

Genesis 32-33 • Jacob Wrestles with God

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Genesis chapter 32 is where we are, make sure your Bible is open there. Genesis chapter 32, as we get into this chapter we're going to see some interesting things. If I use the phrase, the stuttering steps of faith, do you know what I mean by that? I'm talking about the fact that our life of faith is not a perfect one.

We struggle, we stutter, we fall down, we stumble, we get back up and then we have a day of success and victory, and then we have a day that's messed up again and that's just kind of life. And what we're going to see in these chapters, is the growth of Jacob as a man spiritually but we're also going to take note of his stuttering steps and failures, even in the midst of growth.

And we're going to see that his faith was not perfect by any stretch and I hope that will be an encouragement to you as we go through this. So let's begin with prayer, can we?

Father God, we just come together as the family of God. We thank you for this time, we thank you for this gathering, we thank you for being able to come together.

We thank you, Father, for the freedom in our nation that we still have to gather and to worship the Lord, our God, the creator of all things. We thank you, Lord, for your Word. We thank you that we can come together and study the Word.

And I pray, my Father God, that all of us would have ears to hear and eyes to see, and a heart to receive tonight and to hear your voice through the midst of this study.

I pray, my Father, that you would guide and direct my words and help me Father not to misspeak anything that's going on in these chapters. And just really pray for all of us to be responsive tonight to your leading. We ask you to guide us through this study in Jesus name, amen. Amen.

Now, as we get into chapter 32 of Genesis, I think we need to get a little bit of history here, a little context. Because I need you to remember, because this

chapter is so much based on the drama that had been brewing earlier between Jacob and his twin brother Esau. You'll remember that between those two boys, Esau was born first and because he was born first, he was in line to receive the inheritance and the blessing that goes along with it, at least from a cultural standpoint. Firstborn sons were everything. I mean, if you were the firstborn, man you were wow, that was a great blessing.

Now, in this case, it was probably just minutes between the birth of the firstborn and the second born but that doesn't matter. Culturally speaking, Esau was in line to receive the inheritance of his father and the blessing that went along with it.

Now, the difference is, that before the boys were born, God gave a message to Rebekah and Isaac, the parents, and said to them, that the older will serve the younger. And in so saying, the Lord made it clear that God was going to break the cultural mold and He was going to bring the blessing of inheritance on the younger son. Again, contrary to culture.

And then the reason simply was is God had chosen Jacob over Esau. Well, unfortunately, Jacob, along with his mother, Rebekah resorted to deception in order to secure that which God had already determined. I don't believe they had to, God used it but they didn't have to.

And the trickery that they brought into the situation in order to get Isaac to give the blessing to Jacob caused a terrible rift between the boys. It angered Esau to the point that he planned to kill his brother and he said, all I need to do is wait until dad dies and as soon as he does, I'm going to kill my brother Jacob.

Well, Rebecca overheard that whole thing and decided to convince her husband, Isaac to send Jacob away to her brother Laban in the land of Heron and he did so. There Jacob married and has had many children.

It's now 20 years later and Jacob is on his way back to Canaan with his entire family and all of his belongings. Must have been an amazing thing to see this entire clan, traveling through the desert with all their animals and all their, you know, the kids and so on and so on and servants and so forth.

But as you think about this in your mind, I want to remind you that Jacob was the kind of man who in his life had made deals with God. We saw that when he was on his way to Haran. He was the kind of man who manipulated people to get what he wanted. And for 20 years now he'd been living in Haran with his uncle, Laban, who was a man very much like himself, a man very much like

Jacob. So Jacob kind of met his match a little bit in good old uncle Laban. But we've noted over the course of the 20 years in our last studies, over the course of the 20 years that Jacob was there in Haran, we noted his spiritual growth.

We noted the fact that he had been gradually coming to realize that God was behind the blessings that he had received while there and it was not because of his manipulation or successful reworking of circumstances or whatever, but that God, in fact, had been blessing him.

And now he is returning home, but he knew that by returning home, he would have to face his brother Esau. Now, the last thing he knew, the last thing he heard, 20 years earlier, was that Esau wanted him dead. And that's all he knows, he hasn't had any updates to that.

