

Jacob's Struggle

by Peter Brandon

God wants us to be broken and humble so that we can receive a blessing and live a life of simple faith, trusting in His power and provision.

Duration: 45:30

Scripture: Genesis 32:22

Topics: "Brokenness", "Transformation"

Description

Peter Brandon preaches on Jacob's struggle with God at the Jabbok River, emphasizing the transformative power of brokenness and the necessity of surrendering to God's will. He illustrates how Jacob, despite his scheming nature, ultimately encounters God and is renamed Israel, symbolizing a shift from self-reliance to faith. The sermon highlights the importance of being alone with God for true transformation and the need for humility in our spiritual journeys. Brandon encourages the congregation to embrace their own struggles and seek God's blessing through persistent prayer and brokenness.

Transcript

The reading is from Genesis 32. We'll start reading from verse 21. Jacob had been twenty-one years away from home in Palinará.

First of all, he met his uncle Laban. And quite frankly, it was two Jacobs together. It's amazing sometimes how God puts us with brethren and sisters who are just like us in order to teach us a lesson.

And so for seven years, Laban deceived Jacob. Then for the next ten years, Jacob deceived his uncle. Anyhow, God was with him, and this is the mercy of God, and he became a very wealthy man.

Eventually, there came a moment when he heard the word of the Lord to go back to Bethel, go back to his own country in Beersheba. And he gathers the family together secretly. Now, he was wrong to do that.

There should have been a family send-off. But somehow he couldn't trust Laban. And then there's a catch-up, and Laban is searching for his idols, and they are concealed.

And then eventually he comes back to the land of his parents. And immediately he enters the land, God gives him a vision at Mahanan, of two hosts of angels. Now, we know that one angel destroyed the army of the Assyrians.

What would two hosts do? And they were all with him. That's the grace of God. And then he hears that Esau is coming with 400 men.

Now, work these out mathematically. What are 400 men in comparison with two hosts of angels? And he trembles. He's still full of fear.

And then the old Jacob comes out. He says, I know what to do. He's a materialist, and I'll deceive him by a great present.

And he sends him 200 sheep, 20 rams, 200 goats, 20 billy goats. Then he sends him 40 cows, 10 bulls, then 30 milch camels with their coats, and asses with their foals. A considerable farm, really, in those days.

And he thinks that he'll deceive his brother by this gift. Probably he was saying, well, I deceived him out of his birthright. I suppose I must pay up, really.

Therefore, he sends him the gift. But when God blesses, he doesn't want us to have a finger in the pie. It's all of grace.

And we must learn this. And so, there's still the scheming and the planning and the engineering. He found it very difficult to implicitly trust the Lord.

Now, brethren, aren't we like that? After all the years I've been in the Lord's work for 62 years, sometimes I still worry, will he supply my needs? When he's done it for 62 years. Problems and difficulties come. But God will supply our needs.

Now, in the next few months, there might be a lot of unemployment in Australia. And perhaps some might be a little worried. But God will supply your needs according to his riches in glory.

So let's trust him. Then comes the moment when the almighty God must have said, right, we're going to deal with this man. And that's what we're going to look at now.

Let's read from verse 21. So went the present over before him and himself lodged that night in the company. And he rose up that night and took his two wives and his two women servants and his eleven sons and passed over the four jabbok.

Notice jabbok because there's great interest there. And he took them and sent them over the brook and sent over what he had. And Jacob was left alone.

Now, mark that. Can I repeat it? And Jacob was left alone. And there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day or the ascending of the dawn.

And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint. And he wrestled with him. And he said, let me go for the day breaketh.

And he said, I will not let thee go except thou bless me. And he said unto him, what is thy name? Now, I can't help smiling when I read it now. God knew his name.

But he wanted an honest confession. What is thy name? And he said, thy name shall be called no more Jacob but Israel. For as a prince thou hast power with God and with men and hast prevailed.

Notice. Power with God and with men and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him and said, tell me, I pray thee, thy name.

And he said, wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel. For I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved.

And as he passed over Penuel, the sun rose upon him and he limped on his thigh. Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank which is upon the hollow of the thigh. And to this day, because he touched the hollow of Japheth's thigh in the sinew that shrank.

