

(Genesis) - Part 25

by Zac Poonen

God uses discipline and submission to teach us the importance of humility and trust in His sovereignty.

Duration: 1:00:24

Scripture: Genesis 31:1-32, 2 Peter 1:4

Topics: "Spiritual Discipline", "Faith And Trust"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of going through a period of breaking and discipline in order to be used by God. He uses the example of Jacob in the book of Genesis, who had to be alone and have a personal encounter with God before God could work in his life. The speaker encourages young people to be patient and humble, allowing God to do a work of breaking in their lives. He also highlights the tendency for believers to become fearful and anxious even after experiencing God's deliverance, and emphasizes the need to trust in God's blessings and not give in to temptation.

Transcript

Now Jacob heard the words of Laban's son saying, Jacob has taken away all that was our father's and from what belonged to our father he has made all this wealth. And Jacob saw the attitude of Laban. Behold, it was not friendly toward him as formerly.

Jacob had increased in wealth and that naturally, as it usually brings with all worldly people, it brought jealousy on the part of Laban's sons. Of course, Laban's sons are ungodly, heathen. It's a very sad thing when such jealousy is found among those who call themselves believers, when there is jealousy in seeing God prospering somebody else.

And Jacob saw the face of Laban, which was not friendly toward him as formerly. We've seen that before in Genesis chapter 4 in the case of Cain, that when there was something, there was a wrong attitude in the heart, it was expressed on the face. And this is the second time we see in the book of Revelation a wrong attitude in the heart being expressed on the face.

And anyone who is wholehearted in this matter of salvation and sanctification will really seek to work out salvation not only in the fact that we don't do anything wrong, but that we have so cleansed our heart that there is no change in the expression of our face. We know that when we have a difficulty with someone, or when someone has treated us in some way badly, or when there is jealousy, we sense that the expression on our face is not the same as it is towards people to whom we are very warm and friendly. Well, that's just

an indication that we need to still work out our salvation there.

We need to really take that seriously. Lord, I see there that there was a slight change of expression in my face towards that person, which is an indication that I really need to work out my salvation in this area till I really become like the sun that God has created, which shines exactly the same on good and evil people. It's significant that twice in Genesis we come across that, that the face of a man changes when his heart attitude towards someone is affected.

It's significant that in both cases, mentioned in Genesis 4 and Genesis 31, it was caused by jealousy. And dear brothers and sisters, there's far more jealousy in our flesh than we think there is. We can think that we are free from it, but we need to ask God to give us life in this area so that we are thoroughly cleansed from this evil, wretched thing.

And then the Lord said to Jacob, Return to the land of your fathers and your relatives, and I will be with you. See, Jacob himself was quite comfortable there. He really had no plans to go back, but God made the circumstances so difficult that Jacob was compelled to move.

And then the Lord said to him, It's time for you to go back. And he had already spent twenty years in Mesopotamia, twenty years of discipline, twenty years where he had to live in his father-in-law's house. If you have lived in your father-in-law's house, you know what it is like to be twenty years there.

It wasn't easy. Interesting that God trained Moses for forty years in the same way in the wilderness. Put him in his father-in-law's house for forty years.

What a breaking. It's amazing how God uses our in-laws to break us. There in Genesis, there in Exodus, there in the twentieth century.

He uses our in-laws to break us so that he can discipline us, provided we respond to that treatment of God in the right way. It's possible for us to rebel and to waste that discipline. I believe that when we stand at the judgment seat of Christ and see God's plan for our life as He meant it to be, there'll be many, many believers who'll feel so sad and have so much to regret because of the wasted discipline, the wasted sorrows and suffering that could have accomplished something that would have made them rich for eternity, but in which they didn't see God.

They only saw their in-laws. They only saw their father-in-law. They only saw their mother-in-law.

They only saw their brother-in-law. They never saw God in that whole situation, trying to break them and discipline them. And therefore, all those years were wasted.

No doubt, Jacob also must have gone through that attitude. It took twenty years, finally, before God's time came for his period of discipline to be over. God doesn't forget about it.

Twenty years is a long time. Think back to where we were twenty years ago. And think from, say, where were you in 1967? And where are you today? Twenty years is a long time to be disciplined.

You can almost think God's forgotten about you, but He hasn't. God knows exactly the right time to open the prison door or the door of the school, where you can graduate out of that school of discipline. There's a verse in Psalm 105 which says, Psalm 105 and verse 19, speaking about Joseph, when he was in prison.

And the word of God says here in Psalm 105, verse 19, "Until the time that God's word came to pass, the word of the Lord tested him. Then he was relieved." Think of that phrase. There is a time when God's word comes to pass.