He doesn't even know that in the 20 years since he left, his mother has passed away. He doesn't know and so he doesn't know why she hasn't called him to come back home. For all he knows, her lack of calling him back home was proof that Esau was still mad and still wanted him dead. So he has no way of knowing what he's going to find.

Can you relate? Have you ever faced a situation in your life, where the path ahead was unknown? We all have at some point and it's a scary thing, it's a scary thing. You tread lightly in situations like that, usually. So anyway, he doesn't know if any, all this stuff is behind him or not at this point.

So we begin reading here in chapter 32, verse 1, and it says, *“Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. ²And when Jacob saw them he said, “This is God's camp!” So he called the name of that place Mahanaim.” (ESV)*

And Mahanaim simply means, two camps. Because his camp, his entire family and servants and belongings were there, camped where they were and he was allowed to see angels. And so, he does something that is very similar that he did on his way to Haran. You'll remember he saw angels then as well and he named that location, you'll remember, Bethel, or Beth-el, the house of God. And now he names this place the Camp of God, or two camps, if you will.

But I want to talk for just a moment about the appearance, or I should say, the fact that God allowed Jacob to see this appearance of angels. Undoubtedly, this was intended by God to reinforce Jacob's awareness of the Lord's providential supervision of both his journey and his family. I don't know about you, I've never seen any angels, I'd love to, that'd be cool. Before I go to be with the Lord, I wouldn't mind it if God allowed me to see angels. I'd probably freak out,

I don't know, I'm not really sure how I'd respond. But I don't imagine the Lord does it unless there's a purpose behind it, right? And I think the purpose here is pretty clear. He knows, God knows that Jacob is..., this is the unknown, there's a lot of unknown related to going home.

Again, he doesn't know how Esau is going to respond to his coming home. And so when he's facing, or as he's facing, the unknown, the Lord allows this appearance of angels as a sign to Jacob that God is here. He's overseeing, He is supernaturally and providentially guiding and superintending and so on and so forth. And that ought to have been a great encouragement to Jacob.

But it goes on in verse 3 to say, *“And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom, ⁴ instructing them, “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, donkeys, flocks, male servants, and female servants. I have sent to tell my lord, in order that I may find favor in your sight.’”* So he sends a message to let Esau know he's on his way.

“⁶ And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, “We came to your brother Esau, and he is coming to meet you, and there are four hundred men with him.” That's quite a welcome wagon that Jacob is now hearing is on his way. He's assuming, again, the last thing he knows, Esau wants him dead. So why in the world would Esau be coming with 400 men?

Well, it says in verse 7, *“Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed. He divided the people who were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two camps, ⁸ thinking, “If Esau comes to the one camp and attacks it, then the camp that is left will escape.””*

Well, that's a pretty dark kind of a response to this whole thing, to consider that, well, maybe half of us will survive. But this is a very interesting response of Jacob when you think about it. I want you to remember that in our previous study, the Lord instructed Jacob to go home, the Lord told him to go home.

And the Lord had been telling him or reminding him through the course of this 20 years about the promise that had been given originally to Abraham, that had been passed down to his father Isaac, Jacob's father Isaac, and now was also on Jacob himself. So he knew these things. There's a promise related to my life and God has instructed me to go home and that should have been enough to bolster him in the midst of this unknown situation. And yet, we're told here that Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed.

Now, what we're going to see here in the coming verses, in the way of a response to this situation, is going to picture for us both the old version of Jacob and the newer, more spiritually mature version of Jacob that we're starting to see or we've been starting to see emerge over these 20 years. First, and to his credit, we're going to see that Jacob begins with prayer and that's always a good thing, start with prayer.

Verse 9, *“And 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 kindred, that I may do you good,’”*

What is Jacob doing here? What do you see him doing? Well, yeah, you might say, well, I see him praying. Well, yeah, but exactly how is he praying? You'll notice he is beginning by reminding the Lord of the succession of connection between Abraham, Isaac, and himself. And then he even quotes God's own words back to Him and says, who said to me, return to your homeland, notice that. What is Jacob doing here?

