

Introduction

A few weeks ago I mentioned something that happened in the fall of 1992. I was playing the first round of the finals of PGA Tour Qualifying Tournament, known as Q-School, which was held at the Woodlands, just north of Houston, Texas. The field had been narrowed down from several thousand down to the 180 finalists. These 180 would play six rounds and the top twenty-five would earn their tour cards. I had seen in the past that it would take as much as fifteen under par to qualify. So you had to play lights out to qualify. I was one of the first to tee off that day and it was thirty degrees and blowing about thirty miles per hour. I was so cold that I could not feel my fingers; they were numb. I shot four over par the first nine holes and it looked like the tournament was over for me.

As I walked from the ninth green to the tenth tee, I had a talk with God. I reminded God of how he spoke to me while I was seated in the balcony section of Metro Life Church. He had told me that He was going to put me on the PGA Tour. It was a very specific word of direction to me. I reminded God of His promise in 2 Chronicles 16:9, *“For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His...”* I told the Lord that I was in trouble, and that I needed His strong support. I reminded Him that He is One that always keeps His promises, and that I was counting on Him to do what He said He would do. I reminded Him of Numbers 23:19, *“God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent; has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?”* God met me at my point of need as I walked to the tenth tee. I shot three under on the back nine and continued to play extremely well the rest of the week. I finished 13th and earned my PGA Tour card for 1993.

In our text today, God told Jacob to return to the land of his father. God had told Jacob that He would watch over him and bless him. God had made some promises to Jacob, and now that he is on his way, he hears that Esau is coming for him with four hundred men. Things are not looking good for Jacob and he is scared to death. After sending his wives across the stream of Jabbok, he meets with God. He wrestled with God. What did he wrestle about? He wrestled with God about the promises that God made to him. He reminded God of those promises. Jacob has just shot three over par on the front nine and he is walking to the tenth tee and having a serious talk with the Lord. Today’s message is about how Jacob prepares to meet Esau. Jacob was scared to death that Esau was going to kill him and his wives.

We will see that he sent a delegation to seek peace. He divided up his family and flocks. He cries out to God and reminds God of His promises to him. He sent gifts to Esau. Finally, he wrestles with God.

1. Jacob Sends A Delegation.

(Gen 32:1-5) “Now as Jacob went on his way, the angels of God met him. {2} Jacob said when he saw them, “This is God's camp.” So he named that place Mahanaim. {3} Then Jacob sent messengers before him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. {4} He also commanded them saying, “Thus you shall say to my lord Esau: ‘Thus says your servant Jacob, “I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed until now; {5} I have oxen and donkeys and flocks and male and female servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in your sight.””

God had spoken to Jacob to return to the land of his father. He left his family because his brother, Esau, had vowed to kill him. Rebekah had become aware of the plan and she sent Jacob away until his brother's anger subsided. Rebekah and Isaac charged Jacob with finding a wife from her relatives. So, Jacob had fled to Paddan-Haran, where he worked for twenty years and now he is returning. He has not forgotten why he left; it was to escape Esau's plan to kill him. Now, he is returning and he is full of fear about meeting up with Esau.

Jacob has just made a covenant of peace with Laban and now he starts on his way towards home. On his way, the angels of God met him. When Jacob saw them, he named the place Mahanaim, which means two camps. Jacob was camped there and God's angels had a camp there. I think the significance of God's angels being there was to strengthen and support Jacob. Paul wrote in Romans 8:31, "*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?*" I believe that God wanted Jacob to know that He was for him and that He was with him. His angels were there to protect him. I believe that God wanted to calm his fears about meeting up with Esau.

When you and I face fear and uncertainty, God wants us to know that He is with us and He is for us. He wants us to be strong and courageous. Notice what God said to Joshua. Moses has just died and now he is going to lead the nation of Israel into the Promised Land. There are battles to be fought and Joshua is fearful and trembling. God said in Joshua 1:9, "*Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.*" God has spoken to you and I that same promise. We are not to be fearful and tremble, knowing that God and His angels are with us and for us.

God spoke this same promise to Jacob's father, Isaac in Genesis 26:24. "*The LORD appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you, and multiply your descendants, for the sake of My servant Abraham."* God wanted Isaac to know that He was with him and he was not to fear. God does not want us to live in fear, and He wants us to know that He is with us wherever we go.

In 1 Chronicles 28:20, as Solomon was taking over as the King of Israel, David charged his son Solomon to be strong and courageous. Then he said, "*Act; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the LORD God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you nor forsake you until all the work for the service of the house of the LORD is finished.*" It is the same message to Joshua, Isaac, and Jacob. It is the same message to you and I. God is with us and we should not be fearful.