Till that time, the word of the Lord tests us. Jacob was tested, Moses was tested, Joseph went through periods of testing, David went through periods of testing, Paul, Peter, every man of God has gone through a period of testing. John the Baptist was tested out in the wilderness for many years.

The untested people in Scripture were people like Isaac, and you know how he ended up. King Saul, and you know how he ended up. Solomon, you know how he ended up.

These were the untested people who got everything on a silver platter, dropped into their lap. But every man of God that we read of in Scripture has been tested through trial and discipline. And Jacob was a young man when he went out, and it's good for a young man, we read in Lamentations 3. Very wonderful word for young people, if God is to really fulfill His purpose through them.

As the years have gone by, and I've seen many young people who have come to the Lord, I've come to see the reality of this verse, that this, one would say, is almost the number one reason why many people for whom God had a wonderful plan and purpose and ministry, is not being able to accomplish it in their lives because they were not willing to submit to His discipline. Lamentations is a book after Jeremiah, chapter 3 and verse 27. It's good for a man that he should bear the yoke, and that's a symbol of discipline, in his youth.

Let him sit alone and be silent, since God has laid it on him, not his in-laws, but God. Let him put his mouth in the dust, that means keep his mouth shut, and fall upon his face in the dust, and then there will be hope. Let him give his cheek to the smiter.

Let him be filled with reproach, not just one word of reproach, but be filled with it, for the Lord will not reject forever. If he causes grief, he'll have compassion. He does not afflict willingly, verse 33, or grieve the sons of men.

Verse 37, who is there who speaks when it comes to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it? Yeah, God permits these things, and it's good for a man, when he's young, to go through the discipline that Jacob went through in his youth. He could prophesy later on in his life as a prophet, because he's gone through a discipline in his younger days. And that's why God arranges our circumstances and teaches us submission in our younger days, and breaks the strength of our will.

Those of you who are young people, and those of you who are growing up, has there ever been a time in your life when God has been able to break you by your submitting to authority? Many young people today know almost nothing of submitting to authority. They have been a law unto themselves from the time they are born again. They know everything.

They don't know what it is to submit. And the result is, even when they are forty years old, they're shallow. There is no richness in their life and ministry, because they've never known submission to authority all their life.

They've been a law unto themselves. What a sad thing. Think, if you were saved when you were young, by the time you come to that age, you should have a richness of content in your life.

But that can only come if you submit to discipline and authority that God places over you. And we see that Jacob did. He didn't rebel against Laban.

He submitted. And God was able to do a work in Jacob, slowly, it's a slow process. And one day God said, all right, now you can go.

Wonderful if God is able to do that with us. It's very wonderful to see what follows after that in the next chapter. And so God spoke to him by direct word, and also by circumstances.

That's usually the way he guides us, by word and by circumstances. And so he calls his wives, Rachel and Leah, to his flock in the field and said to them, I see your father's attitude, that his face towards me is not friendly. He said, you know that I served your father with verse six, with all my strength.

He wasn't lazy. Yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times. However, God did not allow him to hurt me.

Yeah, that's part of discipline, where God allows other people to cheat us, take advantage of us, and He humbles us. We don't get our wages, we're treated unjustly. And if we don't know in all those situations what it is to keep our mouth in the dust and humble ourselves, we'll never come to that place and ministry that God has appointed for us, and that life that God desires us to have.

And he goes on to describe how God had blessed him, and we... So he says, let's go. And his wives agreed with him. Verse fourteen, Do we still have any portion or inheritance in our father's house? And they followed.

It's amazing. Way back there in the Old Testament, these wives behaved better than some New Testament Christian wives, who still think that they belong in their father's house. I want to ask all the wives here.

Where do you belong? In your husband's home or your father's home? Which do you really consider your home? Very important. The word of God says in Psalm 45, Forget your father's house. I think it's true that very few sisters who are wholehearted enough to obey that.

Very few. But there, Rachel and Leah said, Sure, we're going. And then Jacob arose, verse seventeen, and put his children and his wives upon camels, and he drew away all his livestock and all his property.

And when Laban, verse nineteen, had gone to shear his flock, then Rachel stole the household idols that were her father's. She had also learned some tricks from her husband as to how to swipe something when the father was not watching. Gold, golden idols.

Daughters wanting to grab their share of the father's property before somebody else grabs it. Do you have anything like that? I must grab. I'm going away from home now.

I'd better grab whatever I can from the house before I leave. After all, it's my father's property. I can take.

It's mine. I can take it and go. This lust.

Yeah, we see that there. She had become like her husband, all right. And Jacob deceived Laban, verse twenty.

He was a deceiver. He got a wife who was a deceiver. And he fled with all that he had, verse twenty-one.

