

How to Prevail

by Chuck Smith

Chuck Smith's sermon explores Jacob's life, emphasizing that true victory is found in surrendering to God's will rather than relying on our own cunning and strength.

Duration: 39:08

Scripture: Genesis 27:41-45, Genesis 28:10-22, Genesis 32:24-28, Genesis 32:30, Hosea 12:3-4

Topics: "Surrender To God", "Spiritual Victory"

Description

This sermon delves into the story of Jacob from the book of Genesis, highlighting his deceitful nature, his wrestling with God, and the ultimate victory found in surrendering to God's will. It emphasizes the importance of letting go of our own schemes and submitting to God's plan for our lives, even if it means facing challenges or being crippled in some way. The message encourages listeners to surrender to God, trust in His transformative power, and experience true victory through submission.

Transcript

Tonight, we'll finish the book of Hosea as Pastor Skip leads us in the study of chapters 12 through 14. And so we encourage you, go through the whole Bible with us, learn the word of God, discover what God has to say about himself, about you, about how you can relate to him. And you'll find that these evening studies, as we go through the Bible, are of great help and you'll enjoy them, I know.

Next week, we take the book of Joel, so we continue to move through the Bible. This morning, we'd like to draw your attention to Hosea chapter 12, verses 3 and 4. Here, the prophet speaks concerning Jacob. He said, he took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength, he had power with God, and he had power over the angel, and he prevailed.

He wept and made supplication unto him. He found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us. For years, I had a real problem with the story of Jacob.

He was an extremely self-reliant man. He was cunning. He was clever.

He was a very deceitful man, one that was always ready to take advantage of another man's weakness. There was a passage of Scripture that disturbed me. It said, Esau have I hated, Jacob have I loved.

I had no problem with God hating Esau, but I had a real problem with God loving Jacob. He was such a scoundrel, and yet God declared, Jacob have I loved. That should encourage every one of you.

Jacob was a man who was easy to hate. He was a twin. We're told that during his mother's pregnancy, that she was having an extremely difficult pregnancy, so she prayed about it, asked the Lord why it is so difficult.

And the Lord said, there are two nations in your womb. They are diverse from each other. So it would seem that these little guys were duking it out in the womb and just giving their mother a terrible time.

The Lord said to her, the older shall serve the younger. When they were born, his brother Esau was first out of the womb. He was red and he was covered with hair.

Interesting to see a newborn baby just covered with hair. And so they said, look at that. He's hairy.

And that was his name, Esau. It means hairy in Hebrew. They were born, as they came out, his twin brother Jacob had hold of the heel of Harry.

He was still fighting with him evidently. And as they saw him holding onto the heel of Harry, they said, look at that. He's a heel catcher.

The name Jacob is heel catcher. So they both received their names out of circumstances of their birth. They were probably fraternal twins, for they did not really look alike.

One was hairy and the other was not. And as they grew up, their nature and their characters were quite diverse. Harry was a man's man.

He was a sportsman. He was a hunter. He was a rugged outdoor individualist.

Whereas Jacob, he was a mama's boy. He spent a lot of time in the kitchen, around the ladies sewing circles. He was domestic.

And so a vast difference between the two boys as they grew up. The father, of course, favoring the son that was the hunter and the rugged outdoor type. Esau, because he was first born of the two, the birthright became his, so that he was to receive the blessings of the birthright of the family.

However, one day when he was coming in from out hunting, it had been a difficult chase. He was tired. He was weary.

He was famished. And his brother Jacob had been cooking this savory potage, the lentil soup. It smelled so good.

Esau said to him, give me some of that soup. Jacob said, I'll make you a deal. You give me your birthright and I'll give you some soup.

And he said, what good's a birthright to me if I die? Sure, I'll make a deal, you know, to have the birthright. It meant nothing to him, but it meant so much to Jacob. But as we said, he was willing to take advantage of another person's weakness, and so he traded the birthright for a mess of potage.

Later, as their father was approaching death, because of age, he had become blinded, and he called Esau in, and he said, Esau, I want you to go hunting and get some venison, barbecue it, and fix it like I enjoy it. Bring it to me, and I want to place the blessing upon you. So Esau went out to hunt for deer.

Rebecca heard what Isaac had said to Esau, and so she said to Jacob, take some goat meat into your father, I can fix it to taste like venison. And your father can't see, so just tell him that you are Esau, and that you have the meat for him, that you might receive the blessing. Jacob said, that would never work, because we're too different from each other.

If he should say, smell me, I don't smell like my brother. You know, he was the Cologne guy, his brother was the B.O. guy. And he said, he's so hairy.

You know, if he touches me, he'll feel the smooth skin and all. And, mom, it'll never do. And he'll realize that I'm trying to pull a fast one on him, and he'll curse me.