He's reminding the Lord that his journey is one of obedience. It is in connection with the Word of the Lord. It is in connection with God's direction and will in his life and what does that do? Think about that, what does that do? That puts the responsibility on God, doesn't it?

Do you know that God is not bothered when you put responsibility on His shoulders? He's not bothered by that. He's never going to freak out and go, oh, well, don't put that on me. You might say that, I might say that, if you try to put some kind of a responsibility on my shoulders that I'm not really all that willing to carry. God is always willing, if it's His Word, if it's His promise, if it's something He's laid out in the scriptures.

You see, we get news in life from time to time, just like Jacob got news about Esau coming with a welcome wagon of 400 men. And the news that we receive from time to time in our lives can put us in the same emotional tailspin that Jacob is now in and it's the enemy's way. And you got to know the enemy loves that, he loves it when you get into an emotional tailspin, because that's when he's going to attack.

Satan never wants to give you a break, he's never going to say, oh, I can see you're going through a rough time, I'm going to back off a bit. No, no, no, he's going to exploit those situations to the nth degree. So that's when the enemy is going to attack. He knows that you're going to be at your weakest and fear is

rising and what he's basically saying to you is, you're a pauper, you're a pauper. You're too poor to deal with this situation.

Here's the point though, you have this unlimited bank account called the Word of God and you can meet that accusation of poverty with these unlimited riches. I use that sort of a metaphor because that's the way Corrie Ten Boom used to look at it, she used to she used to say that. In fact, in her book, she wrote that when the Lord would give her a directive and then something bad would happen in the midst of following that directive, the enemy would rush in at a time like that and tell her that she was a pauper, she was poor and there was no way she was going to be able to follow this thing that the Lord had told her to do. And she said, every time that happens, I would sit down and I would open up my bank account, meaning her Bible.

And she says, I would find a promise in God's Word that spoke to that issue and I would write it down and I would imagine that I was writing out a check that was going to meet that particular demand. And she..., it's just like you tear it out of your checkbook and say, there, paid in full. And I always loved that picture because it just reminds us that we don't need to believe the lies of the enemy at a time like that.

And when fear and doubt begins to rise up in our hearts, we don't have to give into that, we can resist the devil and that's what the Bible tells us to do. And what a great way to put up resistance, but through the very Word of God. To quote the scripture, to open up our hearts and our minds and to just speak out the Word of God.

Take the sword of the Spirit, you guys, and swing it, take it out and swing it. It's been given to you as a defensive and offensive weapon against the work of the enemy and against fear. And I like that Jacob is..., this is good stuff here, this is the more mature version of Jacob beginning to deal with these issues in life. I love the fact that the first thing he does is pray and he reminds the Lord.

Verse 10, I want you to notice also his humility. He says, *"I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps."*

And this is so beautiful you guys, this is the next thing Jacob does and I love this too. He expresses his own personal weakness and his lack of deserving, lack of worthiness concerning the Lord and the things that God has done. He's looking back on the last 20 years and all the blessings and he's saying, I didn't

deserve a single thing you gave me. I was not worthy of anything you gave me, but you did it because you loved me, that's why you did it. You blessed me because you're good, not because I'm good. I'm not good, I didn't deserve any of this and he's really speaking of his weakness.

But there's a principle here, humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord. What's the promise from God's Word? He will lift you up, humble yourself in the sight of the Lord. When you're going through a rough time, when fear and doubt is rising up, humble yourself and it's okay to say, Lord, I can't deal with this. We try to be so strong, we think that our faith means that we have to be strong in ourselves, guys, that's wrong.

Faith means we're strong in the Lord, not in self. Jacob isn't lifting up or elevating himself right now, he's humbling himself that he might be lifted up, that he might be strengthened to face this issue and I love that. You know, there's that scripture that the apostle Paul gives us in second Corinthians 12, where he's talking about the thorn in his flesh and how the Lord spoke to him in the midst of that thorn and said, my power is made perfect in weakness.