Now a confession before I start. I'm reading from a Bible that my father-in-law gave to his wife a year before he died. He was a man that was totally and completely devoted to the authorized.

In the other version he called it a perversion. But he didn't know he bought this Bible and it's a Scofield and it's a modern King James version. I'm sure part didn't know that.

But when I picked it up and read it I find I'm still reading the authorized because I've memorized so much of it. And the modern version seems to clash so you'll have to forgive me. But my Bible that I always had for 40 or 50 years was wearing out and I loved it.

Full of notes and comments. And I gave it to an old African brother and he was a bookbinder. He did the binding beautifully but he put email paper in where the pages were worn.

And unfortunately I can't use that Bible now. So I've had to read from here. So if I make little blunders you must forgive me.

But my mind is more photographic than literal. So sometimes I do quote from the authorized when I'm reading from the new King James so you'll have to excuse me. So now we've got the present going over as an appeasement offering.

Now you will never find in Scripture another appeasement offering. All the offerings brought glory to God and the sin offerings allowed God to forgive sin on the grounds of the precious blood of Christ that he saw in the offering. But they are not appeasement.

This was an appeasement offering to satisfy the cravings of Esau. And you can't really do that because we know he basically didn't want the offering when the issue was really settled. Now the way we're going to work at it is quite simple.

First of all we're going to look at Jacob's visitation. Secondly we're going to look at Jacob's rebellion. And then lastly we're going to look at Jacob's conversion.

Now I'm using the word conversion in a wide sense. I'm not putting the word salvation but I am putting the word conversion which means the change of life. Notice he comes to a place called Jebel.

It was a little place geographically where two streams met and poured their water into a natural basin. And that's why the word means to pour out or emptying. It has two meanings.

First of all it's associated with pouring out and secondly it's associated with cleansing. The idea of washing. Now let's think of that.

If that water could speak it would say something like this to Jacob. Jacob, you have never been poured out. Never.

You've always tried to engineer my blessing. You can't do that. When I make a promise I mean what I say and it will be done.

But you are trying to bring in all kinds of gimmicks in order that this promise might be fulfilled. You can't do it. And therefore just as that water is being poured out you've got to be poured out in brokenness before.

Now we must be very careful about the teaching of brokenness. But it's absolutely necessary. Before you got saved you were broken.

You saw that Christ died for your sins on the cross. You saw the enormity of your sin that caused his death and the infinitude of his love and you were broken. That's when God blessed you.

But after your salvation there comes another brokenness. When you see that your Christian life is in a state of failure and you cry out with the Apostle Paul O wretched man that I am who shall deliver me. And I would say especially with the assemblies we need that brokenness.

Now let's face it I know it's a sore wound but we must face it. Many of the assemblies are dwindling. I think I can share this with you.

I don't think it would hinder. We used to have 120 assemblies in London. We only have 15 left.

Now what is God asking? He is asking for brokenness. Just before W. W. Ferrity died I used to go and see him and he came into fellowship in 1864 and he gave me reports of the early breaking of bread occasions that the assemblies had. And gospel meetings where they hired neutral places and they saw hundreds say but he said as we were coming to the end of the century there were clashes.

And all the magazines were asking us to humble ourselves before the Lord. That's broken. Repentance.

Being broken before God. But we never heeded that. And when we turned into the 20th century we moved to use his language from the organic to the mechanical.

And slowly we have declined. We need jabot. We need brokenness.

And when God sees his people broken he will always pick up the pieces and bless them. He loves the broken and the contrite heart. But also with the waters of jabot they were fresh water and therefore it speaks of cleansing.

Now there are two kinds of cleansing in scripture. There's cleansing that comes through the blood that's once and for all and never has to be... That cleanses and brings us into a real relationship with the Lord and nothing can break that relationship. But after we're saved we need the cleansing that comes through the word.

Cleansing that comes through the word doesn't make relationship but it does bring in friendship so that there's a link between us and the Lord and it's the link of friendship. Now when that link is broken by our sins a cloud comes between us and the Lord. We're still related.

We're still children of God but a cloud has come between us and that's why we need that cleansing that comes. May God make that real to us. Then I want you to notice the purpose.

