

Seeking My King & His Kingdom

#7 Brokenness: The Pathway To Blessing

Heb. 11:21 By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff. How did he arrive at this point?

God Broke A Man To Bless Him: Goal = Rid Man Of Self-Sufficiency

Spurgeon: Before God can use a man greatly, He must break him, because we all have a built-in propensity to trust in ourselves.

Genesis 32 = pivotal chapter in Jacob's life = He is facing a severe crisis.

Consider: All of Jacob's deceitful practices, conniving and bargaining are the result of a fundamental misconception.

- a. Spiritual blessings are secured by carnal methods and means.
- b. Jacob believed God had promised to make him, not Esau, the heir of promise with the rights of the firstborn. Jacob valued the blessing; Esau despised it. [worthless]
- c. He never realized he did not need to connive and scheme in order to obtain the promises of God, His blessings and the 1st born birthright.

Background:

1. Jacob connived to steal the first-born inheritance and birthright from Esau. [Gen. 25]
 2. Jacob deceived Isaac to steal the father's blessing on his firstborn. [Gen. 27]
 3. Jacob had to flee to Uncle Laban in Haran to escape the fury of Esau. [Gen. 27]
- During his flight, God confirmed His blessing to Jacob in a dream. [Gen. 28:12-15]
- a. "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants.
 - b. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go,
 - c. I will bring you back to this land;
 - d. for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."
4. He spends 14 years working to have Rachel as his wife. Another 6 before he leaves.

1. Jacob is returning to Canaan in obedience to God. It has been 20 years.

Problem: He must now face Esau whom he had cheated 20 years ago. How will Esau receive him?

Note: Look for ALL the emotions and consequences that resulted from Jacob planning and scheming with his meager resources of his flesh.

Gen. 32:1-2 And Jacob went on his way, and The Angels Of God Met Him.

And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host:

Gen. 32:3-5 And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother... And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak unto My lord Esau; Thy Servant Jacob says thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now:

And I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and women servants: and I have sent to tell my lord, That I May Find Grace In Thy Sight.

- a. How tragic! These fawning phrases [my lord Esau; thy servant Jacob] should not come from a child of God."
- b. This attitude before a man of the world evidenced the state of his heart.
- c. Seems Esau is an immediate threat that might overwhelm the promise of God.

2. Jacob's messengers return: Esau is coming to meet you with 400 men.

3. Jacob Froze With Fear. He assumes Esau is still filled with hostility.

Truth: A guilty conscience often makes us see the darkest possible picture.

Jacob Devises His Own Plan: Fear crowds out Faith. We can become frightened by the growl of oncoming events even though we KNOW God is greater than any lurking threat.

If Esau attacks one camp, those in the other camp could escape.

AFTER dividing his party and possessions into two bands, he at once begins to Pray Earnestly.

4. Then He prayed: "Oh, God, deliver me from Esau!" [Gen. 32:9-12]

Note: Fear Of Man Drove Him To Seek God's Favor.

a. His prayer indicates he had a profound knowledge of God's ways and character.

b. He quotes God's PROMISES back to God; he remembered God's goodness.

c. Yet he was praying in desperation and not in confidence

d. His knowledge about God did not bring God's peace.

Gen. 32:14-20 After his prayer, he turns back to public relations and his strategy.

He takes 580 valuable animals and divides them up.

Knowing how to "rig things," he will Send Gifts ahead to Esau.

Gen. 32:20 Behold, your servant Jacob is behind us." For he said, "I will appease him with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face; Perhaps He Will Accept Me."

Question: How could he turn to his own efforts to appease Esau when just before he had prayed with such earnestness? The "flesh," always unbelieving, still remains and Jacob yielded to his old nature. The two natures, the spiritual and the carnal in every believer, are clearly demonstrated in the life of Jacob: One which believes God and the other which disbelieves. We need to cry daily, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief."

Note: After all his scheming and devising he could say only "perhaps he will accept of me!"

After all our fleshly efforts have been put forth, it is sad, but true, we gain no confidence.

The way of faith brings a calm, but certain assurance, which is the blessed fruit of resting on God and His Word.

Jacob's mind is working so God lets him stew in his own juice.

All the time: God's angels are encamped there.

Gen. 32:21-24 It seems everything he had worked so hard and so long to obtain in Padan-Aram was about to be taken from his hands. His family appeared to be in imminent danger, and his own life in peril. As a precautionary measure he had sent his family over the brook Jabbok.