Think about that people, His power is made perfect in our weakness, not our strength. He's the one who makes us strong, but it's not our strength, it's His strength. What we do is, we admit to Him that we're not strong. Lord, I'm not strong enough to deal with this, I'm not strong enough to endure this, I'm not strong enough to go through this.

I'm not strong enough to beat this, but you are. Lord, you are and I humble myself and I've never deserved any good thing that you've given to me. And I'm praying for this to be given to me, and I don't deserve this either, but I'm going to trust you, I'm going to trust you. I just think these are beautiful words.

His request comes in verse 11. If you look with me there, he says, "*Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, ...*" What is he doing here? He's laying out his request. The Bible says, lay out your requests, right, before God. You have not because you asked not. (James 4:2)

He says, "*...deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for (he tells him right out) I fear him, (I fear my brother) that he may come and attack me, the mothers with the children.*" I'm afraid, Lord, I'm afraid.

Oh we've been influenced. Now I'm not saying we, but the body of Christ has been so negatively influenced by the positive confession movement and the positive confession movement has basically, I don't know, they hoodwinked us

into thinking that if I said anything negative or anything that expressed my weakness or something like that, that I..., that was going to create a reality. So dumb.

I love how Jacob just comes out here and says I'm afraid. David does the same thing, I love David's prayers in the Psalms, don't you? David didn't believe in positive confession, David just got down and dirty with God. He laid it out and he said, if you don't help me God, I'm a goner, and that's a loose paraphrase of a very prophetic sort of a, remark made by David.

But that's the essence of what he said. Lord, if you don't help me, if you don't lift me up, I will sleep in the dust of the earth, that means I'm going to die. Is that positive confession? No, that's just plain old honesty and God wants you to be honest. Lord, I need help, I'm afraid, I need you to be here right now.

And then Jacob reminds the Lord again of the promise He had made. Look at verse 12. *"But you said, (I love this) 'I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.'"*

Look at there, he's quoting God's Word and that's the other thing that you and I need to remember to do when we're going through rough times. We find a promise in God's word that speaks specifically to the issue we're dealing with and we tear it out and we quote it. We quote it back to the Lord and while we're praying, we say, Lord, here's what you said.

And again, God doesn't mind you holding Him to His Word. You just go right ahead and tell Him, Lord, you said this and I'm going to stand on it by faith, right? This is a great, this is a great prayer, it's a great prayer. You see some great principles here of how to pray.

So verse 13 says, *"So he stayed there that night, ..."* Now, if Jacob would have stopped right there, and I know I'm stopping in the middle of a verse. But if Jacob would have stopped right there after his prayer and just said, Lord, I'm going to trust in you, I'm not going to do..., I'm not going to move one inch. I'm not going to do one thing, I'm just going to trust that you're going to help me. It would have been good because what we've been seeing here in this prayer is the new, more mature and spiritually with it Jacob, but that's not what he did. Because we don't always do things perfectly either.

"¹³ So he stayed there that night, (and from what it says) and from what he had with him he took a present for his brother Esau, ¹⁴ two hundred female goats (200 female goats! and this is just a small portion of what he has with him, 200)

and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, ¹⁵ thirty milking camels and their calves, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys.” I didn't do the math, I don't know if you did on that. How many animals that came to, I didn't think it up ahead of time, but that's a lot, that's a huge herd. Now, what's he doing here?

Verse 16. *“These he handed over to his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, “Pass on ahead of me and put a space between drove and drove.” ¹⁷ He instructed the first, “When Esau my brother meets you and asks you, ‘To whom do you belong? Where are you going? And whose are these ahead of you?’ ¹⁸ then you shall say, ‘They belong to your servant Jacob. They are a present sent to my lord Esau. And moreover, he is behind us.’”*

¹⁹ He likewise instructed the second and the third and all who followed the droves, “You shall say the same thing to Esau when you find him, ²⁰ and you shall say, ‘Moreover, your servant Jacob is behind us.’” For he thought, (here it is) “I may appease him with the present that goes ahead of me, and afterward I shall see his face. Perhaps he will accept me.” ²¹ So the present passed on ahead of him, and he himself stayed that night in the camp.”