Jacob knows that God's angels are there with him, but he still is afraid. Therefore, he sent a delegation of messengers before him to his brother Esau. He commanded them to tell Esau that Jacob had been with Laban until now and he is now returning with oxen, donkeys, flocks, and servants. Most importantly, they were to ask Esau for favor in his sight. Jacob sought Esau's favor and mercy.

There is nothing wrong with seeking favor. Jesus found favor with God and men. Notice what Luke wrote. "And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." (Luke 2:52) In Proverbs 3:3-4, Solomon wrote about finding favor with God and men. He said, "*Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man.*" Jacob sent a delegation to his brother Esau to find favor in his sight.

2. Jacob Divides Into Two Companies

(Gen 32:6-8) “The messengers returned to Jacob, saying, “We came to your brother Esau, and furthermore he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him.” {7} Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people who were with him, and the flocks and the herds and the camels, into two companies; {8} for he said, “If Esau comes to the one company and attacks it, then the company which is left will escape.”

The second thing that Jacob does in preparation to meet Esau was to divide into two companies. The delegation that he sent to find favor with Esau came back with a very troubling report. They said that Esau was bringing four hundred men with him to meet Jacob. This sounded like he was bringing an army to attack him. The report brought great fear and distress. If Jacob was fearful before, his fear level just got elevated significantly. So, he divided up the people and the livestock into two companies. He said if Esau comes to one company and attacks it, the other company will be able to escape.

Even though God had revealed His angels to Jacob at Manahaim, and he knows that they are there with him, but he is still acting out of fear. Even though God had promised him at Bethel that He would be with him and bring him back safely, Jacob is still afraid. Sometimes, even though we have God’s promise not to leave us, we still get afraid. It is normal. Sometimes, we are required to take some steps, like divide up into two companies. There is no indication of condemnation or judgment on Jacob for doing what he did.

3. Jacob Cries Out To God

(Gen 32:9-12) “Jacob said, “O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O LORD, who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your relatives, and I will prosper you,’ {10} I am unworthy of all the lovingkindness and of all the faithfulness which You have shown to Your servant; for with my staff only I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two companies. {11} “Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, that he will come and attack me and the mothers with the children. {12} “For You said, ‘I will surely prosper you and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which is too great to be numbered.”

The third thing that Jacob does is cry out to God. In Psalm 56 David had been seized by the Philistines at Gath. He had killed many Philistines and these were his enemies. David is afraid for his life. So, he calls out to God. In verses three and four, he said, “When I am afraid, I will put my trust in You. In God, whose word I praise, in God I have put my trust; I shall not be afraid. What can mere men do to me?” Jacob, like David, was putting his trust in God, and he calls out to God.

I like what he said. He reminds God of what he had spoken to him. In Genesis 28:15 God had told him, “Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” In Genesis 31:3, God said to Jacob, “Return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you.” And in Genesis 31:13, God had told him, “I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar, where you made a vow to Me; now arise, leave this land, and return to the land of your birth.”

It is really good to journal and write down the things that God promises you. It is good to memorize promises in God's word. When you find yourself in certain situations, you can remind God of His promises. I like to pray God's word, and I like to remind God of His promises. Then, I stand on those promises and trust Him to do what He has promised.

The first thing that Jacob did when he cried out to God was remind Him of the promises. The second thing that we see is Jacob's humility. He said, *"I am unworthy of all the lovingkindness and of all the faithfulness which You have shown to Your servant; for with my staff only I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two companies."* He shows humility and gratefulness to God. I find both of these go together. Most arrogant people are not grateful. Most humble people are appreciative of what others or God does for them. I believe that both attitudes are important in prayer. We need to come humbly before God, and we should enter His courts with thanksgiving.

The third thing that we see in Jacob's pray is his request or petition. He asks God to deliver him from the hand of his brother. He tells God that he fears Esau. He is afraid that Esau is going to attack him, his wives, and his children. Then, he reminds God of His promise to prosper him and make his descendants as the sand of the sea.

I want to make a point about praying out of Philippians 4:6-7. Paul wrote, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." This is exactly what Jacob did. He was anxious and fearful, so he goes to God in prayer and with thanksgivings, he lets his requests be made known. The result is going to be that God is going to guard his heart and mind with His peace. When we are anxious and afraid, we need to refuse to be anxious, and we need to go to God in prayer, and let our requests be made known with thanksgivings.