Rebecca said, if he curses, let the curse be on me. But we'll fix you up. We'll rub some dirt on you, we'll let you wear your brother's clothes, and we'll take the goat skin, and we'll tie it on your hand and on your neck, so that if he feels, he'll feel the hair of the goat skin, and he won't know the difference, he's blind.

So, Jacob went in with the goat's meat, and he said, hi, father, I've come back with the meat for you. And he said, how is it that you were able to get it so quickly? He said, oh, the Lord was with me. And he said, well, come over here, son.

And he smelled him. He said, mm, it smells like Esau. And he touched the goat skin on him, and he said, oh, it's got the hair.

It's got to be Jacob. He said, it's got the voice of Jacob, but it's got to be Esau. So he pronounced this blessing, the patriarchal blessing, upon Jacob.

And Jacob went out. Well, soon Esau returned, and he had fixed the meat, and he came in and he said, father, I've got the venison that you wanted. And now give me the blessing.

Esau began to tremble. He said, I made a mistake. Your brother came in, and he brought me some meat, and I gave him the blessing.

And Esau said, well, surely there's something left for me. And he said, no, I've made you his servant, and I've blessed him. And he said, I don't know what to do.

And Esau began to cry, and he said, dad, please, you know, bless me. And so he pronounced a secondary blessing upon him. And Esau comforted himself with the thought, dad will soon die, and when he does, I'm going to kill that Jacob.

Rebecca heard Esau making the vow to kill his brother, and so she called Jacob in and said, son, you better escape to Haran. My brother lives there, and you can stay with him until the wrath of Esau is over, and then you can return. But you better get out of here, because he is planning to kill you as soon as your father dies.

So Jacob took off, fleeing to Haran. And his first night, he came to Bethel, there in the middle of Samaria, a rocky place. And he was so tired from his flight that he just lay on the ground, and he grabbed a stone for his pillow, and he went to sleep and had a dream.

And in his dream, he saw heaven opened, and a ladder reaching up into heaven, and the angels ascending and descending on this ladder. When he awoke in the morning, he became conscious of God's presence even in this barren place. He said, surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not.

There was nothing to suggest the presence of the Lord. I knew it not. I know it now.

And so, knowing that God was there, and of course, Jacob, always ready to make a deal, decided to make a deal with God. And so he said to the Lord, if you will be with me, and you will keep me in this journey that I'm taking, if you will give me bread to eat, and you will give me clothes to wear, and bring me again safely to my father's home in peace, then, Jehovah, you will be my God, and I will give to you a tenth of everything you give to me. So here he is trying to make a deal with God, and, you know, bless me, make me a rich man, and I'll split it with you, a tenth of all that you give to me.

So Jacob continued his journey to Haran. When he arrived there, there was a well with a stone over the opening, and there were three young men, shepherd boys, who had had their flocks of sheep there at the well, and they were waiting for some man to come and roll this heavy stone from the opening to the well, that they might water their sheep. So Jacob, seeing these boys there, said, Hey, fellas, do you know a man by the name of Laban, the son of Nahor? They said, Sure, we know him.

In fact, there's his daughter. She's coming right now with her sheep to water them. So Jacob looked up, and he saw the daughter of Laban, and he ran up, and he kissed her, and he said, I am your cousin.

My mother, Rachel, is the sister of your father, Laban, and I've come to spend some time here. She ran home, and she told her father that his nephew was there. He came running to meet him.

He hugged him and greeted him and invited him to the house. And after staying with Laban for about a month, Laban said, You know, you're a good worker, and you really shouldn't just serve here for nothing. What would you like for your wages? And Jacob, who had fallen in love with Rachel, said, Well, I would like to take Rachel as my bride.

He said, Well, I'll tell you what. Work for me for seven years, and your pay will be Rachel. That will be your dowry.

You can have her as your wife. So he stayed there learning husbandry for seven years, working for Rachel, and he was so in love with her, the time seemed to pass by rapidly, and the day of the wedding came, the party on into the evening, and it was dark, and so he went to his tent with his veiled bride, and in the morning, when he woke up, looked over to see her. It was Leah, the older, ugly sister of Rachel, that was in bed with him.

He was incensed. He went to Laban, and he said, What is the big idea? Our deal was that I would have Rachel as a bride, not Leah. Laban said, Sorry, son, it's a custom in our land.

The younger sister can't marry before the older sister, but I'll make you a deal. Work another seven years for me, and you can have Rachel, too. You ever wonder why at the wedding, the bride they always raised her veil? That's where the custom comes from.

I think that he gave Rachel right away, but he owed his uncle another seven years. There came almost a competition between the sisters. The older sister Leah was able to have children, sons.