Alright, pause there for a moment, this is the old Jacob. And this is why I said at the very beginning about stutter steps of faith. Because right after an incredible prayer that was really well said and very, very full of faith, he reverts back to the old Jacob and we do, too, sometimes. You know, there's the new man that the Bible talks about in the New Testament that is living in us.

That is that person that God is making us to be through His Holy Spirit. It is the redeemed man, the being sanctified man, the believer. And isn't it great if that would just in control of our lives all the time and there was never any hitch to any of that and we just were like smooth sailing. I'm a Christian, man, I'll tell you, I never make any mistakes anymore because I'm a believer in Jesus and now my life is just smooth sailing. Wouldn't that be great? It's just not true, we stutter, we fall down, we make mistakes, we fail, we fail.

We've been talking about this with the picture of Peter, even, you know, as we finished our study in John last Sunday. We discussed that, that whole issue of Peter, the new Peter, the old Peter, so on and so forth. I'm sure you see it in your own life and I know that some of you get really discouraged when the old person, the old man, rears his head. I know you do because I hear from you and I hear from others as well. And some people are just so distressed to the point where they actually doubt their salvation. They begin to doubt whether they were actually, truly, genuinely saved just because they fell down and made a

mistake and the old man, and I'm using man in a non-gender specific way, you understand that. The old man reared his ugly head. Well, I'm telling you right now, that does not give a commentary on your salvation, you just need to know that.

A saved person stutters in their faith from time to time. We all do and so you just be very careful. I've said this before, I'm going to say it again. Be very, very careful when it comes to this whole issue of doubting your salvation because once again, that's one of those things that the enemy will pounce on and I mean, pounce on and make you miserable.

I've had notes from people who literally can't sleep at night because they are so worried that they have somehow walked away from God or were never saved in the first place and can't be saved. And it's because they've gone through a period of failure and you need to know there's a road back. We, again, we talked about this in our study of John chapter 21 just last Sunday. We talked about the road back, how Jesus appeared to direct Peter to help Peter on the road back to restoration and there's a road back for you too. Okay, let's move on.

Now, as we get into the next verses, these are quite interesting and the Lord is going to show Jacob here what his relationship with God has been like for the last 20 some years.

Verse 22, *“The same night he arose and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. ²³ He took them and sent them across the stream, and everything else that he had. ²⁴ And Jacob was left alone. And a man (and we're going to find out this man is the angel of the Lord, the Lord Himself, but it says, *And a man*) wrestled with him until the breaking of the day.*

²⁵ *When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, (and I'll explain that in a minute) he touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him.”* Pause there for a moment.

So this is really an interesting passage. Jacob is wrestling with God and that is a picture of how he's been living. And that's a picture of how many of us lived our life, perhaps, before Christ, and maybe even a little while after we came to know Jesus.

We wrestled, we wrestled with God. We wrestled with His Word, we wrestled with His will, we wrestled with His plans, His agenda in our lives. We wrestled, we fought, we kicked, we bucked. We bit like a, like an ornery horse that

doesn't want to let you on his back. I'm going to bite and nip and kick and buck because I don't want to submit, I don't want to submit and that's why horses do that, by the way, they don't want to submit.

And that's why we do it to God, because we don't want to submit. This whole idea of surrender is a real challenging thing in the Christian life and Jacob is getting this lesson from the Lord up close and personal about the kind of a relationship he's had with God.

And I don't know if you can relate to this or not and maybe you might even say, well, you know, that's kind of like my relationship with God has been or was in the past. I wrestled with God a lot. He'd say something in His Word and I was like, I don't know about that and I'm not sure if that's true. And I get that from people all the time and they always start their question with, if.

If God says da, da, da, then why does da...? And I always come back and go, yeah, well, there's no if, first of all. God said that, are you going to deal with it or not? Are you going to just, you're going to wrestle? I'm going to fight God.

So he's wrestling and it makes this statement that's kind of interesting saying that when the man realized that he did not prevail against Jacob. And you have to understand there that He's saying that Jacob's will is strong and he's just almost unbreakable in his will but then look what happens.