4. Jacob Sends Esau Bountiful Gifts

(Gen 32:13-23) "So he spent the night there. Then he selected from what he had with him a present for his brother Esau: {14} two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, {15} thirty milking camels and their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. {16} He delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, "Pass on before me, and put a space between droves." {17} He commanded the one in front, saying, "When my brother Esau meets you and asks you, saying, 'To whom do you belong, and where are you going, and to whom do these animals in front of you belong?' {18} then you shall say, 'These belong to your servant Jacob; it is a present sent to my lord Esau. And behold, he also is behind us.'" {19} Then he commanded also the second and the third, and all those who followed the droves, saying, "After this manner you shall speak to Esau when you find him; {20} and you shall say, 'Behold, your servant Jacob also is behind us.'" For he said, "I will appease him with the present that goes before me. Then afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me." {21} So the present passed on before him, while he himself spent that night in the camp. {22} Now he arose that same night and took his two wives and his two maids and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. {23} He took them and sent them across the stream. And he sent across whatever he had."

The fourth thing that Jacob does is send a gift to his brother. He has sent out a delegation to find peace and favor. He has divided up his family and flocks into two companies. He has cried out to God, and now he sends a gift to his brother. It is not just a gift. He sends lots of gifts to his brother. He gave:

- Two hundred female goats and twenty male goats
- Two hundred ewes and twenty rams
- Thirty milking camels and their colts (total of sixty camels)
- Forty cows and ten bulls
- Twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys

I did some price checking to see the value of this gift. The average price of a goat today is about \$200.00. Purebreds are much more expensive. When Karen had a goat farm, I bought her some purebred Boer goats that ran \$500.00 each. So, two hundred and twenty goats would be about \$44,000.00 today. The cost of ewes and rams are slightly higher than goats, but if we use the lower amount for goats, that would be another \$44,000.00. Camels are a different matter. The cheapest camel that I could find in the world was in Kenya and the price was \$700.00 each. In most places, the price starts at \$7,500.00 and go up to several hundred thousand. If we used the lowest price in the U.S., the sixty camels would be \$450,000.00. The average price of cows and bulls range between \$125.00 and \$205.00 each. If you want registered purebreds, the price is much higher. If we use an average of \$175.00 each, the total for the fifty cows and bulls would be \$8750.00. The prices for donkeys varied greatly. I saw some as low as \$100.00 and some were \$5,000.00 or more. Saddle-trained donkeys ran in the thousands. If we used \$200.00 per donkey, the value of the thirty donkeys would be \$6,000.00. So, what is the total price of the present that Jacob gives to Esau? Using these modest to low-end prices, the total value today would be \$552,750.00. That is over half a million dollars worth of livestock. That is quite a gift that he is giving to Esau.

In Proverbs 18:16, Solomon wrote, *“A man's gift makes room for him and brings him before great men.”* Jacob's gift was certainly going to make room for him and bring him before Esau. His gift was certain to bring favor. Jacob gave a very generous gift to Esau.

Jacob staggered his gift to Esau. He separated the animals by droves and his servants delivered each drove by itself. Even though it was one gift, it appeared to be one gift after another.

Jacob also commanded all of his servants to give Esau a message. They were to say, “These belong to your servant Jacob; it is a present sent to my lord Esau. And behold, he also is behind us.” Each servant with each drove was to speak the same thing. Esau was going to hear the message repeatedly. Then, behind all of these droves, Jacob was going to follow. Jacob said, “Then afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me.” Jacob was doing everything he could to find favor and acceptance from Esau.

5. Jacob Wrestles With God

(Gen 32:24-32) “Then Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. {25} When he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he touched the socket of his thigh; so the socket of Jacob's thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with him. {26} Then he said, “Let me go, for the dawn is breaking.” But he said, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.” {27} So he said to him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Jacob.” {28} He said,

"Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed." {29} Then Jacob asked him and said, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And he blessed him there. {30} So Jacob named the place Peniel, for he said, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved." {31} Now the sun rose upon him just as he crossed over Penuel, and he was limping on his thigh. {32} Therefore, to this day the sons of Israel do not eat the sinew of the hip which is on the socket of the thigh, because he touched the socket of Jacob's thigh in the sinew of the hip."

Jacob has done everything that he could possibly think of. He has sent a delegation to make peace with Esau. He has divided up his family and flocks into two parties. He has sent a bountiful gift to Esau. He has cried out to God. But Jacob is still struggling. After taking his wives to the ford at Jabbok, he sent them ahead, and stayed behind alone. Jacob needed some time by himself to wrestle with God. God has promised to keep him and to bless him. God has told him to return and yet Esau is coming with an army of 400 men. This is not going down like Jacob had envisioned and hoped for. He is afraid for his life and the life of his wives and children.

When we seek God out, He will meet us. God met Jacob and they wrestled until daybreak. Some commentaries say that Jacob wrestled with an angel. At Manahaim, he saw a camp of angels. I am not in agreement with that interpretation. After struggling all night, the man renames Jacob and said his name will be Israel. Jacob means supplanter, but Israel means one who strives with God. The man told Jacob that he had striven with men and with God and had prevailed, so his name will be Israel. Then, Jacob asked the man what His name was. The man said, "Why is it that you ask My name?" And the man blessed Jacob. "So Jacob named the place Peniel, for he said, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved.'" Panim in Hebrew means face and el means God. Peniel or Penuel means face of God. Jacob declares that he has seen the face of God. Therefore, I believe that the man that Jacob struggled with was God in the flesh. I believe that God has appeared as an angel in the flesh.