She began to bear sons unto Jacob. The beautiful Rachel wasn't able. She was barren, and so she finally said to Jacob, Go into my handmaid.

Let her become a surrogate mother, and it will be as my child. He did that. Leah, not to be outdone, said, You go into my handmaid, and it will be like my child.

Within this period of time, he had 11 sons. Rachel finally was able to conceive and had a son they named Joseph. There was one daughter and 11 sons.

After the 14 years, Laban realized that Jacob had tremendous skills in husbandry. Laban had become very wealthy as a result of Jacob's working for him. So he said to Jacob, Continue on working for me, because I'm blessed as a result of your labor, and tell me what are the wages that you desire.

So Jacob said, Well, I would like to have all of the spotted sheep. So they made a deal that Jacob would have for his own all of the spotted sheep. But learning about husbandry, he learned how to somehow affect the sheep during the impregnation.

So whenever there were healthy, strong animals ready to have relations, he would engineer it so that the healthy ones would bear spotted and straight animals. So that Jacob's animals were stronger. Laban's were weaker.

As time went on, it became very obvious that Jacob's animals were stronger. They were producing more. Jacob became very wealthy.

He had his own servants, and he was actually becoming more wealthy than his uncle Laban. Laban's other sons, when they saw this, became upset with Jacob, and they were plotting against him, and Laban himself was upset, and Jacob could see that things were no longer friendly. And so he came to his wives, and he said, I'm going to go back home.

And they said, Well, we're going with you because, you know, what do we have here in our father's house? He, you know, pawned us off for 14 years of labor, and so we're going also. So Laban was off with his sons, and they were sharing sheep. And so while they were away sharing the sheep, Jacob took off with his servants and with all of his flocks, his herds and camels and all, and they headed back toward home in Hebron.

It was three days before Laban even knew that he left. But when he heard that Jacob had left and had fled from the land, he and his sons came pursuing after Jacob. And the night before they caught up with Jacob, he was now at Mount Gilead, the Lord spoke to Laban in a dream, and he warned him not to hurt or to harm Jacob.

Don't lay your hand on him. And so in the morning when he caught up with Jacob and the family, he was sort of muzzled by God against really saying anything bad. And so he said, How is it that you took off? You didn't even give me a chance to have a big party, a going-away party for you.

And you left with my grandkids. I didn't even have a chance to kiss them and all. I could really hurt you, but last night God told me that I wasn't to touch you or to say anything bad.

But I could really hurt you. And of course Jacob realizing that the Lord had sort of warned him and muzzled him, he decided to tell him off. You know, taking advantage again of the situation.

And so he speaks to him of his deception, how he deceived Jacob and all. Of course, Jacob was a deceiver. He had deceived his father.

Now he ends up getting deceived as far as his bride was concerned. But he began to chide Laban. Genesis tells us, He said to him, Just what is my trespass? What is my sin that you've pursued after me so hotly? I have taken nothing from you.

But for twenty years I worked for you. Your ewes and your goats did not miscarry. They're young, and I have not eaten.

They did not miscarry. They're young. And I have not eaten the rams of your flocks that were torn of the beast.

I bore the loss of it myself. You required me to pay for those that were stolen. And during the day I was thirsty.

I was freezing at night. I had sleepless nights. And I endured these conditions for twenty years, and you changed my wages ten different times.

And you would have sent me away empty had I told you I was going. It was tense. It was highly emotional.

They draw a line in the sand. They put up a pile of rocks. And Laban said, Don't come back across this line.

The line drawn in the sand. You've heard that, and that's where it was. So he and his sons returned, and now Jacob continues his journey home.

He had sent messengers ahead to let Esau know that he was coming home. The servants returned, and they said, Your brother is coming to meet you, and he has 400 men with him. Quite a welcoming party.

And of course, he knew that Esau had sworn he was going to kill him because of what he had done. So Mr. Schemer begins to lay out his plans. He can't go back.

The line is there in the sand. He's afraid of going forward to meet his brother because he doesn't know what his brother will do. So he begins to plan, to scheme.

He took portions of his flocks, some of the goats, some of the sheep, some of the cattle, some of the donkeys, some of the camels, and he sent a servant ahead with a portion of the lambs. And when you meet my brother Esau, and he said, Who are you, and who are these? Just tell Esau that these are a present from Jacob for his lord Esau, and hopefully he was going to appease his brother's anger. And so these men were set out, and every once in a while Esau would come and see now all of these goats with a servant.

Who are you? Well, these are from Jacob to his lord Esau. And he set it up in a clever way so that as soon as his brother's anger seemed to be appeased, they wouldn't offer him anything else. Give him enough, but not too much, you know.

Scheming. Oh, what a fellow. The remainder of the flocks were with him, and so he divided them into two companies.