All the Lord has to do is reach out and just touch his hip and boom, his hip goes out of the socket. And any of you who had any sort of a thing come out of a socket, you know that is an excruciatingly painful sort of a situation. Some of you have fallen, like in the winter on the ice, you've dislocated elbows, shoulders, things like..., even dislocated finger, ouch. It's terrible and it looks weird too.

But I remember Tim who was wrestling one time in the house with some older kids and he dislocated his shoulder. We didn't really know what was wrong and so we took him, Sue and I, he was like four years old, we took him to the ER. We were kind of afraid, you know, it's like, what did he do? Did he break?

And the doctor kind of looked at him, turned his hand, just went boop! And it was like back and we're like, what did you..., yeah, he just dislocated his shoulder, or was it his elbow? It was his elbow and he literally just turned his hand a certain way, poof, popped it back in and it was a simple sort of a matter, but man, it was painful, very painful. And you notice how the Lord simply just touches Jacob's hip and it, and he goes out of joint.

So we see here that the Lord could have prevailed over Jacob at any moment, and the Lord could prevail over you at any moment too, any moment.

And the Lord makes us to understand that this wrestling match is one that He can win anytime He wants, and He'll let us wrestle. He'll allow us to wrestle, even though He has the ultimate power and the ultimate say.

But you know what happens when you wrestle with God and God finally comes to that point in time, like with Jacob, where it's time to make a point. It's as simple as this, it's as simple as a touch.

Now in my life, the touch was my marriage. Sue and I had been married 5 years and we hadn't walked with the Lord those entire five 5, never went to church. And our marriage went the way of the world and that was the Lord's touch. And it was just like a bone going out of its socket.

It was very painful, very distressing but it got our attention, both of us. And this also got Jacob's attention, but you end up limping the rest of your life. It's not a bad thing, it's just a reminder. I'm not going to wrestle with God anymore, that's all.

I know that Jacob limped the rest of his life and there are some of us right here and you could, if you could, if you had time, if we had time, you could stand up, you could talk about that time in your life when God touched you in a way that got your attention. And yeah, you'll probably limp the rest of your life, but it's going to be the best reminder of your life because you'll never wrestle that way with God again.

Verse 26 says, *“Then he said, “Let me go, for the day has broken.” But Jacob said, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.”* I love, this is great. This is part of the new Jacob with his... It's like, God, I want you in my life and I'm not going to let go, I'm not letting go of you ever again. I've seen your power, I've seen what you can do. I'm never going to let you go, I won't let you go unless you bless me.

I think about Moses having a similar kind of a reaction where the Lord spoke to Moses at one point when the people of Israel had rebelled. And the Lord finally said, that's it, I'm not going to go with you anymore. I'm not going to, you take these people, but I'm not going to go with you. If I do, I'm liable to just nuke the whole lot of them and so I'm... And you know, remember what Moses said to God? It was one of the greatest things Moses ever said. He said, I'm not moving an inch without you, you don't go, I don't go. And again, that's a paraphrase, but

that's exactly the essence of what he communicated to God. And that's really what Jacob is saying too. I'm not letting go unless your blessing follows me in my life.

And so verse 27 says, *“And he (that’s the Lord) said to him, (Jacob) “What is your name?” (and he said, heel catcher, remember, that's what Jacob means, deceiver) And he said, (my name is) “Jacob.”²⁸ Then he said, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed.””*

So here's what Jacob said, he said, I'm not letting go until you bless me and look what the... Here's the blessing that God gave to Jacob, a new name, He gave him a new name, that was the blessing.

You think, well that's not that big of a deal, oh, yes it is. Because it is a reminder that this is a new man, this is a new man who has wrestled with God who has understood now, for the first time perhaps in his life, the significance of the power of God to deal with him in his life and so forth.

And his new name, Israel, is a promise of a future walking with God whereas the old name was just a constant reminder of his past and the way he dealt with life by manipulating people, by manipulating circumstances and by making deals with God. What's your name? Jacob, yeah no, no, that's your old past, you're a new man.

You know, the Bible says that we're going to all receive a new name one day, you know that? That only we know. We're going to receive a new name from the Lord and that new name is, I'm assuming is going to be reflective of the newness of our lives. Not that your old name or the name that you have now is necessarily a bad name or whatever, but God's going to give you a new one.