And when Laban heard it on the third day, he followed after. And he took his kinsmen and pursued him for seven days and overtook him. And see how God cares for Jacob.

God came to Laban, the Syrian, in a dream of the night, and said, Be careful that you do not speak to Jacob, either good or bad. It's amazing how God can speak to... Laban was not a converted person. Laban was a godless idolater.

You see, he was worshiping these idols. And he was chasing after these people partly to recover his gods who had been stolen. But God Almighty could speak to this heathen man's heart.

It's tremendous to see in Scripture how God can speak to a heathen man's heart, saying, Don't trouble that child of mine. Tremendous comfort if you have faith in this God, that when we are children of God, God can even speak to heathen people who are seeking to trouble us and restrain us. His... Their hearts are in His hands.

He's Almighty. It's wonderful to live under the protection of a heavenly Father. And Laban came up and caught up with Jacob, and he said, Why have you deceived me? Why have you fled secretly? And then he says in verse 29, It is in my power to do you harm.

But the God of your Father spoke to me last night. Not my God, the God of your Father spoke to me last night, saying, Be careful not to speak either good or bad. And we see here how he uses similar expression to what Pilate used to Jesus in John 19, verse 10 and 11.

Pilate said to Jesus, Don't you know that I have authority to crucify you, and I have authority to release you? And Jesus said, You have no authority over me unless it's given you from above. Unless my Father has given you that authority, you have no authority to crucify me or release me. And that's what Jacob's attitude was.

He didn't realize it as fully as Jesus did, but God worked for him. Laban could not harm him, because God came in between Laban and Jacob. And it's very good for us to see that, that God stands in between us and those who seek to harm us.

If we are called, if we are among the called, if we have made our calling and election sure, if we are those who have submitted to God's discipline in our life... And then here is what Laban says about who his God is. He says, The God of your Father, in verse 29, he says, But my gods, why did you steal my gods? His gods are the type that can be stolen. And he comes to recover his gods.

It's amazing, the stupidity of idolatry, that somebody steals your gods, and you've got to go and recover these gods of yours. And finally, Rachel is clever enough to hide these idols by sitting on them, verse 34, and not getting up when her father came. And so he didn't discover it.

And then Jacob tells Laban, I served you for twenty years, verse 38. If a beast was torn by the... If an animal was torn by the beast, I replaced it myself. Verse 40, I worked by day, the heat consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes.

In these twenty years I've been your outlier. And then they made a covenant not to harm one another, and Laban says, this is a covenant that you will take care of my daughters, and you won't marry anyone else.

And this is a witness.

And like that, they parted. When we come to chapter 32, and verse 1, As Jacob went on his way, the angels of God met him. Yeah, he had obeyed what God had told him.

And when we obey God, and we are in God's ways, the word of God in Psalm 91, 11 says, he will give his angels charge over you, concerning you, to keep you in all your ways. And this was sort of God's encouragement. Because he had just finished with Laban, and now he was going to meet another enemy, Esau.

And in between one enemy and another enemy, both of whom God was going to restrain. He restrained Laban, and he was going to restrain Esau. God sent his angels to encourage Jacob.

Wonderful. Now one would... Jacob was not such a wholehearted, zealous, devoted disciple, that God should do all these things. One would think that God does this only for those who are perfect.

It's amazing how he does these things for those whom he has called. It's one of the things that I've discovered, that when it comes to material things, and earthly protection, which is what most believers are interested in, God gives it to everybody. You don't have to be wholehearted to get God's protection.

You don't have to be wholehearted to get answers to prayer. You don't have to be wholehearted to get physical healing or material things. You have to be wholehearted to partake of God's nature.

But here we are not talking about Jacob partaking of the divine nature. Here we are talking about the angels of God encouraging him and comforting him, protecting him from Laban on one side, Esau on one side. Yeah, God does that even for crooked Jacobs, because he loves them, because he's called them.

But I trust that none of us will ever be, find our comfort in the fact that God protects us from our enemies. If the greatest message I get from scripture is that God answers my prayer and protects me from my enemies, I don't have a clue about the New Covenant at all. This is old covenant.

But God encourages him, sends his angels, and Jacob said, this is God's camp. So he named that place Mahane. Very interesting to see that when God speaks to people, they don't necessarily have to be wholehearted.

God spoke to Balaam. God spoke to Jacob. Today you hear somebody says God spoke to him personally.

Maybe he did, but it doesn't mean he's spiritual. He may be a godless heathen like Balaam. God spoke to Laban.

So don't get excited when you hear somebody say God spoke to me face to face. Maybe he did. He spoke to Laban and Balaam as well.

It doesn't prove much about the person's spirituality. Partaking of divine nature alone, that is a mark of a spiritual man. Not that God speaks to him.

