.

Jacob, the cheat, the schemer, lived for himself and cared nothing about others. There was no love expressed in him. But from the time Deborah died, he experienced all sorts of family sorrows and troubles. All those he had loved died. At Hebron he was left with nothing. Even his own eldest son had wronged him. Joseph was the only one left.

But Jacob had begun to be loving. He had ripened and mellowed. He was anxious about his sons, afraid of trouble for them, concerned for their welfare. He wanted to know how they fared, and so he sent Joseph to inquire.

Then Joseph also disappeared, and Jacob had every reason to think he was dead. 'It is my son's coat,' he said, 'an evil beast hath devoured him: Joseph is without doubt torn in pieces' (37. 33). Gradually everything he had loved had gone from him, and now this last link with Rachel was broken. 'And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down to the grave to my son mourning. And his father wept for him.' No other verse in Jacob's history is so poignant as this one.

Thirteen years passed by. Joseph had already reached the place of power in Egypt. Again Jacob met with trouble. This time it was famine, and all his 'wealth was in cattle! So now his material wealth drained away.

There was just one loved possession left, 'the youngest' (42. 13) who had grown up to take the place of Joseph and who remained with his father. Only little Benjamin was left to Jacob. He 'was more precious than all the others, but even he was not like Joseph who seas lost. When it came to the second time that his sons must go to Egypt to buy food, Simeon was already held in prison there as a hostage, and they could not go again without taking Benjamin with them. Can we not read the pathos in Jacob's words: 'Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me'? (42. 36). Here was a man 'who had lived under the discipline of God's hand, changed now, into a gentle, deeply feeling parent.

But the time came when Benjamin, his last treasure, had to go. And it is here, in Genesis 43, that Jacob comes into his name of Israel. 'And their father Israel said unto them, If it be so now, do this; take the choice fruits of the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spicery and myrrh, nuts and almonds: and take double money in your hand; and the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks carry again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight: take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man' (43. 11-13). Here was a man, weak and uncertain in himself, who could listen to the counsel of his sons. In these proposals he displays, surely, not the stratagems of the past, but the courtesy and kindness of maturity and experience. 'And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release unto you your other brother and Benjamin.' Now, for the first time, Jacob speaks like this, using the name he learned at Bethel. How different he is! How God has stripped him of his confidence. 'If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved,' he cries, but yet he hopes that God will have mercy. Knowing ourselves, and looking at Jacob with that inward knowledge, we realize what God has done. Jacob has not yet reached his highest peak, the seventeen years in Egypt. Here there is still discipline, but there is evident fruitfulness.

His sons returned at length with news of Joseph. 'Joseph is alive, and he is ruler over all the land of Egypt' (45. 26). Again he is Israel. Had it been twenty years earlier, Jacob would have cursed his sons for deceiving him all this time. But not now, now he is mature; now his meekness shines forth. 'And Israel

said, 'It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.' He had learned deep lessons.

But though his father-heart longed to go to Joseph, yet he feared (46. 1). Abraham had gone into Egypt and had sinned. Isaac had been on his way thither and had been forbidden to go. Could he, even for Joseph's sake, go down into Egypt now? His natural love for his son must not be allowed to interfere with God's purpose.

So he stopped half-way-and here for the first time Jacob really shines. He came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. He laid his all on the altar. 'To go, or not to go? The decision is Thine, for I am Thine.' This was his attitude to God.

And God answered him. '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: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes' (46. 34). That 'fear not' shows us Jacob's fear; thank God for it! It shows us too the reality of God's work upon him; for in this hesitation he proves that he had gone further than either Abraham or Isaac. God did not have to stop him at Beersheba. Jacob himself stopped, and took his stand upon the basis of the altar. In these verses we see a different man entirely. Spiritual principles are ruling him now; he cannot just please himself.

So they came at last to Egypt. 'And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How many are the days of the years of thy life? And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage: And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from the presence of Pharaoh' (Genesis 4-7. 7-10).

What a picture this is! Where can we find a better? Who is this Jacob after all? Even Joseph was less than Pharaoh in the kingdom, and Jacob himself was in fact no more than a refugee! He was dependent upon Pharaoh for his very survival.

Pharaoh was his benefactor. Years ago Jacob had called Esau 'lord'. But now? Now he blessed Pharaoh. 'Without any dispute the less is blessed of the greater' (Hebrews 7. 7), and Jacob knew he was the greater. For Jacob was now living in a different world, a world where he stood before God. Pharaoh king of Egypt was the greatest monarch in the earth at that time. No nation in the world was stronger than Egypt, so we would hardly blame Jacob if he had taken a servile attitude before him. But all the old false humility had gone, and he stood on his new ground and blessed Pharaoh. In just such a way Paul dared to express his wishes for the spiritual good of king Agrippa (Acts 26. 29). 'I would to God, that . . . not thou only but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am, except these bonds.' My fetters apart, my happiness is greater than yours-yes, even yours O king!