[Jabbok = emptying; a pouring out; wrestling]

²⁴ And Jacob was left alone. He felt more desolate than when twenty years before he had left his father's house. This passage reveals a crucial crisis in Jacob's life.

Night had fallen, when suddenly a mysterious stranger appeared, and in the darkness wrestled with him until the breaking of the day.

Note: God meets us at the level He finds us in order to lift us where He wants us to be.

1. To Abraham, the pilgrim, God came as a traveler.
2. To Joshua, the general, God came as a soldier.
3. To Jacob, the wrestler, God came as a wrestler.

Truth: "To be left alone with God is the only true way of arriving at a just knowledge of ourselves and our ways." The great question: What does God think about me?

Consider: His entire life, Jacob thought Esau and Laban were his adversaries.

He struggled and schemed to get the blessings he thought they were taking from him.

[These were blessings God promised to give him.]

Consider: Most of us think the enemy or problem is: my spouse, parents, boss,

poor circumstances. "God, please remove my problem. Remove me from this circumstance."

Jacob now realizes God is the adversary. Actually, Jacob is his own adversary, but God had to wrestle him into submission to reveal this fact.

Truth: Most of the time: the problem is in me: my flesh, my sinful, selfish nature that tends to dominate my life.

God has to reveal the POWER OF MY FLESH before I can be delivered from it.

A. GOD'S BREAKING PROCESS REVEALS THE POWER OF MY FLESH

Question: Why did God allow the match to go on all night long? God wanted to show Jacob the POWER of his SELF-WILL. God waited to see if Jacob would surrender, but he kept fighting.

1. God did not use the power to cripple him until He saw that Jacob would not yield. [32:25]

Truth: The FLESH dies hard! Only God can tame it!

2. Until God crippled him, Jacob wouldn't give in. God wrestled him all night to reveal self-will.

3. "What is your name?" [32:27] God never asks questions to gain information.

a. God wanted Jacob to confess his character: supplanter, conniver, schemer

b. After Jacob acknowledged his character, the Lord blessed him.

Consider: We tend to think we are not such a "bad sinner." The more we grow in the Lord, the more it is revealed: nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh." [Rom. 7:18]

4. God will reveal that to each of us! Some of us need an all-night wrestling match!

a. Realize: The flesh is powerful! I must depend on the Lord for everything!

b. My strength lies in recognizing my weakness.

Truth: God exercises wondrous patience with our fleshly struggling, but in the end He accomplishes His purpose and grace triumphs.

The delay only serves to provide opportunity for Him to display His infinite longsuffering.

B. GOD'S BREAKING PROCESS REVEALS TO US THE POWER OF OUR GOD.

Consider: Before the Lord touched Jacob and crippled him, Jacob probably thought the fight was pretty evenly matched. But then in one light touch, Jacob was rendered utterly powerless.

1. Our Father appoints testing and trials to bring us to the end of ourselves, to show us our own powerlessness, to teach us to have no confidence in the flesh so His strength may be made perfect in us.

Truth: Until God breaks us, so we walk with a limp, we have a tendency to view Him as a benign old grandfather, nice to have around when we need Him. We view obedience to God as an available option. But we're in control. Then the lion roars and in one easy swipe, He cripples us.

1. Obedience is not an option; it is our only reasonable course of action

2. Some resist God's breaking process and grow bitter.

God's Strange Command For Victory

Joshua 11:6, 9 But the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid because of them [a confederacy under the King of Hazor, united to attack the young army of God.

According to Jewish historians, some 300,000 foot soldiers, 20,000 horse chariots, and 10,000 soldiers on horses came out to fight Joshua and his army.

This number is described as "much people, even as the sands that is upon the sea shore," 11:4.]

for tomorrow about this time I Will Deliver All Of Them Slain Before Israel.

You shall Hamstring Their Horses and burn their chariots with fire." ⁹So Joshua did to them as the LORD had told him: he hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots with fire.

"Houghing" a horse is done by cutting the sinews of their hind legs so that they are rendered incapable of speed.

Deut. 17:16 when the law of Moses was given, the Lord had forbidden Israel to

"multiply horses," i.e., breed them. Why did God give this strange command?

Couldn't horses make them stronger and more effective fighters?