And Jacob said when he saw them, and then Jacob sent messengers, sorry, verse 3, before him to his brother Esau. He knew that he had escaped from one enemy. His father-in-law chased him.

Now he had another one in front, and that was Esau, who he knew would be waiting for him for 20 years to finish him off. And he says, go and tell my lord Esau. You know what Isaac told Jacob when he blessed him? Do you remember the birthright blessing? Be lord over your brother.

But he's scared now. He says, Esau is my lord, and I am your servant. And please let me find favor in your sight.

And the messengers, I don't think they even got a chance to give the message to Esau, because halfway through they heard that Esau was coming with 400 people, and they just ran back to Jacob, saying, we came to your brother Esau, and he's coming to meet you, and 400 men are with him. And Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed. How very much like us.

We have experienced God delivering us from a laban. We have experienced the angels of God comforting us. And a similar situation arises again after a few days, and we are scared.

We wonder whether God will help us this time, like he did last time. And so the scheming Jacob starts working, divides the people in the flocks, and he says, if Esau comes to one company and attacks it, then the other company can escape, like a military commander. And Jacob said, oh God, this is the last resort, just in case everything fails, we better turn to God as well, after we have schemed and planned and manipulated.

The last resort is God. Oh God, who did say to me, return to your country and your relatives, I'll prosper you. I am unworthy of all the lovingkindness.

It's very easy to recognize our unworthiness when we are in the soup, and when we are in difficulty. The problem is to recognize our unworthiness when everything is going well, and we have no laban or Esau chasing us. At that time, to say to God, Lord, I'm unworthy of the least of thy mercies.

That's the mark of a spiritual man. When a man says to God when he's in a real difficulty, oh God, I'm unworthy of the least of thy mercies, it means nothing. It means nothing.

For 20 years he hadn't thought of that. But now, when he's in difficulty. Yeah, the Bible faithfully describes Jacob for us as a man exactly like us in every way.

No different. And that's an encouragement to us. You see, you read the biographies of a lot of modern day saints, it'll never be like this.

All the followers of John Wesley think that John Wesley never made a mistake, there was nothing wrong with him. All the followers of Martin Luther would think that he never made a mistake, there was nothing wrong with him. All the followers of William Booth will think that he was a great man, there was nothing wrong with him.

And all the followers of Ioanno Smith think there was nothing wrong with him, he was a perfect man. That's true all over the world. Everybody thinks our leader was a perfect man.

But the Word of God describes people in their human frailties. These are biographies inspired by the Holy Spirit, because these encourage us that God has chosen such people and transformed them. And if we are honest, we see that we are like this, and we get hope.

These other biographies and stories that we hear of so many great men only make us idolize them, which God never wants us to do. But here are biographies in Scripture that encourage us, whether it's of Jacob or Abraham or Paul or Peter in the New Testament. They're all honest, all absolutely honest.

And so we see here that Jacob was a man exactly like us, who reacted like us in times of difficulty. And yet God cared for him and helped him. Of course, his concern is only for his own safety.

"Deliver me, I pray thee,' he says, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, lest he come and attack me, mother of a children. But I would say, I'll surely prosper you and make your descendants the sand of the sea.'" If God has said that, he'll keep his word. There's no need to fear.

So he spent the night there. And he still schemes how to please Esau. He selected from what he had with him a present and collects a whole lot of goats and rams and camels and sends them by the hands of his servants.

And he commanded them to say to Esau in verse 17, "Say to them,' verse 18, "These belong to your servant, to the present and to my lord Esau." Here is that undignified attitude before a worldly person, which is absolutely unbecoming of a child of God. Humility is one thing, but to act like this because I want a favor from this worldly person, I need to ask myself, would Jesus act like this? Oh, I am your servant and you are my lord. That's why Jesus said, don't learn humility from the dictionary, learn it from me.

Learn of me, for I am humble in heart. Otherwise you'll never understand humility. There's a dignity about a child of God, which is not opposed to humility.

We don't see that dignity in Jacob, because he was scared, the fear of man, and because he wanted some favor from this man. Again we see how much like us he is. And so the present passed on before him.

And then he arose the same night and took his two wives and his two maids and his eleven children and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. And he took them and sent them across the stream. And he sent across whatever he had.

And then, this is a very important period now that we enter into Jacob's, in Jacob's life. This particular night, he had just finished with one enemy, another enemy in front of him. God had disciplined him for 20 years.

One pressure after another, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. If you turn to Hosea chapter 12, verse 3 and 4. Hosea chapter 12, verse 3 and 4, we read that that was an angel that wrestled with Jacob. It says in Hosea 12, verse 3, in the womb he took his brother by the heel, and in his maturity he contended with God.

