

CGYG & LIFE Bible Study – Genesis 32:1 – 33:20

Read Genesis 32:1-21

-Why did Jacob send messengers to Esau?

-How did Jacob respond to the news of Esau's approach? Why was Jacob afraid? Did he need to be?

-What can we learn about how to pray from Jacob's prayer?

-Given his prayer for deliverance, was Jacob wrong to make the preparations he did to meet Esau? (you might also consider Ezra 8:21-23,31 with Nehemiah 2:7-9; Proverbs 18:16 & 21:14)

Read Genesis 32:22-32

-Who was the man who came to wrestle with Jacob? If he was able to cripple Jacob so easily, why did he wrestle all night with Jacob?

-In what sense did Jacob overcome in his struggle with God and men? (you might also consider Hosea 12:2-4; 2 Cor. 12:7-10; Matthew 5:3-4)?

-What is the significance of Jacob receiving a new name?

Read Genesis 33:1-20

-Do you find Esau's welcome of Jacob surprising? Why or why not?

-How has Jacob's attitude towards Esau changed from before he fled to Laban, and why?

-What did Jacob mean by saying that seeing Esau's face was like seeing the face of God?

-What do Jacob's actions in v.12-20 tell us about him?

Aliens and strangers in the world

Alone in the night, Jacob faced a painful crisis. Having fled from Laban, he could not turn back, yet going forward seemed to mean certain destruction at the hands of Esau and his 400 men. Having relied for so much of his life on his own strength and his own cunning to prevail against others, he now faced a seemingly impossible situation. At the core, however, Jacob's struggles with men were in reality a reflection of his struggle against God. In the midst of this struggle, God graciously (and mysteriously!) visited Jacob, taking on human form and allowing Jacob wrestle against Him with all his might, then completely breaking him so that he could do nothing more but cling to God and, weeping, beg for His favor (Hosea 12:4). In his brokenness, Jacob clung tenaciously to God as his only hope and prevailed, receiving God's blessing and a new identity.

In the same way, we today experience God's favor and receive a new identity only when we cling, completely broken and completely dependent, to God come in the flesh – Jesus Christ. Likewise, in our daily walk, we overcome only as we are rid of self-reliance and learn to rely only on Jesus Christ to enable us to live for Him, in the power of the Holy Spirit. As 2 Corinthians 12:9 reminds us, His grace is sufficient for us, and His power is made perfect in our weakness.

Are there circumstances in your life that tempt you to despair? Could these be reflections of a struggle in your life against God? Give these over completely to the Lord and come, broken, to cling to Him alone.