Some of the servants and all were over one of the flocks, the herds, and the other, he was with him, and they continued on as he sort of came up in the rear. His thought was, if my brother begins to smite the servants and the flocks that are ahead, then we'll flee. While they're engaged in battle, we'll flee.

We'll run for our lives. So he realizes that his brother should be there about the next day. And that night, there by the river Jabbok, he sets his wife and his children down to go to sleep, but he needs to have a good night's sleep.

And so he crosses, he fords the little river of Jabbok, and over on the other side, he tries to get a good night's sleep, because it's going to be a strenuous day tomorrow as he meets Esau and an uncertainty of the future. But an angel of the Lord came and wrestled with Jacob all night long. And Jacob would not give up.

And as the day began to break, seeing that Jacob would not give up, the angel touched his thigh, and the muscles and the sinews and all shriveled. So he became a hopeless cripple, could not possibly run. His last scheme, run if it gets bad, run, is taken away.

He cannot flee. The angel said, let me go. The day is breaking.

And Jacob said, I will not let you go unless you bless me. The angel said, what is your name? Crooked, dirty, rotten, conniving thief. Well, your name will no longer be Yaakov.

He'll get you. But your name will be Israel, governed by God, in Hebrew. A prince of God, governed by God.

Interesting. It says, and he wrestled with the angel and prevailed. And that's the thing that always bothered me.

How could you fight with God and win? How could you fight with an angel of God and possibly prevail? And that troubled me for years. Until I came to the book of Hosea. And here I found the answer.

As I read it in Genesis, and he wrestled with the Lord and he prevailed, I couldn't understand it. Because in my mind, it was a wrestling match in which he won. Which in a sense is true, but how did he win? Hosea tells us.

He said, he wept. He made supplication unto him. That is, it was not a place of dominance that Jacob was now dealing.

It wasn't that he was in control. He had been whipped. He was helpless.

He's crying. It isn't a position of power. It's a position of weakness.

I can't do it. I'm through. Please don't go.

He made supplication. He was begging him. Don't leave me without a blessing.

And what is the blessing? It's the change of character that is recognized in the name. You will no longer be a conniving heel catcher. But from now on, you'll be a man who is governed by God.

Through the surrender to God, he then had power with God. Not in overcoming God, but in surrendering to God. And our place of real victory in our lives is when we come to that place of surrendering to God.

It isn't that we have an advantage and we have overcome by our guises or stealth or devices, but it is that God now rules in our life. We have submitted and surrendered to his rule and therein is where we discover victory. The Lord had to cripple Jacob to bring him to this place.

For the rest of his life, he had difficulty walking because of that shriveled muscle and all in his hip. But yet, the rest of his life, he was governed by God. And he discovered true victory comes in submission unto the will of God.

Sometimes God has to use very severe measures to bring us to that place of submission. And it could be that today, some of you are fighting with God, you're wrestling with God. There's an issue that God is dealing with in your life and you've been fighting him over it.

You're not willing to give in. You're not willing to surrender. But it is so important for your future that this area that God is dealing with in your life be taken care of and that you submit and surrender to God these things.

God is not adverse to crippling you in some way or other in order to bring you to that position of surrendering to him. What does it take? What will it take for you to submit, to give up this fight against God and to submit yourself to God that you might become Israel governed by God? Father, we pray that you will help us this day to realize that the path of victory is one of surrender, giving up. And Lord, we realize that there are some people that are going through some really heavy issues right now fighting with you.

You've spoken to them. You're dealing with them over these things. But they're hanging on.

They won't let go. Father, I pray that before you have to cripple them, they will let go. They will submit to you.

They will surrender these areas of their lives, Lord, to you that they might know real victory, your victory. In Jesus' name, amen. Shall we stand? The pastors are down here at the front.

They're here to pray for you and to minister to you today who have come to the realization that you're never going to win until you surrender, until you give it over to God. You hang on to it. It's only going to cripple you ultimately.

But before that happens, I would pray that you would have enough wisdom to just submit it to God and to surrender it to God and let him work in your life. There's a P.S. to this story. The next day as Esau came into the camp and he met Jacob, they fell on each other's neck and they began to embrace and kiss one another.

He didn't have to run. He couldn't even if he wanted to. He was crippled.

But God worked out his purpose in Jacob's life and he was a changed man. He was now a man governed by God. And God can bring the changes in your life if you will but surrender to him.

And these issues that you are facing that are so fearful and you don't know what to do and you're planning and scheming and trying to figure out, God will take care of those things if you'll just surrender and commit it to him. You can become Israel today. Governed by God.

And you can have the joy of watching God work a miraculous work in your life. The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make his face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee and be gracious unto thee.

The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace.

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