God was going to break him in order to bless him and the blessing is tremendous and that's the whole point, purpose of the angel of the Lord that was the Lord Jesus actually meeting him and wrestling with him. He wanted to break him in order to bless him so that he might live the simple life of faith and Paul put it beautifully. He says I am crucified with Christ that's Paul gone who was saw.

Nevertheless I live yet not I but Christ liveth in me and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. So you see it's a step of faith that brings us into salvation. It's the life of faith that brings us into sanctification.

Not positionally but conditionally. Positionally we're all sanctified. We're set apart for God's glory.

But practically we need that daily life of faith to bring us into blessing and that was the purpose. You see Jacob was constantly having props in his life. The main was Christ.

That was his foundation. But he was leaning on his own engineering in order by scheming to get the blessing of God. You can't do it.

He had to learn now to live the life of simple faith and the just shall live by faith. And they noticed the time of the visitation. Now this is interesting.

And I was just reasoning there just before I came to the platform and it was beautiful. First of all he sends over his eleven sons and he loved them all. It must have hurt him to see them crossing the brook.

Then he sent over his two women servants Pildar and Silla. Off they went. Then he sent over his wives Rachel and Leah.

Can't you imagine the hug? I'll meet you on the other side dear. Then he sent over all his possessions. Now watch it.

All that he had. All went over. And he was back at the beginning.

He had nothing. He was all alone. That's when God met him.

You know in a ministry meeting like this it's very difficult to be alone. Now isn't it so easy to say oh that's the message for Mrs so and so. Oh and that's the message for Brother John.

Don't do that. Get alone. Can I ask you to do something? Draw a circle right round yourself.

Call it a holy circle. And say right now Lord come and deal with me. You dealt with Jacob in grace.

Come and deal with me. And all of us need that. Even as I stand here I want to say to you the Lord needs to deal with me.

Although I'm in my 84th year he still wants to deal with me. And he wants to deal with every one of you. And therefore everything goes over and Jacob is left alone.

And I think the almighty God would say ah now I can deal with him. Wouldn't this be a morning if God had deep dealings with us all. And what was it? They wrestled with him, a man until the breaking of day.

Not Jacob wrestling with the man. The man wrestling with Jacob. All the wonderful purposes of God.

Now let's see the extremity. Who was this man? It was the Lord Jesus. Who was the Lord Jesus? The Creator.

The same one that Moses saw on Mount Sinai. The same one that Isaiah saw in the year that King Isaiah died. High and lifted up.

And his train filled the temple. Oh the glory. Why should he bother with Jacob? That's the miracle.

Who was Jacob? A supplanter. A deceiver. A cheat.

Deep within his spirit there was a desire for God. But he was a crafty piece of work. What a contrast.

The Almighty Lord wrestling with a worm. The Lord wants to wrestle with us this morning. Probably there are things in my life that need to be rectified.

Things in your life. We've all got a history. We've all got black patches.

And he wants to deal with them. Let him deal with them this morning. He's going to wrestle with us in the power of the Spirit.

And then we read this. He prevailed not against it. Think what he could have done.

Think what he did to Sodom and Gomorrah. Think what he did in the flood days. He wrestled with him.

And the Almighty Lord could not prevail against it. Why? Because of his resistance. You might say to me, well, have you ever seen that yet? I remember in one large assembly in London a young man got up who was having deep dealings with... He was 35 years of age.

He had a wonderful responsible job with Lever Brothers. And his wife was dying with cancer. And God had deep dealings with him.

And he got up one morning and he read that Scripture. These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. And quietly he told the assembly how God had been dealing with him.

And then he looked at the assembly and he said, God wants to deal with us. We can honour with our lips, but our hearts can be far from the Lord. And I looked at the congregation and I saw some livid with anger, some weeping.

And one brother came to me. He said, Peter, if I were as near as you to him, I would have pulled him down. Rejected.

Beloved, don't reject brokenness. If God can get us all individually broken, he's going to bless us. Bless us abundantly.

And we need it. And then in the battle, in the wrestling, and notice it's not fighting. It's not the idea, forgive the terms, three rounds with Jacob.

And he finished up with black eyes and a broken nose. God's not like that. It's wrestling.

What is wrestling? It's hugging. Hugging. And that's what God was doing.

