

Jacob Worshipped, Leaning Upon the Top of His Staff

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon explores Jacob's worship as a testament to his brokenness and dependence on God, emphasizing the transformative power of faith in weakness.

Scripture: Genesis 49:1, Hebrews 11:21

Topics: "Dependence On God", "Brokenness and Transformation"

Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes Jacob's later years as a testament to faith, highlighting that his act of worship while leaning on his staff symbolizes his dependence on God after experiencing personal brokenness. Unlike the spectacular miracles of others, Jacob's worship reflects a profound miracle of faith, showcasing the beauty of weakness and reliance on God. Poonen draws parallels with the Apostle Paul and encourages believers to embrace their limitations rather than their achievements, reminding them that God is intimately connected with those who struggle. He reassures that God, the God of Jacob, is also our refuge and will complete the work He has begun in us, provided we cooperate with His transformative process. The sermon concludes with the powerful message that true life in Christ comes through brokenness and surrender to God's will.

Transcript

In Hebrews Chapter 11, we are given an inkling as to what Jacob's testimony was in his later years. There, we are given a record of some of the exploits of great men of faith in the Old Testament - shutting lions' mouths, raising the dead, etc. Jacob's name appears in the list too - and what do you think is recorded of him? "He worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff" (v. 21). It looks quite incongruous to include something like that in a chapter full of spectacular events!

What Jacob did certainly does not look like a "miracle of faith". But it was. It was perhaps a greater miracle than the other miracles recorded in the chapter. The staff had become necessary to Jacob, because his thigh had been dislocated at Peniel. Leaning upon that staff, he would always remember the miracle that God had wrought in his life, in breaking his stubborn self-will. His leaning upon his staff now symbolized his helpless, moment-by-moment dependence on his God. He worshipped God now as a broken man. He gloried in his weakness and his infirmity - and that was his daily testimony.

So it was with the Apostle Paul too. And so it has been with the great men and women of God in all ages. They rejoiced in their limitations and not in their achievements. What a lesson for proud, self-confident 20th-century Christians!

Towards the end of his life, we see Jacob as a prophet. He prophesies concerning the future of his descendants (Gen. 49). Only a man who has been under God's hand and who has submitted to the Divine disciplines is qualified to prophesy. Jacob had learnt through experience. He was no seminary-qualified theoretician. He had been through the grill and qualified in God's University. He knew the secret counsels of God. Truly, he was a prince of God! What a wonderful thing it is to be purged by God. What fruitfulness it results in!

Notice finally, a word of encouragement that runs through the Bible. God calls Himself, "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (not "Israel", but "Jacob")." This is wonderful indeed! He is the God of Jacob. He has linked His Name with the name of Jacob, the grabber and the deceiver. This is our encouragement.

Our God is the God of the man with the warped personality. He is the God of the woman with the difficult temperament. What meaning there is in the psalmist's words, "The God of Jacob is our refuge" (Psa. 46:7,11)! He is not only the Lord of Hosts but also the God of Jacob. Praise be to His Name!

What God has begun in us He will complete. As perfect as was the work of the Father in creation and as perfect as was the work of the Son in our redemption, so perfect will the work of the Holy Spirit be in our sanctification. God is faithful!

"He Who began the good work within (us) will keep right on helping (us) grow in grace until His task within (us) is finally finished on that day when Jesus Christ returns" (Phil. 1:6-LB). He will complete His work in us, as He completed His work in Jacob. But we must respond as Jacob did at Peniel. If, however, we do not cooperate with Him, but frustrate His workings in us, we shall ultimately stand before Him with the tragedy of a wasted, fruitless life. God wants us to be fruitful, but He won't compel us. He wants to transform us into the likeness of Christ, but He will never override our free-will.

The pathway to the Christ-life is via the cross - being broken thereon. What power is released when an atom is broken! What power can be released when a child of God is broken in God's Hand!

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