

27. Two natures within

9/11/2005

We all have heard that many people identify themselves with Peter, one of the disciples of Jesus because of his mistakes and problems with his mouth. But not many people have said that they are like Jacob – the supplanter, trickster and con-man. Because it is one thing to be a klutz and fumbling idiot, but it is a completely different and hard thing to admit that we are cheaters and conniving people without God.

This morning we are going to see a man who were guided by God to go back to his home land. But he is afraid what might happen to him and his family there. So he comes up with his old con-man's tricks again and again. But our God was gracious and long-suffering not only to put up with Jacob, but also he was willing to correct him with whatever means. Yes, that is what the Lord our God would do for us, too. Because He loves us as His children and He will do whatever it takes to make us to be more like Jesus our Savior.

A. GOD'S CAMP

Genesis 32:1-2 So Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. 2 When Jacob saw them, he said, "This is God's camp." And he called the name of that place Mahanaim.

Jacob noticed that he was not alone. God had a camp of angels with him at Mahanaim. Now Jacob could see God's angels with him and it provided great encouragement to him.

This wonderful revelation of God's presence and care came after Jacob finally separated from Laban, the worldly man. Separation from the world brings greater insight about God to the believer.

God gives us a lot of reminders that He is in control of everything all the time. It is up to us to accept His reminders. But if we choose not to accept His reminders, even if God Himself shows up in front of our faces, we still would be afraid and fret about future for nothing.

B. THE FOUR HUNDRED MEN WELCOMING PARTY

Genesis 32:3-8 Then Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. 4 And he commanded them, saying, "Speak thus to my lord Esau, 'Thus your servant Jacob says: "I have dwelt with Laban and stayed there until now. 5 I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, and male and female servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in your sight."'" 6 Then the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, "We came to your brother Esau, and he also is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him." 7 So Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two companies. 8 And he said, "If Esau comes to the one company and attacks it, then the other company which is left will escape."

Jacob was not so sure about this four hundred men welcoming party. He was wondering if this is gonna be a happy reunion or an army to slaughter his family.

So, Jacob started to trust himself and his own schemes again! He tried to appease Esau with gifts. He divided his company into two bands and ignored the protecting army of angels. He sure wants to save his own skin in his own way.

When Laban confronted Jacob with a hostile militia, Jacob boldly stood up to him and spoke his mind. But with Esau, Jacob was afraid to meet him. This was because Jacob knew he was in the right with Laban, but he knew he was in the wrong with Esau. Shakespeare was right when he wrote, "Conscience does make cowards of us all."

In a similar way Jacob represents many of Christians who have Jesus in their hearts, yet they are terrified for their unknown future and haunted by their ugly past sins. God is our protector for our future and our past sins that were forgiven with the blood of Jesus our Savior.

C. IF ALL ELSE FAILS, THEN PRAY

Genesis 32:9-12 Then Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the Lord who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you': 10 I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, 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, lest he come and attack me and the mother with the children. 12 For You said, 'I will surely treat you well, and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.'"

I am sure that you all hear this phrase, "If all else fails, then pray." After taking these steps in carnal confidence, he asked for God's help. That is an absurd and wrong thing to do. We should pray first, then take actions as the Lord leads. Had he forgotten the way God had protected him from Laban?

However, Jacob still came to God with his prayer. Jacob was reminding God with His promise 'Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you'. Many of our prayers fall short because there is none of God's Word within them. Often there is none of God's Word in them because there is little of God's Word in us.

Many of us take our burdens to the Lord in prayer. We just spread them out before Him. Then when we get through praying, we get right up and put each little burden right back on our back and start out again with them. That is not the way we should do.

George Mueller, a great man of faith and prayer, was once asked what was the most important part of prayer. He replied: "The 15 minutes after I have said, 'Amen.'"