It was close activity. He had come to wrestle, to hug him with his love in order to break him. And God breaks us by his love.

He breaks us by his love. That's why we come Sunday morning to see the meaning of Calvary. And we should all be broken.

And then Jacob still resists. And in this hugging session, this wrestling, he looks at Jacob. And he looks at the strongest bone in his body, the thigh bone, and the thigh muscle.

And he touches him. Now, the scholars inform me, for my knowledge of Hebrew is very limited, that the word is a delicate touch. Not normally a hard hit, but a brilliant touch of dislocation.

And that leg was useless. It was swinging. No good at all.

Instead of being self-confident, now he has to bid it then completely on another. God has touched him physically. Sometimes the Lord has to touch us with chastisement.

I remember when I was seemingly dying with pancreatitis, the Lord touched me. Thank God He did. We shall never come under condemnation, but we can come under chastisement, because He loves us.

And therefore, He touched the hollow of his thigh, the source of all his strength went. Now, I don't know the preeminent thing in your life. You say, why do you call it preeminent? The word thigh and the word shaft in the candlestick are exactly the same.

And it means He touches the preeminent thing. Now, here we need to be absolutely honest. The thing that's wrong in my life may not be in yours.

The thing that may be grieving the Spirit in your life may not be mine. But God knows the preeminent thing and His touching it. The source of all your resistance.

And right then, Jacob got to a place where he said, I will not let thee go except thou bless me. In other words, instead of resisting to get away, he holds on to the man of God and you could almost see tears in his eyes. And he says with holy determination, I will not, will not let thee go except thou bless me.

Wouldn't it be lovely and I want to say this prayer for him. If we said that this morning. I'm not leaving that seat until God blesses me.

I want to see God breaking into my life so that I know the Lord Jesus. And immediately God got him there. He said, What's your name? As though he didn't know.

He knew Abraham. He knew Abel. He knew Adam.

What's your name? I mean, it sounds ridiculous, doesn't it? Surely God is omniscient. He knows all. What's your name? What was he after? Jacob had gone into the presence of Isaac.

All dressed up as he saw. And he looked at the tent man. And then he got the skin all around his neck.

Because he saw. Then he got the skin all over his hands and it was wonderful camouflage. But you can't be artificial in the presence.

Now, if Isaac had gone by his voice, that means the Word, he would have been right. But he went by his feelings. What a lesson.

Don't go by feelings. Go by the Word. Stand on the Word and you'll always be right.

Feelings are deceptive. And Jacob said, Who is it, my son? And he saw. What a damnable lie.

And he felt like he saw. He looked like he saw. But it was all deception.

And God hates deception. So, he says, What's thy name? Now, I don't know. I may be wrong.

But I can almost imagine Jacob saying, Did you know my father Abraham? Abraham, my grandpa. Mighty man of faith. What's your name? Did you know my father Isaac? He was a figure of words.

What's your name? He just said. Jacob. A cheat.

A supplanter. A worm. Beloved, take this.

In love. God wants us broken. God wants us to humble ourselves.

If you failed, God can pick you up. But come and just say, Jacob. A supplanter.

Paul got there when he cried out. And he was the greatest Christian of all. Who gave us a leaf out of his own diary.

And right at the end he said, Oh, wretched man that I am. That's Jacob. That's when there's victory.

God can always bless dust. He made man from it. And He sometimes has to bring us to dust.

Where we cry. Then He gives him this tremendous blessing. And quite frankly, even now, I'm not getting to the depth of it.

Thy name shall be no longer Jacob. But Israel, what does it mean? A prince with God. And what does that mean? He had a divine influence.

That meant in his prayer life, he had brought blessing to God by being prince. Just think what could happen if that happened to each one of us individually. That we were a prince with God.

For thou hast power with God and with men. Now notice that. Power with God and with men.

Power in the sanctuary. Power in the street. Power with God means power with men.

Now, can I expose a weakness? Would you mind if I do it in love? The assemblies have specialized in the teaching of the Word. And may they go on doing that. But we have been pygmies in prayer.

In fact, we have become so little in prayer, we've joined ministry and prayer together. And an assembly has just a half an hour prayer a week. No wonder we're not meeting the ministry.

It's power with God and with men. I remember going to a place called Cowdenbeath. This was about 1953.