And that's a very cool thought when you think about it, particularly in light of what we're seeing here. By the way the name Israel is variously translated as, either God rules or one who strives with God or even a prince of God, take your pick. Suffice it to say, it holds many meanings, but they're all positive ones for Jacob. They speak of the newness of his life and so God gave Jacob a new name.

So in verse 29, *“Then Jacob asked him, “Please tell me your name.” But he said, “Why is it that you ask my name?” And there he blessed him.³⁰ So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, “For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered.””* And Peniel means, Face of God.

And it says in verse 31, *“The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, ...”* Now, did you notice that's a different word than the name that Jacob gave to the place? Interesting, isn't it? But you know what? They both mean the same thing, they both mean, Face of God.

And it says, oh, and this is interesting, *“The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip.”* There it is, he limped for the rest of his life.

“³² Therefore to this day the people of Israel do not eat the sinew of the thigh that is on the hip socket, because he touched the socket of Jacob's hip on the sinew of the thigh.” And that wasn't really anything necessarily that God told them to do, they just did it that way in a sense of remembering.

Wow, I was going to do a whole other chapter, I don't think I will, I don't think I can. Because we've got really the, well, can I get through this and read this? Okay, I'm just going to read this, alright?

Chapter 33, here we go. *“And Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two female servants. ² And he put the servants with their children in front, then Leah with her children, and Rachel and Joseph last of all. ³ He himself went on before them, bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.*

⁴ But Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. ⁵ And when Esau lifted up his eyes and saw the women and children, he said, “Who are these with you?” Jacob said, “The children whom God has graciously given your servant.” ⁶ Then the servants drew near, they and their children, and bowed down.”

Can you imagine how Jacob is feeling right now? After that night of drama and wrestling and all of the fear and all of the this and the praying and, you know. And Esau runs to him and grabs him and begins to kiss him and weep over him and, oh, mercy, what an incredible thing.

Verse 7, *“Leah likewise and her children drew near and bowed down. And last Joseph and Rachel drew near, and they bowed down. ⁸ Esau said, “What do you mean by all this company that I met?” Jacob answered, “To find favor in the sight of my lord.””* So he just admits why it was given.

“⁹ But Esau said, “I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself.” ¹⁰ Jacob said, “No, please, if I have found favor in your sight, then accept my present from my hand. For I have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of God, and you have accepted me. ¹¹ Please accept my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, (there’s that acknowledging of the Lord) and because I have enough.” Thus he urged him, and he took it.

¹² Then Esau said, “Let us journey on our way, and I will go ahead of you.” ¹³ But Jacob said to him, “My lord knows that the children are frail, and that the nursing flocks and herds are a care to me. If they are driven hard for one day, all the flocks will die. ¹⁴ Let my lord pass on ahead of his servant, and I will lead on slowly, at the pace of the livestock that are ahead of me and at the pace of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir.””

Notice what he's saying here. I'll meet you there and that's..., by the way, Seir, Edom, that's way south, it's way south of Canaan.

“¹⁵ So Esau said, “Let me leave with you some of the people who are with me.” (you know, to help out) But he said, “What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my lord.” ¹⁶ So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir.”” And that's, of course, in the land of Edom, or what it was, became known as.

“¹⁷ But Jacob journeyed to Succoth, ...” And the reason the but appears at the beginning of that verse, is because Succoth was north instead of south, where he said he was going to go and that's what Jacob had told his brother. So, you know, we're kind of seeing the old Jacob, there's those stutter steps again, like I was saying. We're kind of seeing the old Jacob acting like the old version of himself instead of the new man who is trusting in the Lord and true to his word, right? Instead, he went to Succoth.

And it says, *“¹⁷ ...and built himself a house and made booths for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.”* And by the way, Succoth means booths because he built booths there to live in. And by the way, that is why the Jewish Feast of Booths or Feast of Tabernacles is called the Feast of Succoth, because that's the same word.