D. THE OLD NATURE STILL RULES

Genesis 32:13-21 So he lodged there that same night, and took what came to his hand as a present for Esau his brother: 14 two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, 15 thirty milk camels with their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten foals. 16 Then he delivered them to the hand of his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, "Pass over before me, and put some distance between successive droves." 17 And he commanded the first one, saying, "When Esau my brother meets you and asks you, saying, 'To whom do you belong, and where are you going? Whose are these in front of you?' 18 then you shall say, 'They are your servant Jacob's. It is a present sent to my lord Esau; and behold, he also is behind us.'" 19 So he commanded the sec-

ond, the third, and all who followed the droves, saying, "In this manner you shall speak to Esau when you find him; 20 and also say, '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." 21 So the present went on over before him, but he himself lodged that night in the camp.

In man's thought, this was a good plan, but not in God's. Jacob would rather depend on his own capability than God's.

So often like Jacob, but we mean, "I surrender this. If that isn't enough, I surrender that. If that isn't enough, I surrender some of these..." We need to surrender ourselves to the Lord completely.

E. GOD GOT JACOB'S FULL ATTENTION

Genesis 32:22-25 And he arose that night and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven sons, and crossed over the ford of Jabbok. 23 He took them, sent them over the brook, and sent over what he had. 24 Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. 25 Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him.

I believe that God got Jacob's full attention now. He has Uncle Laban in back of him who doesn't mean anything good, and he has his brother Esau ahead of him. Jacob is no match for either one. He is caught now between a rock and a hard place. And he doesn't know which way to turn. Do you think he wanted to take on a third opponent that night? I don't think so.

It is when we get alone with God that good things begin to happen. Let's not think that the preincarnate Christ who is God Himself couldn't handle Jacob, so the struggle lasted all night long. It was not Christ was struggling against Jacob. It was Jacob. He didn't want to yield to God, because he was a manipulator, con-man and supplanter. He always wanted his way. But now he was cornered and pinned down.

I believe that it is one of those poor English rendering of this incident. Let me put it this way. Let's say you have a four years old son who is jumping on you and wants to wrestle with you. He thinks that he is winning, because he is on top of you and putting his arms around your neck with his red face. Then a phone rings. So you get up to answer the phone. But the boy is still hanging on your neck and still thinking that you two are in wrestling. You can stop that child anytime you want, because you are completely in control and you have power to change the situation any way you want.

I've learned martial arts, but I have never seen any martial art master who touches the opponent's socket of his hip and puts it out of joint. I bet Jacob got a rude awakening in the middle of night.

Genesis 32:26-30 And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks." But he said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!" 27 So He said to him, "What is your name?" He said, "Jacob." 28 And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed." 29 Then Jacob asked, saying, "Tell me Your name, I pray." And He said, "Why is it that you ask about My name?" And He blessed

him there. 30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

This is an invaluable place where God pins us down. There is something to be said for every person doing his "wrestling" with God, and then acknowledging God's greatness after having been defeated. We must know that we serve a God who is greater than us, and we cannot conquer anything until He conquers us.

Jacob has been reduced to the place where all he can do is hold on to the Lord with everything he has. Not a bad place to be. Before Jacob could be delivered from the hand of his brother, he had to be delivered from his own self-will and self-reliance.

When Christ asked Jacob for his name, he must have felt a sense of shame, admitting his name was "Jacob," meaning "con-man, sneaky, cheater."

The name 'Israel' is a compound of two words – 'sarah,' meaning, "Prince or Princess," "fight," "struggle," or "rule" and 'el', meaning, "God". Some Bible scholars take the name Israel to mean, "He who struggles with God" or "He who rules with God." But in Hebrew names, God is not the object of the verb but the subject. Daniel means "God judges" not "he judges God." So this principle shows us Israel means, "God rules."

Here something great happened to Jacob. Jacob went from cunning to clinging, from resisting to resting in God. Now he was not fighting with the Lord, but rather hanging on the Lord.

Jacob thought the real enemy was outside of him, Esau. The real enemy was his own carnal, fleshly nature, which had not been conquered by God.