I shall never forget this. And when I got there, a sister gave me a cup of tea before I went on the platform. You see, in those days, we had the Flying Scot and the Royal Scot.

But they took eight hours to get to Glasgow from London. So when I got to Cowdenbeath, it was 7 o'clock and the meeting was underway. So I said to the sister that gave me a cup of tea, I said, how have the preparation meetings been going? Strange, she said.

I've been in this assembly, she said, for 60 years and I've never seen any drink like it. I said, what did you see? Well, they're all minors and they have shifts. And instead of going home, they've been coming to this.

And in those days, with their dirty clothes, they didn't have the baths like they have now. And they've been praying from early in the morning to late at night. And she said, sometimes I come in and I see tears all over the floor.

Why were they weeping? They've been confessing their sins and getting right with one another. She said, I've never seen anything like it. There's just this prayer burden.

I preached that night and the unusual power of God was present. On Tuesday night while I was preaching, a man jumped up and disturbed the whole service and said, I'm a Presbyterian elder in the church across the way, but I'm not born again. Could you help me? And he was gloriously saved.

And then the Spirit broke out in mighty power and souls were being saved every night, but broken in the presence of God. And then we had an open air march. I've never been in an open air march before, but about 200 of us met.

And we marched through Cowdenbeath. Now I've never seen this before and probably may never see it again, but the brethren that were minors were speaking to their friends on the road who were minors and saying, George, you need to be saved. You need to flee to the Lord.

And people were being convicted on the streets. Where did it all start? With prevailing prayer. And every time we have seen a movement of the Spirit that goes beyond mere campaigning, it is always preceded by prayer.

Here's prevailing prayer. Israel, a prince with God, power with God, and power with men. All may God raise up, brethren and sisters, like that.

And then I want you to note His consecration. Immediately God meets him and changes his name and eventually was going to change the whole of his life. Then God started to bless him.

First of all, that night was a dark night when the angel of the Lord was wrestling with him and now the light was coming. Isn't that beautiful? The day was dawning. And that means a new day, a new period, a new spiritual life was coming to him.

Never get to a point where you can't change. Never become old in your thinking. You see, Jacob was about 83 when God met him.

There's not many of us over 83. But God can give you a new beginning even in the autumn of your life. And therefore at the age of 83, God was going to wonderfully bless this man.

And then you will notice God not only changed his name, but Jacob changed Jabbok into what? Penuel. The place where he sees God face to face. What does Jabbok speak of? Emptying, brokenness, cleansing.

And now it's changed into seeing God face to face. What a revelation! You see, it's one thing to know about the Lord. It's another thing to know Him intimate.

Now, it's vital that we should get all the facts and the doctrine concerning Christ. But that doesn't mean to say that you know Christ intimately. It's another thing, as we were hearing last evening among the young people, to have this epignosis.

And that means this experimental, personal, intimate knowledge of the Lord Jesus. And that's what Paul meant when he says that I might know Him and the power of His resurrection. It means this intimate knowledge of the Lord.

And then I want you to notice another thing that's very beautiful. The temperature change. One moment it was a cold night.

Now the sun was shining and things were warming. And you know when the Holy Spirit fills you, the love of God is shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost. Summertime begins.

Springtime begins. The singing of birds begins as you get in the Song of Solomon. The winter is over.

The springtime is coming. Oh, may God give us a time of springtime among His people. And then I want you to note His understanding was changed.

One moment it was the angel of the Lord. The next moment Divine Light comes and He realises that it was God, the Lord Jehovah, wrestling with Him. And then also I want you to note there's a change in His walk.

You know how Jewish people walk. I was brought up among them and they have a very, very proud kind of walking. But now there's a different walk.

And that stuff I'm sure represents the Lord that He was leaning. And last of all His children got blessed. The meat that came from the thigh that they would no longer eat.

But they had a completely different diet. And what does that mean? When God touches a man in the home the children too are blessed. They don't live on the rubbish of the world.

They live on that which is spiritual. Now there's another problem. He's at Penuel but He's not back at Bethel.

How is God going to bring Him back to Bethel? Now in the next study we're going to see this beautiful thing how He brings Him right back to the place where He started. And may the Lord do it with us all. Amen.

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