Yes, he wrestled with the angel, and prevailed. He wept and sought his favor. He found him at Bethel, and there he spoke with us.

So we see here that the one Jacob wrestled with was an angel, and prevailed. He wept and sought his favor. So turning back to Genesis 32, we read these wonderful words, and that was what God was waiting for.

God was waiting for Jacob to be alone. He had to deal with him personally, and I would like to think that God is very often waiting to meet with us alone, and that's what we may not have time for in the busy world we live in. Occupied with a job, and property, and wife, and children.

Jacob had all this. He had more than us. Four wives, eleven children, and more property, and more to take care of.

It was so difficult to get him to be alone, and God could never do what he wanted to do with this man while he was in the midst of all this. Occupied with all these things. He had to put pressure, after pressure, after pressure, and get him into a circumstance where he had to send off everybody and be alone, and then God said, now I can deal with him.

And he began to wrestle with him, and that wrestling was a picture of what God had been trying to do with Jacob for all these twenty years. Twenty years ago when he met him at Bethel with that ladder that led up to heaven, he had spoken to him, but he hadn't responded in the way God wanted. And so for twenty years he'd been wrestling, and this final night God was going to give him, it was like a, we can say, it was the graduation day from the school of discipline.

And the way God took him through his convocation was quite different from earthly convocations, by breaking him. It was the final, it was giving him the certificate of discipline after twenty years in this school. And he wrestled with him.

Wrestling like God wrestles with us. And we can ask, why does God wrestle with us? And we can answer that question by saying, God always wrestles with us to bring us down to a zero point. When we are converted, we are all so high up, every one of us.

And the younger we are, the cleverer we are, the higher up we are. And the richer we are, add all this, add it, riches, youth, intelligence, and then we are pretty high. And for God to break a man who is young and intelligent and rich, to bring him down to zero is quite a job.

And so He arranges circumstances, gives him a certain type of wife, certain type of in-laws, certain type of circumstances, certain type of job. And if that man will submit to authority, gives him certain types of brothers and sisters who make demands on him, and if that man can submit to authority in his younger days and live with a yoke upon his neck and not think that he knows everything, God can do such a work, finally, that He can bring that person also to a convocation day. Say, all right, I'll give you a certificate now.

God is seeking to bring us down to zero, to bring us down to nothing, to bring down all those high thoughts we have of our knowledge and our ability and our usefulness to God, etc., etc. And it says here in verse 25, when he saw that he had not prevailed. That means even after twenty years, it's been a tough job for God to break Jacob, that he touched the socket of his thigh, so the socket of Jacob's thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with him.

That was the final breaking. That is the certificate. Right? For twenty years I have hit at you little by little by little by little by little by little by little, and I haven't succeeded.

I have to now give you one big blow, because I love you so much, I can't allow you to waste your life. Have you come to that place? Have you ever come to that place, dear brothers and sisters? It's very difficult for us to know how God deals with other people. But Jesus said, by their fruits you shall know them.

But I've come to see one thing, that every man whom God has used and done a work through in a deep and lasting way in the history of the church that I've ever heard of has been a broken man. So by their fruits you know them. And then you can ask, is God partial? He is not.

It must mean that many others have resisted that breaking somewhere along the line. Their knowledge is good, and it's possible, brothers and sisters, to know all about Jesus coming in our flesh, putting flesh to death in a new and living way, about being kind and good and merciful and all the things, and submitting to injustice and injury and all that. And yet for a strength in ourselves that remains with all this knowledge and all this external submission and everything, there can be inside a self that has never been bent or broken, and that manifests itself when there's a sudden provocation.

And that's a wonderful thing when God has been able to break a man so thoroughly that he cannot be offended anymore, that he does not seek his own or think highly of himself anymore. That is the place to which God wants to bring every one of his children. But I wonder whether even one percent of his children ever reached there.

Ninety-nine percent, even those who know the theory of it, theory of it, never reached that place. Because if they reached that place, God would have made them into Israels. Because that was the time when it says He broke him.

And this man, who all his life had been grabbing earthly things, he came out of his mother's womb, grabbing his brother's leg, grabbed his brother's birthright, went to his uncle's house and grabbed his two daughters and grabbed his property, and grabbing, grabbing, grabbing women, property, whatever one can get for oneself, now what does he grab? He's grabbing God. He says in verse twenty-six, God said, Let me go, for the dawn is breaking, and he said, I will not let you go unless you bless me. You see what he's holding now? He's holding on to God.

He's not interested in all those things now. He's not grabbing his property. He says, Lord, you, unless you bless me, I will not let you go.