God's Wisdom: God knew in order for the nation to be saved, they had to learn to trust wholly in Him for their protection. God wanted to be the wall of fire around Israel so He commanded Israel not to trust in physical objects for their safety, salvation, and freedom.

Knowing if they did, they would start to think too highly of themselves, or of their possessions, and turn from the source of all strength, the great I Am.

1. To trust in Him, not in military resources. Obey Him and not question His instructions.

Multiplication of horses and use of chariots showed a lack of faith on Israel's part in God's ability to achieve the victory.

Ps. 20:7 Some *trust* in chariots, and some in horses;

But we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

God wanted them to rely on HIM ALONE for their victory; NOT on their own abilities.

2. Animals had to be obtained from Israel's pagan neighbors (Deut. 17:16; I Kings 10:28-29).

Horses would have encouraged trade and opened the Jews to the influences of the world; influences God was having them destroy.

3. There is no need of horses in the Promised Land.

God wanted them to possess Canaan and enjoy the bounty of its soil.

4. God wanted them to settle down in their Promised Land where they would cultivate spiritual values without distractions as they anticipate the coming Messiah.

5. Horses could fall into enemy hands. Use them against us

Truth: God wants us to be "helpless" so we will fully follow Him and rely on Him for victory.

Then we will experience and know His STRENGTH. So "Hough your horses & follow Him."

C. God's Blesses Us As We Cling To Him In Our Brokenness

Gen. 32:26 And he said, Let me go, for the day breaks. And he said, I will not let You go, except You bless me.

The seat of his strength being touched, he learned to say, 'I will not let Thee go' - other refuge have I none; hangs my helpless soul on Thee.'

1. He knew if God didn't bless him, he had NO HOPE.

2. In Clinging To The Lord In His Brokenness, Jacob received the blessing he had been scheming to obtain all of his life.

Truth: Some of our greatest victories come out of the ashes of our greatest defeats.

D. We Won't Cling To The Lord Until We're Broken

1. Jacob has incredible strength in clinging to the Lord after he is wounded.

2. As long as there is an ounce of self-dependence left, we trust in ourselves.

Andrew Bonar said that in the highlands of Scotland, sheep sometimes wander off among the rocky crags and get trapped on dangerous ledges. Attracted by the sweet grass, they leap down ten or twelve feet to get to it, but they can't get back up. A shepherd will allow the helpless animal to remain there for days until it becomes so weak it's unable to stand up. Finally, he ties a rope around his waist and goes over the edge to the rocky shelf and rescues the one that has strayed. Someone asked Bonar, "Why doesn't the shepherd go down right away?" He replied, "Sheep are so foolish that they would dash right over the precipice and be killed if the herdsman didn't wait until their strength was nearly gone." (In "Our Daily Bread," Winter, 1980.)

E. Clinging To God In Our Brokenness Is The Key To God's Power In Us

1. God gives him a new name that reflects his new character.

a. Instead of deceiver, he is to become a prevailer - "he who strives with God"

b. God prevailed over Jacob by crippling his stubborn self-dependence.

c. God will now conquer Jacob's enemies by His power rather than through Jacob's conniving ways.

"Jacob" tells how Divine grace found him. "Israel" tells what Divine grace made him.

Important Lessons For The Wise Believer

1. It is natural to the "flesh" to plan and scheme and desire to be in charge of my life.
2. The mind of the flesh deems itself fully competent to run my life.
3. God in His faithfulness and love determines to correct this habit in me, His child.
4. He is patient with my self-confidence and self-sufficiency, but He must and will bring me to the end of myself.
5. To accomplish this He lays His hand on me, and makes me conscious of my utter helplessness.
6. He does this by "withering" me in the "seat of my creature strength", and by writing the sentence of death on my flesh.
7. I learn to cling to Him in my weakness, and seek His "blessing."
8. The "flesh" cannot be subdued, but must be "withered" in the very sinew of its power — "because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

The sinew only "shrank," it was not removed. Nor is the "flesh" eradicated from the believer!

9. That which hinders me in my growth in grace is not so much my spiritual weakness as it is confidence in my natural strength!
10. Not until these truths are apprehended will I cease to be a "contender."
Then I will gladly take my place as clay in the hands of the Potter.

"You can trust and obey Me and spend your life seeing what I have for you OR you can disobey Me and wonder what your life could have been."

"God never uses anyone until they are first broken and poured out for Him."