“¹⁸ And Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, on his way from Paddan-aram, and he camped before the city. ¹⁹ And from the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, he bought for a hundred pieces of money the piece of land on which he had pitched his tent. ²⁰ There he erected an altar and called it (God, the God of Israel, that's) El-Elohe-Israel.” God, the

God of Israel. Oh, that didn't take very long, that was just five minutes. But you know what I want to end tonight here with by making a point, just one last point, if I may, about Jacob.

Because what we've been seeing here throughout the course of these chapters is Jacob vacillating back and forth between trusting the Lord, putting his faith in God, and then trying to work out his own deliverance.

And we saw that primarily through, praying first, that was the trust part, and then coming up with all these presents for his brother in the form of these animals, these droves of animals that he sent on ahead of himself so that he would appease his brother. So in that sense he's working out his own deliverance.

He's working to deliver himself rather than trusting the Lord to deliver him. You get it? So think about that for a minute and let me ask you a question. Have you ever done something to try to work out your own deliverance? You see yourself in a fix and you pray about it just like Jacob, but as soon as you get done praying, you get busy doing what you think you need to do to work out what you think you need to do to make it happen the way you need it to happen.

And guys, can I just tell you this? We do this without even realizing it. We do works of deliverance on our own behalf without even realizing it. It's just, it's a knee jerk reaction. Why are you doing that? Well, it's got to be done. No, you're doing it to save yourself instead of trusting in the Lord to save you, you're doing it to save yourself.

I was so impacted by the book, The Autobiography of George Mueller, because George was a man who trusted in the Lord alone. And he understood the idea of trying to force the situation, manipulate the circumstances of the situation, in such a way as to get it to go in his own favor. And he knew that was contrary to faith, the life of faith, to try to work out your own situation. God, I need help. Kind of reminds me of my friend years ago back in Montana who prayed for enough money to buy a new stereo, he wanted a new stereo badly. Prayed for the money to have a stereo and then promptly got the money from his mom. Mom, can I have money to buy a stereo?

Anyway, when I read what I read, George Mueller was writing about keys to building your faith, to making sure that your faith is built up instead of torn down. And one of the keys that he talked about was this very issue of being very careful not to work out your own deliverance. I want to share this quote with you on the screen.

He says this,

*The last important point for the strengthening of our faith is that we let God work for us and do not work a deliverance of our own. When a trial of faith comes, we're naturally inclined to distrust God and to trust in ourselves, in our friends, or in circumstances. We would rather work a deliverance of our own than simply look to God and wait for His help. But if we do not patiently wait for God's help or if we work a deliverance of our own, then at the next trial of our faith, we will have the same problem. — **The Autobiography of George Mueller***

He goes on to say,

*We will again be inclined to try and deliver ourselves. With every fresh trial, our faith will decrease. On the contrary, if we stand firm in order to see the salvation of God, trusting in Him alone, our faith will be increased. Every time we see the hand of God stretched out on our behalf in the hour of trial, our faith would be increased even more. God will prove his willingness to help and deliver at the perfect time. — **The Autobiography of George Mueller***

Isn't that a great quote? By the way, that book is in our bookstore, it's a great read. Because this man is a man who, he ran an orphanage, several orphanages as a matter of fact and never once, never one time ask for financial help, never once and God provided every time. So if that's one of those kind of bolsters of faith that you think you might be encouraged by, it's a good read, so, let's pray. Kids are going to be done, by the way, in about 5 minutes.

Father, we thank you so much for the time tonight to get into your Word. We thank you for these chapters that we've been able to go through and we thank you, Father, for the reminders that, you know, we don't live a life of perfect faith. And like Jacob, we do stutter, we vacillate, and we go back and forth between trusting you and trusting in ourselves.

But Lord, we've been made aware tonight in a very special way, that to trust in ourselves is to actually do damage to our faith. And so we pray in Jesus name that Lord, when trials of faith come our way, that we would trust you with all of our hearts and lean not on our own understanding and wait on the Lord for the deliverance that we need.

Lord, help us, help us every day to grow a little more in our faith, to stand on your promises, to remind you of your Word and to trust the Lord. Be with us, we pray. We ask it in Jesus name, amen. God bless you.