It's wonderful when God has done such a breaking in us that the only thing we want to hold on to is God Himself. I believe that's the mark, one mark anyway, of a really broken man, that he doesn't want to hold on to anything more in life except, that's all. And we may think we do, but let somebody run across our path and do something, and immediately we rise up in anger or self-justification or something, all of which prove that God alone is not enough for us.

We need something else as well, all of which proves that God has still not been able to bring us down to zero. When you're running after earthly things, when you justify yourself, these are all indications that God has not been able to bring us down to zero. Our mouth is not in the dust.

Our mouth is very much open, up in the air. And so God has to wait. Like we read in Isaiah, He waits that He might be gracious to us.

With Moses, He waited forty years. With Jacob, twenty years. With some people, He's waited all their lifetime and never succeeded.

And I wonder if you realize the seriousness of this, dear brothers and sisters. You can be baptized in the Holy Spirit, and yet if God has not broken you, you'll never, never in your whole life ever be able to fulfill all that God wanted to fulfill through your life. We read that when Jesus took the five loaves, He blessed

them.

We can say that's the picture of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Then, before He fed the multitude, He broke the loaves. That's always the second step.

Between the blessing and the feeding, there's a breaking. And that is what releases the power. And so God has done one thing.

He's got this man to lay hold of Him. And then another step. He said to him, what is your name? Something like Isaac asked him when he came with the meat curry.

What is your name? That time he said, Esau. This time, he's honest. What is your name? Deceiver.

All right, I'll change you. I wonder if we see this. This is brokenness.

Lord, I've got nothing to justify myself. I am a deceiver. I'm a cheat.

I'm one who grabs for myself. That's the meaning of Jacob. That is my name.

There's nothing that God loves like honesty. And that's why God hates this self-justification so much. Because when we justify ourselves, we're saying, my name is not Jacob.

I've acted in a spiritual way. God says, all right, you've got to wait some more years. The Word of the Lord is not yet ready to release you.

Go back into the school of discipline. But if we can be honest and say, my name is Jacob. I'm a deceiver.

Always seeking that which will promote my own ends and my own name and my own gain, my own honor. That'll make, it'll make me somebody in the eyes of others. That'll, which will prove to others that I was right and the other person was wrong.

God says, wait a few more years, back to the school. Till we, till our mouth is in the dust. And we say, Lord, that's my name.

Deceiver. Cheat. Grabber.

Then he said, your name will no longer be Jacob. Think how God is so quick to meet an honest man. You will no longer be Jacob from now on, because you were honest with me.

If you had tried to fool me and tried to justify yourself before me and say, yeah, Laban did this to me, that's why I behave like that. He can say all that to Laban, but he can't say that to God. Because he was honest.

God said to him, you shall no longer be Jacob, but you shall be Israel. For you have striven with God and with Me and have prevailed. This was the angel of the Lord that Jacob was struggling with, which is probably a manifestation of Christ.

The word angel means messenger. In some form there, it appears many times in the Old Testament, that phrase, the angel of the Lord. Because you have striven with God and with Me and you have prevailed.

When does he prevail? When he is broken. When his tie is dislocated. It says here that God, the angel of the Lord is fighting with him and he could not succeed in breaking him.

And one would have thought that God would have said, now I have prevailed over you. No. He says the other way around.

He says, you prevailed. Because now you are dislocated, your tie is dislocated, you can't walk. Now you are lame.

For the rest of your life you will be lame. And from that moment, for the rest of Jacob's life, he was a lame man. He may have been around 40 years of age.

He was around 20 perhaps when he went to, we don't know, around 20 perhaps when he went to Mesopotamia and is coming back at the age of 40. Wonderful if God has been able to discipline a man from the ages of 20 to 40, so that God has been able to do a work in him and that he is lame for the rest of his life. Because he is broken and God has blessed him and his name has changed.

Israel means Prince of God. He was a prince. Now he has become a king.

It's only a broken man who can be a king. Easy to say, we are kings and priests. We don't actually become kings until we are broken.

And then Jacob asked him and said, please tell me your name. He said, why is it that you ask my name? There's no need to know that. It's enough that I bless you.

And he blessed him. That is real blessing. 20 years earlier Isaac had put his empty hands on Jacob's empty head and said, here you are blessed with all this.

Nothing happened. But now God Almighty puts his hand on Jacob's head. That's something.

There is something in the laying on of hands. But no man can give to us. You can get the greatest man of God to lay hands on our head and nothing will happen.

If God himself doesn't lay hands on us and bless us and change our name. And so Jacob named the place Peniel. For he said, I have seen God face to face.

And my life has been, yet my life has been preserved. One life had died and another life had come forth. The old Jacob had gone.