'Few and bitter have been the days of my pilgrimage.' Jacob felt things. He honestly felt now that his life had not approached that of his fathers. Again he blessed Pharaoh, and then quietly went out from his presence. How likeable this old man has become! It would have been very easy for him now to have secured some glory for himself out of Joseph's position. But he did not seek this. He remained in the background, and that is where we must look for him now, for we cannot find him in the foreground. The Jacob of long ago would have grasped at this chance of prominence and fame, and there is no telling what he might have made out of it. But now he is no longer Jacob; he is Israel. His very unobtrusiveness is the

mark of God's great work in him, and is his greatest value to God.

There remain seventeen years of his life, in which nothing much seems to happen, but he goes on advancing and shining ever more brightly. May God give to every one of us such an end.

`And the time drew near that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, if now I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt: but when I sleep with my fathers, thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying-place' (47. 29, 30). This is very notable indeed. There is no word from Jacob about how he should live in Egypt; only of how he should be buried! His death and burial were connected with the promise, the land, the covenant and the kingdom. He cared nothing about the things he saw around him; only about these that lay in the unseen. The old Jacob had been hard and severe. He had rebuked even Joseph for his dreams (37. 10). Now, thirty years later, he says to his own son, `I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight . . .' There was not even a command here, but an altogether new mellowness. `And Joseph said, I will do as thou hast said. And he said, Swear unto me: and he swore unto him. And Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head.' In the New Testament it states that he `worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff' (Hebrews 11. 21). He was still a cripple, and he was still a pilgrim.

We have now an old man's memories, but it is very striking to note what in fact Jacob remembered. `God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me' (48. 3). `And as for me, when I came from Paddan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when there was still some way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way to Ephrath (the same is Bethlehem)' (48.7) He remembers his bond with God Almighty; and he remembers his sorrows, that one he so greatly loved should have - died before reaching their destination: this was Jacob now, towards God, and towards men.

There follows the blessing of Joseph's sons. `Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn.' When Joseph protested, and thinking his father mistaken, tried to remove his hand from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's, Jacob refused to be corrected. `I know it, my son, I know it,' he assured him. Here once again we see him going beyond his father Isaac. What Isaac did in blessing the younger son he did in ignorance, not knowing what he was doing; but here Jacob certainly knew what he was at. Both men were blind, but Isaac was blind inwardly. Jacob certainly was not; his spiritual insight overcame the weakness of his body. `His younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.'

We come at last to the long prophecy concerning the sons of Jacob in Genesis 49. For Jacob was a prophet who had acquired a true insight into God's purposes. In this he was more than either Abraham or Isaac. But what a price he paid for this prophecy! For he was compelled to refer to his children's past, and how he must have seen himself in them! This gave him a sympathy, an understanding, altogether different from the old Jacob. At Shechem there had been a bitterness in his words to Simeon and Levi: 'Ye have troubled me, to make me stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites : and, I being few in number, they will gather themselves together against me and smite me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house' (34. 30). Now in verses 5-7 of chapter 49 this personal vindictiveness has gone, and it is the sin which concerns him. `O my soul, come not thou into their council; unto their assembly, my glory, be not thou united.' His motives had been purified through entering into God's suffering over sin. And look too at his expression of trust, after he had described the future rebellion of Dan: `I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!' (49. 18).

At his beginning Jacob had been an utterly hopeless case. But Scripture tells us his story from his birth right through to his death, and to our amazement we find that unpromising man transformed into God's Israel. By the end of Jacob's life the kingdom was already there in the person of this prince with God. If God could make such a vessel out of Jacob, surely he has a plan for us.

In Galatians 6.16 Paul uses the expression 'the Israel of God' for the whole of God's people, showing that Israel was herself a type of the church. 'The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his servant Jesus,' proclaimed Peter, and went on to declare what miracles of divine grace should be accomplished through His Name. Yes, God wants His people, all of us, to know Him as the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, all three. He longs to see us motivated by a Father's initiatives, wealthy with the Son's riches, and really transformed by the patient nurture of the Spirit. For through us He has a work to complete, a great purpose for mankind to bring to fulfilment. End

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/watchman-nee/the-peaceable-fruit/>

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