In Hosea 12:4, the prophet said that Jacob wrestled with the angel and prevailed. The Hebrew word is malak, which means messenger. That is also what the word angel means. I believe that Jacob wrestled with the angel of the Lord, which was God in the form of an angel.

Hosea 12:4 Yes, he wrestled with the angel (malak) and prevailed; He wept and sought His favor. He found Him at Bethel And there He spoke with us,

In Genesis 18, three men appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre. It reads, "Now the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day. When he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him." After the meeting two of them went on to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah and the Lord stayed behind and revealed to Abraham what He was getting ready to do. In Genesis 19:1, it says, "Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening..." These are the two that left the Lord and Abraham. So the Lord appeared in the form of a man, which was also in the form of an angel.

(Gen 18:1-2) "Now the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day. {2} When he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth,"

(Gen 19:1) “Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground.”

At the end of Jacob’s wrestling match with God, God saw that he had not prevailed over Jacob and so He touched Jacob’s socket at the thigh and dislocates it. Then, He tells Jacob to let go of Him, but Jacob refuses to let go. Jacob said that he would not let go unless God blesses him. So, God blessed him there and then changed his name to Israel. This is significant because Jacob meant supplanter or deceiver. He received his father’s blessing by deceiving. However, he has now received God’s blessing by striving with God, which is what Israel means.

Conclusion and Applications

As we come to a close, I want to mention one more significant thing from this passage. In Genesis 33:20, Jacob erects an altar and calls it El-Elohe-Israel, which means, God, the God of Israel. Jacob knew God, and had met God at Bethel. But, at Peniel, he wrestled with God. He came to a different place in his walk with the Lord. This was a turning point. God was no longer the God of Abraham, and Isaac. God was now the God of Israel. His identity had changed. He came out of this trial and wrestling with God as a different person.

(Gen 33:20) “Then he erected there an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel.”

God will take the difficult circumstances and times in our lives to change us. In Romans 5:3-5, Paul said that the tribulations in our lives bring about perseverance and then proven character. Therefore, he urges us to exult in our tribulations.

(Rom 5:3-5) “And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; {4} and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; {5} and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

James said the same thing. He said we should consider it all joy when we encounter various trials. Why? Because the testing of our faith produces endurance, and endurance will make us mature and complete, lacking in nothing. God uses these trials in our lives to help us become more like Him. We may come out limping, but our character will be more like Christ. We can rejoice that Jacob came out with a stronger and deeper faith, and we too will come out looking more like Jesus.

(James 1:2-4) “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, {3} knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. {4} And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

What about you this morning? Have you been going through a trial in your life? Is there something that you are fearful or anxious about? God wants to encourage you this morning. First, He wants you to know that you are at Manahaim. His angels are there with you. God is with you and will never forsake you. Even though you may walk through the shadows of death, He will be with you.

Second, stand on God's promises. God is faithful and will do what He said He will do. He did it for Jacob, and He will do it for you. Stand on God's promises. That is what Jacob did. He reminded God of the promises that He had given to him. Remind God of His promises.

Third, pour out your heart before God. Jacob cried out to God. He was honest before God. He told him that he was afraid of Esau. We have to be real before God. He knows our thoughts and everything about us. You can't hide from God. Get real and pour out your heart to Him. Be humble and grateful as you lift up your petitions to the Lord.

Fourth, when you are really struggling, let the others go ahead and stay behind to talk to God. Get alone with God. Hold on to him while you are wrestling. Don't let go. God will meet you where you are. Seek Him and you will find Him, when you search for Him with your whole heart.

Let's pray.

Introduction (2 Chron 16:9, Num 23:19)

1. **Jacob Sends A Delegation.** (Gen 32:1-5, Rom 8:31, Josh 1:9, Gen 26:24, 1 Chron 28:20, Luke 2:52, Pr 3:3-4)

2. **Jacob Divides Into Two Companies** (Gen 32:6-8)

3. **Jacob Cries Out To God** (Gen 32:9-12, Ps 56:3-4, Gen 28:15, 31:3, 31:13, Phil 4:6-7)

4. **Jacob Sends Esau Bountiful Gifts** (Gen 32:13-23, Pr 18:16)

5. **Jacob Wrestles With God** (Gen 32:24-32, Hos 12:4, Gen 19:1, 18:1-2)

Conclusion and Applications (Gen 33:20, Rom 5:3-5, James 1:2-4)