A new Israel had come forth. It wasn't an overnight job. It was a 20 year job.

And then you read these words. Now the sun rose upon him. This was Jacob's second meeting with God.

You remember we studied Genesis 28? When his first meeting with God, we saw that in Genesis 28. When Jacob was going out, verse 11, he came to a certain place and spent the night there. And the sun had set.

That was at the age of 20. Now after 20 years, the sun had risen. Of course, it's only a geographical fact.

But it was also true of his life. We can say that between that sunset and the sunrise lay 20 years of darkness and struggle and discipline. Which unfortunately, as I say and I want to keep on repeating, many young people do not have the patience to go through.

And therefore they remain empty all their lives. I want to exhort every young brother and sister here. Allow God in your younger days to do a work in you of breaking, of thorough breaking.

Don't be so impatient to suddenly be a leader and a teacher and a prophet or what is worse, a prophetess. No. Just humble yourself.

Seek to be a broken person. Then God can do something through you, maybe after 20 years. Or if you are more wholehearted, maybe after 10 years.

But otherwise it's possible we can go all through our life thinking that we are something and we're just nothing. Because God's not able to break us. And the sun rose upon him, and he was limping on his thigh.

When the sun set, he was not limping. He was a strong, erect Jacob. There's a piece of poetry I read once called, Lord, bend this proud and stiff-necked eye.

Help me to bow my head and die, beholding him on Calvary who bowed his head for me. This eye, straight, just like the letter I in the English language. Straight, stiff, erect.

That's how we are. And God has to bend it so that it's sun rose. How different God's ways are.

This is not the way worldly industries train their young people to be business executives. It's the exact opposite of that. There they are limping in the beginning, they are standing erect by the time they finish their training.

God's ways are the other way around. If you're standing erect when you start your training, you're limping by the time you finish. You don't have those high thoughts about yourself.

You're bent, you've got to stop. You're a helpless man now. And therefore to this day, the sons of Israel do not eat the sinew of the hip.

I wanted to turn to a verse in Hebrews 11, verse 21. You know Hebrews 11? It's that fantastic chapter full of people who shut the mouths of lions and split open Red Sea, raise people from the dead, etc., etc. Fantastic thing.

Pull down the walls of Jericho. And in the midst of all these fantastic things, we read one statement which looks so odd, coming in a chapter like that, and that is about Jacob. Hebrews 11, verse 21.

By faith Jacob, says in the last part of that verse, worships, leaning on the top of his staff. Funny, isn't it? A statement like that should come in the book of Hebrews. So and so split open the Red Sea, so and so pull down the walls of Jericho, so and so shut the mouths of lions, and so and so defeated enemies, and so and so raised the dead, and Jacob was walking with his staff.

Was that a miracle? I believe a greater miracle than splitting the Red Sea, than pulling down the walls of Jericho. When God can get one man, stiff, erect, clever, intelligent, shrewd, young, when he can get him broke, so that he leans upon a staff. That's a miracle of grace with which no pulling down of walls of Jericho can ever compare.

And that is why it is written there in Hebrews 11, verse 21. He worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. He had a staff for the rest of his life.

Interesting that the Holy Spirit mentions that. That's an example for us, dear brothers, as to the way God wants us to go. This Christendom, which exalts converted astronauts and converted film stars, and thinks that these are the great representatives of Christ.

Great intellectuals get up to give profound lectures to evangelical graduates about Christianity. They have no understanding that God's ways are with a broken man with a staff limping, broken, helpless, a man who has known the power of God in his life. That's why we are so much against the Bible schools, because no Bible school can teach this.

The men whom God has used most throughout the history of the Church are men who have never went to a Bible school. That's been true for 20 centuries, and God hasn't changed His mind now. This is the school that we need to go to, to be broken and humbled.

There's a verse in Isaiah 33, verse 23. I don't know whether you know it. It's a very lovely verse.

Isaiah 33, verse 23 says, in the last part of that verse, the lame will take the plunder. The plunder means after a battle. In the olden days, when two armies had a battle and one army won the victory, they'd go and plunder the enemy and take all their gold and silver.

And usually, the lame person who would be struggling along would be the one who would get nothing, because all the active fellows go up in front and grab, loot everything for themselves, and by the time the lame fellow reaches there, there's nothing left for him. But here's a verse which says, the lame are going to get the plunder. Amazing.

Jacob got it, but not till he became lame. When God is able to break that proud self-sufficiency in us, we can get the plunder. And you know, Jacob was not a very spiritual man to begin with.

He was a crafty schemer, like all of us are. And if any of you think you're not a crafty schemer, I just ask you to go and ask God to give you a little more light on yourself. I don't believe there's one of us in this room who's not a crafty schemer.