How about you? Are you trying so hard to make something happen? Is it in relationship with someone? Or is it your business? Whatever that is, instead of coming up with all of your worldly tricks, why not cling on to the Lord who made everything in the universe with his words. Instead of resisting the will of God in your life, why not resting in God? Because He will not give you anything bad for you.

F. A GOOD REMINDER TO CARRY AROUND

Genesis 32:31-32 Just as he crossed over Peniel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip. 32 Therefore to this day the children of Israel do not eat the muscle that shrank, which is on the hip socket, because He touched the socket of Jacobs hip in the muscle that shrank.

The first memorial is the name of the place. Jacob named the place Peniel "Face of God".

The second memorial was a permanent limp. Jacob would remember his being conquered by God with every step he took for the rest of his life. This was a small price to pay for such a great reminder from God.

G. STILL RULED BY THE OLD NATURE

Genesis 33:1-3 Now Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and there, Esau was coming, and with him were four hundred men. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two maidservants. 2 And he put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children behind, and Rachel

and Joseph last. 3 Then he crossed over before them and bowed 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.

Please note that the chapter 33 starts with the old name Jacob, not the new name Israel which represents a godly nature. That means that Jacob was at it again.

It is a rather embarrassing thing for a believer of Jesus Christ to be out done by unbeliever in mercy and forgiveness. We ought to be the ones who offer them to non-believers, not the other way around.

Genesis 33:5-15 And he lifted his eyes and saw the women and children, and said, "Who are these with you?" So he said, "The children whom God has graciously given your servant." 6 Then the maidservants came near, they and their children, and bowed down. 7 And Leah also came near with her children, and they bowed down. Afterward Joseph and Rachel came near, and they bowed down. 8 Then Esau said, "What do you mean by all this company which I met?" And he said, "These are to find favor in the sight of my lord." 9 But Esau said, "I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself." 10 And Jacob said, "No, please, if I have now found favor in your sight, then receive my present from my hand, inasmuch as I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God, and you were pleased with me. 11 Please, take my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough." So he urged him, and he took it. 12 Then Esau said, "Let us take our journey; let us go, and I will go before you." 13 But Jacob said to him, "My lord knows that the children are weak, and the flocks and herds which are nursing are with me. And if the men should drive them hard one day, all the flock will die. 14 Please let my lord go on ahead before his servant. I will lead on slowly at a pace which the livestock that go before me, and the children, are able to endure, until I come to my lord in Seir." 15 And Esau said, "Now let me leave with you some of the people who are with me." But he said, "What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my lord."

God worked in both of these two brothers' hearts and there was no hard feeling. What was past was past.

Proverbs 16:7 When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

Genesis 33:16-20 So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. 17 And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, built himself a house, and made booths for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth. 18 Then Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan Aram; and he pitched his tent before the city. 19 And he bought the parcel of land, where he had pitched his tent, from the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for one hundred pieces of money. 20 Then he erected an altar there and called it El Elohe Israel.

Jacob was glad to be reconciled with his brother, but didn't want to be too close to him. He was still afraid of Esau. Unfortunately, Jacob still acts like "Jacob," because he said he will go far to the south with Esau to the area of Mount Seir. Instead, he allowed Esau to go a few days beyond him and then headed towards the north to Succoth.

It is good for Jacob came to the Promised Land, and he settled there. But he falls short, because it seems God directed him to return to Bethel, not succoth or Shechem.

H. APPLICATIONS

1) We need to remember that when God is with us, nobody can be against us.

That doesn't mean that the children of God will never go through difficult times. But it means that our God will be with us no matter what kind of situation we face.

2) The more we struggle with God, the clearer it is that we are wrong. We have two choices to choose from: a surrender to the Lord to follow Him from the beginning or continuously struggle with God until we get worn out.

3) When we bring our petitions to the Lord, we must trust Him that He will handle it according to His will and leave it at that.