We all are. We're like Jacob. And God calls Himself, as we've seen, the God of Jacob, the God of the crafty schemer, the God of the man with the crooked temperament and the warped personality.

Praise God that He can take such people and change them. If they will let Him break them when He's wrestling with them. Lord, bring me to that zero point quickly.

I know I can't get it overnight. I can't reach that tomorrow, perhaps. But Lord, let's do a quick job in me.

Please not take 20 years. Reduce it to 10 at least. I want to be wholehearted.

Yeah, the lame will take the plunder. Chapter 33, verse 1. Then Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming. Immediately after God blesses us, there's always the temptation of the enemy.

We have to be tested to see whether we trust in this wonderful blessing that we've received from God. It's easy to change our name to Israel, say, my name's Israel now. But when Esau comes, we'll find out whether you're really Israel or not.

And he's not. It's Jacob who lifts up his eyes, not Israel. And because Jacob lifts up his eyes, he's still scared.

And this is so true. It's really so true. Even after God's done such a fantastic work in us, the next thing is the same old failure.

Praise God for such ruthlessly honest biographies and scripture. I don't think there's ever been a biography written that is so honest as a scriptural biography. Never.

I've read many biographies. I'm always hesitant to believe these biographies, because I say, I don't know how honest they are. I can believe scripture, but when I read these biographies, I say, it can't be.

These men couldn't have been like this. These are certain peaks that they have mentioned, but what about all the valleys in between? They've never talked about that. And he puts the maids and their children in front, and here is all the partiality coming forth, and Leah and her children next, so that if somebody gets wiped out, Leah and the children will be finished first, and then his favorite wife at the back, Rachel and Joseph last.

There's not much of Israel here yet. It's the same old crafty Jacob, still scheming. But he himself passed on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times, again demeaning himself.

And he's so surprised that the God who took care of Laban took care of Esau too. Esau ran to meet him and embrace him, fell on his neck and kissed him, they wept. And he lifted up his eyes and saw the women and the children and said, who's of these? And he said, the children whom God has graciously given your service.

Then the maids came near with that children, they bowed down. It's very interesting to see that Jacob had light on that. That even though he had 11 children, he didn't think that they were a bit of a nuisance.

They were children whom God had graciously given. And then the various families came forward, and Esau said, what do you mean by all this? And Esau said, I have plenty, my brother, verse 9. Jacob said, please, if I have found favor in your sight, take this present. Verse 10, the last part, for I see your face, as one sees the face of God.

Amazing that Jacob could see the face of God in Esau. How is that? Don't we see the face of God only in spiritual people? No, not necessarily. You see the face of God in the face of every man and woman whom you have wronged, even if you wronged them 20 years ago.

When you see a man, suddenly your conscience tells you, remember how you cheated him 20 years ago. And that man's face is the face of God to you, reminding you, settle it before the day of judgment. That's how Esau's face became the face of God to him.

He was suddenly reminded, and the only way to remove that threatened judgment that we see in a person whom we have wronged is by setting it right. Setting that matter right once and for all, then that fear of judgment will not be there anymore. That person's face will no longer be like the face of God, demanding judgment.

So he gives his gift, and Esau says, let's take our journey and go. And Jacob's scared still, whether Esau will kill him on the way or something. So he says, you go ahead, I'll come later and join you, he says in verse 14, at Seir.

Of course, he had no intention to go to Seir, why are you just telling Esau a lie? So Esau returned, verse 16, to Seir, and Jacob journeyed to Shekin, and built for himself a house. And Jacob came safely to the city of Shekin, which is in the land of Canaan. And I believe he made a mistake here.

He bought a piece of land in Shekin, where his God had told him, as we see in chapter 31, verse 13, what he told his wife, I am the God of Bethel. Arise, leave this land and return to your land. He was supposed to go to Bethel.

And we read later on, God told him to go to Bethel. But he didn't reach Bethel. Something like Abraham leaving Mesopotamia and stuck in Haran.

Instead of reaching Bethel, he got stuck in Shekin, bought a piece of land. Of course, he built an altar, as we read in verse 20, which is good. But he did not go where God wanted him to go.

And the result we read and study in our next study is the sad events that happened in Shekin, where he saw his own daughter being raped by the men of Shekin. He was out. He didn't move to the place where God wanted him to go.

He bought a piece of land. Maybe Shekin was a good place to settle down in. Like many believers find good places to settle down in today.

They can build an altar there and say, God, the God of Israel, yes, you can worship God anywhere. But if you're not in the place where God wants you to be, you can never fulfill God's purpose. So there are warnings and encouragements in the life of Jacob.

And we praise God for it, that he who is the God of Jacob will be our God too.

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